## A HISTORY OF PUBLICATIONS IN GREENVILLE COUNTY

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To fulfill an assignment one should look first at what the words in the charge mean. History is defined by the Merriman-Webster Third New International Dictionary, unabridged, as "a narrative of events connected with a real or imaginary object, person or career." Publication is explained by the same dictionary as "communication (as of news or information) to the public public announcement, proclamation, specifically legal notification."

A great amount of latitude is inherent in those definitions. For the purpose of this monograph, however, history is defined rather more narrowly and publications somewhat more sharply angled. There is a practical reason for the limits to be presented here; there is a paucity of information readily available about the subject with the exception of newspapers, and the author admits to a bias.

Detractors have called them fish wrappers or liners for bird cages. They have little value past the day of publication except for a place in archives of libraries and a look today at what yes-terday was like. The late governor of Georgia, Eugene Talmadge, called them repeatedly "them lyine newspapers."

called them repeatedly "them lying newspapers."
Greenville County has a rich history of newspapers. Best evidence is that the county's first newspaper appeared July 12, 1826 – nearly 167 years ago.' However, an advertisement in a city/county directory for 1883-84 claimed that the Enterprise and Mountaineer was established in 1824.' That date is in disagreement with other authorities who said the Mountaineer debuted in January, 1829. It may be that a hand-written newspaper preceded both the Republican and the Mountaineer, although there is no evidence of this.

 Rhea T. Eskew began his career as a reporter with United Press International. In Greenville, he served as president of the Multimedia Newspaper Company, from which position he is now retired. This paper was presented to the Greenville County Historical Society on May 16, 1993. Hand-written newspapers did exist; the Carolina Rebel appeared January 28, 1863³ and was circulated from Columbia. What is generally believed to have been the first newspaper in the world was a hand-written affair which was issued daily in Rome and first appeared in 59 B.C. It was the Acta Diurna and was hung in prominent places throughout the ancient city.<sup>4</sup>

Probably the first newspaper in this country was the Boston News-Letter which came out in 1704 on a regular basis as a weekly.<sup>8</sup> It is likely that the first newspaper in South Carolina was the South Carolina Gazette in Charleston, which published first in

August of 1778, and lasted only two years.6

The Greenville Republican was published each Wednesday morning and proclaimed itself "the voice of union sentiment." Those were the days of angry voices debating the policy of nullification and the political character of its principal advocate, John C. Calhoun, who declared that the states were sovereign entities. In 1832 the state legislature adopted an ordinance nullifying the 1828 and 1832 tariffs which had penalized the South."

Although the ordinance later was repealed the seeds of political dissension and economic turmoil remained. In July, 1832 the pro-nullification weekly, The Southern Sentine® appeared with the motto "Quick to Discern and Ready to Defend." Turner Byrnum was the editor and he vigorously attacked the staff of the Greenville Mountaineer. B. F. Perry was the editor of that publication, and the differences in political stance led to a duel between the two newspapermen.

On August 16, 1832 Perry and Bynum met on an island in the Tugaloo River. Perry's first shot mortally wounded Bynum

who died the following day.

Not too surprisingly, the Greenville Mountaineer in its edition of August 18, 1832 did not report either the duel or Bynum's death. The mechanics of putting together a newspaper in those days did not lend themselves to a quick turnaround between occurrences and publication. The Southern Sentinel appears to have died with its editor; the only copy readily available is located on microfilm at the Clemson library.<sup>10</sup>

John Hammond Moore in his book, South Carolina Newspa-

pers, lists 107 names, or permutations thereof, of newspapers published in Greenville County between 1826 and 1988. That number encompasses a spectrum of political, economical, religious and ethnic bias.

The Southern Sentinel and Greenville Mountaineer illustrate the point. Cohen's Weekly is another, and it appeared on April 22, 1926. In a front page article the publisher proclaimed this: "For a long time we have had an idea that we would like to get out a little paper. At last we have decided to do so. This paper is sent to your door by the Cohen Company and is free. Don't pay for its."

The flavor of this weekly can be tasted through a front page article in its second issue. In appeared, unsigned, on page one under a two column picture of Max Cohen and reported: "Our buyer, Jack Cohen, has just returned from the big city. Jack Cohen is a man that (sic) knows how to buy and what to buy. He never pays the asked price for an article.""

This newspaper, which did not live up to the word "news", had no byious mission and that was to sell goods for the Cohen stores. One of its advertisements affords a glimpse of the times: "Pins, 360 for 3 cents; Men's fine wash ties, 35 cents; Men's oxfords, 55 value only \$2.95." Today, nostalgia possibly would be the only value it has, and despite its physical appearance in modern times it would have been called an advertising supplement.<sup>12</sup>

Political fervor was evident in the Southern Sentinel and the Greenville Mountaineer. B. F. Perry who dueled his adversary Bynum later became a co-editor and co-publisher of the Southern Patriot which proclaimed in its issue of July 18, 1851 that it was "Devoted to Agriculture, Arts, Commerce, Literature, Manufacturers (sic), Science and Politics," as well as "The rights of the South and the Union of the states." Letters played a prominent role in these early publications. In fact, almost the entire front Page of the Southern Patriot of July 18, 1851 consisted of such letters. Many were in fact news reports, a common manner of circulating details of events in newspapers of the day.

In its issue of March 10, 1853 the Southern Patriot also published poetry and postal rates. One poem, unsigned, is repro-

duced here in its entirely under the headline:13
THE BRANDY SELLER

Of all the crimes that have ever been Retailing Grog is the greatest sin

Postal service in the mid-19th century was a vital and unique part of business and social life. The Southern Patriot reported the cost of letters destined for no more than 3,000 miles distance was three cents pre-paid and five cents unpaid. It was interesting that an unstamped letter would be delivered but at a higher rate the cost presumably borne by the recipient. Newspapers and periodicals were charged one-half cent for the first three ounces and one and one-half cent for each subsequent ounce. Taxpayers even then were subsidizing the cost of mailing information. <sup>14</sup>

An indication of how pervasive postal service was in earlier days is illustrated by the 1883-84 issue of the City-County Directory which listed 36 post offices in Greenville County. Among them were offices in Alba, Reedy River Factory, Sandy Flat and White Horse. 15 By contrast there are 14 post offices in Greenville County today. 16

The Southern Patriot was both a weekly and tri-weekly publication. It cost \$3 a year "if paid in advance" and its edition for May 10, 1851 carried a headline reading: "The Largest Slaveholders," naming them as Nathaniel Heyward, Col. Wade Hampton, Governor Aiken, Col. William A. Alston and Col. Williams of Society Hill. It said many were opposed to seccession "and all are subscribers to the Southern Patriot."

It also stood against the "Anti-Republican, ruinous and corrupting policy of South Carolina continuing in the hazards and speculation of Banking."

In addition to these proclamations, the Southern Patriot did indeed print news of hard fact. It listed President Millard Filmore's salary as \$25,000, Vice President W. R. King's at \$5,000 and each cabinet officer's pay at \$6,000. The newspaper also reported that it "has originated with and belongs to an association of gentlemen who own nearly a thousand slaves and are worth several hundred thousand dollars. It will be issued on superior paper neatly and beautifully printed with new, clear type."

olne of the more popular names for newspapers in Greenville County is Mountaineer, and it is one of the most enduring. It seems to have appeared first in January, 1829 and subsequently in combination with other titles or standing alone at least 11 times. If One of the latest incarnations well-known to historical society members is The New Greenville Mountaineer.

The rich brew of Greenville newspapers includes at least one of extremely esoteric appeal. It was The Southern Herald and Working Man which was published simultaneously in New York and in this county. In its issue of January 1, 1876 the editors announced that it would be "issued semi-monthly from New York and Greenville, S.C. and circulated throughout America and Europe in the cause of immigration to the South and the General Prosperity of the country." That statement of purpose was signed by one Tilman R. Gaines at 29 Broadway, New York.

That issue also included a lengthy statement by John McGuigan who with his son was identified as an immigration agent located in Greenville. This report began with these words: "We are well aware that, as Agent for Immigration, we have been misunderstood and wronged by certain persons in South Carolina; and these persons by persecuting the Agent instead of helping him on the work have injured his, as well as their own cause, and retarded the creat work."

There were others of narrow appeal: The Cotton Plant published monthly by Williams and McKerall and which proclaimed itself an agricultural journal, and The Weekly Flag<sup>20</sup> which made its debut January 10, 1879 and the masthead of which revealed that it was "Edited and controlled by the Executive Committee of the Grand Lodge, LO,G.T. of South Carolina." The initials LO.G.T. stood for the International Order of Good Templars, and in its first issue the editors said it was "a real live temperance Paper."

As if to reinforce that description, The Weekly Flag exhorted its readers in this manner: "Brothers and Sisters let us rally round the Flag and never allow the 'Army of Alcohol' to rejoice over its downfall."

A number of newspapers targeted for Blacks has been pub-

lished in Greenville. One of the earliest was Lancet which started in 1890 and ceased operations in 1891. Others include Greenville World which began in 1932 as a weekly and continued until 1941 and Black Star another weekly which published on an "irregular" schedule starting in 1976 and which survived for what must have been a short time. "One report is that Black Star is still publishing but in Columbia with some circulation in Greenville."

In 1973 another Black newspaper started in Greenville under the ownership of Hezekiah Simmons and John Bishop. It's name was Focus which later was renamed Focus News. According to L. R. Byrd Focus News experienced financial difficulties and the Greenville Chamber of Commerce, which did not want the newspaper to fail, brought him in to help as a consultant. Byrd is now a personality on WFBC radio with his own weekend call-in show. Focus News ceased publishing, according to Byrd, in 1988 or 1989. Another source reported it died in 1981 although it is likely that was the date on which it renamed itself Focus News.<sup>34</sup>

At least four other Black newspapers had beginnings in Greenville County: People's Record, 1901 to 1909; Greenville World, 1932 to 1941; Greenville American which started in 1952 and disappeared on an unknown date, and the Carolina News Guide which published from 1963 to 1964.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most enduring of the special interest newspapers is the Baptist Courier. Its city of publication changed from Columbia to Greenville in 1878 when it still was a commercial venture under A. J. Hoyt. It has a wide circulation today guided by its respected editor John Roberts.<sup>26</sup>

A Methodist church newspaper, The Southern Christian Advocate, was established in Charleston in 1837 but was published in Greenville on two occasions – 1885-1889 and 1912-1914.<sup>27</sup>

A mystery which this researcher was not able to resolve to his satisfaction is where did the earlier newspapers obtain one of only a handful of absolutely essential ingredients to publishing. That is the paper on which newspapers are printed. There is very little information on this subject pertaining to South Carolina. For most of this century it can be assumed that newsprint has

come from wood fiber the source of which is abundant in the South and which has led several of the world's largest newsprint producers to locate mills in the region.

It is also most likely that paper used in South Carolina for nespapers published in the early 19th century was made from rags, if you will. What is known is that Vardry McBee built a paper mill south of Greenville on the Reedy River at what was later named Conestee, and that the mill was put in operation between 1835 and 1836.<sup>38</sup>

The Charleston Courier in its edition of January 9, 1832 contained this report: "We regret to learn that the Paper Mill of Mr. White near Columbia [the only one in the state] has been destroyed by fire." The following day, the Courier elaborated: "On Wednesday night last, the 5th instant, about eleven o'clock, the mill was discovered to be in flames. It seems to have taken in the loft from a flake or spark of fire that passed from one of the chimneys, in both of which there is obligated to be fire kept day and night. Unfortunately not a cent was insured" and the loss was placed at a total of \$20,000.<sup>29</sup>

Another report said that paper was "being manufactured near Columbia in 1827 and probably for some years previously and at one time or another at several places in the up country." 30

Today, Bowater operates a newsprint mill near Rock Hill and its American headquarters recently moved from Greenwich to Greenville. How, who and where paper was made in South Carolina for newspapers and other purposes might be the subject for another report.

The newsprint industry today is not prospering. The cause is simple; the page count - number of pages printed for each edition - has decreased markedly since 1989. Also, the number of newspapers has declined since the early days of this century. This has come about principally because of the disappearance of afternoon newspapers or their merger with morning editions. These problems for newspapers have been exacerbated by the softness of the retail sales markets and that directly affects newspaper advertising.

In other times, before the advent of radio in the 1920's, people

got the preponderance of their news exclusively by way of the printed word. The debut of television in the 1950's created even more problems for newspapers. Today, the population of this country gets its news first from TV. Being first is not all, however, and many newspapers are experiencing circulation growth as readers discover that TV cannot explain the complex issues of society in sufficient detail to slake their thirst.

Many newspapers published in Greenville county came but

only a handful stayed.

The Greenville Republican, the second by this name published by Absolom Blythe, solicitor of the Eight Judicial Circuit, started in 1873. It claimed to be the first newspaper published in the city of Greenville proper. In June, 1874 the newspaper got new proprietors, James M. Runion and J. Mims Sullivan. Robert Woody, in his book, Republican Newspapers of South Carolina, observed in a footnote that Runion was auditor and subsequently treasurer of Greenville County. At its origin this newspaper was a voice of the Republican political party. That voice had to have been a somewhat muted one as its support came from a population largely devoted to the Democratic Party with the exception of Blacks, few of whom could read. Woody reports that the Greenville Republican was "subsequently sold to The Greenville News."

Here is a list, partial no doubt, of other newspapers pub-

lished in Greenville county:

1876-76 Daily Enterprise, the daily edition of the Enterprise and Mountaineer

1887-88 Carolinian

1876-81 Greenville Advertiser
1891-91 Semi-monthly Adver

1891-91 Semi-monthly Advertiser 1891-95 Greenville Democrat, a daily 1900-00 Evening Observer, a mill paper

1907-10 Mill Workers' World

1911-present Fountain Inn Tribune Times (now published by Greenville News-Piedmont Company)

1917-present Greer Citizen 1918-61 Mill Life

1918-25 Bridge, a monthly published in Piedmont

1925-67 Parker Progress

1963-64 Carolina News & Guide 1965-69 Middle Earth Free Press

1967-71 People's Paper, published in Taylors

1979-80 Berea Regalia<sup>32</sup>

This roster does not include a number of so-called supplemental publications sired by the Greenville News-Piedmont Company. They include the Poinsett Register, a descendant of an earlier one called County Fare and one named simply The Paper, a more-than supplemental publication circulated in Spartanburg by the Greenville newspapers.

The Yellow Pages of this year's telephone book. Issts six psyapers published in Greenville county – Edge Magazine, Iwanna, a so-called shopper, the Piedmont Post, the Piedmont Trading Post and The Greenville News and Greenville Piedmont.

Such directories serve up an interesting mix of information. The Greenville Business Directory for 1860-81 listed seven newspapers including the Air-Line Directory, the College Mirror (a publication of the Judson Literary Society) and the Baptist Courier. It is doubtful that the Air-Line Directory would be classified today as a newspaper.

The 1888 City/County directory listed five – Daily News, the Carolinian, Enterprise & Mountaineer, Baptist Courier and Cotton Plant. The 1902 City/County directory also listed five newspapers – Baptist Courier, The Carolina Odd Fellow, the Cotton Plant, Furman Echo and Greenville Daily Herald. 35

Since directory publications depend heavily on advertising it is not surprising that some which might not have paid the going rate were not listed.

It is not the purpose of this paper to render the audience senseless by a dreary recitation of names and dates, but it seemed essential to impart enough information to show what a wideranging, series of publication titles Greenville County has been host to and over how many years.

A sampling of reports in Greenville's newspapers is revealing if nothing else. The Parker Progress, which has a 42 year history, has a physical appearance of a modern publication. It was published every Friday "for Textile and Suburban Greenville." A sense of the times can be gleaned from a front page report in its edition of September 16, 1927: "Pointest Clan #26 of the Order of the Ku Klux Klan will hold a district meeting and celebration in this city on Wednesday, September 21. The Grand Dragon of the state KKk will be present...."

In its issue for March 6, 1886, the semi-weekly Mountainer told its readers that "Col. C. J. Elford has just returned from Washington bringing with him 400 executive pardons for that many individuals in the state." The origin of that news was contained in President folinson's Annesty Proclamation. 38

The Greenville Daily News on November 7, 1875 reported that "between 7 and 8 o'clock last night, Tilman Acree, the notorious horse thief and alleged murderer broke jail and succeeded in making his escane." <sup>39</sup>

The Southern Herald and Working Man revealed in its edition for January 1, 1876 that although time passes many questions of social concern remain the same. It reported on President Grant's message to congress delivered December 12, 1875. Grant said that he wanted to have Congress consider items "of vital importance which may be legislated upon and settled at this session." Among those points were five items: 1) that all states afford the opportunity of a good common school education to every child; 2) no tax monies to be used to promote sectarian tenents; 3) declare church and state forever separate and distinct but each free within their proper spheres and [a radical proposition - the research's comment] that all church property shall bear its own proportion for taxation; 4) drive out licensed immorality, such as polygamy and the importation of women for immoral purposes, and 5) enact laws to ensure a "speedy return of sound currency."40 Those were rather radical and liberal suggestions then and some would be considered so today.

One can speculate on how those suggestions fared. That 44th congress had 74 senators with the Republican party in a majority by 11. There were 292 Congressmen with a Democrat majority of 63.

Newspapers in the 19th century were lusty and aggressive

and their editors often went after their competition as forcefully as they did political and social concerns. For example: The Greenville Daily News in its edition of May 26, 1897 contained an editorial headline "De Gustibus" and it said, in part - "The Baptist Courier is respectfully reminded that it was in excerable taste and utterly useless as well for it to be the first to draw attention to a coincidence in time between a warm political controversy between this paper and a public official and a recent sad occasion in this city." The fuss was between the News and Tilman with the Caurier chipping in with what the News called outside issues about the dispute."

Many newspapers sailed close to the financial wind in those days. The Greenville Democrat on February 14, 1894 printed a special notice which said: "As we are in need of money, subscribers to the stock of the Greenville Democrat, or the Paper, are urged to come and pay their indebtedness." "G. A. Norwood was president of the company then with B. M. Shuman treasurer and John C. Bailev editor.

The Greenville Piedmont traces its ancestry back to 1826 and the Republican. That is a fair appraisal, but if one were to draft a family tree of the newspaper some of its limbs would be twisted and some would have to account for the several interruptions in

publication and mergers.

In contrast The Greenville News has a more straight-line history although it, too, underwent changes in ownership, modifications to its flag and shaky financial times.

A. M. Speights started the Daily News in 1874. It was called "a vigorous fighter against the scalawags and carpetbaggers" and it supported the straight Democrat party ticket. The Columbia and Charleston newspapers in those days advocated split vote

among Democrats and Republicans.43

At the end of its first year, circulation was about 500. It was a four column newspaper which was hand-set by two printers who could handle the entire content. The population of Greenville County was 22,675. Typesetting equipment would not be installed until 1884.

Later in the year of founding, the Daily News was sold to a

Greenville business firm, Gower, Shumate and Reilly. The circulation price was \$6 annually in advance and that must have been a contributor to is shaky financial situation.

In 1880, the newspaper was purchased by Lucas and Richardson, Charleston stationers, who installed J. F. Richardson as manager. In 1888 the Daily News became a stock company and Col. James L. Orr was elected president. "At the turn of the centry, it was still losing money and was sold to D. A. Tompkins and J. P. Caldwell who owned the Charlotte Observer." Even so, on July 5, 1909, it began a Monday edition never before having published on that day."

The modern era and days of success were ushered in on March 1, 1916 when B. H. Peace was named business manger. Up to that point, the newspaper had accumulated a debt of more than \$40,000.00 In 1919 Capt. Ellison A. Smythe, a textile executive and major stockholder, offered to sell to Peace who served as publisher from 1919 to 1934. He was succeeded by his son Roger who remained in that post until his death on August 20, 1968. B. H. Peace's other two sons Charlie and B. H., Jr., were associated with the News throughout their lives.

It was Roger Peace who convinced his father, B. H., to buy the Greenville Piedmont in 1927, giving the county and the area their first morning and afternoon daily newspapers under common ownership.<sup>48</sup>

B. H. Peace, Sr. ushered in the modern era of newspapering in Greenville. Roger Peace, assisted by Kelly Sisk, refined his father's success, and in 1967 led to the formation of a stock company, Multimedia, Inc. Although the Peace family – in addition to his two brothers Roger had three sisters – retained a substantial financial interest in Multimedia, the direct ownership of The Greenville News and Greenville Piedmont ceased with the formation of Multimedia.

In the 73 years since B. H. Peace, Sr. became publisher of the News and subsequently the Greenville Piedmont the newspapers have had only six men to hold that title. Steve Brandt, the current publisher, was named to that post in March of this year.

In 1981 there were 1,730 newspaper in the United States. In

1991 there were 1,586. In March, 1983, the combined circulation of Greenville's two daily newspapers was 106,622. In March, 1993, the total was 120,799. In 1992, The Greenville News was the fastest growing newspaper in South Carolina.<sup>69</sup>

There are doomsayers among critics of the press who predict that newspapers will disappear within the first quarter of the next century. Ted Turner of CNN fame believes it will happen sooner, but then he predicted that newspapers would die within the past few years.

The most likely scenario, however, is that newspapers will be around for as long as people are interested in current events, and are interested in more than a cursory knowledge of those events and who like to read. For their part newspapers should remember the exhortation of the Chicago Times in 1861 when it said, editorially: "It is a newspaper's duty to print the news and raise hell." So

## **Endnotes**

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  - 16 Telephone interview with Postmaster's Secretary.
  - 17 Ibid.
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    - 36 Microfilm. op. cit., reel 404.
    - 36 Ibid.
    - 37 Ibid.
    - 36 Ibid.
    - 39 Ibid. 40 Ibid
    - u Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> History of The Greenville News, 1874-1950. Robert F. Stevenson Thesis. USC College of lournalism and Mass Communications, 1990.
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