

Reminiscences Of Earlier Days At Merrill Herald

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Early reporters on the Herald staff included Ruben C. Angerbeck, Clark Bublitz, J. A. Chilson, Allan Waters, David Christensen and John Gunitz.

One prominent Merrill business man, George O. B. Gruetzmacher, received his early training in the Herald office, starting as a printer's devil when this paper was first rolled off the press.

Daily Herald printing presses were run by hand and day of the early pressmen was Walter Klinko, whose whistling of the popular melodies of that day made the drone and monotony of that life leading press a more enlightening task. Walter's lacker became "Carline's" Paul Watson, many famous orchestra. Wonder if Whiteman ever heard him whistle.

Mable Pomerville, who graduated from high composition of news copy to setting up ads, would find a change from that hand work to big Ludlow and Linotype machines of today most interesting.

One of the first Linotype operators for the Herald was Arthur G. Leisman, who is now the Reverend Leisman and is pastor for the deaf in Milwaukee. Grammatical errors, mispellings, misspelled words were no worry to the reporters in those days. They knew "Art" would make the corrections.

Five hand compositors tried valiantly to set enough news to fill one page in the days of long ago. Today the Linotype machines with their long arms and hand-like jaws take care of eight, ten and twelve pages in a day.

Among the first hand compositors in the Herald office, whose names were from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. were Vina Hatanaway, now Mrs. H. E. Erickson, Chicago; Lou Parker, now Mrs. Mabel Pomerville, now Mrs. J. A. Morgan, Merrill; Stella Tranter, now Mrs. Arthur Martinson, Wausau; Mae Everson, now Mrs. J. O. Stewart, Chicago; Violeta DeBar, now Mrs. John Gunitz, Sr., Merrill; Lida Steckling, now Mrs. E. E. Prochnow, Iowa; Hattie Torrey, married and living in Minnesota; Chris Everson, now Mrs. E. F. Foster, Merrill.

If a news flash came from the nation's capitol, C. N. Johnson, the editor, threw all rules of the book out of the window, disregarded dead lines and started writing a regular manuscript on his views on legislation taking place. Sometimes the hand compositors would still be setting copy for that day's paper as late as five in the afternoon.

The Herald has employed three deaf Linotype operators who were experts in their field. One was A. G. Leisman, now a pastor for the deaf in Milwaukee; Leonard Wood, present whereabouts unknown, and "Nick" Nicklaus, now residing in Wisconsin Rapids.

In the days of hand composition, the late editor, C. N. Johnson, would bellow out promises of big banana splits to the girls if they would empty the copy books by three o'clock. They never did get the copy books cleared, but they did get the banana splits, going over to Fowler's drug store for their treats. Fowler's had a most popular soda fountain in those days.

"Tramp" printers, who travelled from town to town to work in printing offices for a few days and then take the road again, were frequent employees of the Herald. Some stayed a few days, others a week, and a few managed to "stay out" for about a month. Many odd experiences, some humorous, others discouraging, were experienced with these "road printers."

Jerry Juneau, now on the Chicago Tribune, is a former Herald reporter. His wife is the former Violet Shaur, and they have two children, attending school in Chicago.

Al Nelson, a steady Linotype operator, who "cut his eye-teeth" on the Herald staff, is now holding the same kind of job on the Chicago Evening American. His wife is the former Mabel Brantz, a telephone operator both here and in Chicago.

The Herald staff at the time of the change to machine operations numbered about 125, while at present the average weekly staff carries thirty. One of the first bookkeepers

was Florence Garibee, now Mrs. Harry R. Allen. Others who held early bookkeeping jobs included Dolores Nussba, deceased; Zada Gerlich, now in the East; Helen McClure, now Mrs. Ray Trantow; Lida Steckling, now Mrs. E. E. Prochnow of Iowa; Gela Hackbart, now Mrs. H. Nehring of Mackean; Hattie Steckling, now Mrs. Hanson, of Kaukauna; Rose Foirier; Elaine Runge of Crawfordville, Ind.

Rudolph Tewes, operator of the big Linotype machine in the Herald office, holds the longest record of continued service on The Herald. Starting as a "printer's devil," he learned the trade the hard way and is a master mechanic when it comes to administering to the needs of the Herald machines. "Rudy," who has been on the staff for 35 years, is also a radio-minded mechanic.

Going to the hospital for an appendectomy while serving as society editor was the saddest day of my life. . . not so much for the physical pain, but the fact that I had to be away from the "smell of printer's ink" for a few days. However, three days after the operation, I wrote three wedding while in bed. Came out of the ether on the eventful Sunday just as the State Liederkreis convention parade was passing the Raven hospital and playing "Happy Days Are Here Again."

Remember well the day when the editor, C. N. Johnson, who minced no words in giving his editorial opinions, wrote a denunciation on some action the then mayor had taken at a council meeting the previous evening. His name calling of the mayor was nothing less than vitriolic and I took that on my shoulders. . . in making the morning train I was too embarrassed to walk down Main street nor travelled to and from the depot on the railroad tracks. Imagine my relief when I returned to the office and found the editor and the mayor talking and laughing as though nothing in the world had ever happened.

After Verne Pomerville Morgan and I had finished our day's task of setting type, we went down to the basement to get out the mail, sometimes getting through as late as seven and eight in the evening. If we had dates, we had no time to eat. . . just clean up and go. . . sometimes our "beaus" were at our homes waiting for us to go to see "The Perils of Pauline", a nickel show at the Cosmo theatre, located upstairs in the Montgomery-Ward store.

Dave Christensen in his column in this Centennial edition, says he worked for fifty cents a day. Wonder what Dave will say when he learns I started at 75 cents for a sixty-hour week. . . and when the stipend went to \$2.00 a week I felt I would become another Andrew Carnegie by starting a dollar a week bank account. (Note to Dave: There was no overtime pay, either).

Wanted a pair of patent leather shoes, so saved fifty cents a week toward that. . . when my dad accompanied me to the Solum shoe store (kitty-corner from St. Francis church) I found the shoes cost \$4.00 and I only had two. . . and also found the smallest size was four, and I had to have size two. . . I still wanted those shoes, so Mr. Solum packed the in-soles and my dad supplied the other two dollars.

TAUGHT IN SCHOOL ERECTED IN 1860

The following is believed to be a complete list of the teachers who taught in the schoolhouse erected in 1860 west of the present site of the Hotel Merrill: Miss Kate Goodrich, Mrs. Matt Beebe, Mrs. Peter McKeller, Mrs. D. A. Kline, Mrs. George Strowbridge, Charles Marvin, Mr. Samuel Ashman and Mrs. Emmanus Beckwith, with possibly the addition of Mrs. Mary Jane Miller Armstrong, though it is doubtful if the latter taught here after this building was completed.

Frank White had brought two carpenters, probably John and Richard Dobie, from Wausau to complete the building. Miss Mary Jane Miller was teaching in a one-room school in the White dwelling while the new school was in the process of construction.

Winner Show

When the famous Winner family first put on their musical and comedy acts in Merrill, they performed in a tent located on the corner of Main and State streets. They would give their main performance for only a dime a seat.

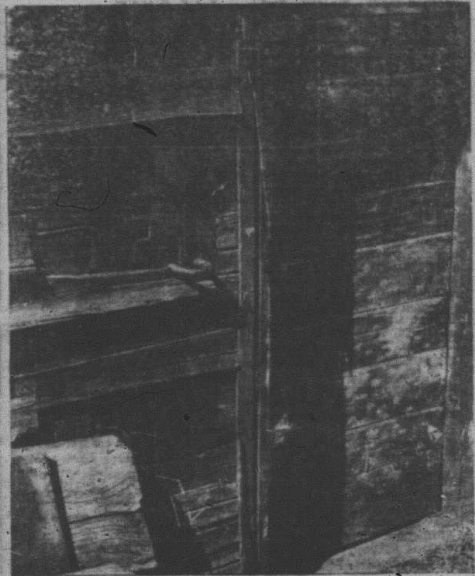
Members of the first Ladies' A.C. Society were of no particular church denomination. They met on Wednesday and produced much entertainment for the people in the form of thimble bees, spelling bees, ice cream socials and sugar festivals. One of the notices pertaining to one of the forthcoming events stated that charades, tableaux, singing and other amusements will be introduced.

Following the coming of the railroad to Jenny in 1880 there was a scramble for places of business.



Tom Frechette, early Merrill resident, father of Mrs. William Ruhl. Mr. Frechette was a well driller.

Fifteen citizens gathered in 1875 and formed the Jenny Silver Cornet Band, the first band in the village. They practiced every night so they would be in good form for the dances, church affairs and holiday celebrations. This band reorganized in 1887 as Harrison's Action Band.



The first Lincoln county jail is still standing in Merrill. It is being used as a woodshed at the residence of Paul Grynud at the corner of Stuyvesant and East Main streets. The top view shows the barred window and the bottom shows the door with the big staple that held the locked bar. The building is made of heavy boards, nailed every two inches in each direction. This jail was used in the early seventies until a new jail was built in back of the old courthouse, near the Lincoln County Normal School. There is a movement on foot to preserve the building in its original shape and have it permanently placed in the grounds near the present county jail.