

Winston-Salem Journal ^[1]

Winston-Salem Journal

by Catherine A. Whittenburg, 2006



Front page of the Winston-Salem Journal, January 21, 2011. Image from Flickr user zsrlibrary (Z. Smith Reynolds Library).

The *Winston-Salem Journal*, located in North Carolina's fifth-largest city, is one of the state's most influential [newspapers](#) ^[2], and several of its owners, editors, and reporters have gone on to play significant roles in the national media. Editorially, the *Journal* has supported many local and statewide causes that reflected the desires of some of the city's elite business and philanthropic households, such as the Hanes, Reynolds, Babcock, and Gray families. This was reflected in the paper's support for the restoration of Old Salem, the relocation of [Wake Forest University](#) ^[3] to [Winston-Salem](#) ^[4] in 1956, and the establishment of the [North Carolina School of the Arts](#) ^[5] in the city.

The *Winston-Salem Journal* was founded by Charles Landon Knight and James Robert Justice on 3 Apr. 1897. Knight was the father of John S. and James L. Knight, who later built [Knight Ridder, Inc.](#) ^[6], the largest newspaper chain in the country in terms of total circulation. By 1925 the *Journal* was engaged in cutthroat competition with its local rival, the *Daily Sentinel*. After five months of feuding, *Sentinel* owner Frank Gannett-founder of the [Gannett Company](#) ^[7], another of the nation's premier newspaper companies and owner of *USA Today*-sold his paper to the Winston-Salem Journal Company.

In 1971 the *Journal* and *Sentinel* were awarded the [Pulitzer Prize](#) ^[8] primarily for their year-long campaign in print to save territory in western North Carolina and Virginia from the hazardous effects of strip [mining](#) ^[9]. When reporters discovered that the Gibbsite Corporation was planning to buy mineral rights in order to strip-mine the land, a stream of articles had appeared in both papers throughout 1970 about the dangers it would pose to the environment and its residents. Facing media criticism and regional opposition, Gibbsite announced its intention to allow its options on the land to lapse.

The *Sentinel* continued to circulate until declining readership forced it to cease publication in 1985. The *Journal*, purchased in 1969 by [Media General, Inc.](#) ^[10], a publicly owned communications company, has remained the primary daily newspaper for Winston-Salem. Soaring production costs and declining readership forced the paper to downsize in 1995, resulting in the dismissal of 86 employees. Other moves to economize and respond to changing markets have included the complete computerization of editing and design procedures, as well as establishing a *Journal* website on the Internet in 1996.

Many talented journalists spent time at the *Winston-Salem Journal*, including Tom Wicker and Marjorie Hunter, who later worked for the *New York Times*; Joe Doster, who left the *Charlotte Observer* ^[11] to become publisher of the *Journal*; and Chester Davis and Roy Thompson, who dominated the feature-writing contests of the [North Carolina Press Association](#) ^[12] from the 1940s to the 1960s.

By the early 2000s the *Winston-Salem Journal* had a daily circulation of about 93,000 and served residents of [Forsyth](#) ^[13] and other counties in northwestern North Carolina and southwestern Virginia. The *Journal* has begun to shift its emphasis from national events to more community coverage in an effort to compete with other media.

Reference:

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Additional Resources:

The *Winston-Salem Journal* official website: <http://www2.journalnow.com/> [14]

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"Winston-Salem Journal Story" January 22, 2011. Flickr user zsrlibrary (Z. Smith Reynolds Library). <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zsrlibrary/5377638849/> [20] (accessed September 11, 2012).

Subjects:

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Whittenburg, Catherine A. [22]

Origin - location:

Winston-Salem [23]

From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press. [24]

1 January 2006 | Whittenburg, Catherine A.

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