

History
of
ORANGE COUNTY
FLORIDA

NARRATIVE AND BIOGRAPHICAL

By

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copies of 'Orange Echoes;' this mail has gone to practically every section of the world."

The rather remarkable spirit of harmony and cooperation which exists among the several communities of Orange County is no doubt due in large part to the work of the County Chamber of Commerce, and in particular to the genial and sympathetic spirit, the tactful manner, and the wise and comprehensive programs of its secretary, Dr. Karl Lehmann.

THE NEWSPAPER PRESS OF ORANGE COUNTY

The following account of the newspaper press of Orange County has been prepared in the main for this work by Mr. W. M. Glenn, owner and editor of the Orlando Morning Sentinel:

The early history of the Orange County Press is somewhat obscure. Journalism actively flourished intermittently in the county from the late 70's and continued to record and chronicle the events of a growing community during the hectic years brought on by a disastrous freeze in the early 90's, and continuing through two wars, those of 1898 and 1914.

Orange County journalism may be considered in three phases; that of 1880 to 1890, when the weekly was undisputed king of the Fourth Estate; from 1890 to 1910, during which there sprung up bi-weeklies and tri-weeklies, followed by a demand for a daily newspaper; from 1910 to the present time the daily newspaper has occupied the center of the stage.

During the nearly fifty years which we have under survey many papers came unheralded and as silently passed into the by-gone days of yesterday. Some of them seem justified and others occupied the limelight merely as organs of personal gratification and not with the evidently sincere purpose of serving the community.

The Orange County Reporter was established in 1880 by S. B. Harrington and was located in a frame building north of the present Armory. Conducted by Mr. Harrington for a period of two years, the paper passed under the control of the late Mahlon Gore who successfully conducted and published the Reporter until 1890. Mr. Gore came from Sioux City, Iowa, and is survived by Mrs. O. S. Robinson, a daughter, of Gatlin Avenue. Mr. Gore was one of the pioneers who not only gave of his talents to the newspaper profession but early saw the advantages and possibilities of real estate. It might be said that Mahlon Gore laid out the first subdivision that Orange County had, this being a tract of land on either side of Gatlin Avenue and bounded on the north by Lake Jennie Jewel and on the south by Lake Gatlin. In 1890, Mr Gore sold his interests in the publication to the late S. R. Hudson, who published the paper for a period of six years selling out to Josiah Ferris

in 1896; Mr. Ferris in turn sold the paper to the Reporter-Star Publishing Company, headed at that time by W. R. O'Neal, president, M. O. Overstreet, vice-president, N. P. Yowell, secretary and treasurer; they with T. P. Warlow and W. D. Yowell composing the Board of Directors. About 1912 the Reporter-Star passed into the hands of G. H. Walton of Richmond, Kentucky, and George Kellar, now representative of the Mergenthaler Linotype Company. In 1913, J. Hugh Reese of Miami became interested in the paper and later Messrs. R. B. and J. C. Brossier, Mr. Reese's brother-in-law. Save for the addition of Mr. J. F. Schumann as associate editor, the management of the Reporter-Star has been vested with the Messrs. Brossier since 1914.

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In 1895, the South Florida Sentinel, the forerunner of the present Orlando Morning Sentinel, was established by Latimer Clark Vaughn, and the plant was located in the old building on Pine Street which is north of the Baptist Church. This old two-story frame building housed the publication for a number of years, with the composing room on the second floor and the editorial and business offices on the first floor. Previous to his arrival in Orlando, Mr. Vaughn had published newspapers in Henderson, North Carolina and Marianna, Florida. It is to his credit that the first Campbell press which ever came to Orlando was brought here and installed. The Campbell press was the pride and joy of Orlando and many a person viewed the intricate, noisy and somewhat cumbersome press in action as it turned out a paper of huge proportions. Mr. Vaughn, who died two years ago, conducted the paper for a period of nine years, selling to Josiah Ferris, who came to Orlando from Tampa in 1885. Before coming to the City Beautiful, Mr. Ferris was on the case with Col. D. B. McKay, publisher of the Tampa Times. He was an intimate friend not only of Col. McKay but also of Col. W. F. Stovall, for many years publisher of the Tampa Tribune. With noteworthy distinction, Mr. Ferris successfully conducted the South Florida Sentinel from 1894 to 1914, and in 1913 established the Orlando Morning Sentinel, published every day in the week except Monday morning.

Josiah Ferris, dean of Orange County newspaper men, is a stalwart soul who has given untiringly of his ability to the upbuilding of Orange County and Florida, ever mindful of the sacred obligations which rest upon the heart of every true and honest publisher. He put in the first telegraph service for a newspaper in Orange County, becoming a member of the International News Service in 1913 with the advent of the daily publication. In 1912, he purchased and installed the first perfecting press in Orange County, the Miehle; this was a flat-bed press and published four pages at one impression, the paper then being removed and the reverse side being printed. After that, the paper went through a somewhat crude folder and eventually made its way into the hands of the reader. The paper was six columns wide, each column being $13\frac{1}{2}$ ems wide. In 1914, Mr. Ferris was taken ill and the duties

of publication devolved upon Mrs. Ferris, who gave every ounce of energy to carrying on the arduous duties of a daily publication. During that time she was ably assisted by the late W. S. Branch, who contributed many editorials and conducted a column of light verse and terse sayings. In November, 1914, the South Florida Sentinel and the Orlando Morning Sentinel were sold to W. C. Essington of Noblesville, Indiana, and W. M. Glenn then of Indianapolis, with Mr. Essington as business manager and Mr. Glenn as editor. This partnership continued under the most pleasing conditions until July 15, 1925, when Mr. Glenn purchased the interest of Mr. Essington and became sole owner and publisher of the paper. The South Florida Sentinel continued its career as a weekly until the summer of 1916, when it ceased publication due to the fact that the public demanded a daily newspaper.

In the early 90's, hard times hit the land, and newspapers felt the pinch of financial and economical depression, reaching a climax during the panic of 1893, followed closely by a disastrous freeze which ruined the citrus trees of Florida. In this period, rival publishers forgot animosities and rushed to each other's assistance. In the case both of the Reporter and the South Florida Sentinel, many publication dates were missed, and it was during this period that the two Orlando papers consolidated for a brief period, becoming the Sentinel-Reporter, published by Messrs. Hudson and LaSalle, the latter representing Mr. Vaughn.

In the fall of 1890 the late Mahlon Gore made a trip to the west carrying with him a great many pictures of Florida. While in the west he spent an evening with Mr. S. R. Hudson, a former employer with whom he had worked in Kansas City, in the early 80's. Mr. Gore had purchased the Orlando Reporter, and in 1891 Mr. Hudson decided to visit Orlando and make a survey of conditions here with a view to buying the paper. Early in March, 1891, he came to Orlando, purchased the Reporter, and in April of that year returned to Orlando with his family and took over the paper. With him were Joe M. Rice, a reporter, and Geo. M. Munger, a compositor. In 1892 he started the daily Reporter, the plant being in a building on the lot where the Angebilt Hotel now stands. The late Chas. Wiemer was a reporter on the paper and Mr. Ferris was in the composing room part of the time. According to Mrs. S. R. Hudson and her daughter Miss Hattie Hudson, who reside in Orlando, Mr. Hudson's Reporter consolidated with the Sentinel in the fall of 1898 and the plant was removed to East Pine Street, the publication being called the Reporter-Sentinel. Mr. Rice went to Virginia and Mr. LaSalle represented Mr. Vaughn's interest in the Sentinel.

Some time previously to this, Mr. Hudson had purchased the Record, a paper published when he came to Orlando. The name was dropped from the Reporter when this paper was combined with the Sentinel. In 1905, the consolidation was discontinued, and Mr. Hudson moved the Reporter into the Rogers and Martin building, later selling to Mr. Ferris.

The Orange County Chamber of Commerce issues *Orange Echoes* monthly, at twenty-five cents a year.

The *Orange County Citizen*, a weekly paper, was originally published in Apopka, by Dr. Geiger, a Baptist preacher, who lived in that town and was held in high esteem throughout Florida. As a weekly publication it ranked with the best papers of the state for the moral tone of its editorial policy. Dr. Geiger was appointed to a traveling missionary position by his church, and found that he must dispose of the paper, much to his regret.

Hon. A. B. Newton of Winter Garden, representative in the state Legislature, bought the paper and removed it to Winter Garden. Mr. Newton, who previous to coming to Florida had been a county superintendent of schools in his native state, continued the high-grade policy of the *Citizen*, but as his business and legislative duties increased, he found it difficult to give the attention needed to the paper and, after several talks with Mr. C. E. Howard, who at that time was editor of the *Reporter-Star* in Orlando, agreed to sell him, stating that he did so only because of his acquaintance and agreement with Mr. Howard's policies; the paper was thereafter published in Orlando.

These policies, under which the paper flourished from first to last, were democratic, prohibition and absolutely independent, in character, three traits that distinguished its editorial policy; and as the paper was of the old-fashioned type of weekly, largely editorial in its sphere, it continued to be positive, rather than negative on the questions of the day.

After seven years of service, largely in the prohibition cause, the object of its publication having been attained, Mr. Howard, having many other duties, sold the paper to Arthur Ivey, a young reporter on the *Sentinel*, who after a time discontinued publication.

The *Democrat* was established in 1906, J. H. Holland Starbuck, editor and publisher; its life appears to have been brief.

There are many copies of the Orlando papers of the early days and the author of this historical sketch has perused a number of them brought to the office and treasured by various people. The *Florida Record* is very interesting. On Page 1 appear these words, "Title of this paper—The Orlando Daily Record." Then there appears a line, "March 6, 1893." It was of seven columns, 13 ems to a column, and measured 24 by 18 inches. On the editorial masthead appears the name of James Irving Crabbe, reporter, Florida Press Association, affiliated with the National Editorial Association. Then appears the subscription rates and "terms invariably in advance." The rates were, daily one year by mail, \$5.00 and weekly one year by mail, \$1.00. A copy of the old *Orange County Reporter* dated February 4, 1892, volume 14, number 47, whole number 723, has come to our attention, being loaned by F. S. Richards. The paper measures 22¼ inches by 29. The editorial

masthead reads "Mahlon Gore, editor, and S. R. Hudson, publisher." With the volume number and the serial number, the first publication of the Orange County Reporter would seem to have occurred sometime in the year 1878. On the editorial page appears this line, "one copy one year, \$2.00." In volume 13, page 9, whole number 633, published May 15, 1890, Mahlon Gore's name appears as editor.

One of the early publications was the Orlando Star, a tri-weekly. Volume 1, number 33, loaned to the author, was published Thursday, September 3, 1896. The price was three cents. On the left dog-ear of page 1 appears "for President W. J. Bryan of Nebraska," and on the right ear "for Vice-president Arthur Sewall of Maine." The Star was published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday; the subscription rate was one year \$2.00. In the paper dated Thursday, October 15, 1896, the names of W. H. Jewell appear as editor and W. F. Barnes as business manager. Two days later, October 17, the name of C. A. Weimer as city editor was added to the above. Perusing the Orange County Reporter for May 15, 1890, we discover a paper of large proportions; clumsy and difficult to handle, being $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches longer and five inches wider than the standardized paper of today, which measures 23 by $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The Reporter of that day was of nine columns, $13\frac{1}{2}$ ems to a column. In the thirty-seven year old paper, we find a schedule of the De Bary Line on the St. Johns River, leaving Jacksonville at 3:30 p. m. and arriving at Sanford at eight o'clock the next morning, also a schedule of the South Florida Railroad, with north-bound trains leaving at 6:35 p. m., 11:55 a. m., and 2:00 p. m. except Sunday, and at 11:40 p. m. daily; south-bound trains at 10:40 a. m., 3:18 p. m., 5:45 p. m., and 6:13 p. m. Also the "Tropical Trunk Line," the Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West System, only $5\frac{1}{4}$ hours between Orlando and Jacksonville; also the schedule of the Tavares, Orlando and Atlantic Railroad Company, with a schedule between Orlando and Tavares by way of Wekiwa, Apopka and Zellwood, trains leaving Orlando at 5:55 p. m. and 5:40 a. m., arriving at Tavares at 8:15 p. m., and 7:10 a. m. respectively, and leaving Tavares at 6:45 p. m. and 6:40 a. m., arriving at Orlando at 8:20 p. m. and 9:00 a. m.

In addition a time-table of the Orlando and Winter Park Railroad appears, the intermediate stations being Lakemont Park, Winter Park, Bonnie Burn and Rowena. The interesting information is conveyed that trains will stop on signal only at the Arcade, Concord Street, Orange Avenue, Fair Oak, Highland, Rowena, Rose Hill, Lake Mable, Bonnie Burn, Rollins College and Lakemont Park. Advertising appears by the Orlando Novelty Works, the South Florida Foundry and Machine Company, Curtis and O'Neal, and the First National Bank of Orlando, all these firms being in business in Orlando at the present time. There was considerable real estate activity in the early days. A large advertisement on the front page by the Sinclair Land Agency offers "high pine land in healthy locality, from \$2.00 to \$100 per acre," and

another by Mahlon Gore exhorts the reader to "get a home on the installment plan," and offers "homes for actual settlers, ten acre tracts, \$20.00 to \$50.00 per acre, according to situation and quality," concluding with the words, "now is the time. The winter of 1889 and 1890 will see these lands all taken by actual settlers. Come and make selections early;" "let no man make a purchase until he has carefully examined the situation; buy only good land, make only good improvements, and you will always be in the lead." W. F. Barnes & Company offer special bargains, but no prices appear.

There were no hypocrites in those days, for one finds fine liquors advertised for sale by Rogers and Martyn, who evidently conducted a cosmopolitan saloon in Orlando, with a line which stands out prominently to the thirsty hypocrite of today. "We pay special attention to the jug trade," it says alluringly; "we import our wines and liquors direct from Europe where we have a special agent. We buy in large quantities for cash, therefore we can sell in any quantity, large or small, as cheaply as any firm in the country and guarantee the quality to be as represented. Agents for several good brands of champagne, Scotch and Irish whiskey and direct importation of choice Ceylon tea. Why send away for your liquors when we can do as well for you here and you know who you are dealing with." The advertisement was marked "599-Y;" we do not know what this means, but we take it to mean that 5 stands for May the month of publication and the 99 means for the remainder of the year.

In the early days of 1890, phosphate was coming into its own in the southern part of Florida, and on the editorial page of the Recorder appears an analysis of phosphatic rock by Thos. R. Baker, professor emeritus in Rollins College who recently celebrated his ninetieth birthday. Interesting items such as these punctuate the journal under survey. "Sudden gust of wind blew down the file of the Citizens National Bank, and some pedestrians passing along at the time narrowly escaped injury as the file fell crashing to the sidewalk;" "excursion tomorrow. An excursion train will go through direct to Clay Springs without change." "A hail storm visited Apopka. Some of the stones were said to have been as large as hen's eggs." "Governor Fleming will deliver the annual address to Rollins College; trains over the Orlando and Winter Park Railroad will be run in such a way as to accommodate all who wish to go from here to attend the Commencement Exercises at Rollins College;" "truckers at Clermont are shipping tomatoes at from \$4 to \$8 per standard crate;" "from all accounts Cedar Key must be in a deplorable condition under the domination of a besotted and desperate mayor." "Thos. A. Johnston shot and killed Wm. Lee of Oakland in front of the First National Bank." Here comes the exciting part of the evidence collected by the reporter. "Lee said, 'G—d—y, I've got you now,' and when Lee got within several feet of Johnston he rushed his horse up and struck at Johnston with his hand. Johnston

then drew his pistol and as his horse fell, shot Lee in the right side, then turned his horse about and as both horses were running he shot a second time and Lee soon fell from the saddle. Johnston checked up his horse, came by Bill Johnston's house and told him he had shot Wm. Lee and then surrendered himself to the sheriff."

The names of Major M. R. Marks is given as mayor; John D. Broome as Judge of the Circuit Court; C. G. Butt as Judge of the Criminal Court; and J. L. Bryan as Judge of the County Court. W. M. Poage was pastor of the Methodist Church South, J. G. Patten of the Presbyterian Church, C. S. Farriss of the Baptist Church, J. Chris Williams of the Congregational Church, S. B. Carpenter of the Protestant Episcopal Church, F. M. C. Eads of the Methodist Church and J. J. Creed of St. James Catholic Church. J. W. Anderson was president of the Y. M. C. A.; James M. Lane was Worshipful Master of the Orlando Lodge number 69; C. O. Myers was High Priest, Eureka Royal Arch Chapter, number 7; Wm. H. Jewell was Eminent Commander of the Olivet Commandery, number 4; A. J. Mosteler, Odd Fellows and Carl Warfield, C. C. Knights of Pythias.

Buggies were selling from \$50 to \$150; saddles from \$3 to \$20 and bridles from \$1 to \$5. Rough pine lumber was quoted at \$11 per thousand feet. Good buggy horses were \$125 to \$200. Irish potatoes 35 cents per peck. Chickens 30 to 50½ cents per pound, eggs 20 to 55 cents per dozen, cow peas 10 cents per quart and strawberries from 10 to 50 cents per quart. Papers from which clippings were taken and mentioned in the Recorder were as follows: The Leesburger, the Floridian of Tallahassee, the Jacksonville Metropolis, the Pensacola News, the Fort White Boomer, the St. Andrews Messenger, the Belleview Blade, the Fernandina News, the Dade City Democrat, the DeLand Record, the DeLand Agriculturist, the Sumterville Times, the Key West Equator, the Sumterville County Times, the Volusia County Record, the Madison Record, the Florida Times-Union, the Mandarin News, the Palatka Times, the Ocala Banner, the Ocala Capitol, the St. Augustine News and the Leesburg Commercial.

Just recently there came into our hands the first three volumes of Lochmede, a publication printed by J. B. Henck, Jr., at Longwood. The first number was issued July 1, 1887, and the last June 28, 1889. It was more in the form of a magazine, being three columns wide, containing editorials, news items and advertising, all type hand-set. The main attention of the publication was devoted to Winter Park and Rollins College. There is no indication who was editor other than information under the masthead which advised that communications by mail should be addressed to Mr. Henck at Longwood, and that an office was maintained at Winter Park, with Charles J. Ladd in charge. The publication was entered at the postoffice at Winter Park as second-class mail matter.

The Winter Park Post was established by A. Ellison Adams; during Mr. Adams' service in the World War, the Post was issued by Mrs. Hiram Powers and Miss Emly Nichols. It was purchased by Mr. J. H. Wendler, who changed its name to the Florida Post, and whose ambitious efforts to make it the Republican organ of the state resulted disastrously to himself, the stockholders and the paper. The Winter Park Herald was then established by Mr. E. B. Mendsen and Dr. R. F. Hotard. On May 1, 1925, the Herald was purchased by Mr. William M. Traer of Jacksonville, who incorporated the Orange Press the following August. In April, 1926, Mr. Traer erected a fine building in West Morse Boulevard, and enlarged the paper to seven columns. Mr. Traer owns all the stock in the Orange Press, Inc.; the paper now has more than three times the paid circulation that it had when he bought it.

The students of Rollins College have for many years issued a weekly publication known as the Sandspur; the college also publishes Bulletins at frequent but irregular intervals.

Apopka has a long and interesting newspaper history, but it comes down to us in fragmentary condition, due to the fact that the files were not preserved; for this reason it has been difficult to get the record of the early publications.

The first paper published in Apopka was established by the Rev. Dr. Hughes, a Baptist clergyman from North Carolina who came here in the early 70's, with his brother-in-law, the Hon. J. J. Combs. This paper had a brief existence, though it gave evidence of considerable ability behind it. Then came Rev. Willis M. Russell and his son, Rev. A. M. C. Russell, Methodists, who founded the South Florida Citizen. The Florida Conference transferred Rev. Russell to another town and the paper passed into the hands of Rev. Frank A. Taylor, another Methodist clergyman, who lopped off the words "South Florida" from the name, the paper being known as the Apopka Citizen. Mr. Taylor sold the paper in a couple of years and the plant was moved to another town. At a later period, George Eugene Bryson established a paper here, but it did not last long; then came Walter S. Russell, now of Jacksonville, who for nearly four years published the Apopka City Union. Mr. Russell later established the Jacksonville Metropolis which was highly successful; he sold the paper at a good price and it became the present Jacksonville Journal. The next venture in Apopka was made by Fred H. Perry, who established the Apopka Advertiser which for a time was regarded as one of the best weekly newspapers in Florida. In spite of this fact, the paper had a hard road to travel; it was moved about, and was edited for a time by Mr. F. S. Witherby, the well-known Apopka merchant of today. There were other ventures here, among them the Apopka News, of which Mr. Witherby was business manager.

Next came the splendid Apopka Chief of today, established in 1923 by Major Albert M. Hall, an experienced newspaper man who came here from Maryland, but who for nearly forty years had labored in the daily newspaper field in New York state. The Chief has been a success from its first issue. It is a clean and attractive paper, edited with great care and ability and is quoted far and wide. A short time after its establishment, Mr. Hall organized the Apopka Printing Company, Incorporated, and an up-to-date building was erected in the business district and equipped with a linotype and modern machinery throughout. It was soon turning out high-class commercial work, including color and process work. Today its business is running \$50,000 a year. In addition to the Chief the company issues several other regular publications, weekly and monthly, including a high-class magazine. Mr. Hall is president of the company, Mr. William Edwards vice-president, Mr. D. F. Hall, secretary, and Mr. C. Ellwood Kalbach, general manager.

The Chief is independent in politics and holds to a high standard on all moral questions. It boasts that it goes into every home in Apopka and surrounding communities.

Hon. A. B. Newton established and edited the first newspaper in Winter Garden in the early 90's, under the sprightly name, the Ricochet. This was followed by various other ventures, among them the Orange County Citizen, which was moved from Apopka to Winter Garden by Mr. Newton, and later sold by him to Mr. C. E. Howard of Orlando, where it was published for several years. At present, the Winter Garden field is ably occupied by the Journal, which is owned by Mr. Howard Parker.

During the past three years, the Bithlo Tribune Company has published a weekly paper, printed in St. Cloud, devoted to the interests of Bithlo and eastern Orange County; it is edited by Claud F. Johnson, and the subscription price is two dollars a year.

Two papers devoted to the interests of the negro population, and edited by a capable and right-minded man of that race, were published for a number of years in Orange County, the Winter Park Advocate, which was carried on for some twelve years, and the Florida Christian Recorder, which was published for about fifteen years in Orlando. The editor and proprietor of both papers was G. C. Henderson, who died some ten years ago and whose widow is a teacher in the Orlando colored high school.

The latest paper to be established in Orange County is the Florida Republican, issued on the fifteenth day of each month in Orlando by the Republican Publishing Company, and edited by Mr. W. C. Lawson. The first number of Volume One is dated August 15, 1927.