

## William J. Larkin (1867-1938)

At his death from pneumonia in 1938, William J. Larkin, known as “Billy,” was known as the *dean* of newspapermen in the area. Tracing back to his days with the old *Daily Times* as a boy of 14, he was involved in the newspaper business in Worcester for 56 years, including time at the *Spy*, the *Telegram*, the *Gazette*, and finally the *Evening Post*. Among his other passionate interests and involvements were the Catholic Church, Holy Cross College, and the local sports scene. From the size of his funeral, as is recorded below, it appears that Billy Larkin was one of the most popular as well as respected members of the community. When he was hospitalized with pneumonia the evening of January 20, five days before his passing, his picture, with a caption describing his illness, was on the front page at the top of the *Evening Gazette*.

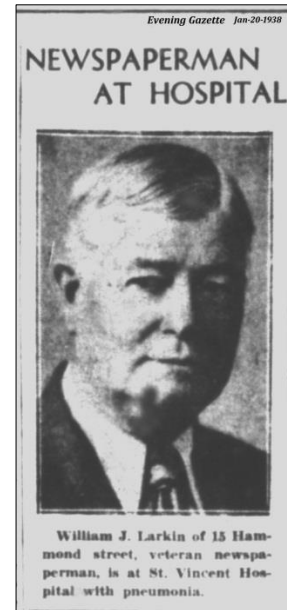
When requested to pen his autobiography, Billy’s response was to say newspapermen were intended to report the news, not to be the news themselves, and resisted doing so, but eventually he settled on writing a series of columns under the heading of “Looking Back on a Half Century.” The resulting sixty-two articles on a variety of subjects lodged in his memory were published in the *Evening Post* between August 15, 1935 and January 15, 1936.

In 2014, Larkin’s grandson, Bruce Papazian, formerly of Worcester but now a resident of Harvard, published an e-book of the “Looking Back” series, now available at Google Books but also available [here](#) in the form of a pdf file. A portion of the table of contents can be seen [here](#).

The best way to gain a sense of the personal as well as the professional side of Billy Larkin is to read Bruce’s introductory section before the first of the sixty-two columns. Larkin was also profiled in Charles Nutt’s *History of Worcester and its People*, p.135 of volume 3 (not included here).

Below are three articles from the local press on Billy Larkin’s death: two obituary notices, both starting on page one, published in the *Telegram* and the *Gazette* the same day as his death, plus a notice in the *New York Times* and local story on his funeral on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The account of the funeral identified a large number of people in attendance, including honorary bearers (*right*), ushers, and dozens of institutional representatives. It may have been one of the largest funerals in the city’s history.

Oddly, there is no obituary notice from the *Evening Post* itself because the microfilm reels for January and February of 1938 are not included in the collection at the Worcester public Library. It is believed that the paper was not publishing during that time. It was sold and taken over by the *Telegram and Gazette* in October of that year.



Telegram, Jan-25-1938

# W. J. LARKIN, DEAN OF NEWSPAPERMEN, DIES

Pneumonia Is Fatal;  
Family at Bedside  
When End Came

William J. Larkin, 71, dean of Worcester newspapermen, died at St. Vincent Hospital shortly after 1 o'clock this morning.

He had been taken to the hospital Thursday suffering from pneumonia. His family was at his bed as he died.

Funeral arrangements were to be announced later.

#### Confidant of Scores

Behind him were 56 continuous years of active, varied newspaper work.

He had worked on every daily paper published in his time in the city. He was the confidant of scores in his own, and many other, fields of endeavor.

He carried qualities which friends loved or respected, chief of which was an utter integrity.

Mr. Larkin was born in Worcester Oct. 31, 1867, son of the late William and the late Honora (Dunleavy) Larkin.

After the death of his father, he left school in his junior year at the old English High to become office boy at the Worcester Daily Times. During his spare time he learned type-setting and four years later he was a full-fledged printer. He worked on the mechanical side of the newspaper business for a little more than a year. Then, because of his close association with church activities, he joined the editorial staff to cover Catholic news, the beginning of his journalistic career.



WILLIAM J. LARKIN

#### Transferred to Telegram

In 1888, through the recommendation of Rev. Dr. John J. McCoy, then curate of St. John's Church to John D. Baldwin, editor of the Worcester Spy, Mr. Larkin was given a position on the Spy staff, reporting Catholic news.

In 1899, he transferred to the Telegram when Charles O. Hurd was managing editor. For the next two years, he proved his versatility by covering sports as well as City Hall and politics. Then he went back to the Spy when that paper was taken over by Charles Nutt as owner and publisher.

While working for the Spy, Mr. Larkin was made Worcester representative of the old Boston Journal. In 1902, he accepted a position, in addition to his regular work, as district representative for the Boston Globe, a position he held up to the time of his death.

In 1903, he was also chosen as the day representative for the Associated Press in Worcester. He was still listed as an A. P. correspondent up to his last day.

Soon after George F. Booth, owner and publisher, installed the new Gazette plant at Mechanic and Norwich streets, Mr. Larkin was engaged as city editor. He started work in that capacity on April 1, 1904, and in 1919 he was made news editor. During that period, he hired and started scores of youngsters who are now regarded as successful "old-timers" in the newspaper field.

In 1921, when the Telegram and Gazette were combined, Mr. Larkin went to the Post as city editor. When that publication changed ownership last year, he was assigned to edit features and women's news.

#### **Devout Catholic**

He was a devout Catholic, a charter member of Alhambra Council, K. of C., and president of the Holy Name Society of St. Paul's Church for almost two decades.

He was an original member of the St. John's Cadets, for many years the undefeated drilling champions

## **William J. Larkin**

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of the Springfield diocesan Catholic Total Abstinence Union. He was secretary of the Union for 26 years. He was treasurer of the Holy Cross Fathers' Association and a member of the Washington Club.

He leaves his wife, Mary F. (McKennon); a daughter, Mrs. Martin Papazian; two sons, Paul W., and Alwyn V.; two brothers, Timothy F., and John A.; a sister, Mrs. Charles W. Carroll, and three grandchildren.

Mr. Larkin's experiences, many and varied, were told in a series of memoirs published several years ago. He enjoyed the distinction of having ridden on the first trolley car on every line operated in the city as well as the county lines which years ago operated out of the city. He reported practically every hearing that was held in the towns when the town fathers were busy trying to bring in or keep out the trolley.

He covered city government meetings in the old City Hall at the corner of Main and Front streets. He wrote the story of the removal of the Old South Church from the Common to make way for the present City Hall; the story of the departure and the return of home militia in the Spanish-American War, and countless other incidents which have played important parts in the lives of Worcester and its residents.

#### **Saw Holy Cross Grow**

For 51 consecutive years, Mr. Larkin personally covered and wrote stories of Holy Cross commencements. He saw the college grow from one building to its present size.

He also had written about—and dined with—such figures of national prominence as William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, Woodrow Wilson and numerous others.

Though leading a busy and active life as a newspaperman, Billy also found time for a personal interest in sports. He was a familiar figure at many athletic events and in his younger years was frequently called upon to officiate. During the time Worcester boasted of a club in the old Atlantic Baseball Association, he was chosen official scorer for the home team and sub-umpire in the league.

One of his duties for years was announcing primary and election results as they were brought in from voting precincts to City Hall.

His popularity with the Fourth Estate was enduring. On practically every occasion they have organized for club purposes, he had been the choice for president.

#### **Paid Tribute in '31**

More than one hundred newspaper men and others gave "Billy" a testimonial banquet at the Wachusett Country Club on Oct. 18, 1931, on the occasion of the completion of his 50th year in journalism.

"He commands the respect of all, regardless of race, creed or color," was the tribute paid Mr. Larkin at that time.

"The Larkin Record," a miniature news sheet set three columns wide with Mr. Larkin's picture in the middle column, was prepared

## **William J. Larkin**

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and distributed by his newspaper friends at the banquet. The "Half Century Edition" extolled Mr. Larkin's qualities. It read:

"WACHUSETT COUNTRY CLUB, Oct. 18, 1931—From October, 1881, to October, 1931—50 years of newspaper work and still going strong! Fifty years of newspaper work honorably and creditably performed. A clean record of achievement which lends honor and dignity to our profession.

"A host of friends. A long, long line of assignments well done; of capable direction of other workers; fair dealing with news sources; conscientious interest in his chosen work; expert knowledge of many things and persons, born of long experience and the trust of those with whom and for whom he has dealt.

"That is the record of William J. Larkin and that is why we are here tonight—to mark our admiration for the record and for the man.

"For Billy Larkin his co-workers of the Fourth Estate wish many more years of health, happiness and achievement."



# LARKIN FUNERAL TO BE THURSDAY

## Dean of Worcester News- papermen Dies at Hos- pital

The funeral of William J. Larkin, 71, of 15 Hammond street, dean of Worcester newspapermen, who died early today in St. Vincent Hospital, will be Thursday morning at 921 Main street, followed by a solemn high mass of requiem in St. Paul's Church at 9 o'clock. Burial will be in St. John's Cemetery.

Mr. Larkin, who had spent 56 continuous years in active newspaper work, was removed to the hospital Thursday, suffering from pneumonia. His family was at the bedside when he died.

Mr. Larkin was one of the most widely known newspapermen in Worcester because of the many years he had been in close touch with the affairs of the city and the large number of persons with whom he had come in contact during his work. Because of the ability he displayed in the treatment of many difficult news stories, his integrity and strict adherence to the ethics of his profession he enjoyed an unusual degree of popularity.

Mr. Larkin was born in Worces-

## William J. Larkin Gazette, Jan-25-1938

ter, Oct. 31, 1867, son of William and Honora (Dunleavy) Larkin. He attended the public schools and

the old English, now the Classical High School. In his junior year, however, he found it necessary to leave school. His first work on a newspaper was in the composing room of the Worcester Daily Times in 1885. But in the following year he became a reporter.

He joined the staff of Worcester Daily Spy, June 24, 1888, and continued with that newspaper until 1899. Then he left to join the staff of the Worcester Telegram but after two years of service there he returned to the Spv.

Mr. Larkin's excellent work and fidelity to newspaper traditions attracted the attention of George F. Booth, who had installed the new plant of the Evening Gazette at Mechanic and Norwich streets and in 1904 he became its city editor. In 1919 he became the news editor. He remained with the Gazette until it was merged with the Worcester Telegram when he went to the Worcester Evening Post as city editor. He was on the staff of that paper at the time of his death in the capacity of feature editor which position he assumed when there was a change in the management last year.

### Covered Outside Papers

In addition to his work on local newspapers Mr. Larkin engaged in many outside activities. Since 1902 he has been the Worcester correspondent for the Boston Globe, having succeeded John F. H. Monney and Eugene M. Moriarty. He had also done correspondence for the old New York World, the Cincinnati Enquirer and other newspapers.

## William J. Larkin Gazette, Jan-25-1938

Mr. Larkin had also served the Associated Press as local representative. He began that assignment in 1903 and was still listed as a day correspondent for Worcester at the time of his death.

Mr. Larkin enjoyed the personal and intimate friendship of the public men of the city throughout his newspaper career as well as a wide acquaintance with business and professional men. His early training gave him high ideals in his profession, instilled accuracy, fairness and thoroughness in his work, and he in turn as city editor of the Spy, Gazette and Post taught these principles of journalism to the men who worked for him.

Mr. Larkin was a Democrat but his advice was frequently sought by men in public life regardless of their party affiliation because they valued his advice and knowledge of political matters.

### Held K. of C. Offices

A devout Catholic, Mr. Larkin was a charter member of Alhambra Council, Knights of Columbus. He was one of the original members of the old St. John's Cadets for many years the champions in drills among the cadet companies of the Springfield Diocesan Catholic Total Abstinence Union. He had served as a director and clerk of the Knights of Columbus Religious, Educational, Charitable and Benevolent Association, the corporation which holds the property of the council. He was a communicant at St. Paul's Church president of the Holy Name Society for almost two decades and for more than a quarter of a century he was secretary of the Springfield Diocesan Catholic Total Abstinence Union.

Mr. Larkin was especially popular with his associates in newspaper work and the esteem and affection which they held for him was emphatically demonstrated on Oct. 18, 1931, when he was given a testimonial at the Wachusett Country

Club in recognition of fifty years in journalism. The event attracted more than two hundred men and women who had known Mr. Larkin in his work not only in Worcester but from many other other places.

Mr. Larkin's journalistic career had been exceptionally varied and he demonstrated a versatility that enabled him to "cover" equally well any assignment from sports to politics and crime. His retentive memory made him a human encyclopedia of information on Worcester persons and events and proved valuable in many news emergencies where press time was so near that it allowed little time for research. The wide range of subjects he had written about was displayed when a few years ago he wrote a series of memoirs dealing with the city and its people during his earlier years in newspaper work.

Mr. Larkin in 1895 married Mary F. McKennon, who survives with a daughter, Madolyn M., wife of Martin Papazian, and two sons, Paul W. and Alwyn W. Larkin. He also leaves two brothers, Timothy F. and John A. Larkin a sister, Mrs. Charles W. Carroll and three grandchildren.

The Holy Name Society of St. Paul's Church will meet at the funeral home Wednesday night at 7.30 to recite the rosary.

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## WILLIAM J. LARKIN

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### Worcester Newspaper Man Was in Journalism 53 Years

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WORCESTER, Mass., Tuesday, Jan. 25 (AP).—William J. Larkin, dean of Worcester newspaper men, died of pneumonia at St. Vincent Hospital at 1 A. M. today. His age was 71. He was a correspondent for The Associated Press, feature editor of the Worcester Post, and district correspondent for the Boston Globe.

In his fifty-three years of active newspaper life he had worked on every daily paper in the city. He had been city editor of the Evening Gazette and later of the Post.

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(continue to account of the funeral)

## PAY FINAL TRIBUTE TO NEWSPAPERMAN

### Men and Women in All Walks of Life at Funeral of William J. Larkin

This city and the men and women who compose its public, industrial and mercantile life, this morning at funeral services in St. Paul's Church, paid their respects to the memory of William J. Larkin, 71, of 15 Hammond street, newspaperman here for more than half a century, who died Tuesday in St. Vincent Hospital.

The church was thronged with almost a thousand persons who knew and respected Mr. Larkin through their contact with him as during the last 56 years he recorded the events of the passing scene for local publications and international press services.

Closest in sympathy with the family of the deceased were members of the large delegations of news writers, editors and executives from this and other cities. To most of them, Mr. Larkin had been an associate and confidant, to all a friend, and they mourned his death. With them, in tribute to the dean of local journalists, were members of the clergy, professional men, manufacturers, merchants, public office holders and common work-a-day persons, all kin in that they knew and revered "Billy" Larkin.

His funeral was at the McCrea & Sons Funeral Home, followed by a solemn high mass of requiem at the church where Mr. Larkin had been a communicant many years.

Rev. John D. McGann, pastor, was celebrant; Rev. Thomas F. Smith, deacon; Rev. Bernard L. Doheny, sub-deacon, and Rev. Raymond L. Cashman, master of ceremonies. Seated in the sanctuary were many priests who had known Mr. Larkin, not only in his professional capacity, but also as president of the St. Paul's Church Holy Name Society for almost two decades, and for more than a quarter century as secretary of the Springfield Diocesan Total Abstinence Society. Among them were: Rev. Msgr. John P. Phelan, V. G., of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Rev. John Wieloch, Rev. John Mieczkowski of St. Mary's Church, Rev. James A. Nally of St. John's Church, Rev. Walter E. Leahy of Nazareth, Leicester, Rev. Michael A. Lahey of Shelburne Falls, Rev. Bernard A. Kerrigan of St. Bernard's Church, Rev. Cornelius Donohue of Stoneville, Rev. James W. Tobin of Shrewsbury, Rev. John J. O'Malley of St. Joseph's Church, Leicester, Rev. Edward J. Featherstone of Springfield, Rev. Edward P. McGuire of Oakdale, Rev. J. J. McCarthy of Rochdale, Rev. Robert T. Sullivan of St. Ann's Church, Rev. Francis J. Toolan, S. J., and Rev. Russell Sullivan, S. J., of Holy Cross College.

The Gregorian mass was sung by the church choir, under direction of John A. Mullaney, organist. Soloists were Thomas M. Griffin,



Miss Rose Kane, James C. Sullivan, Mr. and Mrs. J. Frederick Donnelly, Edward Cunningham and William Ryan.

#### Honorary Bearers

The honorary bearers were Mayor Sullivan, John C. Mahoney, Police Chief Thomas F. Foley, George F. Booth, Joseph C. DeWolf, M. H. Williams, William G. Gavin, Clarence L. Wilson, John T. Sheehan, Dr. Michael E. Cosgrove, J. Edward Croak, Robert B. Sibley, Thomas O'Keefe, John J. Spillane and Harry J. Kirby.

Thomas J. O'Connell and John J. Mullan, Jr., were ushers.

Many of the organizations in which the deceased held membership over a span of years sent delegations. Some of them were from groups active long ago such as the old St. John's Cadets, for many years champions in the Springfield diocese drill competitions, and of which Mr. Larkin had been an original member. Their representatives at the services were Patrick F. Sullivan, John J. Flaherty, M. F. Reidy, George H. O'Donnell, M. J. Toohill and John F. Harrigan.

#### K. of C. Delegation

To honor his charter membership in Alhambra Council, K. of C., there was a delegation composed of William H. Burke, William H. Holley, Michael J. Toohill, John F. Delaney, James E. Glispin and Thomas J. Degnan. The representatives of Bishop O'Reilly Assembly, Fourth Degree, K. of C. were Thomas J. Higgins, John F. Harrigan and Edward F. Larkin.

William J. Horan, Hugo N. Peterson, John M. Hart and John F. Power were from the Jeffersonian

Club.

The members of the Typographical Union present were Lawrence M. Collamore, Adolph Rivard, Francis Courtney, George F. Kane, Albert R. Hanley, Francis Reardon, David Singalove and Leo B. Caniff.

Edmund Ryan, Thomas L. Buckley and William P. Murray represented the Boston Army Base.

#### Represent Newspapers

Besides those executives of the Worcester Telegram and The Evening Gazette who were honorary bearers, the following department heads and staff members represented those papers: Howard M. Booth, business manager; Edward D. Dolanty, circulation manager; Francis P. Murphy, news editor, Henry T. Ford, day city editor, the Worcester Telegram; Ayton F. Smith, news editor, William F. Holland, city editor, The Evening Gazette, James E. Lee, Edward B. Conroy, Stephen D. Donahue, Harold G. Nye, Leroy J. Mumpton, John P. O'Keefe, Josef C. Dine, Vance Alden, Carl W. Erickson, Edwin J. Seward, William Warburton, Robert Greighton, Herbert M. Sawyer, Louis Kursman, Patrick A. Dowd and William T. Ryan from the editorial staffs.

The delegation from the Worcester Post Chapter, American Newspaper Guild, was William J. Belleville, William H. Murphy, Mrs. Grace F. Minns, Augustine P. Wynne, Edward J. Dalton, William Feldman, Clifford Caucher, G. Robert Jernberg, Leo Lavin, Guy Livingstone, Edward W. Scannell, James A. Shea, G. Arthur Swift, Timothy Shea, E. Matthew Peter-

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son, Edward Eaton, Walter F. Brennan, Lucius L. Tolman and Joseph H. Gauthier.

Other representatives from The Post were William L. Roach, executive editor; the Misses Elizabeth Coonan, Florence A. Guilmette and Mildred M. Reynolds, the business office.

**From News Services**

The Associated Press was represented by John H. Mattimore and the United Press by William E. Dewing. Lucian H. Thayer, city editor, represented the Boston Globe, for which Mr. Larkin was local correspondent for more than 35 years. Frederick W. Coonan was present from the Boston Herald.

Also present at the services were Freeman L. Saltus, publisher of the Labor News and Patrick McDonough, representing the Catholic Messenger.

Judge John E. Swift of Milford representing the Supreme Board of Directors of the Knights of Columbus. St. Paul's Church Holy Name Society delegates were John J. Marshall, William Cullen, James A. McTiernan, William J. Crowley, Francis Flynn and George H. Griffin.

**Others at Services**

At the services were Sen. Joseph P. McCooley, Rep. Anthony Doyle, Mr. and Mrs. Charles C. Morse, Dr. Peter O. Shea, Health Department director, School Committeeman James J. Marshall, City Messenger Edwin M. C. French, Michael J. O'Hara, Thomas E. Holland, executive director, and Donald Tulloch, secretary of the Parks and Recreation Commission, Sheriff and Mrs. H. Oscar Rocheleau, State Detec-

tive Lieut. Edward J. McCarthy, Register of Probate F. Joseph Donohue, County Commissioners Francis E. Cassidy of Webster and George W. Jones, Asst. Supt. of Schools Thomas F. Power, Postmaster James F. Healy, Orville R. Ford, Lieut. L. Everett Stevens, George H. Hill of the Worcester Safety Council and Orville B. Denison, convention bureau manager, Chamber of Commerce; R. Nelson Molt, secretary, and Edward J. Kelley, of the Metropolitan Water Supply Commission; Dr. Louis R. Cassels, police surgeon; John D. Hassett, state industrial health inspector, and John D. Hughes, merchandise manager of Denholm & McKay Co., and William C. Bowen, clerk of courts.

A police escort, a radio cruiser manned by Patrolman Fred Jones and John Miller, preceded the funeral cortege from the church to St. John's Cemetery, where prayers were said by Rev. Fr. McCarthy. The assembled clergy chanted "Benedictus."