



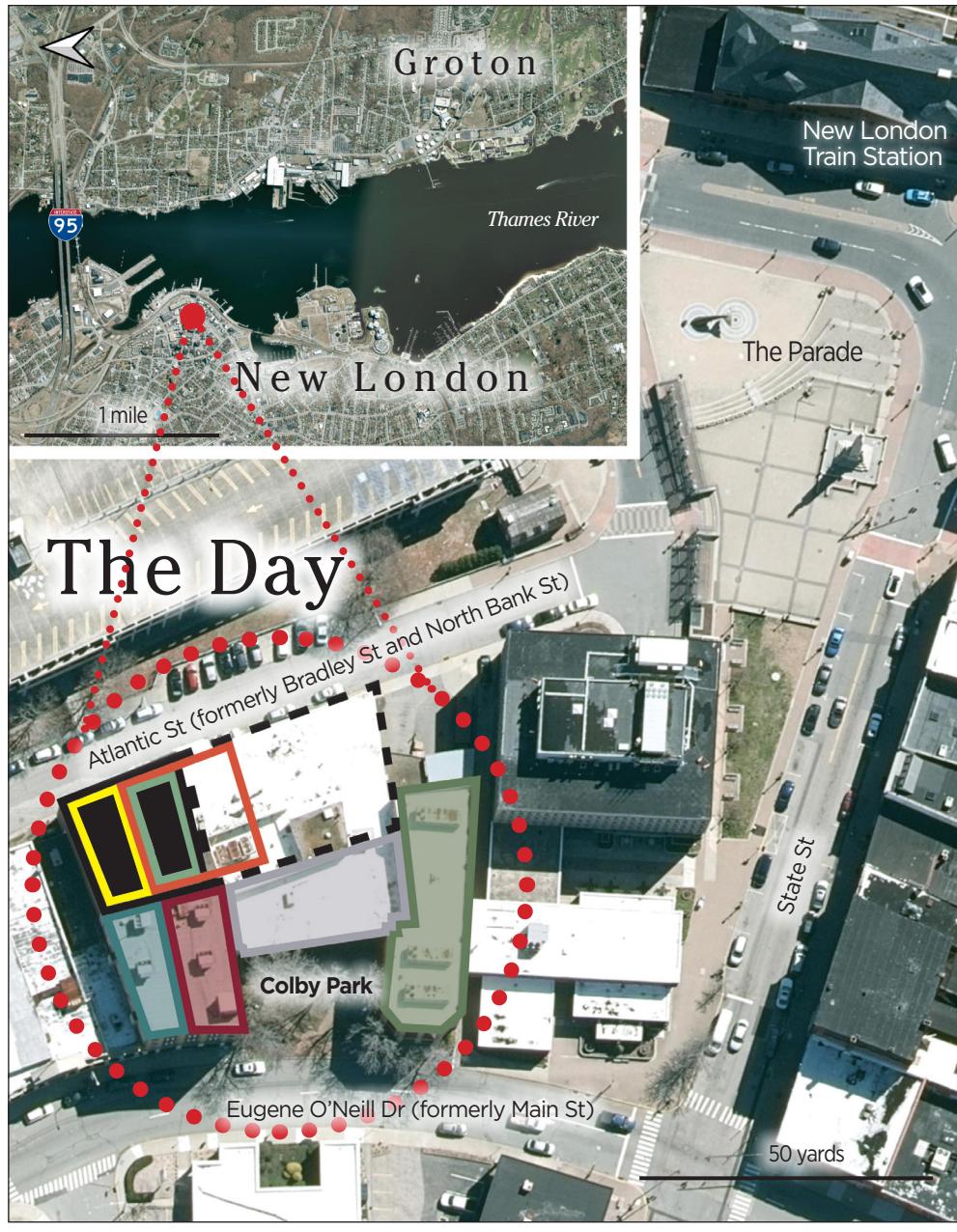
THE DAY

This was how the fourth-floor composing room looked before the size of the building was doubled in 1928. The area was later the newsroom, then offices and a meeting room.



THE DAY

The first-floor business office in 1929, after the expansion of the building was completed.



SCOTT RITTER AND JOHN RUDDY/THE DAY; SOURCES: ESRI, U.S. CENSUS, DAY ARCHIVES

The original Day building, erected in 1906, was the part represented by the burgundy rectangle. The building was expanded many times over the years as the company grew, displacing several well-known businesses and institutions.

Bodenwein wanted The Day to have its own home

FROM A1

Hurricanes paralyzed its presses. Civil rights protesters marched outside its doors.

But over the last decade of digital transformation, it gradually emptied until there was too much space to keep. Today, about to be listed for sale, the place is more than a building: It's an artifact of The Day's history.

In its first quarter-century, The Day bounced around New London, occupying three sites on Bank Street and one on Main Street. Most were inadequate, but in 1893 the paper moved into a roomy new building it shared with the Boston Furniture Co., occupying two floors and the basement.

It was The Day's best home so far, but Bodenwein, who had bought the paper two years earlier, thought his company needed its own place.

"The surroundings in Bank street comprising a lumber yard in the rear and a furniture store one side and above us made me shiver every time the fire alarm sounded," he later recalled.

Adding to his worries, the landlord asked whether The Day would be willing to leave if Frank Munsey, the publisher of a national magazine, decided to move his operation there.

"That certainly gave me a jolt," Bodenwein wrote. "Of course nothing ever came of it, but it gave me some restless nights." In Munsey's brief flirtation with publishing from New London, he erected his own building, which became the Mohican Hotel.

Bodenwein started looking around and in 1904 bought the site of a confectionery wholesaler on Main Street. Architect Dudley St. Clair Donnelly designed a four-story building that was "fireproof," with arched windows and terra cotta lion heads on the facade.

The cornerstone was laid on July 2, 1906, the 25th anniversary of the paper's first edition. The structure then rose between a plumbing business and a paint shop. The builders didn't remove a large rock when digging the foundation, instead pouring concrete around it. It's still there, sticking up through the basement floor like the tip of an iceberg.



This eight-page special section celebrating the expansion of the building was printed while members of the public were there inspecting the work on May 6, 1929.

The "Day Building," its name set in stone over the door, became a symbol of the paper's progress, and for a while a picture of it adorned the masthead on the editorial page.

In 1911, when the paper spearheaded a drive to raise \$100,000 for the founding of Connecticut College, the building took center stage.

A huge clock face, two stories high, was placed on the facade to track the progress of the campaign. In the days before radio, crowds gathered outside during championship boxing matches to hear Associated Press updates relayed from the third-floor newsroom by megaphone.

Just seven years after moving in, the paper was outgrowing the space, which included an office rented by a dentist. The press, which printed 16 pages at most, was no longer adequate, so the company bought a larger press to double the paper's size. A new pressroom was the first of many expansions, a 60-by-40-foot wing fronting on Bradley Street, a block in the rear.

With the addition, on the site of a tailor shop, a pattern began. As The Day continued to grow, its building gradually absorbed the surrounding neighborhood.

As smoke filled the first-floor business office on Dec. 14, 1921, Bodenwein's fear of a fire seemed to be coming true. But the flames were next door, and the staff evacuated while firefighters put out

the blaze. Bodenwein turned the close call into an opportunity and bought the damaged building. Other purchases followed, including the home of the B.P. Learned Mission on Bradley Street, by then renamed North Bank Street.

In 1927 Bodenwein decided to turn his holdings into two major expansions. First came a seven-bay circulation garage on the mission site. Then a crew demolished the building where the fire had been.

That set the stage for a complex construction project: A second four-story Day building went up next to the first, then the two were engineered into a single structure.

Architect Edward L. Scholfield designed a new facade with Bodenwein's input. Made of buff brick and limestone, it fronted both buildings and subtly followed the curve of Main Street. Over the first-floor windows, Gothic letters spelled out "The New London Day."

On May 6, 1929, The Day welcomed 1,000 visitors to the marble-lined lobby as the building opened. Linotype operators set people's names in souvenir slugs of type, Bodenwein welcomed everyone to his paneled second-floor office, and the press cranked out copies of an eight-page "New Home" section.

"It seems," Bodenwein mused, "as if... we have provided room and facilities for all the growth (and) expansion likely to happen in the next quar-

ter century." His prediction was right on the mark.

When Elizabeth Bodenwein Miles sank a gilded shovel into the ground off North Bank Street on Feb. 27, 1960, it had been 31 years since the last expansion, just a few more than her late father had foreseen.

"I wish he could be here now to see the start of new construction he hoped would someday be made necessary by the growth of this area and this newspaper," Barnard L. Colby, soon to be named publisher, said at the groundbreaking.

Since 1929, The Day's circulation and staff had doubled. The planned two-story annex, which displaced H. Marcus & Co. and a few other businesses, created space for a new press, a bigger composing room and improved circulation facilities. The old fourth-floor composing room became a modern newsroom.

At the time, New London was on the verge of the Winthrop Urban Renewal Project, which radically changed the city. The Day supported the effort and benefited from it. When the wrecking ball leveled almost every building on Main Street, The Day and the Savings Bank of New London were the only survivors.

The company cut a deal to sell the city the old police station on North Bank Street, which it was using for storage. In exchange, the city widened the street, where the paper's loading docks were, and provided land for more construction.

"The Day's expansion in partnership with redevelopment transformed North Bank Street from a cluttered neighborhood of shops, vacant frame buildings, bars, and brothels into a neater but desolate service road for the newspaper," Gregory N. Stone wrote in his book "The Day Paper."

In 1968, after the city had forced out the paper's neighbors, the Salvation Army and Bishop Studio, The Day built an advertising wing, with parking space in front.

Set into the white brick wall was a 400-pound stone rendering of the New London city seal that formed part of The Day's logo. It had been salvaged from the police station as a relic of a neighborhood that by then The Day had entirely outlasted.

In the 1980s, The Day's fortunes soared as the full effect of Bodenwein's will, which established the paper's ownership-by-trust, kicked in with the death of his last heir. With new revenue, the company added staff until every desk in the newsroom was shared by two people. It was again time to enlarge the building.

One day in 1986, employees were startled to see a demolition notice in the front window. But the building wasn't coming down, just the circulation garage. It was replaced with a four-story addition that included a new garage, mailroom facilities and space for a larger newsroom and executive offices.

Then came a three-story, 6,000-square-foot building on Eugene O'Neill Drive to house a new press that could print color photos. As a finishing touch, the parking lot in front was turned into a park named for the retired Colby.

"This fine young park now carries a fine old New England name," Publisher Reid MacCluggage said at the 1992 dedication.

That's where things stood when the internet arrived, upending the business models of newspapers everywhere, including The Day. Circulation and advertising revenue began to retreat, and cost-cutting followed. In 2011 the company outsourced its printing to the Providence Journal and shut down the pressroom. The newest part of the building was suddenly obsolete. Elsewhere, empty desks were increasingly common.

When the pandemic descended, The Day became a mobile company overnight. For 14 months the building stood empty, and it's been only lightly occupied since.

The newspaper now looks ahead to a new chapter in a new home. It's an unexpected turn, but one person might not have been surprised. In his will, Bodenwein anticipated the possibility, but even earlier, in 1929, it was on his mind.

Though the building then seemed poised to meet the paper's needs indefinitely, Bodenwein, ever the visionary, acknowledged that sooner or later, "The Day may have to move again."

j.ruddy@theday.com



The seven-bay circulation garage on North Bank Street was built in two phases: The part with the wide door in the foreground went up in 1925, and the rest followed two years later.



Part of the garage was torn down in 1960 to accommodate a two-story annex on North Bank Street. The rest was demolished in 1986 and replaced by what is now the rear wing of the building.

THE DAY