

## GETTING THE NEWS

*In 1837 the New Albany Daily Gazette, a small 4-page newspaper, appeared on the street . . . the first daily paper in Indiana. That was 120 years ago and all through that long span of time New Albany has been served by a daily newspaper, and at times by two, recording for their readers the day-to-day events which add up to the history of a city.*

The history of New Albany's daily newspapers begins in 1837, but the city's first newspaper – a weekly – started publication in 1820 in a log building which stood at the corner of Main and Bank Streets, where the American Red Cross Building now is. This pioneer journalistic venture – the *New Albany Chronicle* – was published by Mason Fitch, one of New Albany's outstanding early citizens, and Ebenezer Patrick, who had previously published a paper at Salem.

New Albany, which had been a wilderness only seven years before, was apparently too tiny to support a newspaper because circulation totaled only 250 after a year and the *Chronicle* quietly suspended publication. But the copies of this paper contain much of interest. The New Albany resident could read, if he didn't know already, that Abner Scribner was suing Wendelin Wiestenfeld or that Sheriff James Besse was auctioning off the property of Mordecai Childs. And, of course, he read all the sordid details of the trial of John Dahmen for the murder of Frederick Nolte.

That murder case would have provided perfect material for New Albany's second paper – the *Microscope and General Advertiser* – which was probably one of the first scandal sheets published anywhere. The editor was Dr. T. H.

Roberts, who moved the paper to New Albany in September 1824, after he was driven out of Louisville by an angry mob for probing too deeply into private affairs.

In 1825 Roberts changed the name of his paper to the *Indiana Recorder and Public Advertiser*, and seems to have changed his editorial policy to a more sedate style. In 1827 this paper became a twice-weekly publication called the *Indiana Commercial Recorder*, but there seems to be no copies of it in existence.

Other short-lived early newspapers were *The Cresset*, established in 1828, and *The Aurora*, started about the same time. Then in 1830 the first really successful New Albany paper was established. This was the *New Albany Gazette*, a weekly started by three brothers, James, Henry and Thomas Collins. It was the first New Albany paper that espoused a political party –the Whig Party – which later was absorbed into the Republican Party.

This is the paper which became a daily in 1837 and continued publication for many years under various names such as *The Bulletin* and *The Tribune*, which had no connection with the present *Tribune*. It finally went out of business about 1860, was revived in 1864 as the *New Albany Commercial*, a Republican paper, and finally in 1870 was moved to Louisville as the *Louisville Commercial*, where it was published for many years.

The first Democratic paper in the city was *The Argus*, established in 1836. It lasted until 1841 and two years later the type and press was purchased by Phineas M. Kent who established the *Southwestern Democrat*. In 1849 the name was changed to *The Ledger* and daily publication was begun. *The Ledger* was an afternoon paper and *The Tribune* was published every morning. After 1870 when *The Commercial* was moved to Louisville, another paper, *The Daily Standard*, was established by Josiah Gwin. In 1872 the *Ledger* and *Standard*

were consolidated as *The Ledger-Standard*, but in 1881 the name again became simply *The Ledger*.

Another attempt had been made to start a daily paper in the 1870s when J. M. Griffin established *The Independent*, but after a short while it became a weekly. An earlier attempt by John Anderson, who operated Anderson's Collegiate Institute, to establish a daily, *The Morning Herald*, in 1854 also failed after a short while.

Josiah Gwin, who had started *The Standard* in 1871, began publishing the *Public Press* in 1881 – a weekly paper which had a large circulation and which continued in business until about the time of the first World War.

The present *New Albany Tribune* had its beginning in 1888 to fill the need for a Republican paper in the city. *The Ledger* continued as an afternoon paper until the early 1920s when failing fortune forced it to become a weekly. It continued until the 1937 flood caused such heavy damage that it was sold to *The Tribune*, but the name . . . the oldest in New Albany journalism . . . is continued in the *Sunday Ledger-Tribune*.

Several German papers were published in New Albany at various times. The most successful was the *Deutsche Zeitung*, published by Otto Palmer from 1875 until about 1905.

With the advent of radio broadcasting in the early 1920s, New Albany listeners had to depend on stations in Louisville and other cities for news and entertainment until 1936 when WGRC went on the air with studios in both New Albany and Louisville. After a few years, however, all operations were transferred to Louisville and New Albany was without its own radio outlet until 1949 when WLRP went on the air on June 1 with 1,000 watts of power.

Today the *New Albany Tribune*, the *Sunday Ledger-Tribune* and radio station WLRP are busy at work bringing the world to New Albany readers and listeners and providing a day-to-day chronicle of local events . . . the events that add up to the history of a city.

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