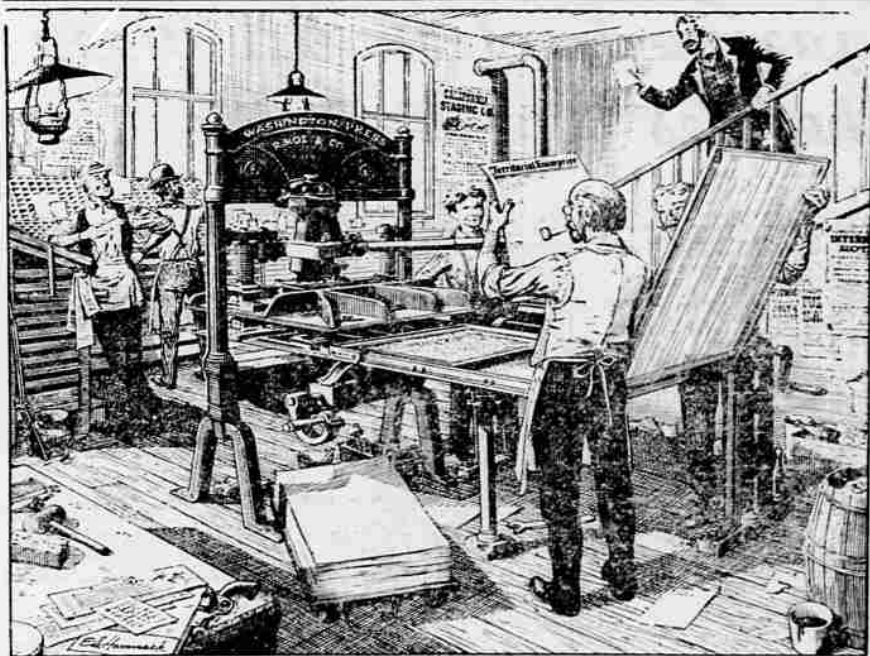




THE ENTERPRISE is still published from the same red brick structure on Virginia City's historic C Street that it occupied in 1864 when a young staff member named Samuel Langhorne Clemens first signed a story with the byline Mark Twain. The paper's mechanical equipment has been conservatively updated.

Territorial Enterprise Marks Anniversary With Appropriate Broadides

When, in the second week of December, 1958, the regular weekly edition of The Territorial Enterprise came off the press in storied C Street, Virginia City, Nevada, another centennial of the Old West had been achieved and a full cycle completed in the gaudy epic of frontier journalism.

The Territorial Enterprise, Nevada's first newspaper, made its original bow in December 1858 and in years to come achieved the status of a household name in the free-wheeling mining civilization that whooped it up in the name of gold and silver wherever from Leadville to the Mother Lode and from Alder Gulch to Tombstone. Eventually, like the names of Wells Fargo and Union Pacific, it became part of the folklore of the stagecoach years and a symbol of the West in the days of unfighting editors whose bloodstream was largely printer's ink and bourbon whiskey.

The Territorial Enterprise will, however, observe its hundredth birthday with comparative decorum. There will be a commemorative issue printed on book stock for libraries and collectors of Western Americana, felicitations from notables including President Eisenhower and probably an informal gathering of the staff in the Delta Saloon across the street, a premises where Enterprise editors have held editorial conference almost daily since 1864 when a young reporter named Samuel Langhorne Clemens first started signing stories in the paper with the byline Mark Twain.

"We have a certain dignity to maintain," says Lucius Beebe, speaking for himself and his partner in ownership of the newspaper, Charles Clegg, "and can't go around sleeping in gutters and doorways on our hundredth anniversary. We're just an old gentleman full of benevolence and Jack Daniels."

Things were not always thus. The day after the news of Appomattox Court House, The Territorial Enterprise suspended publication altogether. No editor was sober enough to write news copy, no compositor could hold a typeset and, as Joe Goodman, the then publisher remarked afterward, "there wasn't anybody in Virginia City could have read a newspaper if we'd printed one." On other occasions almost too numerous to remark, members of the paper's staff had to defend their persons and opinions with Colt's six guns and Goodman himself was participant in a formal duel over a political difference in which he griev-

ously maimed Tom Fitch, editor of the rival Virginia City Union. It was the threat of prosecution by the authorities for participating in a duel that eventually caused Mark Twain to leave Virginia City.

When The Territorial Enterprise made its first appearance just before Christmas in 1858 it was as a weekly published at Genoa, a swing station on the Pony Express route forty miles down Carson Valley from its eventual home. But the assays of seemingly inexhaustible riches in gold and silver along the fabled Comstock Lode, discovered the following year, beckoned. Its type cases and Washington hand press loaded on an oxcart, it arrived in Virginia City in 1860 and shortly was the richest, most powerful and easily the most celebrated newspaper, by now published daily, anywhere between Chicago and California.

Nineteenth century letters in Nevada, as elsewhere in the Old West were largely those of journalism and The Enterprise in its golden years boasted many celebrated staff members beside Mark Twain and Joe Goodman. They included Rollin Daggett, a notable Bohemian and wit who had previously been American Minister to the Sandwich Islands as Hawaii was then known. Judge Charles C. Goodwin, later a noted editor of the Salt Lake Tribune. Wells Drury who told the story of Virginia City in "An Editor On the Comstock Lode" and William Wright, who as mining editor of The Enterprise wrote under the name of Dan De Quille and became the ranking historian of Nevada with his celebrated book "The Big Bonanza."

The fortunes of The Enterprise rose and fell, now in bonanza, now in borrasca, with the mines and community whose destinies it chronicled. With the gradual closing of the great deep mines of the Comstock, the lights burned low in Virginia City and its great days of journalism and unfighting editors became only a memory.

Eight years ago, Clegg and Beebe, the latter a graduate of twenty-one years on the editorial staff of the New York Herald Tribune, came along and picked up the pieces. Sensing the coming boom in things Western and the potentialities of a near ghost town with an incredibly glamorous past, they reactivated The Territorial Enterprise, built a modern printing plant while maintaining editorial offices in the same red brick structure in C Street the paper has occupied since 1863 and set out to go places in a manner reminiscent of an older and bold-

er newspaper tradition.

Today they claim the largest circulation by ABC audit of any weekly newspaper west of the Missouri. Their payroll is the biggest in Storey County excepting only the county itself. The fame of The Territorial Enterprise has been the deciding factor in putting Virginia City on the map as one of the greatest tourist meccas in the West so that, in summer months, it is visited every week by more than 40,000 people, just a hundred times its permanent population of 400. And The Enterprise editorial page, where Beebe and Clegg disport themselves without any visible inhibitions whatsoever, finds itself quoted in metropolitan dailies and coated paper periodicals from coast to coast.

"In all the world there isn't a newspaper even remotely like The Territorial Enterprise," says Newsweek.

Editorially Clegg and Beebe are against almost everything, but especially against what they characterize as "the putrescent delusion of progress." They favor what they term "benevolent backwardness," deplore the flying machine and other manifestations of the alleged jet age, and their blood pressure mounts dangerously at mention of television, togetherness or taxes. When a ministerial group had the temerity to raise a voice against legal gambling, Nevada's prime source of revenue, The Enterprise noisily advocated the fingerprinting of all clergymen as suspect characters. When a civic group pointed out that a red light establishment (prostitution is a matter of local option in Nevada) was operating within 500 yards of a school in violation of municipal statute, The Enterprise coined its now famous battle cry: "Don't move the girls; move the school!"

"In an era when progress is generally considered a Good Thing," said The Wall Street Journal in a recent survey of the Enterprise's activities, "such an editorial policy makes for good reading and the subscribers come flocking. For that matter so do the advertisers. Thus, while the Messrs. Beebe and Clegg clearly have a high good time publishing The Enterprise it is also a comfortably profitable situation."

Besides its own prosperity, the newspaper's determined march into the nineteenth century has encouraged what might be termed the renaissance of Virginia City, a hairychested Gomorrah with a saloon for every twenty of its roughly 400 inhabitants.

As The Territorial Enterprise faces the second century of its not too tranquil existence, Beebe and Clegg believe they have a formula for journalistic longevity.

"Keep the moral tone low and the alcoholic content high and a newspaper may well live forever," they say. "The one horse chaise of the poem would never have come apart if its occupant hadn't been a deacon!"



CHARLES CLEGG, standing, and Lucius Beebe, editor and publisher, respectively, of the Territorial Enterprise as it begins its second century of publication as Nevada's oldest newspaper.

In the language of the timber-

man, softwoods are trees that bear cones; hardwoods are trees that wear broad, deciduous leaves.

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