

City Had Five Newspapers At One Time; Advocate Published In 1875

Merrill has had as many as five newspapers, all published here at the same time. The urge to printers' ink that afflicts many active men who take an interest in public affairs has raged in Merrill during its boom years as virulently as in any other city.

Long before there was any Merrill, M. H. McCord, the lumberman whose name still marks a spot on the map near Tripoli, and A. D. Gorham, the city's first publisher, brought out the first issue of the Lincoln County Advocate on February 6, 1875.

In March, 1884, shortly after the incorporation of the city, Van R. Willard, one of the original supervisors, bought the Advocate only to turn it over to Alexander Black and Dewitt Johnson at the end of the next year. By the next spring Norriam Black had bought out Johnson; in December it changed hands for the third time in less than three years and M. E. Northrop and C. H. Cummer bought the paper and operated it for four months.

L. A. Harrison and C. F. Hanson were the next publishers of the Advocate, which by that time resembled a French cabinet; nobody could keep track of who was running it. Hanson severed his connection with the newspaper within six months, but in October, 1889, he bought out Harrison and rode alone for another six months.

In April, 1890, a group of some of the wealthier and best-known businessmen in the county formed the Advocate Publishing Co., and gave the paper its first continuous year under the same management since the incorporation of the city. Walter A. Scott, (son of T. B. Scott), Frank T. Hixon, W. H. Flett, Henry C. Hessel, Dr. J. D. Heath, and C. A. Norway were among the new owners. Scott, Hixon, Norway, and Heath were lumbermen and Flett and Hessel were lawyers.

Johnson Comes In

After two years under these distinguished auspices the company disbanded, probably because the election was over, and in February of 1892 C. N. Johnson took over the paper and made it a permanent institution at last. The company had built a building on the site of Arvo's Garage on East Main street in 1891, and in 1893 Mr. Johnson changed the name of the paper from Lincoln County Advocate to Merrill Advocate.

C. N. Johnson sold the paper in 1906 to A. C. Thompson, who published it until August, 1909, when the Lincoln County bank acquired it and sold it to William M. Allen, publisher of the Merrill Star. The paper then became the Star-Advocate.

In the meantime, however, the Democrats had been making their own ventures in the journalistic field. The Northern Wisconsin News, Democratic in politics, was established by Dave Finn and Reuben F. Vaughan in 1878, three years after the Advocate first saw the light, and was the second newspaper in Lincoln county. After that it had almost, but not quite, as hectic a history as the booming Advocate.

In that same year a German newspaper was published in Merrill, bringing the total to four. C. W. Honigman established the Merrill Anzeiger, Democratic in politics, in February, 1888. Six years later the paper was purchased by F. W. Sallet, who published it another six years as the Anzeiger and, in 1900, changed the name to the Wisconsin Thalbote. Otto Susemihl took over the paper in 1902, and, after eight years, relinquished it to Frank Beyer. Two years later it was closed down. Publication was resumed in 1917 during the risky years of war fever by Arthur Hessel and Gust Belling in partnership, but it was discontinued August 27, 1920.

While Sallet still had the paper, he also got out a Swedish paper, the Wisconsin Valley Posten, which started roughly the same time as the Anzeiger, but the paper did not prove a success and was soon dropped.

The Merrill Star, owned and operated by W. M. and Mary B. Allen, was first issued on December 31, 1898.

Some years later the Merrill Advocate was purchased by the Allens and the two papers combined under the name of Star-Advocate.

The Star-Advocate was purchased by the Chulsen on August 22, 1909. Thus when the Herald was founded there were already three English weeklies and a German weekly in the Merrill newspaper field. It was started by W. R. Jaeger, now publisher of the Wausau Freeman, who brought up his machinery from Wau-



Mr. & Mrs. A. S. CHULSEN
Early Merrill Pioneers and Parents of the Publishers

W. H. Catmon and H. C. Hetzel acquired it in 1881 after three years of existence, and released it after another three years to J. N. Cotter and Cannon. The next year Cannon took over Cotter's interest. After still another three years A. G. Christenson took over the paper in 1888, and Christenson ran for only six months before selling out to A. A. Dunn and C. N. Johnson, who was then making his first journalistic venture. When Johnson took over the Advocate in 1892, Dunn became the sole owner of the News.

Changes Hands Often

Christenson bought it again in 1894, however, and Dunn & Christenson changed the name of the paper from Northern Wisconsin News to Merrill News. Then in 1895 it changed hands again, going to A. T. Curtis, and three years later Thomas N. Locke took it over. It was the last of the News' honorable tradition of three year terms. Locke hung on despite precedent for four years, and sold to A. T. Curtis, who in turn leased it to D. S. Johnson in 1902. Another News tradition was still in the running, however, and that was A. G. Christenson; for the 44th time he took it over in 1904, only to relinquish it again to Mahon & Fitzgerald. Edward D. Mahon became sole owner in 1912 and published it until 1918. Mr. Mahon is now owner of the Quality Print Shop.

A third Merrill weekly, the Merrill Times, was established by Norman Black, later editor of the Fargo Forum, in 1887. The following year, with financial difficulties causing new paper W. R. Schofield took it over only to sell within a short time to A. G. Christenson, who merged it with the News in 1888.

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sau and kept the paper going for about one year.

The first staff, under Mr. Jaeger, included John Guntz, now on the Wausau Record-Herald, on news; J. W. Bruce, Civil War veteran, now deceased, on news and advertising; Miss Stella Trantow, now Mrs. Arthur Martinson, printer; Miss Lou Horton, still printing at Menominee, Michigan, printer; Miss Maybelle Pommerville, now in charge of women's wear and advertising at Livingston's department store, printer; Miss Carla Everson, now Mrs. Elmore Foster and still with the Herald as telegraph editor, printer; and George Gruetzmacher, now proprietor of the Quality Print Shop, printer; Miss Urna Hathaway, printer, now Mrs. H. Hendrickson of Chicago. The carriers at that time included Harold Henrichs, Milton Frye, and Leslie Putnam.

The plant was originally in the Kathryn Luedtke building at 1211 East Main street, where Fred Peterson's garage now is.

In 1909 C. N. Johnson and W. B. Chulsen bought the paper in partnership through J. W. Bruce and moved it to its present location at 909 East Main street. In 1913 a partnership of F. J. Smith, A. H. Smith, W. B. Chulsen and Joe A. Chulsen took over the publication under the name of the Merrill Publishing company; but in 1920 W. B. and Joe A. Chulsen took over the publication alone, and have operated it since that time.

Pedestrians

The early residents of Jenny were mighty pedestrians.

In the early days there were no railroads, and even the wagon roads were little better than blazed trails through the woods. Horses were scarce and only a few could afford to travel in horseback. The only other mode of getting from place to place on land was to walk.



Wm. Rehfeld, one of Merrill's early masons. He built many of the city's brick buildings.

Retired Fireman Worked In Woods, On Spring Drives

John Taylor, 106 South Genesee street, retired Merrill fireman and former lumberjack, has had a long and interesting career.

Jack, as he is known to his host of friends, celebrated his 84th birthday last February 27 and is amazingly alert and active for a man several years past the four score mark.

He was born in Canada and got his first taste of woods work north of Toronto in the Lake Simco region. He recalls that country as a vast and isolated area of mountains and virgin timber lands threaded with rivers and lakes. While driving on the Severn river through the chain of lakes, work would be held up at times by the strong winds which would back up the logs and prevent their passage through the lakes for several days at a time.

Jack worked in the woods in the winter; on the spring drives until about July 4; and on the farm in the summer.

He was rated as a skilled woodman in just about every department and was a "bubble cuffer" who could ride a log as easily as the greenhorn can fall off a log.

When he was about thirty years old he came to America and worked a year for Davis and Stiff of Eau Claire on the Little Black river at Medford. He skidded with four oxen and the logs were then hauled 12 miles by four-horse teams to the river.

The following year he came to Merrill and his first job here was with the Wolf River Co. on the spring drive on the Newwood.

He worked for Gilkey & Anson skidding at Squirrel Lake and driving the Little River; ran a logging crew at Bunker Hill for Wright; worked on the boom; and off and on would work around the pond at the Stange sawmill.

One of the big log jams Jack remembers occurred on the Prairie at the Della. A large rock in the center, and large rock formations on the shores at that point contributed to the pile-up, once it started. The lumberjacks had to work long and hard to free the logs. In the meantime the gates had been closed and water piled up with the logs. When the gates were opened the flood of water enabled them to drive right through to Merrill. This drive from where the logs went into the water at Alta Springs, to Merrill, took over two weeks.

Lumberjacks were glad to hit the hay when the long day's work was over. Jack loaded for three winters with Jack Smith as top loader. A couple of loads would be put on before daylight and someone would be used at night so that the work could be continued after dark. The work day was 12 to 14 hours and the pay was \$1 a day.

Lumberjacks could get their clothes, rubber boots, etc., at the warrigan and the cost would be deducted when they finished their work in the woods or on the drive, and got paid.

Jack joined the Merrill fire department in 1902 and retired in 1923. In his earlier days with the department the pay was \$45 a month for many years. Fires were quite frequent, especially in the winter months, and many of them were bad fires. Among the worst fires Jack helped fight were those of Wright's mill, Cosmo Theater, the Tannery, Big Mill and High school.

Mrs. Taylor, the former Maria Howard, came to Merrill in 1865 from Sauk county, and she, too, recalls many incidents of the early days. Mrs. Taylor says that though hard work was commonplace, the young folks found time for fun. A dance would be arranged on the spur of the moment and everyone would go, regardless of how far they had to walk to and from the affair.

Mr. and Mrs. Taylor are the parents of M. N. Taylor, executive director of Trees for Tomorrow, Inc., Merrill. Andrew Taylor, sales manager of the package division, American Molasses Co.; Wilbert, principal of a school at Manitowish; and Floyd, Merrill, with Fromm Bros., Inc.