

## **Beaver (Windsor)**

### **Publication Dates**

1886 – 188?

### **Frequency**

Weekly

### **Online Holdings**

1886: Dec. 18      (Vol. 1: no. 6)      4p.

### **Source of our Digitized Holdings**

Windsor Community Museum

### **Description**

The Beaver was the southwestern Ontario mouthpiece of the Knights of Labor. The Order of the Knights of Labor was founded in 1869 in Philadelphia and by the early 1880s had expanded into Canada. It was one of the most prominent labour organizations of its time. It was also an important player in the development of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (Canadian Encyclopedia). By the mid-1880s, the Order had unionized around 14,000 Canadian workers of all trades and skill levels, of many races, and both genders. As well as advocating for better pay and working conditions, the Order promoted the idea of a more just society and a reformed economy and political system. They especially believed that education of the working classes was key to their success. This is evident throughout the only existing issue of the Beaver.

Joseph A. Kilroy was the publisher and manager of the Beaver. He was born in Lockport, New York in 1850, came with his parents to this region at age 8 and married Catherine Hanrahan of Windsor in 1874.

He had always been interested in politics and was a natural political organizer. In the early 1870s, he attempted to start a new reform minded labour party in southwestern Ontario. Alexander Mackenzie, the Canadian prime minister of the time, then persuaded

him to channel his efforts towards building up the Liberal party in the region. He ran unsuccessfully as the liberal candidate for North Essex in the 1882 federal election. He later parted ways with the Liberal party.

In late 1880, he took over a grocery business at 7 Sandwich Street West called the California Store. His brother, Thomas E. Kilroy, who was also politically minded, started another grocery store in 1886 called the Kilroy (located in the White Block). This store is advertised in the Beaver (p. 3).

Around this time, he became involved in the Knights of Labor organization. In 1886, he started the Beaver Publishing Company, located in the Dougall Block (Sandwich Street West at Ferry Street), and published the Beaver newspaper. It was a weekly which came out every Saturday morning and cost \$1 per year, if paid in advance. It had a circulation of 3,000 and seems to have been well supported by advertising. The Beaver probably continued until at least 1888 as Joseph Kilroy was still listed as a publisher in the 1888 city directory. From 1891-1906, he moved to California. When he came back to Windsor, he worked for the New York Life Insurance Company, but was still publishing political materials on the side. In 1911, for example, he was assaulted twice for publishing and distributing pamphlets on the controversial bilingual schools issue. When he died in 1919, his obituary described him as a "rugged community builder and pioneer" (Border Cities Star: 1919 May 8, p. 5).