

Journalism in Early Oregon

Politeness Was Unknown; Editors "Abusive, Denunciatory, Vituperative, Sarcastic, Rancid, Uncourteous"; Many Small Papers Suppressed in '60's; Spectator First Paper

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PIONEER publishers sought to be leaders of public opinion, rather than makers of profit; to be champions of party or factions rather than neutral mediums of news.

Modern politeness was unknown. Editors were savagely abusive, denunciatory, vituperative, sarcastic, rancid and uncourteous. They hated and they spread venom and they splattered ink. Editorial duello was a fine art.

This style was more highly developed in Oregon than anywhere else in the west. Yet there was no physical combat. Enemies did not get even with fists or guns or tar-and-feathers or libel suits.

The only reprisal was to whet words the sharper, or to make the compound more sour and bitter. Modern refinements and the soft answer were unknown. The editor who could not go one better was downed.

Papers Suppressed; Held Treasonable

That was the style the readers wanted, in the narrow, local field of pioneer Oregon. All public questions were acutely controversial. Nowadays, in times more polite, readers seek other treatments as of prizefights, murders, sex tangles and bootleg. Such things then were frowned upon. Maybe the early style was better. At least it was peculiar and was a product of distinctive pioneer conditions. Five of the most fiery newspaper were excluded from the mail or otherwise suppressed by the government in 1862-63 for treasonable utterances: Albany "Inquirer," P. J. Malone, editor; Jacksonville "Gazette," James O'Meara; Eugene "Register," Anthony Noltner and C. H. (Jo-aquin) Miller; Portland "Advertiser," Corvallis "Union," James H. Slater.

Spectator First Paper! It Began in 1846

The first printing in the Pacific Northwest was done for missionaries at Lapwai, Idaho, in 1839, by Edwin O. Hall, soon followed by Cornelius Rodgers, and in 1844 by Medare G. Folsy and Charles Saxton. The texts were translations of the Bible and hymns in Indian tongues of the Nes Perces, Cayuses, Spokanes and Flatheads. This printing continued until 1846, when the plant was moved to The Dalles. In 1848 the missionaries again moved the equipment to Tualatin Plains, near Hillsboro, where they published eight numbers of "The Oregon American and Evangelical Unionist," edited by J. S. Griffin, the second newspaper in Oregon.

The second print shop was that of a weekly newspaper at Oregon City, "The Oregon Spectator," issued February 5, 1846, first newspaper published west of Missouri River. W. G. T'Vault, editor, who was postmaster-general of the provisional government. The editorial salary was \$25 a month. The editor styled himself "a Democrat of the Jeffersonian school." He was a scourger of Whigs; also of the "aristocracy," which was composed of tradespeople headed by George Abernethy, and ~~and~~ missionaries as opposed to the farmer settlers, who disliked merchants and missionaries generally. As the aristocracy owned the "Spectator," the inevitable occurred, and T'Vault held the sanctuary only three months. Then came to the chair H. A. G. Lee who announced that he would discuss politics as a science of government, but not effervescent partyism nor the "noisy froth of spouting demagogues." Again broke the wrath. This time the British came in to reinforce Abernethy and Lee was sent packing after four months of antagonism

toward the "aristocracy" and Jo. In Bull and favoritism toward the American farmer settlers.

Rush to Gold Fields Causes Suspension

Next in line was George Law Curry, who held the job nearly two years, until 1848. Then he, too, was sent packing by the Abernethy owners, but came back with a newspaper of his own, "Free Press," the printing outfit for which he obtained from Catholic missionaries. Curry continued publication only seven months in 1848, and suspended because of the rush of his subscribers to the California mines.

Curry's successor on the "Spectator" was Aaron E. Wait. Intermittently the "Spectator" continued publication as a Whig organ until March, 1855, when succeeded by the "Oregon Argus," edited by "Parson" W. L. Adams.

Fourth of Oregon newspapers was the "Western Star," published November 21, 1850, at Milwaukie; owned by Lot Whitcomb, founder of that town, and edited by John Orvis Waterman, "governed by the principles of Jeffersonian Democracy, advocating measures, not men," said the Oregon City "Spectator," which was the only other existing newspaper. This new publication continued until June, 1851, at Milwaukie, when Waterman and his partner, William Davis Carter, moved it to Portland to become the "Oregon Weekly Times," flat-footed Democratic and pro-slavery. In 1860 the "Times" became a daily, suspended in 1864. Alonzo Leland was the most noted editor of the "Times." As the "Star" this publication printed the correspondence of McLoughlin, Wyeth and Thurston, in the spring of 1851, which has much historical value.

Fifth of Oregon newspapers was the "Oregonian," which began publication December 4, 1850, at Portland, published and edited by Thomas J. Dryer, Whig, Republican, anti-slavery; now the oldest newspaper of the west, except "The Deseret News" of Salt Lake, six months older. Dryer was editor ten years. In 1861-65 the "Oregonian" had five successive editors, until in the latter year Harvey W. Scott took the editorship, brought fame and greatness to the newspaper and outdistanced all competitors.

Statesman Sixth In Line of Papers

Sixth of Oregon newspapers was the "Oregon Statesman" first published at Oregon City, March 28, 1851, edited by Asahel Bush, ablest editor of his day, 1851-63; newspaper moved to Salem, 1853; to Corvallis, 1855; soon returning to Salem where it has been since published. Other notable editors were D. W. Craig and Samuel A. Clarke. Under Bush, the "Statesman" was the leading newspaper, the recognized organ of the Democrats and the leader of the Union alliance of Douglas Democrats and Lincoln Republicans in the Civil War. His chief adversaries were Adams and Dryer, Whig-

Republicans; T. B. Odeneal and James H. Slater of the Corvallis "Messenger, Democratic Crisis and Weekly Union"; Delazon Smith and P. J. Malone of the Albany "Democrat and Inquirer"; Anthony Noltner of the Eugene "Herald, Register and Review"; William J. Beggs, of the Jacksonville "Herald"; W. G. T'Vault of the Jacksonville "Intelligencer and Sentinel"; James O'Meara of the Jacksonville "Gazette"; Alonzo Leland of the Portland "Advertiser and Times."

The influence of Bush was more potent than that of any other man in holding Oregon to the Union, in connection with that of his partner in the "Statesman," Senator James W. Nesmith. Bush could outdo any adversary in sarcasm and invective and was the spokesman of the "Salem clique" as the ruling power of Oregon politics. He had remarkable breadth of vision and gift of foresight; was endowed with outstanding courage; used his influence for the obvious advantage of Oregon in national affairs. His breach with the Breckenridge secession Democrats split his party but upheld Oregon as a Union state.

"Columbian" First in Northern Area

Seventh of the newspapers in Oregon was the Olympia "Columbian," founded by T. F. McElroy and J. W. Wiley, who bought of Tom Dryer the old Ramage printing press of the "Oregonian" and first issued the "Columbian" September 11, 1852. Oregon territory then included the area later Washington and Idaho. In December, 1853, Wiley and A. M. Berry changed the name to "Washington Pioneer," and in



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February, 1854, to "Pioneer and Democrat." At first "neutral" in politics, the "Columbian" soon declared itself "a straight-cut, radical Democratic journal." This was the earliest newspaper in Washington, established as part of the movement for separation from Oregon and of the Salem-Oregon City capital controversy. The second newspaper in Washington was the "Puget Sound Courier" of Stellacoom, founded by W. B. Affleck and E. T. Gunn, May 19, 1854. "Whig" in politics and short-lived.

Scottsburg Gazette Begun in 1854

South of Salem the earliest newspaper was the Scottsburg "Gazette," first issued April 23, 1854, by Daniel Jackson Lyons,

editor. Scottsburg was then a rival of Portland for trade growth, but soon faded out and the "Gazette" plant in 1855 was moved to Jacksonville for publication of the "Table Rock Sentinel," W. G. T'Vault, editor, who was a hard-boiled pro-slavery Southern Democrat, and a foe to Bush's Salem clique and the Salem "Statesman" in the conduct of the Democratic party. T'Vault had been the first newspaper editor in Oregon, of the "Spectator" in 1846; was vigorous but never conspicuously successful in any important endeavor. James O'Meara took the editorship in 1859 as a pro-slavery radical, but the Union cause was too strong for him in 1862 and Orange Jacobs then was put in as editor by new owners, who changed to Union politics. The most noted owner was B. F. Dowell, Republican, who published the "Sentinel" in 1864-78.

Two other contemporaries were the Portland "Democratic Standard," founded July 19, 1854, and the Oregon City "Argus," founded April 21, 1855. Alonzo Leland was publisher of the "Standard" and William L. (Fighting Parson) Adams, of the "Argus." Leland opposed Bush and Oregon statehood. Later in 1859, James O'Meara was editor, prior to his Jacksonville exploits on the "Sentinel."

Adams Bitter Foe of Bush's Policies

Adams was the most energetic and effective of Bush's editorial antagonists, a militant Campbellite preacher, Whig, prohibitionist, antislavery, later a Republican; of ruthless sarcasm, unyielding dogmatism, cutting epithets and terrific invective. Billy Adams and Asahel Bush led the list of fighting editors in the 1850's and each fought harder than the other. David W. Craig became publisher of the "Argus" in 1859, but retained Adams as editor until 1863. The "Argus" then united with the Eugene "State Republican" of H. R. Kincaid, which later united with the Salem "Statesman." Kincaid then founded the "Oregon State Journal" at Eugene and conducted that paper more than 45 years. Adams was rewarded by Lincoln by appointment as collector of customs at Astoria in 1863.

Four Democratic organs of intense Southern bias should be noted as belonging to the late 1850's:

Corvallis "Occidental Messenger," June, 1857, owned by J. C. Avery, founder of Corvallis, and edited by T. B. Odeneal, termed by Bush "Avery's Ox."

Jacksonville "Herald," August 1, 1857, owned by William J. Beggs and B. J. Burns.

Eugene "Democratic Herald," March, 1859, published by Alexander Blakely and then by Anthony Noltner.

Albany "Oregon Democrat," November 18, 1859, published by Delazon Smith, who early that year had been Oregon's short-term senator and was defeated for reelection in September, 1859; name changed to "Inquirer" in 1861, P. J. Malone, editor.

These newspapers represented the southern secession wing of the Democratic party, which in 1860 followed Breckenridge and Joe Lane against Douglas and Lincoln. The "Occidental Messenger," later the "Oregon Weekly Union" of James A. Slater, was the most defiant and radical advocate in

Years Add to its Value

By HARRY B. CARLIDGE
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THE entire personnel of the Oregon City Morning Enterprise joins with me in heartiest greetings and congratulations on this anniversary occasion to the venerable Statesman. A newspaper, like a true statesman, grows in value in proportion to its ripened experience.

What can one say on this occasion that has not been tritely said of newspapers in general in one manner or another over and over again? The Statesman needs no generalized eulogy. Down through the years it has forcefully and eloquently spoken for itself.

Established prior to state admission, it watched over the birth of the constitution, and rocked the cradle of Oregon. It guided its first faltering steps; has grown with it, suffered with it, rejoiced with it; advised, cautioned, scolded; encouraged, defended, praised—until today a great newspaper and a great state go forward day by day with that understanding that comes only from long, honest, helpful association.

In 1854 we find The Statesman advocating the holding of a convention to form the state constitution. It urged that this was the only way to get needed harbor improvements, lighthouses and railroads. The printed sheets of its historic files transport one as it were a fairy carpet of an Arabian. With moistened eye of emotional reminiscence we behold on every scale every human quality; everything that prompts exaltation; piques to bitter resentment and chagrin; everything that inspires pity, dread or anger; excites the sense of mystery and fear. Eighty years of gripping history chronicled under the inspiration of the moment.

So much for the past, which is said to be always secure. But what of the future? Whoever is content with the ideas of yesterday, the journalist must be equipped with the ideas of tomorrow. Reading The Statesman as I do daily, to me there is no question that the octagonarian is yet vital and awake to present day demands; and when the advancing world requires new standards it will be one of the first, judging by the present, to step from the ideas of tomorrow to the ideas of day-after-tomorrow. Again congratulations and best wishes!