

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

EARLY NEWSPAPERS

The first newspaper for a hundred miles south of Jefferson City made its appearance in Vienna October 20, 1858. It was called the Central Missourian and carried the names of C. F. Walker as editor and Henry Lick as publisher. The subscription rate was one dollar a year. The files are incomplete, only a few copies being preserved.

No copy of volume one, number one is known to be in existence, but a copy of volume one, number two is in the possession of Walker E. Case of 3735 Manola Avenue, St. Louis, a grandson of Charles P. Walker who has permitted it to be examined. The date is October 27, 1858. It contains an item to the effect that one of our later-to-be prominent citizens was bound over to Circuit Court on a charge of felonious assault. The

chief interest of this issue to Vienna citizens, however, is that it contains the order of the County Court incorporating the Town of Vienna, and appointing Sam W. Reed, John Felker, N. H. Cansler, I. J. Jones, and John R. Owen as the first Board of Trustees. The land embraced in the incorporation was the south half of section 20 and the north half of section 29, township 40, range 9, a mile square. The Board evidently got busy at once, for following the order of incorporation are copies of the first six ordinances passed by them, as follows: Ordinance number one adopts the ordinances of the City of Jefferson, as published so far as same may apply, defining the duties of the officers of the new town. Number two prohibits routs, riots, and unlawful assemblies, or disturbing the peace by unusual noise, profane or obscene language or conversation or by tumultuous language or carriage, or by threatening, quarreling, traducing, scolding, fighting or challenging to fight, under penalty of from \$2.50 to \$20.00 fines. Number three prohibits card playing and selling goods or liquor on Sunday, under penalty of from \$2.50 to \$10.00. Number four prohibits the discharge of firearms within two hundred yards of the courthouse, under penalty of \$2.00 to \$5.00, to be paid by the parents, or the guardian or master in case of an infant, apprentice, or slave. Number five forbids driving through town faster than a trot or pace, 'except in emergency,' under penalty from one to five dollars, with the same provisions for payment as number four. Number six prohibits gambling with Negroes under a penalty of twenty to one hundred dollars for the white man, and five dollars for the Negro. The publication was to be continued in the next issue, which is not at hand.

The issue for February 26, 1859, was a four-page, four-column paper; the leading article was an address by Joseph Mosby, entitled "The Teacher's Mission," delivered before a meeting of teachers in January, 1858. The only local news item was a three-line notice of the

death of Mrs. Mary Ann Shinkle on February 19, 1858, age twenty-eight years and four days.

Among the local advertisements the firm of Jones and Bowen advertised a farm for sale, identified as the present T. J. Terry river land; Sudheimer and Hengest ran a blacksmith and wagonmakers card, as did A. J. and Jno. Martin; Mr. John Felker advertised he was quitting business and offered house, lot, and stock for sale for cash or on time; Thomas Anderson and V. G. Latham each requested persons indebted to them to pay up; C. J. Elrod and John Martin each published a stray notice; John R. Owen advertised a general store, and I. J. and T. J. Jones gave notice of dissolution of their partnership.

Professional cards were mostly of physicians at Jefferson City, but included those of Joseph Mosby, Buell Root, and Sam W. Reed, attorneys and Dr. V. G. Latham at Vienna; Samuel C. Williams, lawyer, is the only Phelps County professional card, his address being given as Little Prairie.

A letter from Chamois complains bitterly of some previous write-up of that city, largely devoted to two murders there; the controversy seems to have been over whether the murderers were from the bottoms or out in the hills.

The issues for April 24 and May 1, 1861, numbers six and seven of volume three, a four-page, five-column paper, carries the name of A. S. Petit as editor and publisher, but a note below it advised persons having business with the paper to communicate with C. P. Walker at the office of the Rolla Express. The subscription price remained at one dollar a year.

In this issue only one Maries County legal card appears, that of Abraham Johnson, lawyer; nine lawyers and two physicians of Rolla carry cards, also the legal firms of Pomeroy & Seay at Steelville and Shuck & Organ

at Salem; the professional card of Dr. A. S. Petit is the only one from Maries County aside from that of lawyer Johnson. The advertising situation is a complete change from that of 1859 when Jefferson City firms were the majority of all advertisers; final establishment of the Phelps County seat at Rolla, together with the completion of the Southeast Branch Pacific Railroad (now Frisco) to that point shortly before was the main cause of diverting Vienna business to Rolla. An interesting advertisement is that of B. H. Woodson, mail contractor from Rolla to Neosho, who assured the people that they can now travel from St. Louis to Springfield by rail and his coach line in three days and have a night's rest each night. A majority of other advertisements, outside of patent medicines, are for various kinds of liquors. One firm called attention to its stock of 5,000 barrels of whiskey, besides vast quantities of brandy, gin, cordials, etc., and offers to trade all or part of it for land (this firm is in St. Louis). A franker statement from a Rolla dealer refers to his wares as 'First Class Tanglefoot.'

The Rolla markets 'Carefully corrected every Saturday by D. R. Parsons & Co.,' (composed of D. R. Parsons and Chestine Miller) are noted as follows: By the bushel corn was 40 cents, wheat 90 cents, oats 40 cents, potatoes 65 cents, white beans \$1.00, green apples \$1.00, and dried apples \$1.50; eggs 8 cents per dozen; sugar by the barrel seven to nine cents a pound; coffee 17 cents, molasses 45 cents, and whiskey 28 cents per gallon; salt \$1.50 per hundredweight butter 12 cents, lard 9 cents, and tallow 7 cents per pound; bacon and ham 11 cents and feathers 30 cents; beef cattle two and one-half to three cents and hogs three to five cents on foot; nails were four to six cents a pound, and bar iron four and one-half to seven cents.

The news in the paper was mostly war news, the fall of Fort Sumter being the most important, followed by news of disturbances in Baltimore. Very little news of local interest was published, the only item of consequence

being the marriage of Mr. Walter Birmingham, and Miss Ellen O'Brien, on April 17th, solemnized by Father Gouldin. The paper was full of legal advertising, mostly Sheriff's sales in Phelps County. In fact, it appears to be more of a Phelps County newspaper than a Maries County one, and it is the supposition that when Mr. Walker went to Rolla to establish the Rolla Express that he took his printing plant with him and printed the Central Missourian there. Dr. Petit being a kind of branch-office manager at Vienna. The paper did not long survive the vicissitudes of wartime and 'folded up' before the middle of the conflict, Dr. Petit moving elsewhere and Mr. Walker devoting all his time to his paper at Rolla.

On February 14, 1873, volume one, number one of the Banner of Liberty made its appearance, published by J. M. (Myscal) Johnson and A. P. Rittenhouse. Their salutatory says that the Maries County Advocate plant was destroyed by fire after a brief career, and that they have acquired its remaining plant and good will. No copies of the Advocate are now known to exist, but it is thought to have been published by a man named Ellis.

Advertising continued to come largely from Rolla and Jefferson City, and a few St. Louis firms. The only Vienna advertising are the professional cards of Joseph Mosby and Johnson & Rittenhouse, Attorneys; D. B. Hall is a watchmaker; these and the card of the Smith House, J. M. Smith, Proprietor, completes the list. Items of local interest appear as news; the paper is rampantly Democratic and also takes a whack at the county warrant situation, Maries County warrants being below par.

The second issue, in addition to the above advertising, contains the saloon advertisements of John Murphy at Vienna, and of the Dixon Mills at Dixon, James Crismon, proprietor. James H. Cansler, Sheriff, advertises a sale of school land on April 16th. Final settlement

of the estate of Martha Hutchison is also noted.

The card of Lindon Marts, Justice of the Peace and General Collection Agent, appears in the third issue, as did a notice by the County Clerk to everyone--especially including lawyers--to bring back books belonging to the county library.

Among the news items in the third issue was quite a write-up of Maries County's iron resources; also an article in praise of the then Representative, Honorable E. J. Sorrell, for his resolution to not pay legislators unless they were actually present.

J. M. Johnson having died, A. J. Rittenhouse acquired his interest, the last issue of The Banner of Liberty appearing March 6, 1874. The issue of March 13th appeared under the name of The Vienna Courier, Rittenhouse & Rittenhouse, publishers, under whose management it remained until September 10, 1875, when it was sold to T. F. Stratton.

In the next ten or twelve years the paper had several owners. Bennett & Farrow succeeded Stratton in the early eighties, and they in turn sold it to John H. Diggs. Losing the paper after a trial in which he was accused of murdering Thomas Watkins, editor of a rival paper, it was published for a time by W. M. and A. Y. Barr, who sold it to Dabney Rainey, about 1887. Rainey operated it for thirty-five years or so. The name had been changed to The Maries County Gazette at the time it was acquired by the Barrs, which name it now bears. It is published by Madalyn H. Baldwin who acquired the interest of B. E. Colley, his father, C. H. Colley, having acquired it from the Rainey estate.

The Herald was founded at Vichy by Herbert & McCrae, publishers of the Rolla Herald, soon after the town was laid out. It was later published by Thomas Watkins and removed to Vienna, where Watkins and J. H. Diggs, publisher of The Courier, became involved in a

newspaper war over the county printing. As a result Diggs shot and killed Watkins. He was acquitted on the ground of self-defense after a sensational trial. The Herald was not published after the death of Watkins. Another paper was started in Vichy about 1890 by a man names Lewis, but lasted only a short time.

The Maries County Times, owned and edited by the Honorable J. G. Slate, started publication in Vienna late in 1895 or early in 1896. After several years publication under his management, and later that of E. L. Camp, the paper was moved to Belle, where its successor, The Belle Banner, is now being published by Norman B. Gallagher.

The Home Adviser, a weekly--as were all the other papers in the county--was founded about 1903 by Reverend John Fugel, Brinktown was the first publication office, the paper being moved to Vienna after some five or six years. It is still published by the original founder, the publishing name having been changed, however, to The Adviser Printing Company. Der Wegweiser, an edition of The Adviser formerly published in German, has been discontinued.