

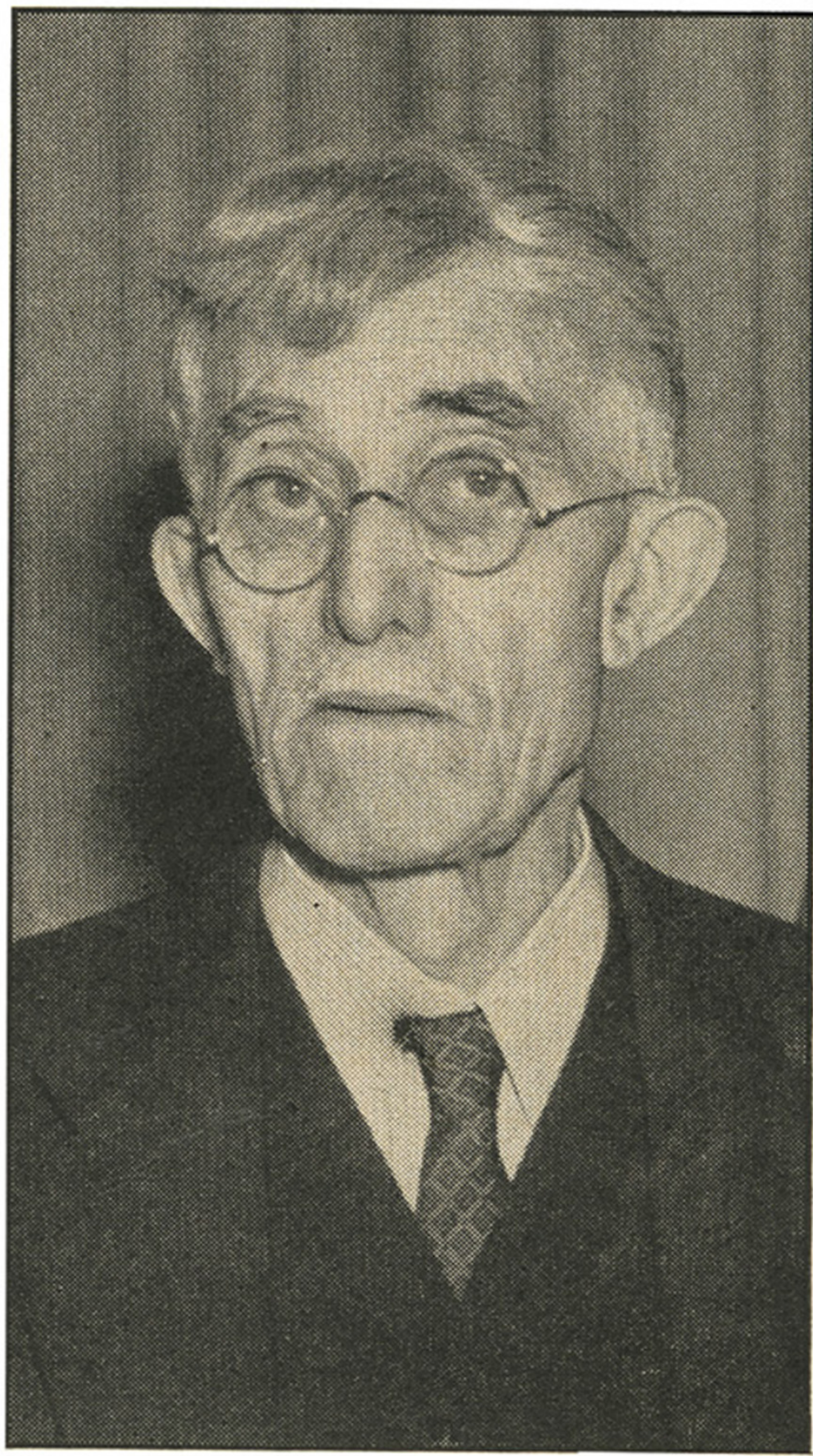
January 25, 1950

A Man Who Started Something

By Graham Patterson

Fifty-six years ago this month, PATHFINDER was founded by an enterprising young man named George Mitchell, son of a United States Senator. He had little money, but he was amply endowed with energy, foresight and the burning conviction that America needed a magazine that would report and interpret the significance of the news as it happened. He selected Washington as the magazine's headquarters because "the Capital City is the only place from which a truly national and independent news review can be issued."

George Mitchell died Jan. 2. He would have been 84 years old on Mar. 16. He retired from business in 1936, but lived to see the magazine he started in 1894 become the second largest news magazine in America, with a circulation of 1,200,000.



Pathfinder

George Mitchell. He saw a need.

The birth of PATHFINDER sprang from a trip around the world that the 25-year-old Mitchell and a companion took in 1891. They went through Britain, over the Alps, down the Danube, along the coast of Greece, through Palestine to the Far East. Altogether, they traveled some 35,000 miles, one fifth of it by bicycle.

Young Mitchell took with him one of the first Eastman cameras made, and returned with hundreds of pictures and stories. Popular magazines rejected his articles and pictures. "They told me," he said, "that the reading public was not interested in facts, but only in fiction. This led me to the conclusion that if there was no periodical in existence dealing with facts rather than fiction, it was time there was one."

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The first issue of PATHFINDER—Jan. 6, 1894—had only eight pages. The contents included national and international affairs, industrial, financial and scientific news and "echoes" from the world of art, music and drama. Mitchell printed 50,000 copies of the first issue, but after the first few months this was cut to 1,500 in an effort to make the magazine self-supporting.

At the end of the first year, the magazine had grown to 12 pages, but circulation rose slowly. "It took five years," Mitchell said, "to get 12,000, five more years to get 20,000, and 18 years to reach 45,000, when we expected 50,000 the first year."

But these setbacks did not discour-

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George Mitchell.

age him. For the first eight years, he paid himself only \$15 weekly, and \$20 after that. He frequently worked 14 hours a day. But, he said, "Every copy of *PATHFINDER* that goes out is good seed. If we were not sure that the work we are doing is good work—work which benefits mankind—we would quit. We appreciate the confidence and support of our readers—it is our rod and staff. We plan to show our appreciation by a renewed determination to give a paper which is all meat and which has no equal at any price."

In the light of today's events, some excerpts from the first issue of *PATHFINDER* are highly interesting. Its editorial said, "Upon the surface the nations of Europe are feverish with unrest and affright. Theoretically, Europe is in a state of siege, and no nation, save Switzerland, can be considered exempt. Yet a state of siege is not war, nor is it necessarily a precursor of war."

A news item in the same issue noted that an income tax of 2% on all incomes over \$4,000 had been adopted by a close majority of the Democrats of the House Committee of Ways and Means as the revenue feature of the forthcoming Wilson bill.

The third issue of *PATHFINDER*—dated January 20, 1894—contained a full column by William Jennings Bryan on "The Proposed Income Tax."

George Mitchell was a most unusual man, gifted with a variety of talents as well as a huge storehouse of energy. He wrote by hand the entire contents of the first issue. For years he edited all the copy, working long hours with hardly a pause for lunch. Sometimes it was necessary to remind him when the day was done. Sometimes he would be found on the floor mending the big printing press when it was not working properly.

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Mitchell was many men in one. He was an artist as well as writer, and for 12 years did most of the art work that appeared in the magazine. He was also an amateur magician of no mean ability. He not only played the violin but made one. He built his own home and other houses with his own hands. He was an excellent cabinetmaker and wood-carver. Those who knew him wondered how he could do so much. The answer seemed to be in his power of intense concentration.

The editorial platform of *PATHFINDER* was the same then as now. The masthead bore this statement by Mitchell:

"The aim of this paper is to give busy, earnest people a digest of all the really important developments in world progress in condensed, clean and orderly, yet sprightly and entertaining form. We carefully exclude private opinions from the news pages, stating simply the facts as they are found. The editorial comment is written more from the personal point of view, but with malice toward none and charity for all—never with the idea of forcing conclusions on our friends, but rather of stimulating thought and discussion on living topics. We have no interest but yours."

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We pay humble homage to the memory of George Mitchell by expressing, in his words, our "renewed determination to give a paper which is all meat" and to repeat his pledge, "We have no interest but yours."

Graham Patterson

Publisher.