CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRESS.

Few realize the influence of the public press upon the history of a community. It does, not, however, require much consideration to perceive its importance as a factor, acting in its dual capacity as a director and mirror of public opinion. It is easily seen, also, how important, particularly in the study of local history, it is to peruse carefully the columns of the newspapers, for through them we have not only the principal but often the sole means of a true understanding of conditions and development. Manitowoc County has been fortunate in having in past and present men of influence, of intellectual capacity and high integrity connected with its various news publications. The names of such as Fitch, Olmstead, Smith and Nagle are not soon forgotten by those who for years have had the opportunity of reading their comment on current events. The newspapers of the county have always been remarkable for the prominence given their editorial departments, the true test of a paper's individuality.

The newspaper history of Manitowoc County begins properly with the year 1850. True it is that from such expressions as “our Manitowoc readers,” appearing in 1849 in the Green Bay Advocate indications are given that it had a local constituency and Milwaukee and Chicago papers were taken by a few of the more opulent. The Madison Express
too, did what little county printing was to be done in the forties. But on November 30 1850 appeared the first number of the Manitowoc County Weekly Herald, established by C. W. Fitch, a pioneer resident of Kenosha. This gentleman was of New Jersey birth, being thirty-one years of age at the time he came to Manitowoc and was well educated and possessed of considerable editorial talent. The type and out-

fit used was shipped to the city on the steamer Champion and had been purchased of Editor Cramer of the Milwaukee Evening Wisconsin, being sold later by Fitch to a Naperville, Ill. firm. The paper started out in modest form and the first is-

sue contained the following salutatory:

"When we agreed to hazard the undertaking we had nev-
er set our foot upon the soil of Manitowoc or seen an inhabi-
tant of the county. We did so from reliable representations of its past history, present population, business advantages and prospective advancement. These, to our ken, were not overrated and are sufficient to warrant the commencement with the promise of a liberal recompense. If we are all right in these conclusions and we know we are unless we have greatly overestimated the enterprise and foresight of the peo-
ple, we shall not have cause for regret." In politics it was announced that the Herald would be liberally Democratic, the principles enunciated being as follows: "Politically we advance the doctrine of the Democratic party and the time honored custom demands that we should make some exposition of our faith. One of the most prominent articles of the Democratic creed in the western states is the exclusion of slavery from free territory. To this we most cheerfully sub-
scribe. As a matter of principle and policy we are in favor of preserving the free soil of our country from the reproach of human bondage. We are in favor of cheap postage, a low rate of duties and economy in the administration of the gov-

ernment. We are opposed to banks and in favor of an inde-
pendent treasury. We are in favor of river and harbor im-

provements, of granting public lands to actual settlers with proper limitations, at the lowest possible rates and of reason-
able exemption laws."
It is thus easily seen that the doctrines of the new publication were extremely healthy and likely to have a beneficent influence on village life. Of the venture the Milwaukee Daily Wisconsin said in its issue of December 2nd: "The Manitowoc County Herald is the title of a newspaper just published at the thriving village of Manitowoc by Charles W. Fitch, editor and proprietor. It is Democratic in politics, of the Jeffersonian stamp and is one of the neatest papers issued in the west. It is bound to succeed so long as the editor makes as good a local paper as he does now. "Our brief personal acquaintance with Mr. Fitch has been of the most agreeable cast and we welcome him to our state and the profession with our best wishes for his prosperity as a man, a citizen and an editor. We trust the people of Northern Wisconsin will give him a liberal support." In those days personal jibes and shots at fellow editors were much more common than now and the pages were enlivened by many a friendly tilt with the Green Bay Advocate and the Sheboygan Lake Shore Journal. The Herald was immediately made the official county paper, remaining so until 1855. For four years the sheet held the field uncontested and in April 1854 it was enlarged and from that time on copies were sent to the State Historical Library at Madison and have since been preserved, the only file in existence.

On the 25th of April of the same year, however, competition appeared in the shape of the Manitowoc Weekly Tribune, of which S. W. Smith officiated as editor. Mr. Smith had for some years been a resident of the village and resigned as manager of the National Hotel to assume his editorial duties. Smith and Roeser was the name of the proprietors but the latter retired from the firm in October. The paper started out with the statement that the publication was "a step not taken without consideration," adopted as its motto "Ever Onward" and notified subscribers that subscriptions were payable in wood and other merchandise. It was at first independent in politics,—Smith having been a Democrat with strong Abolition tendencies,—then became Free Democrat in policy and by 1857 was definitely ranked as a Republican
newspaper. Editor Smith was an interesting writer and the series of articles appearing in 1854 on “Sights and Shadows of a Soldier’s Life,” detailing incidents in his career as a veteran in the Mexican war, was ably written. Some years later when he took trips to Chicago, Cincinnati and Washington his descriptions of the journeys were indicative of great skill as a writer. In July 1854 Carl Roeser, Sr., who had been associated with Smith in the establishment of the Tribune started the first German paper published in the county, known as the Wiskonsin Demokrat, Smith and Roeser appearing as the first proprietors and later Roeser & Co. By this time that nationality was much in evidence in the newly opened regions and the paper filled a need that had long been felt. It was strongly Free Soil in its proclivities and Roeser being considerable of a politician and a candidate for the position of state treasurer of the new Republican party in 1855, the paper was given over largely to controversy on public questions. It preached the doctrine of violation of the laws of the land in regard to the escape of fugitive slaves while the Herald counselled moderation. This radical position of the Demokrat opened the way for the establishment of a paper in the German language, taking opposite views on these burning questions and accordingly the Weekly Nordwesten was started in September 1855 by Carl H. Schmidt. The principles advocated by it were stated by the Herald as Democratic principles, coupled with “denunciation of Know Nothingism and Abolition fanaticism.” Another German paper was also started by Carl Pflaume in the same year as the Nordwesten, being entitled Der Buschhauer but after twenty-four months existence it was discontinued, the editor returning to Germany. With all these publications in the field a struggle for county printing was the natural result, the Herald being superseded by the Tribune in 1855, the latter enjoying the patronage until it again reverted to the Herald in 1860. The Tribune suffered by fire in December 1856 but the damage was soon repaired and J. N. Stone acquired an interest which he retained for two years, later removing to Neenah where he still edits the Neenah Times, being one of the veteran figures of the Wisconsin press.
The years 1857 and 1858 saw many changes in the newspaper field. Editor Roeser sold an interest in the Demokrat in April of the first named year to A. Wallich and himself removed from the city some years later, dying in Washington, D. C. in November 1897. Roeser was present at the initial meeting of the Wisconsin Press Association in 1857 and was chosen second vice president. In October Editor Schmidt of the Nordwesten tried an experiment in making his paper a tri-weekly, continuing it as such until April 1859, a Dr. Vette being associated in the editorship in 1858. Another innovation took place in 1858 in the establishment on May 31st of the Manitowoc Daily Tribune, published by Smith & Stone. In the words of the salutatory: "The issue of a daily paper is an event in the history of a village or city," and it might have been added as was done by the Madison Democrat in commenting on the venture: "A daily paper in a town the size of Manitowoc is a somewhat hazardous experiment." The sheet was a small one with little space devoted to local news and the price was fixed at twelve cents a week or five dollars a year. One of the first items it contained was that of the marriage at Two Rivers of Conrad Bates and Miss Dorothea A. Phillips, by Rev. M. L. Stanley, commenting upon "the liberal fee enclosed for the marriage notice." The Weekly Tribune in the meanwhile continued publication and another competitor was introduced the following year when, on July 11 1859, the first issue of the Manitowoc Weekly Pilot appeared. Jere Crowley, a veteran Irish newspaper man was the proprietor, coming from Neenah, where he had edited the Advocate. A vigorous writer, who had been reared, as it were, in a newspaper office, having occupied all positions from that of "devil" upwards, he formed a valuable addition to the journalistic coterie. The Pilot was from the beginning strongly Democratic and maintained its political stand through its entire existence.

The field was thus occupied when the campaign of 1860 came on, unparalleled as to its bitterness. The various newspapers represented the various shades of opinion in that campaign most characteristically. At one extreme was the Mani-
itowoc Herald, flaunting the names of Breckenridge and Lane, the candidates of the Southern Democracy, upon its editorial pages throughout the campaign. The Pilot on the other hand supported Douglas, boiling certain nominees of the Democratic party in the county because of their Breckenridge sympathies. In a position mediate between the two was the third Democratic weekly, the Nordwesten. The Tribune and Demokrat, of course supported the Republican candidates. The conflict took on a personal aspect in many respects and General Smith was particularly attacked, being nicknamed 'Tin Horn Smith' on account of certain experiences he had undergone in the northern wilds of Wisconsin. It seems that he was sent by the state to the fastnesses of Shawano County in January 1860 to protect certain timber lands from depredations. In preparing for the expedition he made elaborate plans, taking with him four men besides two teams, loaded with stores and impedimenta, furnished by the state. The bill for tin ware alone was $51.04, the schedule including three tin lanterns, one red signal lantern and a tin horn five feet long. Some one signing himself Enquirer sent a communication to the legislature asking for an investigation and remarking: "If this expedition is an invading army sent out to conquer Shawano County and annex it to Manitowoc I solemnly protest against any change in our county boundaries." The incident was the occasion of much discussion in that body, Smith being attacked by Gabriel Bouck and Col. Elmore and being ably defended by Col. Cobb. Smith, himself, always denied the charges and in fact it later transpired that he had only misconstrued orders but the nickname clung to him despite all. Editor Crowley, too, considered himself aggrieved in the campaign. His race and record had been used against him and efforts had been made by a member of his own party to oust him from the position of Deputy United States Marshal, which he then held. The decision of the political struggle did much to quiet the controversies and the Civil War brought many changes.

In January 1861 Otto Troemel established another German weekly under the name The Union but as the war clouds
gathered he surrendered the pen for the sword, consolidating his publication with that of Editor Roeser under the appellation "Union Democrat." In the absence of the latter in Washington on business during 1861 F. Kuemler occupied the editorial chair but after three years of varied existence the paper suspended in August 1864. The Herald had, early in 1861, come out for Lincoln, turning in a direction exactly opposite from its former course and even the Pilot seemed to consider that the president should be supported in his efforts to sustain the union during the early part of the war. It had become the official county paper by this time, a position it long occupied thereafter. This loss as well as the reduced circulation due to the war was a hard blow to the Herald and it grew less and less influential, although it supported the Republican candidates in 1862, until finally it was obliged to suspend on March 26, 1863, the last issue, printed at Sheboygan, containing the following valedictory: "The truth has long been apparent that we have in Manitowoc a superabundance of newspapers. We have only some thirty-five hundred voters in the county and three fourths of the patronizers of local papers require those printed in their own languages. The support of the remainder is divided between three English papers, the entire amount of which is only sufficient for one. We confess that we have no ambition to pursue a business that does not pay a reasonable profit upon labor and capital and this will suffice for a full explanation of the course we have taken. Our suspension will be brief. We expect to resume it very soon in a less crowded field, where we shall call upon our editorial brethren of the state for a renewal of those liberal courtesies so characteristic of the Wisconsin press. With our readers we part reluctantly and, in closing, the memory of long years of pleasant intercourse, of kindnesses innumerable, of cheering words and gracious deeds,—makes the task harder than we would wish, harder than they will ever know. May the shades of adversity's night never fall upon their hearts or homes. From all we bespeak forgetfulness of past grievances and here, at this resting point, we bury the hatchet of old dissensions." The outfit
was sold to the Tribune and Editor Fitch at first moved to Racine, where he started the Journal in November. Later, in 1867, he took up his residence in Washington becoming a prominent correspondent, being employed by the Pittsburg Chronicle and Boston Post; still later he acted as confidential clerk of Senator Sawyer. He died in Washington October 2 1899. Mr. Fitch was one of the ablest writers that have ever been in the journalistic world in Wisconsin and was honored by being chosen vice president of the State Editorial Association in 1861 and president in 1863.

The war had a depressing effect on all of the papers in the county. Subscriptions fell off and the offices were constantly being depleted by enlistments in the army. The Daily Tribune, which had battled for success so nobly, succumbed in November 1861, becoming at first tri-weekly, then semi-weekly and at last in August 1863 being merged in the weekly edition. The daily edition was again started in 1865 but continued only a few months and another attempt made by the same publication during the Franco-Prussian War met a similar fate. During the sixties the Tribune underwent many changes of management. In 1864 Editor Smith accepted the position of quartermaster in the Thirty-Ninth Wisconsin and his chair was occupied by Rev. L. N. Wheeler, then pastor of the Methodist Church, and H. Sibree. The former retired in September as did the latter soon after when the editor turned the duties over to Julius Enert and Thomas Sullivan in April 1865. In October General Smith, after selling out to O. B. Smith & Co., the principal member of the firm being his brother, left for Warsaw, Missouri, where he resided until his death in October 1890. In partnership with John M. Read, formerly of Manitowoc also, he established the Warsaw Times which he continued to edit for many years. As an editor, politician and soldier he ranked high and Manitowoc sustained a loss in his departure. O. B. Smith and J. Enert continued to control the Tribune until June 1869 when they sold it to Fred Borcherdt, the next prominent figure in county journalism. Both the old owners moved south establishing the Knoxville, Tenn. Tribune and in 1889 O. B,
Smith became a state senator in Florida, having removed to that state.

During the troublous times of the war the Nordwesten had been suspended, no paper being issued from 1861 until February 1865 when Editor Schmidt, who had been at the front, again took up the pen. In 1867 he commenced the publication of a Sunday story edition which has been continued as a feature up to the present day, proving remarkably successful. The Pilot, in the meanwhile, had perhaps held the leading position. An opponent of Republican principles and of Lincoln and his policies it had incurred the enmity of many radicals, who considered opposition as disloyalty. On the night of May 12 1863 the office was broken into and much of the type thrown into the lake, affording the boys royal sport diving for lead for some days. This warning, however, did not cause Editor Crowley to abate his opposition and in the next issue he offered fifty dollars reward for information regarding the perpetrators of the outrage and remarked editorially: “If the scoundrels who have committed the dastardly act have not already repented we hope that Hell will one day find them in one of its hottest provinces.” Soon after the war closed Mr. Crowley began to grow feeble and he was assisted in 1866 and 1867 by W. R. Kelley and in 1868 by J. M. Read, later of Kewaunee. In 1869 he retired definitely, selling the publication of which he had been ten years the editor to E. B. Treat. G. C. Skeen, a former Milwaukee Sentinel editor, was employed by Mr. Treat as editor for some time but in August he assumed charge himself. In April 1870 Jere Crowley passed away, mourned by all as a sincere and honest man. It is due to him that the Pilot was given such a prominent position at the outset, so that its latter success might be easy. Soon after the war A. Wallich and C. Troemmel had taken up the broken threads again and re-established the Demokrat, this time under the name of the Zeitung, the first issue appearing in June 1868, Republican in politics, as before.

Thus it was that by 1870 the personnel of the editorial fraternity of Manitowoc had entirely changed, the old figures
having disappeared with the exception of C. H. Schmidt. Nor did the changes stop there. In August 1870 Mr. Treat relinquished the Pilot to J. C. Bollmeyer, who then acted as editor until his office was destroyed by fire on March 2, 1871. Soon after Ten Eyck G. Olmstead purchased the plant and continued to manage it alone until he associated with him John Nagle in the spring of 1876. Mr. Bollmeyer moved to Ohio where he edited the Wausion Expositor for some years and died in December 1898. The Tribune in the meantime was managed by F. Borcherdt but upon his appointment as consul to Leghorn, Italy in 1874 his son Edward assumed the editorship. For six months in that year it changed to a semi-weekly but resumed its old form in September, after which time John B. Miller was for some months associated in the management. The elder Borcherdt died abroad in 1877 and in April of the next year the Tribune discontinued publication, thus leaving the Republicans without an organ. Its valedictory was terse, stating in reference to reasons for the paper's suspension: "It is unnecessary to enumerate them, but the fact is, that it does not pay to continue its publication." Edward Borcherdt became associated with John Nagle and together they purchased the Olmstead interests in the Pilot, the first issue under the new management appearing April 25, 1878. Changes had also taken place among the German papers. Editor Troemmel of the Zeitung died in February 1873 and the sheet was accordingly sold to Henry Baetz and Col. Wedelstad, the latter acting as editor until July 1875, when he removed to Milwaukee, later taking a position in the state treasurer's office. Fred Heinemann purchased the paper, changing the name to Manitowoc Journal, but did not long continue its publication and in the latter seventies the German Republicans lost their organ. On March 8, 1871 the legislature granted a charter to the Nordwesten Printing Company, John Franz, C. G. Schmidt, C. H. Schmidt, Henry Schweitzer, A. Piening, H. Menge and M. Kettenhöffen being the incorporators. Four years later Menge & Schweitzer took up the management of the paper, Mr. Schmidt still retaining the editorial chair and soon also re-
suming entire control. In 1878 the Nordwesten and Pilot were the only newspapers in the city. Two Rivers, however, had by this time secured a publication, the Manitowoc County Chronicle, established in 1872, in the championship of the so-called People’s Party, then active in politics. Judge H. S. Pierpont was the first editor but did not remain long at the head, being succeeded temporarily in 1874 by George N. Woodin and selling his interest in April of the following year to William F. Nash, the present proprietor. Mr. Nash has made a reputation state wide as an editor and has served the people of the county ably in the state senate. The paper is Democratic in politics. The city maintained a second paper, the Weekly Tribune edited by Robert Boehm and Republican in politics, for some time in 1900, but it soon discontinued.

On April 24 1879 appeared the first number of the new Manitowoc Tribune, revived by Henry Sandford of Racine and published by W. Christie of that city. It was Republican in politics and immediately took up the struggle against the Pilot. The latter had, however, a tremendous advantage due to a long and continuous existence, careful management and a circulation of over two thousand. The Tribune, first published at Racine, was soon located in Manitowoc but Christie severed his connection with it, starting the Manitowoc Journal on June 15 1886, a three quarto Republican weekly appearing Saturdays, that existed a little over a year. Editor Christie was a former Chicago Tribune employee. In June 1881 a new German paper, the Post, was founded by A. Wittmann, independent in politics and in October of the same year the Lake Shore Times made its appearance, the outfit of the Journal having been purchased by Haukohl & Baensch. This, too, was Republican and continued under the same management until 1884, when J. S. Anderson purchased it. Under the latter’s able editorship, and assisted no less ably by his wife, the paper took on a dignified and literary tone which made it very popular. In 1887 it was sold to H. G. Kress, who for two years was its editor, discontinuing its publication in order to engage in business in Spokane, Washing-
ton. Other changes also took place in the eighties; Edward Borcherdt retired in 1888 from the Pilot management and in January of the same year Editor Schmidt, the veteran of Manitowoc journalism, passed away. Under his management the publication had taken a prominent place among the German weeklies in the state and it was largely due to his efforts that the German Editorial Association held its convention in Manitowoc in 1883. The paper was continued by a stock company from 1888 until 1893, H. Falge and later C. G. Schmidt, a brother of the deceased, acting as editors. In the latter year it was sold under administration proceedings to Mrs. C. H. Schmidt and for some months H. E. Kummer was the editor, after which C. G. Schmidt again resumed his duties, later associating with him his son Adelbert Schmidt. In the Post management William F. Brandt was for some years associated, retiring in 1892 to engage in business independently. Editor Sandford in the meantime continued to conduct the Tribune until in 1895 he secured a position at Madison. For some time he edited it from that city but in March 1897 sold the plant to G. G. Sedgwick, Rev. Emmet W. Rankin and E. R. Barrett of Kansas City, Missouri. The paper was soon incorporated with the St. Nazianz Weekly, a six column folio that had been in existence since June 1895, the editor of the latter, H. C. Olson forming one of the new corporation then organized under the name of the Citizen Publishing Company. The name of the Tribune was also changed to the Citizen. C. W. Roberts of Racine later purchased Olson’s interest and became the editor of the Citizen, Editor Barrett removing soon after to Missouri.

A new publication appeared on December 14 1893, issued from the office of the Brandt Printing & Binding Co., entitled the Manitowoc Times-Press, of which H. G. Kress was the editor, it being in reality a continuation of the old Lake Shore Times. It, too, was Republican and has since continued to be such and Mr. Kress has continued to direct its editorial policy. The paper was published for some time independently by Mr. Kress and a daily edition of short duration was put forth in the fall of 1898. The years 1894 and 1896 wit-
necessed the addition of two German weeklies in the county, which have since maintained themselves with credit, viz., the Wahrheit, edited and owned by C. Otto Schmidt, appearing first in the last named year, being Democratic in politics and the Kiel National Zeitung, started in 1894, owned at first by Halhnek & Landen, being edited by the latter and later being transferred to H. A. Kuenne. It is independent in politics. Editor Wittmann of the Post was honored by being chosen president of the German Press Association in 1890. In May 1896 he sold his interests to Emil Baensch and William Gennrich and a year later he passed away after a life of usefulness. The paper after his death became Republican in politics. On March 21 1900 one of the saddest chapters in the history of Manitowoc journalism was recorded. John Nagle, editor of the Pilot, after a short illness, succumbed to an attack of typhoid fever and passed from mortal scenes. Beloved by all, staunch to friends and convictions he presented a notable figure. He had at one time been honored with the presidency of the State Editorial Association and his opinions, as they appeared week by week, were widely copied. His attitude in the Bennett Law controversy, where he took a stand opposite to that of his party, also marked him as a man of convictions and gave him a wide reputation. Soon after his death a company was formed, which purchased the Pilot and placed Sydney T. Pratt, formerly of the Milwaukee Sentinel, in the editorial chair. He remained in this position and was a part owner of the enterprise until May 1903, when the Nordwesten and Pilot were combined, E. W. Mackey becoming editor and Adelbert Schmidt business manager.

It was the occasion of much remark that for so many years a town of the size of Manitowoc should have no daily paper. The project was often considered in the early nineties but it was not until October 19 1898 that the Brandt Printing & Binding Co. issued the first number of the Manitowoc Daily Herald. M. C. Gettings of Monroe was the first editor and was succeeded after a few months by E. R. Barrett and then by E. W. Mackey, also of Monroe, who has ably conducted its columns. After a hard struggle it
gained a distinctive place in the popular favor and has a circulation of over a thousand. In October 1899 the Herald-Press Publishing Co. was formed with H. G. Kress as president, Horal Nelson as vice president and W. F. Brandt as secretary and treasurer, the company publishing both the Daily Herald and Weekly Times-Press. The former is independent in politics. On May 12 1900 another daily, The News, appeared for the first time, Republican in politics with C. W. Roberts as editor, he having acquired the interests of the Citizen Publishing Company. For a time F. Ellis Reed was connected with the management and finally John McFarlane of Racine purchased the paper and has since conducted it and the Weekly Citizen in a most satisfactory manner.

There have been more or less of what might be called ephemeral publications in the county. A religious weekly, Concordia by name, was published in Manitowoc during 1875 and 1876 but was later removed to Green Bay. Rev. Roehl of the German M. E. Church edited a monthly designated Der Hausbesucher in 1888 devoted to pastoral affairs. Rev. Rog-ers and Rev. Gray of St. James during the nineties also edited The Diocese, another church periodical. A Polish weekly, Wszyotko Jezusa published by local priests was established in 1887 and attained a wide circulation but the hard times of 1894 caused it to suspend. Another Polish publication, the Biblioteczka Rodzinna, met the same fate after a five months’ existence in 1903. During 1896 Walter Wittmann edited a Populist weekly entitled the New Broom, published at the office of the Manitowoc Post. Amateur talent has also found means of expression in the publication of The Picket by the pupils of the North Side High School in 1883 and 1884, the New Era and So-To-Speak by the pupils of the same school and the various other small miscellany. On the whole the progress of the press in the county has been one of the brightest phases in its history.