

David Bean



David Bean was the son of one of the first settlers to this area but as a young man he left the farming life to pursue his love of the written word – first as a teacher and then a journalist. This civic-minded man would also become the mayor of Waterloo and would lay the cornerstone of Waterloo’s Carnegie Library in 1903.

Bean was sixteen years old when he began teaching in small schools in Blenheim, Baden and Washington. He is best remembered, however, for his work at the Elmira Public School where he worked for twenty years and became its principal. “By his great energy and perseverance, he became one of the most successful teachers in the county.” While in Elmira he introduced the continuation school course and prepared many young people for their teaching examinations.

In 1889, Bean moved to a large home on George Street in Waterloo. The house had an apple orchard to its left that extended all the way to Willow Street. At the same time he became the sole owner of the *Waterloo Chronicle*. During his time there, the weekly newspaper became a credible source for news of Waterloo and its neighbouring counties. Under the leadership of David Bean and Sons Limited, a wide array of events were written about; everything from a “tramp” stealing a suit of underwear from a clothes line, to the 1893 visit to Waterloo by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The visit was described as “purely business in nature, but the presence of so distinguished a statesman was news abroad.” As the business prospered the Bean family purchased Berlin’s *Daily Telegraph* in 1898, with Bean’s son D. Alexander heading up the newspaper. Bean’s sons, Roy and Clive took over the *Waterloo Chronicle* and kept it in the family for three generations until it was sold in 1954 by grandson Roy M. Bean.

David Bean distinguished himself outside of the printing business by becoming chairman of Waterloo’s first Water Commission. The commission was established when the quality of the water coming from Berlin was called into question. He was elected mayor in 1901 and soon became embroiled in an important debate around the Town’s library. The Education Department threatened to withhold a legislative grant unless a better reading room was provided for the public. It was Mayor Bean who came up with the idea to make an application to philanthropist Andrew Carnegie for a \$10,000 grant. The grant was received and the library was opened to the public in 1905.

Photo courtesy of the Waterloo Public Library.