

## *Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles*

"Engine of Liberty"

Carroll County Times article for 12 September 1993

By Joe Getty

The earliest newspaper ever published in the area now comprising Carroll County was The Engine of Liberty and Uniontown Advertiser. This newspaper was published by Charles Sower during the years 1813 through 1815. The Historical Society has just released a publication of abstracts from the Engine of Liberty relating to the history of Carroll and Frederick counties.

The primary reason that Sower located his press in Uniontown was to support efforts to create a new county. Citizens of this area were petitioning the General Assembly to form a new county from portions of Baltimore and Frederick counties. The 1813 proposal designated Uniontown as the county seat for the new county to be called "Union county."

Establishment of a newspaper was integral to the political strategy for creating a new county. While the 1813 efforts failed, it helped to lay the groundwork for later proposals in the 1820s and 1830s. The next newspaper established in this region, The Carrolltonian and Baltimore and Frederick Advertiser founded in 1833 by Col. John K. Longwell, was instrumental in the success of creating Carroll County in 1837.

The abstracts from Sower's newspaper provide a unique view of local history documenting many aspects of daily life in this region. The entries and advertising covered a wide range of topics. Sower described his intentions in his prospectus:

"It shall contain the most interesting Foreign and Domestic Intelligence; a cursory view of the proceedings of this State Legislature and of Congress; Agricultural information; Essays on Moral and Political subjects; Anecdotes; Poetry; &c. &c."

The newspaper followed the format that was traditional for the 19th century. The first page usually contained national news and general interest items. Page two contained state news, political items and editorials of which many were reprinted from other papers throughout the nation. Most of the local items appeared on page three along with the majority of local advertising. Page four featured literature, essays, and poetry. Advertising appeared on all four pages.

The major news story during this time period was the War of 1812 and articles reprinted from other newspapers about wartime activities appear throughout these editions. Sower also supported the political movement of "Federalists" through essays and editorials. In fact, an incident that arose over a Sower editorial in Norristown, Pennsylvania, probably instigated Sower's relocation to Maryland and establishment of a newspaper in Uniontown.

Charles Sower (1789-1820) was the fourth generation of a distinguished family of printers in America. His great-grandfather, Christopher Sauer (1695-1758), established a German-language press in 1738 and his production of almanacs, newspapers and a German Bible at Germantown, Pennsylvania, is well documented in historical literature. Charles' grandfather, Christopher Sauer (1721-1784), carried on the family tradition in printing and is known for his political and religious editorials.

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In the third generation of Sauer/Sower printers, David Sower (1764-1835) was a well-known Philadelphia printer and bookstore owner who relocated to Norristown, Pennsylvania, in 1799 to establish the Norristown Gazette. In 1808, his son Charles took over the operation of the Norristown newspaper. In a satirical editorial of 1812, Charles excoriated a Philadelphia militia company for its incompetence. In response, the soldiers raided the newspaper's printshop in Norristown and destroyed Sower's equipment. Sower sold what remained of the Norristown business and moved to Maryland. Charles Sower quickly became influential in the local political life of Piedmont Maryland. He represented the Federal Republicans on local committees and served as the secretary of the committee that was organized to promote the formation of the new county. When this committee's efforts failed, Sower sold his newspaper to John Harris. He relocated to a larger market in Frederick City where he established the Star of Federalism in March 1816. He continued the publication of this newspaper until his death in 1820.

The collection of the Engine of Liberty and Uniontown Advertiser was donated to the William J. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, by William Randolph Taylor. Taylor's mother, Caroline Augusta Sower, was a lineal descendant of Christopher Sauer of Germantown. The abstracts published by the Historical Society include any items published that relate to the local history of Frederick and Carroll counties. If you would like additional information about this publication, call the Historical Society at 848-6494.

Photo Caption: This illustration of the masthead of the Engine of Liberty and Uniontown Advertiser appears on the cover of a recent publication produced by the Historical Society of Carroll County. This newspaper, which was the first in Carroll County, was published in Uniontown from 1813 to 1815.