

CHAPTER XVII

EARLY NEWSPAPERS

The first paper in Arkansas, to be published west of Little Rock, was the Arkansas Intelligencer at Van Buren and as the editors say "Will go East from a point farther West than was ever paper printed in the United States." The first copy was issued Saturday, January 22, 1842. Messrs. Frances Van Horn and Thomas Sterne, editors and proprietors. Price three dollars (\$3.00 per annum), it was a five column paper 22x15 inches. The news was of a general character, there being only a few locals. The first issue carried two columns of advertising; the merchants were Henry and Cunningham; W. W. Lyons; Star and Griffith and Scott and White. The lawyers Paschal and Campbell, William C. Scott, Jesse Turner, R. P. Pryor and J. M. Tebbets. There was also an advertisement of a steamboat. This paper as published by Van Horn and Sterne was neutral in politics.

It is not known when Van Horn's connection with the paper ended as no file of the paper of the first year has been found, with the exception of the first issue; but in April 1843 the names of Sterne and Wheeler appeared at the head, the previous numbers being missing. They were followed in May 1843 by Thomas Sterne. In July 1843 George W. Clark became identified with Sterne and so continued until March 1844 when Geo. W. Clark became sole proprietor and editor. He says "while we shall advocate Democratic measures and support democratic men with zeal and firmness, we shall treat our political adversaries with courtesy and fairness, hoping that though we may differ in politics nothing will happen to interrupt our social relations." Clark continued as editor until April 1845 when J. W. Washburne and C. D. Pryor became editors and proprietors until March 13th, 1847, when on March 20th, 1847, Clark again became editor and so continued until he received a government position with the Pottowatomie Indians when he was succeeded by his

brother, Anselm Clark, who continued to publish the paper until his death, September 1859. The equipment was sold to a Fort Smith paper, thus the Arkansas Intelligencer ceased to be, after an existence of over seventeen years.

As the years passed and the town grew the paper carried ten columns of advertisement of merchants, some of whom would use an entire column; of steamboats that plied between Van Buren and New Orleans and Cincinnati. If the merchants of this day would advertise as those of that day, we could have a daily of our own.

The paper also contained much news of the Indian Territory as at that time there was no paper published there.

After Mr. Clark made the Arkansas Intelligencer Democratic, the Whigs, of which there were a number in the county, decided they must have an organ of their own where the ideas of their political party could be advocated. Thus the "Frontier Whig" came into existence. This paper was published at Van Buren from the last of April or the first of May 1844 until sometime during 1846. Thomas Sterne who had withdrawn from the "Arkansas Intelligencer" took charge of the paper and had as his chief editor the brilliant and forceful writer, John S. Logan. Judge Jesse Turner and others were contributors. Some warm controversies took place between Logan and Clark which culminated in a duel which was fought with rifles at sixty paces in the Indian Territory, opposite Fort Smith. Neither were hurt owing to bad marksmanship after which a reconciliation was effected.

The writer has made diligent search for copies of this paper in Van Buren without success. A few copies were given the Arkansas History Commission by a lady from Washington, Hempstead county.

The "Van Buren Press" was the third paper to make its appearance in Van Buren. This paper was founded by Joseph Starr Dunham of Middletown Connecticut, in 1859. The first issue appeared July 6th, 1859, and continued until January 23rd, 1862 when it was obliged to suspend publication on account of scarcity of printing paper,

caused by the War Between the States. Occasionally an issue would appear printed on the reverse side of wall-paper, wrapping paper or any kind of paper that could be obtained, containing important war news. Has anyone any copies of these papers?

On February 3rd, 1866, the Van Buren Press again made its appearance after a lapse of four years, and from then on was continually published, except for two issues when the equipment of the Press was destroyed by fire in December 1892 until it was consolidated with the Van Buren Argus July 18th, 1914.

For 48 years, from the time it was established in 1859 until Mr. Dunham's death in August, 1912, no other name appeared as editor, proprietor or publisher. A record very few papers can claim.

During its earlier years Messrs. A. J. Ward, L. C. Southmayd, Jesse Turner Sr., Granville Wilcox, Col. N. B. Burrow were frequent contributors and being men of high standing in this community their articles carried much influence with them.

Looking back through the long vista of years during which time the paper was published and for thirteen years the only paper published in this county, makes it from a historical point of view the most valuable. As a writer the editor of the Press was fearless, standing for right and principles; not being easily swayed from what he thought was right, no matter how much influence was brought to bear on him, nor what the outcome.

Extreme ideas were not adopted, hence the policy of the paper on political questions has been characterized by conservatism.

A weekly visitor to most of the homes in this county and throughout Northwest Arkansas, it exerted a great influence wherever read towards molding public opinion during the unsettled affairs of the state. You often found this paper standing by a man or an official when all the other papers were against him, as was the case at the time of the Brooks and Baxter war, when this paper was the only one in Northwest Arkansas to champion the Baxter cause.

During the entire time the paper was published it was Mr. Dunham's custom to keep a file of the Van Buren Press at his home, consequently when the Press office was twice destroyed, first by the Federals when they took possession of Van Buren, and the second time by fire, a complete file of the paper was preserved to future generations.

During the years Mr. Dunham was in Washington his son, Starr Dunham, and Mr. Carl Schuppe had charge of the publication of the paper. After the death of his son, Mr. Schuppe had entire charge, he having been with the Press from a young man until a few years before Mr. Dunham's death.

After Mr. Dunham's death the paper was published for a time by Mr. R. S. Knott who had charge of the publication. After his retirement his son, Clifford Knott, carried on the paper until it was purchased by Frank Anderson in 1914.

As the Van Buren Press had espoused the cause of Governor Baxter those in sympathy with Governor Brooks felt the need of an organ in which they could express their views, thus was born the Van Buren Argus on December 25th, 1875, with Messrs. George Thayer and his brother-in-law, John Cass, in charge of the paper, having for their editor Mr. Granville Wilcox an able and fluent writer. The following divisions are gathered from the salutary:

First, to make the Argus always useful in advancing the interests of Van Buren and Crawford county and the entire state of Arkansas. Second, to earnestly advocate the cause of education. Third, unswervingly advocate the first law of nature—order. Fourth, shall try to furnish our farmer friends a paper that will be of use to them. Fifth, that they stand for the Democratic party, etc.

Both Mr. Thayer and Mr. Cass were practical printers, Mr. Thayer having been connected with the Press for several years, and Mr. Cass coming from Illinois. As was usual between rival papers there was some hot discussions between the editors of the two papers. In 1879 Mr. George Thayer became sole owner and publisher, then

Mr. John Thayer in 1880 followed by Thayer and Ibbotson in 1882 and after that the Thayer Brothers had entire charge of the paper until 1909 when it was leased by Mr. Frank Anderson who purchased it in 1912. This paper like the Press, was taken by many persons over the county where it carried much influence.

Mr. Wilcox's connection with the paper ended in 1885 not long previous to his death. Mr. Anderson having purchased the rights of the Van Buren Press consolidated the two papers on July 18th, 1814. The paper is still welcomed in the homes of those who were subscribers to one or other of the papers.

The Daily Argus made its first appearance on May 1st, 1897, with Mr. Frank Anderson as editor and the Thayer Brothers as publishers. At this time the Weekly Argus was being published upstairs in the Lynch building, which is on the northwest corner of Main and North Sixth streets. From there it was moved to what was known as the Hinkle brick at the rear of the Citizens' Bank and Trust company on South Seventh street.

On its Ninth Anniversary the Daily Argus had this to say: "The eight years history of this paper is a continued story of the success and failure, the joy and sorrows; the heartaches and happiness; the hopes and fears; the lives and deaths; the coming and going of our citizens as gathered and told from day to day during that time, until the Argus has become closely allied with nearly every home in the city."

From a clipping from the paper, it is learned that in 1909 the Thayer Brothers disposed of the control of the Weekly and Daily Argus to Mr. Frank Anderson, who for the past twelve years had had editorial charge of the paper. The Daily continued to be printed until 1913, when Mr. Anderson sold the paper to Mr. R. B. Holbrook, who discontinued the Daily as it was a losing proposition. In June 1913 Mr. Anderson bought the plant from Mr. Holbrook and resumed the publication of the Daily Argus. In 1914 when the Van Buren Press and the Van Buren Argus were consolidated it became the Press-Argus.

In January 1917 the daily was discontinued, partly



A Marker To Miss Eno . . . erected on the Crawford County Courthouse lawn by the Arkansas Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy, "in honor of Miss Clara B. Eno who has done so much to preserve Arkansas history."



A City Scene of Yesteryear . . . Main Street of Van Buren in 1867. The iron railing portico of a three story building can be detected in the original photo at the front right but is not shown in this reproduction.



A Rural Scene of Yesteryear . . . Gone are the old split rail fences that once dotted the countryside. The fences served many purposes; to keep tame stock in the pasture and to keep wild deer out of the corn. Then when they rotted down, the rails made excellent cooking wood.

on account of the great advance in price of printing paper and material, but in May of the same year the paper again made its appearance and continued until April 1918. On November 30th, 1919 the Daily Press-Argus was again revived under the management of Messrs. Phillips and Scudder. In April 1920 Mr. Anderson, after two years spent in the federal employment service and the census bureau again became editor of the paper and it was continued until January 1921 when it was forced to suspend publication.

On January 1, 1924, Mr. Carl Schuppe well known to the newspaper readers of Crawford county, became associated with Mr. Anderson in the publication of the Press-Argus. On March 15 the plant was moved to the Bowlin building, 625 Main street, where larger quarters better adapted to the needs of the plant could be had.

Mr. Anderson sold the Press-Argus on Nov. 1, 1927, to Hugh and J. C. Park. Under their management the paper has become one of the most widely read and well known weekly newspapers of America.

The Republicans of Crawford county feeling the need of an organ in which they could voice their political principles decided they must have a paper. After due consideration by Mr. J. J. Warren, a prominent member of that party he established the Van Buren Graphic, as a weekly paper. The first number was issued on January 28th, 1881, with Mr. J. J. Warren as editor and Mr. Frank Ibbotson as publisher. He says: "Our public schools shall receive due attention," at that time Mr. Warren was a member of the Van Buren school board. The temperance question is also mentioned. "The Graphic shall not be used as a medium to gratify the personal whims or grievances of the editor or anyone else."

Mr. Ibbotson was succeeded as publisher by Mr. W. N. Bradbury in the latter part of 1881; later Mr. Warren had sole management of the paper. A writer in speaking of the paper says: "Its course has been especially characterized as aggressive and spirited and its life was identified with what might be called the "Frisco period of Crawford County History." In March 1888 the paper was

published by Mr. Z. Wells, who published the paper for a short time when Mr. Warren again became the owner for a short time previous to his death, which occurred in the fall of 1888. There being no known file of the paper in existence it is not known whether the paper was published after Mr. Warren's death or not.

In June 1889 Mrs. Warren sold the paper to Colonel J. M. Weaver who edited it for about two years, after which the Graphic plant passed into the hands of R. S. Hynes, of the Crawford County bank. It was located in one of the upstairs rooms in the Citizens Bank Building, now occupied by the telephone exchange.

After the Van Buren Press office was destroyed by fire in 1893 Mr. Dunham purchased the plant and with it for nearly twenty years, the Van Buren Press was published, until purchased by Mr. Anderson. The Van Buren Republican, edited and published by Lloyd Garrison, was the successor of the Graphic, but was only of short duration, as it ceased to exist November 12th, 1892.

During the summer of 1893 Mr. J. W. Higgs removed from Alma to Van Buren and founded the Van Buren Daily Venture with Mr. Higgs as editor and publisher. The first issue appeared during August 1893. The Weekly Van Buren Venture appeared very soon afterwards. This paper was democratic in principle and was a daily and weekly visitor to many of the Crawford county homes until about 1900 when Mr. Higgs sold the paper to Mr. Gillingham C. Yoes. Mr. Yoes changed the politics of the paper so as to be the organ of the Republican party. Like the Graphic there is no known file of the Venture, Mr. Yoes having lost the file of his paper by fire. In June 1883 the Davidson Publishing company established the Arkansas Agitator with Major F. B. Davidson of Saint Louis as editor. This paper was devoted to the industries and agriculture, but only a few numbers appeared.

Among the other papers that have appeared here but of short duration are the Times, a Republican paper that was published by Hammond Brothers of Kansas; The Daily Optic by Ibbotson and Lloyd. G. N. Callahan and C. R. Cordell were also connected with the paper. It was

only published for a few months as it did not receive sufficient patronage to continue. It was the first Van Buren daily paper. Then for a while the Trades Review was published and distributed over the city every Saturday.

After the suspension of the Daily Press-Argus George R. Wood edited the Evening News for a few months.

Peoples' Protector, a paper managed in the interest of the colored people, ran for about 11 weeks in 1888. Printed in the office of the Graphic, with H. H. Wilburn as its first editor. He was succeeded by E. W. Merchant, who retired in favor of G. W. Hill. Mr. Hill was editor until it was suspended.

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TO THE PUBLIC

The undersigned respectfully informs the citizens of Van Buren and Western Arkansas generally, that he has at the request of many friends commenced the publication of a new paper, to be called "The Van Buren Press," and he flatters himself that he shall be able to make it a journal every way acceptable and worthy the support of the generous public, among whom he has come to reside. Himself a Democrat, born and bred, he wishes to assure his patrons that so long as his name appears as Editor of the "Press", that they may expect to find it supporting the great principles of the National Democratic Party of the Union without faltering. A stranger, comparatively to the people of Arkansas, it is their right to enquire what general principles of political economy will guide the undersigned in the management of his paper? To this he replies in brief—that he believes with Jefferson that "equal and exact justice belongs to all men of whatever sect or persuasion, religious or political." That no more taxes should be raised than is necessary for the economical administration of the government; and that in forming a Tariff revenue should be the principle and equal benefit to all classes incident; and that the **ad valorem** principle of laying the duty is the correct one.

That he has not and never has had, any sympathy whatever with negro abolition agitation. A Northern man, he comes from the only Congressional District in

his native state whose representative in Congress voted for the Kansas Bill, and he believes in the controlling principle that, that measure, in removing the Missouri restriction enacted. That the question of Slavery belongs only to the people of the locality where the institution exists and that any meddling whatever with it is not only officious but a wrong and an abuse, and ought not to be tolerated by the people of the slave holding states.

Known-Nothingism in all its phases we are prepared to battle against. The rights of the citizens should no more depend upon the locality where he first happened to open his eyes, or upon his peculiar manner of worshipping a God over all, than upon the form of his coat or shape of his hat.

Consideration what immigration has already done for our glorious country, we should open still wider the doors for the emigrant, whom truth makes free and bids him come to our shore and people our prairies, bringing with him the wealth which is above all price, the wealth of honest industry.

We believe in the rightful acquisition of Cuba. We want to see the majesty of our laws extending over the Continent, from shore to shore, and over the Southern seas. We believe in extending peacefully by annexation or purchase if we can, but in any event we go for OUR COUNTRY RIGHT OR WRONG.

To conclude we stand upon the Cincinnati platform, and the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case. We have perhaps a preference for president in 1860, but we wait for the Charleston Convention, and we are sure that enlightened body of Democrats will give us a candidate around whom the Democrats of the Union will rally and elect, as sure as the election comes off.

But our patrons must not suppose that we mean to make the Press a purely political. We will make it, we hope acceptable to all classes—to the fair as well as to the sterner sex. We shall endeavor to give the news of the day, both foreign and domestic, and our column will be open to correspondents and we shall be glad of their contributions, whether on Law, Love, Politics or Religion.

In a word, we mean to interest ourselves in all that is going on around us, and that will benefit the people of the city and state of our adoption. To the citizens of Van Buren and the region "round about" do we look for countenance and support and we will do for them all that energy, and a stout heart, a disposition to please and a sincere wish for the welfare of our new home can accomplish.

July 6th, 1859.

J. S. Dunham.

(Editorial copied from the first issue of the Press, Van Buren, Arkansas, J. S. Dunham, Editor.)

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Alma Newspapers

Newspaper life has been a variable thing in Alma. The Alma "Herald" was founded in 1877 by M. L. Yeatman, with whom a Mr. Bell was afterward associated. It was a seven-column Democratic paper. Two years later a stock company composed of M. F. Locke, J. T. Hollowell, L. C. Locke, D. W. Brodie, W. T. Black, B. P. Renfroe, and E. B. Hassett, bought the office, and George Thayer (of the Van Buren Argus) leased it, and for two years it was independently Democratic, under the name of "Crawford County Democrat". John Renfroe and R. R. Wood were the next lessees, under the name of "The Arkansas Farmer", and two years later, a Mr. Stonecipher gave it the name Alma "Leader", and Frank Ibbotson was its publisher for a few issues. It might be mentioned that Eugene Douglass and P. H. Hillyer were connected with the paper a short time in its first years, under the name Alma "Independent". In 1880 J. S. Renfroe used the "Leader" while he had charge, and again, B. P. Renfroe had control of it under the name of "Crawford County Democrat". Col. Locke took charge of it in March, 1887, and replaced "Crawford County" by "Alma", and in June, 1888, D. B. Locke and J. A. Garner assumed control. Today there is no paper published at Alma.

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Mulberry Newspapers

The first newspaper published in Mulberry was "The Mulberry Weekly Times" with Mr. Frank Ibbotson as

editor. The paper was Democratic in principle and well edited. Mulberry was at this time in Franklin County.

Another paper published in Mulberry as late as 1937 was the "Mulberry Times," which suspended publication in the latter part of 1937. The Press-Argus of Van Buren taking over the subscription list of the Mulberry Times at its suspension and the subscribers received the Press-Argus until their subscription to the former paper expired.

The Mulberry Times was published by a company at Ozark, which published the Democrat-Enterprise. V. T. Leavitt, editor, Mulberry Leader, February, 1900.