

A Newspaper, A Community And Change

Today is the 80th anniversary of the Farmington Enterprise. Looking back over the four decades of Farmington history spread through the pages of The Enterprise, one feeling is crashingly clear: 1887 is not 1967, neither for the Farmington community nor for the newspaper which has served it.

When Arthur Power founded Farmington, the community he had in mind was rural and self contained, set in land we would call wilderness today. It was a community of farmers and small shop keepers. The thrust of its style of life was directed inward, if only because the simple necessity of survival required it.

In the 80 years intervening between the foundation of The Enterprise and today, the problems of physical survival in Farmington have largely been solved. But not the style of life for its citizens or of a focus for change for the community.

It would be overstating the case to call it a crisis, but nevertheless the Farmington community—and the newspaper that serves it—stands at a point in history where the paths it can take are both obscure and tangled.

To see why, just look out your window. Look at the expressways, the shops, the automobiles, the factories and stores. And the families still moving in—commuters, housewives, school children—which will double Farmington's population in merely 15 years.

If you were to have walked about in Thursday night's first fall rain, you might have seen darkly the giant trees, horse-drawn plows and quiet rural life of Farmington's past. And you might have understood the enormous pull this past has on Farmington's present.

It is trivial to say that the past is not the present; it is much harder to show in what way the present and the future evolve out of the past.

That is exactly what the Farmington community faces today, together with the paper which has grown and prospered with it. Farmington is no longer a small country town; the Farmington Enterprise is no longer a small country town weekly. Neither of them could be, no matter how attractive might be the nostalgia of the past.

Farmington itself is changing, and the fact of change has itself produced differences and disagreements. Shall the Township consolidate with the City? Shall residential land be re-zoned to accommodate the flow of business to the area? Shall taxes go up again to pay for the increasingly expensive education our children need? Shall a wood lot be cut down to make way for a new subdivision?

The Farmington Enterprise, too, is changing, and the fact of change has produced phone calls and, sometimes, contradictory questions. "Why don't you print more Farmington news?" "Why don't you print more area or Michigan news?" "Why have you changed the appearance of the paper?" "Why don't you change the appearance of the paper further?"

The Farmington community has changed to meet the new world that Arthur Power could only have dreamed of; the Farmington newspaper now the Farmington Enterprise & Observer, has changed to serve the new community that is in the making.

To continue to do so with excellence, taste and concern is our challenge. We hope you will join us in striving to meet it.

—Philip H. Power, Publisher

A Story Of Many Owners

The Enterprise's 80 Years Exemplify

'Change, Inevitabilities In Technology, Steadfastness . . . Journalistic Innovations'

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Peel is an English and Journalism instructor in Farmington High School and a prominent member of the Historical Society. He based his article on the research effort of Becky Nietert, FHIS graduate of June 1967, and her contribution is gratefully acknowledged.)

By LEE S. PEEL

"James Clark, a river man at Ludington, while maddened by drink, cut his mother's throat, and she will probably die. It took two officers to arrest the desperate man. He is a quiet man when sober."

This quotation from the front page of the very first issue of The Farmington Enterprise on Nov. 2, 1888 says two importances about the long history of the paper and the readers it serves.

Neither is very complimentary. First, it says that crime, then as now, is news (only the style of writing about crime has changed); second, it says that readers, then as now, probably read what they're served.

In 80 years of Enterprise history, however, publication of crime stories has not been the only reason for the paper's existence.

EDGAR R. BLOOMER, founder, publisher, and first editor, forswore in his opening issue three requirements for the success of the paper. He said quite bluntly: "It will readily suggest itself to the mind of any one of this practical age that money is the first requisite, and the second, able contributors and (thirdly) appreciating readers must be found."

Bloomer's first issue was a five column, four-page paper carrying the motto, "Independence in All Things—With Justice to All." His front page columns contained much advertising (now almost extinct on front pages in American newspapers) and the sort of choice hometown stuff that has characterized the small town paper throughout the United States.

For example, "J. B. Webster, was in Detroit, last Saturday," or "Mrs. Fred Fry, is on the sick list. Dr. Moore is attending her," or "Fred Warner has a better line of Men's Underwear and Woolen Overshirts, than you find in many large cities. Call and see them."

In the spring of 1897, The Enterprise moved from Grand River to its present location on Farmington Road, then South Center Street, and installed improved machinery. Thus by 1898, according to The Enterprise's own account, the paper had "become a household word in almost every home in this and adjoining townships." Copies also went to 22 states and to almost every county in Michigan, and its printing facilities were number two behind Pontiac in the county.

The tenth anniversary was marked with a special edition of two, eight-page sections with a large number of photos and stories about the town and the townspeople.

And advertisers had quite a bargain for their space in 1898. A full column for a year, for example, was only \$50, and business locals were but five cents per line per insertion.

When Bloomer sold the building, in 1899, to Harry N. McCracken (later well-known in township political activities for many years), Gov. Warner, Farmington's only man to make the governor's chair, was a witness to the transaction. The new business owner was A. E. MacKinnon.

HARDLY BEFORE THE INK was dry on the building document, MacKinnon had labor problems. A young man, Virgil McNitt, struck to increase his wages from \$5 to \$6 per week. When MacKinnon said no, the young man left. He later became head of one

of the most successful syndicates in America. In the late 1920s, the McNaught Syndicate, as it was known, was sold to Hearst interests.

In these early days, printing was done by a steam engine press, and one winter it froze and cracked beyond repair. To get the paper out, MacKinnon printed the entire edition by hand after a blacksmith attached a handle to the flywheel of the press. But this hard work prompted MacKinnon to rig up a treadmill and attach it to the press and get a horse to walk upon the treadmill and thus turn the press. But this maneuver, too, failed, when a streetcar, which ran by The Enterprise office, frightened the horse, and caused him to climb all over the treadmill.

A friend of MacKinnon's who worked for the Detroit United Railways convinced the editor to get a new electric motor for the press instead of replacing the steam engine. His friend obtained one, and they hooked it to the street railway wires outside the office. So the D.U.R., besides providing trolley service for the townspeople, also helped produce their weekly paper. The voltage was cut down by running the wires through a barrel of water just outside the building.

The 80 years of Enterprise history is a splendidly typical example of change, of inevitabilities in the march of technology, of steadfastness in the cause of Farmington, of journalistic innovations that were steps forward and then backward, and then forward again.

Always there is the imprint of the people who ran the paper. And in the final analysis, the measure of The Enterprise is the measure of the man (or men) at the helm.

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY MEN at the helm. In the 80 year span of time, 17 owners and 20 editors have come and gone. The owners who were longest in command were the Taggs—A. C. and son Jim—who superintended the paper from 1941 until 1957, a total of 16 years. Even today, many readers of The Enterprise and Observer will remember their stay in Farmington.

Second in longevity (14 years) was Hyman Levinson of Detroit who bought the paper in 1927. Several editors were hired and fired or left under Levinson's ownership.

From the guidance of the many owners and editors came many slants, novelties, excesses, and directions.

In 1908, Editor Calvin Goss ran, as a front page box beside the paper's nameplate, these words: "The Enterprise is a clean newspaper and has no room for scandal."

And also in 1909 new editor Fred Van Black "editorialized" about women smoking and the teaching of health laws in schools. Unfortunately, journalistically speaking, guest editorials appeared more frequently as the editor's works appeared less frequently.

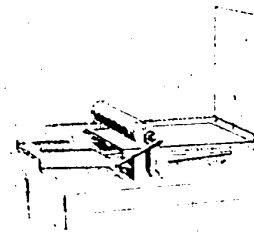
During the same year, the tag by the nameplate now read: "The Enterprise news is clean news."

In 1913 important national and international news appeared, including a "Washington Gossip" column. By contrast in 1963, when President Kennedy was assassinated, Editor Kiley chose to ignore the event completely.

The paper's goal, enumerated by new publisher J. Arch Price in 1914, was again to boost Farmington, to remain independent, and to publish a "newsy" newspaper.

A 1915 novelty was two columns on page two—in German, no less.

"A BIGGER AND BETTER Farmington," a change in wording but hardly a novelty in mottoes, slipped into place in 1921 under Wales Martindale, a family name significant in Farmington's 140 year history.



A MODEL of the first press used to publish The Enterprise in 1888. It could print about 200 copies an hour.

Editor Martindale's announced goal, in part, was "to come here solely to make The Enterprise a newspaper worthy of the prosperous, growing community . . . and the extent of our success will be determined, largely, by the manner in which people are willing to extend their patronage and support."

Implied here is that money from advertisers and buyer-readers, a necessary ingredient proclaimed first by Editor Bloomer in the very beginning, was still a ringing platitude in the 1920s and, indeed, it has been for decades since.

School news written by high school students made its first appearance on a more or less regular basis in the 1922-23 school year and has continued, sporadically, ever since. A high school education in the '20s was becoming more commonplace.

In 1941, the Taggs began their "Around the Block" column, a folksy, chatty, front-page column of mostly trivia but with the editor's inimitable snipprint. The sophistication of the contemporary newspaper was not yet here. And the Taggs' new motto for the paper, "Leadership—Our Purpose; Service—Our Goal" lasted for more than 20 years.

In 1945, one thousand six hundred and sixty-one persons paid to get their Enterprise even though the year marked another increase in rates, a pattern that had developed gradually since issue number one in 1888 and was destined to continue.

A belief in the invincibility of the paper's prestige and quality jumps at us in a special National Newspaper Week issue of October 1949. The editor rhapsodized, "The Enterprise is somehow the whole town—for what happens in Farmington happens in the paper."

But its self-promotion was not all puff and puff. In January 1953, the paper won the first of what has become a rather impressive list of awards and honors. The Michigan Press Association conferred a second place general excellence award for this year to be followed by a repeat the next and a first place in 1955. In 1962 the Michigan Education Association gave its annual School Bell Award to The Enterprise "for distinguished, comprehensive, continuous, and objective coverage of all phases of public education . . ." The Enterprise had come of age, journalistically.

BUT ITS GRIP ON Farmington faced a first serious challenge in August 1964, when The Farmington Observer moved in and scared the daylight out of the status quo.

A paragraph from an editorial of the August 27, 1964 issue tells screamingly of the fright of The Enterprise: "Other publications may claim to be the Farmington paper to obtain advertising and news stories, as some have in the past, but The Farmington Enterprise still remains the only paper giving complete, exclusive coverage and total coverage for the growing Farmington area."

New offset printing, greatly improving the photos in The Enterprise, gave temporary boost to the cause of the paper, but Philip H. Power, new owner of The Observer papers, in May, 1966, ended the paper's drift to hysteria and bought it, lock, stock and patronage.

The rest is history, current and hardly noticeable because it is so slow to write itself, seemingly. But as The Enterprise (more correctly now The Enterprise and Observer) moves into its new decade of history, its sounds will doubtlessly repeat the tunes of bygone years. Bloomer said it 80 years ago, and The E & O says it now: We believe in Farmington. We need your advertising; we need readers.

In moments of quiet truth, readers will also admit that they, too, need the paper.

Farmington ENTERPRISE & OBSERVER

PHILIP H. POWER

Advertising Director

Advertising Editor

DALE O. FEIN

Controller

Victor Howard

Printing Superintendent

Subscription Rates

By Carrier Single Copies, 10c. Monthly rate, \$3.00. In Advance.

By Mail \$10 a Year, paid in advance

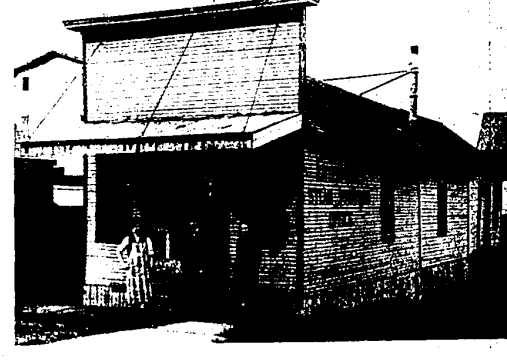
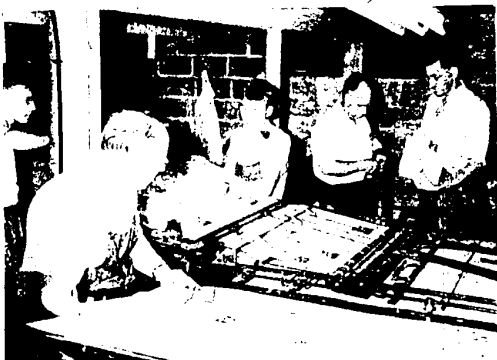
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LEFT: Our former flat-bed printing press. Vic Howard, in foreground, is still superintendent of the plant. ABOVE: The Enterprise building as it appears today. RIGHT: The paper's home on Farmington Road prior to 1926. From left: An unidentified 'printer's devil,' editor W. J. Richards, Grace Tremper.