

Bruce Murray

Our Story

Advocate Printing has a rich history in Atlantic Canada. For much of that time we have been serving our clients with innovation, service, and transformation. But most importantly, for over 100 years now, we've never lost sight of our roots or our greater purpose — to be an active supporter of our communities.

1890s to 1918

From the age of 18, John D. MacDonald had a dream of setting up his own printing press. In the fall of 1891, he opened a job printing shop in the town of Pictou, Nova Scotia. The business began to grow under MacDonald's ambitious direction and in December 1893 he purchased a secondhand newspaper press to launch The Pictou Advocate.

In January 1900, a fire destroyed the press and offices. However, with relentless determination and the help of his community, MacDonald rebuilt his print company and newspaper; never missing an issue.

The operation took residence in many buildings in Pictou, before finally settling in the stone house on George Street where The Pictou Advocate resides today.

1919 to 1961

The company was sold to journalist John Andrew Fisher in 1919. Fisher maintained the business and added his flair for humour to the pages of The Pictou Advocate until his death in 1935.

George Carson Murray, a former Advocate employee and editor of Canadian Press, bought the business. Murray expanded and modernized the business during his 26-year tenure. Murray's wife, Nonie, and their 10 children all worked in the plant, including son Bruce Murray, who began as a paperboy at the age of 6.

George Murray died suddenly on September 3, 1962, and Mrs. Murray sold the business to George Cadogan in the fall of 1964. The company continued to prosper; Cadogan bought some of Advocate's local print competition and acquired several highly experienced employees to run the plant, including Piet VanVeen, who eventually took ownership of Advocate.

1980s

Motivated to grow the business Piet soon took on Ted Tieman as a business partner in the early 80s and hired brother Dirk VanVeen as production manager. In 1985 Piet VanVeen retired and the company was reorganized under ownership of Bruce Murray, Dirk VanVeen and Ted Tieman.

The company expanded its commercial printing, purchased and launched several newspapers during this time of growth.

By 1989, Advocate Printing and Publishing was owned by the two remaining employee shareholders; Bruce Murray and Dirk VanVeen. With a driven work ethic and the perseverance to turn all obstacles into opportunities, Advocate flourished under their partnership — focusing on commercial printing. A keen ability to identify upcoming industry needs and the determination to meet those needs, allowed Advocate to grow from a local print shop into a revolutionary communication company, serving customers throughout North America.

1990s

The 1990s were a decade of unparalleled growth for Advocate. In 1991, a newly constructed printing plant in the Pictou Industrial Park became Advocate's newest and current location. The modern building allowed room for the newly purchased web heatset press and for the sheet-fed printing division.

Bruce Murray became the sole owner of Advocate Printing and Publishing in 1994. It continued to thrive under his consistent direction. The business operated under the ideology, "If we can help our customers succeed in their business we will succeed in ours."

Technology was a primary factor of the company's growth during the 1990s as Advocate developed one of the most advanced prepress departments in Eastern Canada. A commercial photography studio and a design studio were added to further meet the needs of our print industry customers. As the new creative divisions grew with new media, Advocate Communications Group was formed.

Additional modernization in bindery, finishing, direct mailing, prepress, web printing, distribution and data management; combined with the talent and spirit of its people has made the business one of the most progressive full service print companies in Eastern Canada.

Advocate Printing & Publishing's ability to service Atlantic Canada was greatly increased by the addition of Maritime Press of Moncton New Brunswick and St. Croix Printing and Publishing of St. Stephen New Brunswick.

While all four of Bruce's children worked at the company when young, two returned after university to make it their career. Bruce Murray's son, Sean, began working as a paperboy at the age of 7. He worked part-time and then full-time after university, learning all aspects of the company while serving in various departments.

Bruce Murray's daughter, Jill, also began work in bindery at the age of 8; folding and inserting Sobey's flyers into newspapers and then part-time until graduating from university. She currently is the Director of Marketing and Communications.

2000 to present

In 2004, Bruce Murray dies and the business remains in the Murray family. Son Sean Murray takes the helm as CEO.

The company's full portfolio of newspapers came under the umbrella of Advocate Media, in 2005 paying homage to its first paper, The Pictou Advocate.

In 2006, wide format digital printing is introduced to Advocate's stable of services.

In 2007 Advocate Printing opened its virtual doors with the Digital Solutions Group, which now offers variable data, web to print and digital asset management services.



In 2010 Metro Guide Publishing, with over 20 magazines, is purchased.

In 2015, Lighthouse Publishing was acquired. This brought breadth and strength to our print operations, as well as adding The Lighthouse Bulletin and The Lighthouse Log to our staple of newspapers.

Advocate further expanded the commercial print market share in 2016 when it acquired a significant line of business in the Maritimes from Transcontinental Inc.

Today, Advocate is Atlantic Canada's largest independent printer, with the capability to help its clients from concept to creation; and from printing to distribution. The company boasts 11 community newspapers and more than 20 magazine titles published.

Throughout our more than 100-year history, we have never forgotten that Advocate's roots are firmly planted in Atlantic Canadian soil. Advocate Printing & Publishing is proud to serve our communities and foster the entrepreneurial spirit of hard work, dedication, and perseverance.

Source: Advocate <http://www.advocateprinting.com/about-us/our-history/>