

Press Builds State

Local Interests Aided by
Active Press Since 1846

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The helpful influence of the press in the development of a community or a commonwealth is not a matter of argument. From the very beginning, Oregon newspapers have been busy at the job of building up both their town and the commonwealth. All departments of the papers, not excluding the advertising department, have had a hand in furthering development. Many of the earlier Oregon newspapers, like those of the older parts of the United States, gave disproportionate emphasis to politics but still tried to keep an eye on the economic, social, and cultural phases of community life.

The first Oregon newspaper, the little twice-a-month Spectator, published, 1846 to 1855, at Oregon City, the first center of business and government in Oregon, started right out with the idea of building up the country. One of its earliest efforts to promote local progress was not so very exciting in form or content, but it was headed in the right direction. It read:

"The time has come for a thorough and complete organization of our city corporation. Our mayor and trustees are doing business in the right way. Our advice to them is, first: 'Be sure that you are right, then go ahead.' Gentlemen, dig up the stumps, grade the street, tax dogs, prohibit hogs—and advertise in the Spectator."

A sore economic point in early Oregon was the currency system—or lack of system. The provisional legislature had extended the commonwealth's legal tender to include besides gold and silver—treasury drafts, approved orders on solvent merchants, and good merchantable wheat at the market price. The Spectator then, in its very first issue, deplored that action, saying in part:

"Could we have our own individual choice of a legal tender, it should be the precious metals only, and to this we believe we will be compelled to come ultimately."

Besides thus standing for stable currency, the little paper warned

Oregonians against a precipitate rush to the California goldfields, which rush at first had a serious effect on Oregon's economy, draining the little commonwealth of its business and professional men, and forcing the final suspension of two of Oregon's first three newspapers. California, however, soon became a market for Oregon products to supply the great influx of population attracted by the mining development.

The Weekly Oregonian, launched at Portland Dec. 4, 1850, with T.J. Dryer editor, also cautioned its readers repeatedly against gold excitement. An excerpt from one of its editorial warnings:

"A word to the wise, etc. Let every man who can cultivate an acre of land stay away from the gold mines and do so; he will then make more money with less labor than ninety-nine out of a hundred who go to the mines. Look at the price of provisions, the quantity you can raise, the sure market at your door, and stay away from the gold mines."

This was in 1853, with gold excitement both in Oregon and to the north and to the south of the young territory.

Another of Dryer's editorials, published the next year, was a forerunner of William Allen White's famous "What's the Matter with Kansas?" editorial of the super-political nineties when he advised Kansans to "raise more corn and less hell." Dryer's concluding paragraph of an editorial on "hard times" gave the readers this warning:

"We must work for a less sum, and work more hours—produce more, purchase less and sell more, avoid litigation and exercise more economy, and the times will not be hard for any length of time."

Through the years the newspapers of Oregon have published a wealth of good ideas and suggestions from their readers in the variously titled department of "letters to the editor." This is by no means a new policy. Early in its career the little Spectator called for contributions from the readers. The response was rewarding.

A faithful and valuable contributor was Morton Matthew McCarver—who had already been a founder of Burlington, Iowa, and was to help found Linnnton, now a part of Portland, and later Sacramento and Tacoma.

Every forward move for the development of this commonwealth and the home communities has been promoted by an alert and energetic press.

In the rough pioneer days promotion of cultural development was less evident than it has since become.

Early cultural hunger was more or less satisfied with what few books, magazines, and newspapers the pioneers were able to bring from the East, with an occasional venturesome dramatic or musical road show touring the Coast, and with "local talent" productions and sessions of literary and debating societies. Scarcity of space and of qualified reporters held down this type of local reading-matter in the early years. Later the editors' shears reaped cultural material from the big eastern papers. Of recent years this field has been much better cultivated, and readable special treatment is accorded literature, science, and the arts in all the papers that have the space and the manpower.

Scornful critics in a previous generation used to quip that "anybody can run a newspaper." Editors would admit this, pointing out, however, that "anybody" could not run a good newspaper. Today, with higher newspaper standards and with much higher costs, not so many of the less qualified ones are trying it.

In the early days the obligation to promote the finer things of life was less thoroughly realized by editors than it is today. T. J. Dryer of the Oregonian, an editor well up to the best pioneer standards, published a scornful review—Oregon's first book review, by the way—of a book because it was written by a woman author (Margaret Jewett Bailey). "We seldom read books of feminine production," the paper commented, believing their (the females') province to be darning stockings, pap and gruel, children, cook-stoves, and the sundry little affairs that make life comparatively comfortable. This has all been changed for the better. The modern attitude, paraphrasing that famous old quotation, declares, "I am a newspaper, and therefore nothing human is alien to me."

City-builders feel that the news-



THE LEWIS AND CLARK SALT CAIRN, where members of the Lewis and Clark expedition rendered salt from sea water in 1805-6 in preparation for their return trek. The cairn was restored according to descriptions in the Lewis and Clark diary and is located on Lewis and Clark Way, Seaside.

papers are among their strongest supports in developing their communities into places that people deliberately choose as their homes. The good newspaper help bring in industries, promotes local physical improvements, labors for the improvement of conditions affecting health, education, culture, morals, and general welfare.

The newspaper can't "cover" everything, but it does its best in its news and editorial and feature columns. The other day this writer ran through one issue of about half of Oregon's weekly papers, taken at random, and found editorials dealing with the following subjects and in many cases providing community leadership:

Conservation, tax problems, city transit service, school problems, unemployment compensation, centennial beards, telephone service, fisheries, power dams, cemetery location, expanding local payrolls, Columbia River Development Corporation, regulation of special elections, county publicity, highway improvement and financing, sup-

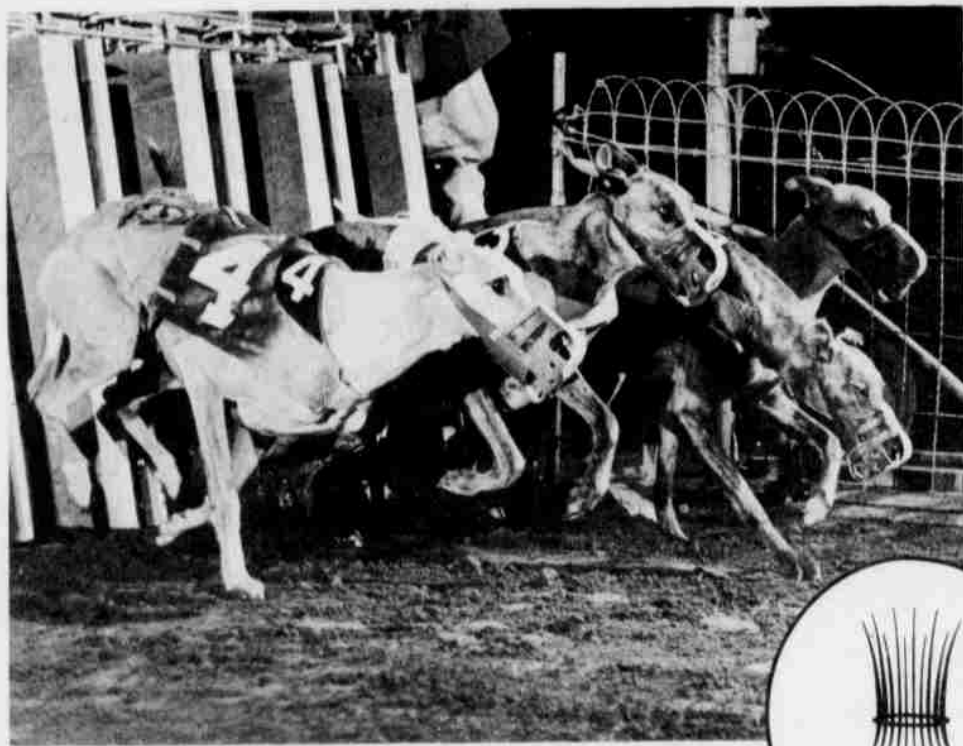
port for the Chamber of Commerce, community recreation, boost for the 4-H, promotion of county health council, development of industrial sites, defense of local shopkeeper.

Only a few of the papers carried no editorial comment. Regrettably, most of the editors who usually bypass that job are quite capable of stimulating thought in their communities.

If the power of the press were not so obvious, would there be so many publicity representatives working for corporations that can afford to hire them?

There are today 21 daily newspapers and 100 weekly and semi-weekly newspapers in Oregon. The combined circulation of the dailies is over 604,000 copies per issue and the weeklies go to over 200,000 subscribers each week. Families which do not subscribe to at least one newspaper are very rare.

In the winter of 1862, the Columbia river froze over in several places.



DISCOVER GREYHOUND RACING, the all-family entertainment this summer. Children are welcome at Fairview Park, new home of Multnomah Kennel Club overlooking the beautiful Columbia river. Fairview Park is less than 20 minutes from downtown Portland on the Banfield Expressway. Parking is free on 35 acres of handy, paved lots. Tasty food and beverages are available in the grandstand and in the Fairview Lounge.

YOUR WHOLE FAMILY will enjoy the color of the Parade to the Post... and when the speedy greyhounds break the starting box to chase "Rusty", the elusive, mechanical rabbit... it's a sight you'll long remember. ENJOY GREYHOUND RACING... the all-family entertainment.

50 NIGHTS OF RACING FROM JULY 9 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 26, EXCEPT SUNDAYS AND DURING THE MULTNOMAH COUNTY AND OREGON STATE FAIRS.

PARADE TO THE POST 7:30 P.M. 10 RACES NIGHTLY, RAIN OR CLEAR. ADMISSION 25 CENTS. CHILDREN UNDER 12 ADMITTED FREE. PARIMUTUEL WAGERING UNDER THE SUPERVISION OREGON STATE RACING COMMISSION.

MULTNOMAH KENNEL CLUB

at beautiful FAIRVIEW PARK

Is Proud to Participate in Oregon's

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

WE'VE GROWN WITH THE STATE. This is our twenty-seventh year of racing, and the growing popularity of this exciting attraction has made it the number one spectator sport in Oregon.

YOU'VE SHARED IN OUR GROWTH. Since 1933 Multnomah Kennel Club's contributions to the state from parimutuel wagering have totaled \$9,337,830.23. About one-quarter of this has gone into the state's general fund. The rest has been allocated to county fairs, the state fair and expositions throughout the state.

YOUR COUNTY FAIR has received \$166,328 of the above amount during this period. About seventy-five percent of this comes from greyhound racing alone! All told, county fairs throughout the state have received \$5,987,840 from racing through 1958. We're proud of this contribution to state and county expositions.



Multnomah Kennel Club 223rd Ave., Between Halsey & Glisan Sts., FAIRVIEW, OREGON