The Ashland Press: An Historical Overview

Paul Joseph Skamser Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/etd
THE ASHLAND PRESS: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This thesis is approved as a satisfactory and independent investigation by a committee of four department of Arts, and is acceptable as meeting the thesis requirements for this degree, but without implying that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

BY

PAUL JOSEPH SKAMSER, JR.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, Major in Journalism, South Dakota State University

1973

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
THE ASHLAND PRESS: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many institutions and individuals were of assistance to the author during the course of preparing this thesis. Institutionally, I would like to thank the management and staff of The Daily Press of Ashland, Wisconsin; the Evening Telegram Company headquartered at Superior, Wisconsin; the Vaughan Public Library of Ashland; the Superior Public Library and last but not least South Dakota State University. Individually, the one who deserves my greatest appreciation is John E. Cooper, Professor, Journalist, Friend and Inspiration. I would also like to single out for special thanks my advisor, Dr. George Loewenkamp, general manager of The Daily Press.

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the degree Master of Arts, and is acceptable as meeting the thesis requirements for this degree, but without implying that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

Thesis Adviser

Date

Head, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Date
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many institutions and individuals were of assistance to the author during the course of preparing this thesis. Institutionally, I would like to thank the management and staff of The Daily Press of Ashland, Wisconsin; the Evening Telegram Company headquartered at Superior, Wisconsin; the Vaughn Public Library of Ashland, the Superior Public Library and last but not least South Dakota State University. Individually, the one who deserves my greatest appreciation is John B. Chapple, reporter, associate, friend and inspiration. I would also like to single out for special thanks my advisers, Dr. George Phillips and Dr. Vernon Keel; Dr. Ruth Alexander, Dr. Ben Markland and Dr. Wayne Hoogestraat of my examination committee; Byron Johnson, general manager of The Daily Press; my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Skamser; my brother, Gordon Skamser, and his family, and Michael Suplick and Daniel Wilkinson, for scholarly aid. In addition, I owe a debt of gratitude to John and Sarah Rogers for hospitality and assistance during the final typing phase. Other individuals of assistance were Wanita Adams, Myrta Chapple, Allen Denny, Marge Falter, Preston Gee, Robert Gramer, Jon Harkness, Dr. Ralph Helfenstine, James Lamal, Shirley and Jack Magnuson, Karen Miller, Dennis Olby, Roy Paulson, Betty Peterson, Richard Pufall, James Rowinski, Kathleen Roy, Katherine Stewart, Mr. and Mrs. William Stewart, William Stewart III, Robert Varner and Lois Wessman. My apology to anyone left out.

iii
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of the Literature</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. FINDINGS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashland's Genesis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting the Stage</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Fifield Brings Ashland a Newspaper</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Chapple's Historic Assignment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The &quot;Election Extra&quot; Endures</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Name on the Masthead</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Chapple's Regime: Short but Impressive</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Period of Proprietorial Plethora</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashland's Other Journalistic Offerings</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John C. Chapple's Lengthy and Literate Leadership</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John B. Chapple in Charge: A Mercurial Decade</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a Family Newspaper to a Newspaper Family</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Gunderson's Tranquilizing Tenure</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Asbach's Regime: Short but Fiery</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Johnson Comes and Clanking Machines Go</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Chapter I</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for Further Study</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first of these sections of the introduction. In the case of our topic there is no problem, such as that following in historical research projects. I have endeavored to deal successfully with the vastness of our topic, reducing down 100 years of history into manageable proportions to fit the scope of a thesis. I, therefore, have chosen to call what follows an overview rather than a history in the interest of accuracy and brevity.

Objectives of the Study

My primary objective in what follows is to offer a history of the press in Ashland in a factual, concise, and readable form. A secondary objective is to put the founding of the newspaper in a historical context, thus the first two sections, as well as to present information on other newspapers in Ashland, thus the ninth section. I have also endeavored to divide the main text of the thesis into meaningful and logical sections based primarily on proprietorships and transfers of ownership. To expand on my primary objective it has been my goal in this endeavor to combine historical accuracy with interesting writing so that this project will not gather dust but be

v
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A Prefatory Statement

The **Thesis Style Guide** calls for a statement of the problem as the first of three sections of the introduction. In the case of my topic there is no problem, as such. What follows is an historical research project. I have endeavored to deal successfully with the broadness of my topic, boiling down 100 years of history into manageable proportions to fit the scope of a thesis. I, therefore, have chosen to call what follows an overview rather than a history in the interest of accuracy and candor.

Objectives of the Study

My primary objective in what follows is to offer a history of the **Press at Ashland** in a factual, concise and readable form. A secondary objective is to put the founding of the newspaper in a historical context, thus the first two sections, as well as to present information on other newspapers in Ashland, thus the ninth section. I have also endeavored to divide the main text of the thesis into meaningful and logical sections based primarily on proprietorships and transfers of ownership. To expand on my primary objective it has been my goal in this endeavor to combine historical accuracy with interesting writing so that this project will not gather dust but be
read by those people who have an interest in the history of northern Wisconsin. My goal is to contribute a meaningful piece of research on a segment of my area's history within the framework of my interests, insight, ability and expertise.

Review of the Literature

The literature used in this study consisted of general historical works about the area, special editions of the Ashland Press, regular editions of the Press and miscellaneous guides such as that on Wisconsin newspapers, a city directory and a state governmental guide. The books by Guy Burnham and Albert Marshall are valuable sources of information about the early history of the area as is the Nelson Ross book on LaPointe. The History of Northern Wisconsin and the Ellis effort are important with regard to the early history of Ashland as is the 1929 special edition of the Press. The 1893 and 1929 special Press editions are the keys to the first half-century of the newspaper's history. The Commemorative Biographical Record and, again, the 1929 special edition offer valuable data on Sam Fifield. Relevant regular editions of the Press offer the most help in tracing the last 50 years at the Press, especially that period since the takeover by the Evening Telegram Company. The special edition of the Press put out in 1947 is a historical gold mine concerning John C. Chapple. For a capsule summary of Ashland journalism through 1957 the Guide to Wisconsin Newspapers is indispensable. The Ayer guides are also valuable. Personal communication also played an important role in this project, especially with regard to Chapple family data.
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

In the preparation of this study I relied on historical books and articles, the newspaper, itself, and personal communication with persons who have had a role in the history of The Daily Press of Ashland, Wisconsin. Both the index card and Xeroxing methods were used during the research phase of this study. Personal communication came via interviews and data written by the sources, themselves. After the initial research phase the first draft of the text was written and sent to South Dakota State University for suggestions and criticism. Following the return of the first draft additional research was done and included, other problems ironed out and the advised changes incorporated into the paper. Parts of the second draft were also mailed in with the suggestions incorporated. Upon completion of the second draft of the text the attendant material was completed.

The text portion, divided into 15 sections, and the attendant material have been prepared in accordance with the 1970 Thesis Style Guide. The complete second draft was read by a disinterested party with the criticisms considered and many incorporated. Then the revised second draft was mailed in. Upon its return the suggested changes were made and it was presented to the typist. Upon completion of the typing on an IBM electric the required copies were made and submitted for the approval of South Dakota State University.
CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

Ashland's Genesis

Before discussing newspapermen and their products it would be well for purposes of perspective to undertake a quick perusal of geology and geography, Indians and explorers and missionaries and fur traders.

Glaciers moving across what was to become Lake Superior and northern Wisconsin formed the Apostle Islands and also carved a large basin to form a bay of the lake which was to be called Chequamegon, according to Edwin Ellis in an 1888 historical article on Ashland.¹ Ellis states that this bay "is protected from the storms of the lake by a long, low sandy point" as well as by the islands and that into the bay "open from the lake three broad channels, with a depth of water ample for the largest vessels,..."²

The indication, therefore, is that there is a fine, natural port with commerce potential. Going further back, long before the glaciers, Ellis observes that "vast deposits of iron ore had been upheaved and stored along the south shore of the lake" and he lists

² Ellis, p. 12.
Chequamegon Bay as one of the three natural outlets on Lake Superior for these minerals. Ellis also makes mention of the "vast forests of pine" in the area. 3

The first inhabitants of the Chequamegon Bay region were Indians. Area historian Guy M. Burnham says in his 1929 book, *The Lake Superior Country in History and in Story*, that the Chippewas came to the region in about 1500. 4 They settled in the area, primarily on what was to become known as Madeline Island, Burnham writes, until about 1600 when they moved to the Sault region at the eastern end of Lake Superior, returning about 75 years later. Other tribes were filling the void, however, including the Huron, Ottawa, Sauk, Fox and Illinois. 5

Burnham states that Radisson and Groseilliers were the first white men of record to come to the Chequamegon region. 6 In 1660 the French adventurers Pierre Esprit Radisson and Sieur des Groseilliers entered Lake Superior and followed the southern shore as far west as Chequamegon Bay on an expedition in search of furs, according to Albert Marshall in *Brule Country*. 7 Marshall relates that during their

3 Ellis, pp. 12, 14.


5 Burnham, pp. 8, 14.

6 Burnham, p. 11.

northern Wisconsin forays the two men erected a small, log building approximate to where Fish Creek flows into Chequamegon Bay, near present-day Ashland. He adds that in 1693 Pierre le Sueur established the first French military post on Lake Superior on Madeline Island, the largest of the Apostles group, a move designed to protect the fur trade. French sovereignty over the Great Lakes ended officially in 1760 with the fall of Montreal to the British, according to Marshall.8

The first missionary to the Indians in the Chequamegon region was Claude Jean Allouez who, according to Burnham, arrived on October 1, 1665, and established St. Esprit or the Mission of the Holy Ghost.9 It is believed that this Jesuit mission was located at the head of Chequamegon Bay near the mouth of Fish Creek, according to Marshall, which would be approximately the site of the Radisson-Grosseilliers structure of a few years before.10 This pioneer missionary work lasted about six years with Jacques Marquette succeeding Allouez in 1669 and staying two years, Burnham states. The mission was re-established, however, in 1835 at LaPointe on Madeline Island by Frederick Baraga and it sustained until 1853 when his successor, Otto Skolla, departed.11 There was also a Congregational mission at

11 Burnham, pp. 17, 128.
LaPointe during this era, having been established in 1831 by Sherman Hall, and presided over by him for the ensuing 23 years.\textsuperscript{12}

The first white settlement in the Chequamegon Bay area was in the early 1800's and was caused by the American Fur Company, Ellis states. This settlement was at LaPointe and for many years it was the center of a flourishing fur and fishing trade.\textsuperscript{13} The company was organized in 1808 and its headquarters community grew to 2,000 but in 1853 the company concluded its operations.\textsuperscript{14}

With the closing of the Catholic mission and the conclusion of American Fur's activities, it can be seen that LaPointe was on the ebb in 1853. Soon other communities were to be established on the mainland along the bay including Ashland and Bayfield.

Setting the Stage

The year 1854 saw the beginning of Ashland. Its founding was no doubt inevitable but nonetheless it can be traced to an event in Peoria, Illinois. Following its founding Ashland sustained typical growing pains until 1872 when a solid future was signaled with the establishment of a newspaper.

It happened that an uninsured soap and candle factory burned at Peoria, according to biographical material on and recollections of Ashland's pioneers published in a 48-page, special historical edition.

\textsuperscript{12} Marshall, p. 122.

\textsuperscript{13} Ellis, pp. 12-13.

\textsuperscript{14} Burnham, p. 75.
of the Ashland Daily Press. The proprietor of this property was Asaph Whittlesey and after the fire, casting about for new horizons, he wrote to his older brother, Col. Charles Whittlesey, who was conducting a geological survey in northern Wisconsin. The colonel replied optimistically that there was mineral wealth on the Penokee Range and that railroads were being promised for the region. Asaph received the news while in Ohio and, with his wife and daughter, set sail up the Great Lakes, landing at LaPointe in early June, 1854, the edition reported.

On July 5, 1854, Whittlesey and George Kilbourn, a woodsman, left LaPointe in a rowboat on a tour of Chequamegon Bay in search of a site for a new settlement and late in the afternoon landed on the southern shore, according to the historical edition. Whittlesey recalled: "As I stepped ashore Mr. Kilbourn exclaimed: 'Here is the place for the big city' and handing me the ax added, 'I want you to have the honor of cutting the first tree in the way of settlement . . . .'" According to the historical recount this was the founding of Ashland and the felled tree was used as a foundation log in the community's first structure, the location being present-day Front Street and 18th Avenue West. Two more cabins were built in 1854.


An honest-to-goodness pioneer and a man handy with an ax were thus the first on the site, two crucial elements, but a promoter wasn't far behind. Martin Beaser came to the settlement in August, 1854, from Ontonagon, Michigan, according to the historical report. Beaser engaged the services of G. L. Brunsweiler who, in January of 1855, surveyed and platted a town, the plat dated February 7, 1855. On March 2, 1855, the settlement was named Whittlesey but changed to Ashland on June 30, 1860, so designated for the estate in Kentucky of Henry Clay, a man Beaser wished to honor.  

The tone of the middle 1850's in Ashland is described by Ellis in his historical article thusly:

The years 1853 to 1857 were years of wild speculation. The states of Wisconsin and Minnesota especially were covered with rising cities--at least on paper. Fabulous stories of rich silver, copper and iron mines on the south shore of Lake Superior attracted a multitude of active young men from the eastern states.

One of these was Ellis, himself, a doctor who left Farmington, Maine, in April, 1854, for the midwest, according to the Who's Who Edition. Representing several St. Paul, Minnesota, capitalists, he left that city in early February, 1855, for the head of Chequamegon Bay to examine the situation. Ellis attributes the geological surveys of the Penokee Range south of Ashland as the incentive, adding that the thought was that "this iron must be used in the coming years" plus the conviction that it "would reach the great water

19 Ellis, p. 13.
highway at Ashland." He acknowledges in his recollections that Whittlesey, Kilbourn and Beaser had gotten there first but adds that he and his associates "were not deterred." 20

Upon his arrival at the head of the bay Ellis found a trading post, physical evidence of the speculative venture entitled Bay City initiated by David Lusk, Frederick Prentice, J. D. Angus and George Stuntz, its location being at the foot of present-day Ellis Avenue, about one mile west of the Whittlesey settlement. Ellis recalls: "These men had also been attracted by the situation of our bay as the outlet of an extensive country, abounding in minerals and timber." 21

But, as Ellis adds, this quartet "had perfected no plans for the acquisition of title to the lands." Ellis, with the help of Prentice, filled that void and platted Bay City in 1855. 22

In 1855, 1856 and 1857 many settlers came to Ashland and built homes, looking forward to the future with confidence. The first two-thirds of 1857 saw streets cleared, several frame homes built and a sawmill begun and brought near completion. 23 This energetic development didn't continue, however.

Ellis relates in his magazine piece:

But, in September of that year the great financial storm came, involving the whole country in ruin. The little

village of Ashland was overwhelmed. The people had but lit-
tle money, and in making their improvements had contracted
depts which they could not at once pay. There had been so
much speculation that the settlers had paid but little atten-
tion to the cultivation of the soil, depending on supplies
brought by water a thousand miles. We had no wagon roads nor
railroads within three hundred miles. Winter was coming on,
and many of the settlers—in truth, all who could get away—
left the place. The few who remained saw hard times, whose
memory is not pleasant to recall. 24

The years following 1857 were difficult ones with settler af-
ter settler moving away. 25 Whittlesey, Ashland's founder, moved to
Bayfield to a federal government job, the historical edition states.
The hoped-for railroad to transport the wealth of the Penokee Range
to and through Ashland had not materialized due to the hard and un-
certain times prior to the Civil War. From 1863 to 1869 there was
only one family left in the community, the Martin Roehms. 26

With the advent of the 1870's things brightened up. The ency-
clopedic History of Northern Wisconsin reports that many of the old
settlers returned in 1871 with the real revitalization the following
year, as the following excerpt indicates:

In 1872 the Wisconsin Central Railroad began work at the
bay, and at the same time many people arrived; houses were
erected and the re-construction of the city progressed rapid-
ly. The improvements in Ashland for the year 1872, not tak-
ing into consideration the cost of the railroad or the iron
bridge at White River, amounted to $244,000. 27

24 Ellis, p. 15.
25 Ellis, p. 15.
27 A. T. Andreas, History of Northern Wisconsin (Chicago: The
Western Historical Co., 1881) p. 68.
Another event of some importance in 1872 was the consolidation, at least on paper, of the two sections of the revitalized community. Although there had been "considerable rivalry between the two rather distinct settlements here, only a mile or so apart," according to Burnham, "all interests were harmonized" as evidenced by the uniting of Bay City and Ashland into "one common plat."\(^{28}\)

It was also in 1872 that Sam S. Fifield came to Ashland and, with his brother, established a newspaper.

**Sam Fifield Brings Ashland a Newspaper**

When a pioneer community shows promise a printing press is often on the scene posthaste. Ashland, as well as Bayfield, was no exception.

The cradle of newspapering in the Chequamegon Bay region was at Bayfield. The pioneer effort was known as the Bayfield Mercury and the Andreas volume reports that it was published by Hamilton Hatch and its first number came out on June 20, 1857. It lasted about one year. Joe H. Campbell purchased some of the Mercury equipment in October, 1859, and started the original Bayfield Press, an operation that lasted until the spring of 1861. On October 13, 1870, the Fifield brothers, Sam and Hank, re-established the Bayfield Press with Hank O. Fifield in charge.\(^{29}\)

It wasn't until two years later that Sam S. Fifield,


\(^{29}\) Andreas, pp. 69, 71, 82.
Maine-born and not quite 33, came to the Chequamegon Bay region to establish a newspaper at Ashland, bringing with him experience on three other newspapers. Another encyclopedic work, the 554-page Commemorative Biographical Record of the Upper Lakes Region, reports that he was born in Corinna, Penobscot County, Maine, on June 24, 1839, the son of Samuel and Naomi Fifield. He went to Rock Island, Illinois, with his father and brother in 1853, his mother having died when he was eight, and in 1854 the trio moved to Prescott, Wisconsin. He worked in clerical positions at Prescott and on the newspapers at Taylors Falls, Minnesota; St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin, and Osceola Mills, Wisconsin. He subsequently purchased the Polk County Press at Osceola Mills, serving as editor and proprietor before moving to Ashland in 1872 to establish the Press.

The Ashland Press wasn't exactly established at Ashland, however, but born in a barn in Bayfield, across Chequamegon Bay. The first issue of the new weekly was supposed to have been printed in Ashland but because of "vexatious delays" it was printed in Asaph Whittlesey's barn in Bayfield with the establishment date June 7, 1872. The newspaper was established via the co-partnership of the Fifield brothers. Sam had the leading role, however, as he assumed

31 Commemorative Biographical Record, pp. 2-3.
33 Commemorative Biographical Record, p. 3.
the editorial and business management of the Press while Hank served as local editor. Their first job after printing the first issue was to move the paper to its home town.

The equipment for the first Ashland Press was shipped from Bayfield to Ashland across the bay on top of a scow loaded with lumber and was landed at a dock located approximately at the foot of present-day Seventh Avenue West, according to an extensive article on the Press in the 1929 historical edition. The article offers these details: "There was no road finished from the dock then, only a trail, so the citizens of Ashland had a 'bee' and helped pack the type and cases, and racks and other printing materials and paper, up the steep banks." The press, itself, was another matter. The report continues: "The printing press, which was too heavy to handle in this way, was tied upon a 'go-devil' to which was hitched two yoke of oxen, and it was dragged up the ravine until the office was reached."35

The first home of the Ashland Press was located approximately where the Royal Theatre building now stands and was a frame structure. Because the building was being plastered, the first number of the Press published in Ashland was printed out-of-doors under a shade tree next to the building.36

Meanwhile, the infant publication had added an employee.

---

34 Andreas, p. 69.
Arthur Bowron had been the printer's devil on Sam Fifield's paper in Polk County. He arrived in Ashland on June 13, 1872, to fill the position of apprentice on the new weekly, arriving just in time to help get out the second edition.\textsuperscript{37} He served for 15 years, functioning as apprentice, journeyman and foreman in the shop and as local editor. The first foreman of the Press was W. W. Way.\textsuperscript{38}

The initial management of the Press sustained for two years. On June 1, 1874, Sam Fifield purchased his brother's interest with Hank becoming a newspaper editor in northern Michigan.\textsuperscript{39}

Subsequently the Press was moved to a new location. The two-story Fifield Block was constructed on the northwest corner of Vaughn Avenue and Second Street with the newspaper established on the second floor except for its business office "on the first floor in a little cubby hole . . . ."\textsuperscript{40}

In companionship with the move went new equipment. In June of 1877 a Cincinnati cylinder press was installed at the Fifield Block location. More modernization occurred here. It was at the Fifield Block that power job presses were first installed in Ashland with a Nonpareil and another large platen press put in. For power a water motor was installed initially and later a steam boiler plus an

\textsuperscript{37} Burnham, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{39} Andreas, pp. 69-70.
engine. It can be seen that Sam Fifield's paper was progressing, indicative of his ability, energy and leadership, attributes also indicated by his companion progress in the political arena.

Fifield was a man who wore two hats. In 1870, prior to coming to Ashland, he was assistant sergeant-at-arms in the State Assembly and was sergeant-at-arms again in 1871 and 1872, according to the Commemorative Biographical Record report. His biography continues that in 1874 he was elected to the Assembly and in 1875 and 1876 re-elected, each time by increased majorities. He was chosen Speaker of the Assembly in 1876. In the fall of 1876 he was elected to the State Senate to fill an unexpired term and in the fall of 1879 he was re-elected. In 1881, while a member of the State Senate, he was nominated for and elected to the office of lieutenant governor and was re-elected in 1883.42

During his forays to the state capital of Madison, Fifield left the Press in the hands of W. R. Durfee and others, Burnham reports.43 It was while Fifield was absent from Ashland, although on vacation rather than on state business, and Durfee in charge that a man arrived in Ashland in 1887 who was the forerunner of a family destined to dominate Ashland newspapering for almost 70 years.

42 Commemorative Biographical Record, p. 3.
43 Burnham, p. 138.
Joe Chapple's Historic Assignment

Joe M. Chapple was the proprietor of a small weekly in North Dakota when he decided to go to the Lake Superior region and seek greater opportunity. He came to Ashland in 1887 and took a job on the weekly Press, envisioning it as a daily and himself as its publisher.

Joe Mitchell Chapple was born in LaPorte City, Iowa, on July 18, 1867, the son of William and Louisa Chapple, according to John B. Chapple, Joe's nephew and the couple's grandson. Chapple added that William Chapple was the proprietor of a weekly newspaper at LaPorte City and that Joe worked there as a boy.

From Iowa, Joe Chapple went to North Dakota. Burnham relates in his free-wheeling style that from "far off LaPorte City, Iowa, Joe Chapple trekked or hiked or walked or rode or took a covered wagon into the northwest, until he came to... Grand Rapids..." Burnham continues that Chapple became the owner of a weekly newspaper there, the Journal, and that he ran the Grand Rapids paper "a couple of years" before heading toward Lake Superior.

Speaking before the Chequamegon Bay Old Settlers Club at Ashland on August 2, 1939, Chapple told of his motivation for moving. He recalled that he had been "living on the drought-swept prairies of

44 John B. Chapple (personal communication).
45 Chapple.
46 Burnham, p. 137.
North Dakota... running a little weekly newspaper" and added that "the 'tumble weeds' of the Dakota prairies did not suggest a promising future, and it had been my one ambition to some time publish a daily newspaper of my own." Burnham relates that Chapple had begun "hearing things about Lake Superior and some of the promising looking cities that were springing up on its shores" and so "he made a trip to Duluth." Chapple reported to the old settlers:

On the Duluth Tribune I landed a job as a reporter, and sought a special assignment to write a story on the 'boom town' of Ashland. Duluth was ridiculing and 'jibing' at the mushroom boom town here, and I was sent to provide more material for their ridicule. I came here to scoff but I caught the fever of Ashland's boom, and remained to settle here. Burnham reports on what was causing the boom: "The boom was the real thing. The discovery of ore on the Gogebic Iron Range, and the speculative fury that follows such discoveries started a boom that resounded all over the country..." Chapple recalled what the city was like when he arrived: "Ashland that year, in 1887, resembled a mining camp. Much of the business was transacted in tents. There was a premium on places to do business, as well as to sleep. He offered further insight: "Real estate, all over this area, was sold without limit--sight unseen. There was wild trading in

48 Burnham, p. 137.
50 Burnham, pp. 137-38.
options."51 Burnham declares that "Ashland as the coming port for the Gogebic Iron Range was certainly destined for great things."52

Chapple reported to the old settlers on that summer day more than 50 years after his arrival in Ashland that when he first "wandered into the office" of the Press publisher, "Fifield was enjoying the first profits of the Gogebic iron boom in California for the winter." He added that he "met the smiling and genial W. R. Durfee, a sawmill manufacturer, who was in charge of the paper . . . ." Chapple then recalled how he first came to work for the Press:

The boom was on and Durfee was so busy he was half crazy. When he heard I was a newspaper man, he said, 'Come on in here and go to work. Do you know what an ad is? Damn Governor Fifield for going away and leaving me with this newspaper. I don't know anything about newspapers. I'm a sawmill man.' Then it was that I saw my opportunity.53

Chapple not only saw opportunity in his new locality but also natural beauty. Burnham reports that he had been working for the Press about three weeks when "Chequamegon Bay captured him. He became enamored with it. Its glorious sunsets, its sky blue waters, its entrancing noondays, all these appealed to him and he decided to stay here."54

His decision led to the fulfillment of his ambition.

52 Burnham, p. 138.
53 Press, August 3, 1939, pp. 1, 3.
54 Burnham, p. 138.
The "Election Extra" Endures

The impact of the ambitious Joe Chapple on Ashland journalism was felt in short order for he was the major influence in making the Press a daily newspaper the year after his arrival. The details of Sam Fifield's role are indefinite, however, due to varying versions.

Chapple reported to the old settlers that he saw the opportunity for a daily newspaper when he first came to Ashland and upon his initial contact with the Press. He recalled: "Real estate men and merchants were clamoring for advertising. It seemed to me that the one thing Ashland needed was a daily paper. I told Durfee what I thought." Chapple then recalled the response of Fifield's winter replacement as: "A daily paper? I don't care what you do, just so you take it off my hands."\(^{55}\)

Historian Burnham states that Chapple and Fifield discussed the matter and that the latter wanted no part of it. Burnham says:

There was so much doing that after being on the paper only a short time, Joe suggested to his employer that he ought to change it over to a daily, but Sam answered briefly to the effect that there was no news for a daily paper, that he had never run a daily paper, that the weekly paper was doing mighty well as it was, that he would not waste a lot of money experimenting on a daily paper, that he didn't intend to establish a daily paper.\(^{56}\)

Apparently Joe Chapple's purposefulness plus an impending election, however, reached an apex on March 5, 1888. It was on that date, a Monday, that the people of Ashland perused the first issue of

\(^{55}\) Press, August 3, 1939, p. 3.

\(^{56}\) Burnham, p. 138.
the Press as a daily newspaper, says Burnham. He gives the particulars: "James E. York who brought the blast furnace to Ashland was a candidate for mayor to succeed John H. Knight. The Press wanted York elected. The day before election, entirely unannounced, the Press came out as a daily paper." Burnham adds: "Here came the new paper . . . with the entire Republican ticket at the head of its editorial column."\(^5^7\)

Because the Press as a daily came along in conjunction with the election there apparently was the feeling that its first number was a pre-election extra. Burnham relates that "the paper which Colonel Knight's supporters had supposed was simply an extra, issued for campaign purposes, stayed."\(^5^8\) A statement entitled "It Has Come to Stay" on the front page of the Press of Saturday, March 10, 1888, declares:

In the heat and excitement of the election just passed, the Daily Press has neglected to square itself before the public as a permanent institution. The idea has prevailed to some extent that the Daily Press was only issued for election purposes and would cease to have an existence after election. This is a mistake, . . . .\(^5^9\)

Burnham not only discusses the role of the publisher but also his whereabouts. He says that after Chapple came "Durfee's services were no longer needed" and he adds that "Fifield, we believe, took a trip to San Diego, California." Concerning March 5, 1888, Burnham

\(^5^7\) Burnham, p. 138.  
\(^5^8\) Burnham, pp. 138-39.  
states: "Just where Fifield was that day, does not clearly appear. The printers on the old Press who used to tell this story said that the daily made its appearance the day before Fifield's return."

Although Burnham says the question of the Press as a daily was discussed beforehand, Chapple's recollections indicate that Fifield's role was strictly ex post facto. Chapple reported that upon his arrival Fifield was on vacation in California, that Durfee gave him a job plus a resigned go-ahead to make it a daily and that when Fifield returned he was unpleasantly surprised. In fact, Chapple recalled:

When Gov. Fifield came back from California, he blew up. 'What? A daily paper in this town? You've ruined me!' he shouted. 'You'll send me to the poorhouse.' So I was fired. But before I left, I collected the advertising accounts owed by the various real estate men and put the money down on the governor's desk. There was $482. The governor didn't even count it, just saw the pile of bills, got up and put his arms around me and said, 'You're the boy I want.'"

It's time to hear from Fifield, himself. The March 10, 1888, front page statement says that "it has long been the intention of the publisher to issue the Daily. The Daily Press will be issued every evening except Sundays, and be in every respect a first-class evening journal, with the latest local and general news."

While the Press served Ashland with its daily edition it continued to publish a weekly edition for about 28 years. The Press as

60 Burnham, p. 138.

61 Press, August 3, 1939, p. 3.

a weekly endured until October 7, 1916, according to the Guide to Wisconsin Newspapers 1833-1957, the yeomanly project of Donald E. Oehlerts.63

Near the conclusion, the March 10, 1888, statement says: "It is the intention to make the Daily Press a paper that every citizen can take pride in. The enterprise is not a venture, but is in every response to a positive public demand, which can no longer be disregarded."64 Within 14 months of its debut as a daily, the Press would have a new engineer of the enterprise, the man who had led the response.

New Name on the Masthead

The issue of The Ashland Daily Press for May 31, 1889, tells in its masthead that "Joe M. Chapple & Co." is the proprietor and also that Joe M. Chapple is the editor and manager.65 It was doubtless the first time in Press history that the name "Fifield" wasn't borne there.

In the same issue the lead editorial is entitled "After Many Years' Service" and is signed "Sam S. Fifield." This nine-paragraph farewell gives insight into the man, his career, the Press and the


shape of things in the upper midwest in the late 19th century. It follows in its entirety:

With this issue of the Press the editor and proprietor relinquishes his position and steps down and out of the profession. For twenty-eight years the writer has conducted a newspaper in Northern Wisconsin, not having missed an issue in all that time,--seventeen years of which have been devoted to editing and managing the Ashland Press, the pioneer newspaper of this city and county.

We therefore deem it an event in the history of journalism in Wisconsin worthy of a passing note, for during this period the development of the northern frontier from an almost homeless wilderness to its present high position in one of the most prosperous states of the union has been accomplished. During these eventful years our pen has recorded almost every important transaction that has occurred in the great west and written the history of over a quarter of a century of progress in which the present generation of men have performed a part. It covers the period of the great rebellion and the history of the heroic deeds which saved the republic from dismemberment and destruction.

It covers the introduction into the northwest of railroads and telegraph, the opening up of forest and prairie; the settlement of states and territories; the building of railroads across the continent; the establishment of the great inter-ocean route to the Atlantic seaboard; the development of the rich iron mines of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan, and in fact nearly all of the great events which have been crowded into the most important era of the nation's history.

The history of the Ashland Press is the history of our proud and prosperous city. Every step in its advancement from the cutting out of the first street,--to its present prominence, has been recorded in its columns. It has advocated its interest early and late, and advertised its advantages, until they are known far and wide. The Press has been true to its locality, true to the 'New Wisconsin'--faithful to its friends and supporters, and to-day stands as one of the leading local newspapers of Wisconsin.

Politically it has always been a faithful advocate of Republican principles and the firm supporter of the party candidates.

To us then, it has been over a quarter of a century's labor as a local historian, and as a compiler of passing events.

To cease this work, to lay down the editorial pen and walk and work in other lines, is to us no easy task, and has been the source of much thought and consideration, and yet we feel
that we have earned a rest from this labor, and that we can retire with an honorable record.

The Press establishment and business has been sold and transferred to Joe M. Chapple who has been connected with it for the past two years as city editor, and who has demonstrated his ability to continue the publication of the paper successfully. He is a young man of excellent character and business habits, and during his connection with the Press has won many friends in the city who we feel confident will extend to him the same kind treatment which has ever been extended to us in the past. He is worthy of the confidence of the patrons of the Press and of the people. As our successor we feel confident he will keep the Press up to a high standard of excellence, and deserve the patronage of our businessmen and citizens generally, which we earnestly bespeak for him.

And now, in taking leave of our readers and patrons, we desire to return to them one and all our heartfelt thanks for their staunch friendship and the many favors extended to us in the past, and wish for them all success and happiness in the future. We can assure them that while we cease to edit the Press we shall not cease in our efforts to perform the part of a good citizen, but will continue to march shoulder to shoulder with those who work for the upbuilding of our city and extending its business and influence, as the metropolis of the New Wisconsin.66

An indication of why Fifield sold the paper is given in the 1929 historical edition article on the Press which says that "the strenuous life in a daily newspaper office was not to his taste. It was different from the old weekly grind and the governor ceased his activities as a newspaper publisher and editor . . . ." The same 1929 article adds another factor in that prior to relinquishing his role as a newspaper publisher "after about twenty years of pioneering in the wilds of northern Wisconsin" he had been appointed Ashland postmaster, probably a more quiescent occupation.67


in the same edition, this one a history of the Ashland post office, says that Fifield subsequently became postmaster of Ashland and first assumed the position on December 20, 1889, serving two terms totaling about 20 years.68

The lead editorial in the May 31, 1889, Press by Fifield was followed by a shorter one, this one signed "Joe M. Chapple" and given the provocative title of "What About It." This offering, too, is included herewith in its entirety:

Having purchased the Press it is expected that I should say something to its readers upon assuming the responsibilities which go with it. I can only say that I shall do my best to make the Press a first-class newspaper, and to transact the business in an honorable and satisfactory manner.

I respectfully ask the support of the friends of the Press and hope by hard work and strict attention to my duties, to merit their patronage and esteem. The Press will continue to preach Republican principles, advocate the interests of Ashland, city and county, and give the news of the day.69

The man from Iowa by way of North Dakota had thus fulfilled his goal in Ashland of becoming the publisher of a daily newspaper, a position he held for about five years before again moving on to new challenges.

Joe Chapple's Regime: Short but Impressive

The leading achievement of the half-decade personal Press proprietorship of Joe Chapple, who was only 21 when he took over in

---


1889, was probably the magazine-like annual edition of 1893, but there were other accomplishments too.

One of these was Guy M. Burnham. In his 1939 recollections for the old settlers, Chapple recalled Burnham as the man "from my home town in Iowa, and whom I brought to Ashland, and who became known throughout the state as north Wisconsin's historian." According to the historical edition biography, Burnham arrived in Ashland in January of 1891 to work for the Press, serving as city editor and editor until 1912 and then as editor of the Ashland Daily News for two years.

Acquisition of equipment was another accomplishment. The 1929 historical article on the Press reports: "Under the regime of Joe M. Chapple many improvements were made in the mechanical equipment of the Daily Press." In the article about itself in the 1893 annual edition it is reported: "During the past year the Press purchased two Cranston cylinder presses, through Marder, Luse & Co., and we do not hesitate in saying they are the best presses made." This equipment displaced the old Cincinnati and Cranston pony cylinder presses.

The new equipment was broken in by the publishing of the 1893

70 Press, August 3, 1939, p. 3.
annual edition which, according to the 1929 article, was "a marvelous edition even when viewed from present day standards." A look at this publication 79 years later shows that the term "marvelous" is not an overstatement. Between its heavier stock covers it contains 184 pages of pictures, drawings, articles and tables concerning a very broad spectrum of the business, industry, education, religion and people of Ashland and area in that era. A few additional details: it is indexed, contains attractive and interesting advertisements and is approximately nine inches wide by 11\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches deep.

Included on the 35-person staff of the Press at the time of the 1893 annual edition besides the chief and Burnham, city editor, were Will H. Chapple, business manager, and John C. Chapple, superintendent of circulation.

Shortly after the issuance of the annual edition, according to the 1929 article on the Press, Joe Chapple "left for other fields and purchased the Bostonian, a magazine published in Boston which was afterwards changed to the National Magazine . . . ." John B. Chapple was asked to characterize his uncle, Joe M. Chapple. The elder Chapple, according to his nephew, was a "ceaseless dynamo of physical and mental energy." John B. Chapple further

reported that after leaving Ashland he published two books of Americana; Heart Throbs and Heart Songs, and the younger Chapple claimed that his uncle's magazine was the forerunner of such publications as Time. At 80, according to John B. Chapple, Joe M. Chapple was a sought-after speaker on his reflections about famous people.79

When the founding Chapple left the Press he had three brothers to fall back on, Will, John and Bennett, as well as the old reliable, Guy Burnham.

A Period of Proprietorial Plethora

After Joe M. Chapple's departure the Press became a Joe Chapple & Co. newspaper with a turbulent turnover in family proprietorship followed by an abortive sale and finally stability with Mr. and Mrs. John C. Chapple.

The second oldest of the four Chapple brothers was Will H. Chapple who was born four years after Joe on March 14, 1871, also in LaPorte City.80 After Joe left Ashland, Will continued to hold the title of business manager with Burnham moving up to editor.81 Presumably, however, Will filled the role of proprietor for his absentee owner brother and John continued as head of circulation.

The youngest of the Chapple quartet was Bennett who was born

---

79 Chapple.
80 Chapple.
in LaPorte City on April 26, 1879. A few years after becoming Press business manager, Will established the Saturday Evening Press at Phoenix, Arizona; John became editor of the Press at LaPorte City and Bennett became business manager of the Press at Ashland. Again there is a presumption in that Bennett probably filled the role of proprietor.

John Crockett Chapple was born in LaPorte City on May 27, 1875. He came to Ashland to work for the Press, returned to LaPorte City to edit the paper there and then returned to Ashland. About a year after Bennett became business manager in Ashland he and John exchanged jobs and locations, with Bennett going back to LaPorte City and John returning to Ashland. The year of John's return was probably 1899 or perhaps a year or two earlier. He and Myrta Bowman were married on November 9, 1898, at LaPorte City and the couple's first child, John Bowman Chapple, was born in Ashland on November 20, 1899. Presumably John had the proprietor role like all three of his brothers.

The plethora of Press proprietors during this period was far from complete, however. A year or two after the Bennett-John switch,

82 Chapple.
84 Chapple.
86 Chapple.
according to the 1929 historical article, "Will H. Chapple returned from Phoenix and assumed the management of the **Daily Press** for about a year, then taking up his work with the **National Magazine** where he has been ever since." The article continues that Bennett left for Boston about the same time as Will. This all places Joe, Will and Bennett in Boston and John in Ashland with the year about 1902. The **Press** historical article says that "for some years it was John C. Chapple, business manager, and Guy M. Burnham, editor." 87 Again, it appears, the **Press** reins are in the hands of John but again, in time, they are removed.

Subsequently the **Daily Press** was sold to J. T. Hooper who in turn sold the paper to Robert Knoff. These transactions defaulted, however. The historical article reports: "Certain financial arrangements were not carried out which had been made with the Chapples regarding the sale of the **Daily Press** . . ." 88 During this period all four Chapple brothers were with the Chapple Publishing Company in Boston which at one time had 150 employees. 89

It fell upon Kirk L. Miles to take over the **Press** proprietorship for the Chapples. Miles, according to the historical article, "very satisfactorily" rescued the floundering newspaper. 90

---

89 **Chapple**.
It was in 1915, according to John B. Chapple, that his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John C. Chapple, returned to Ashland from Boston and purchased the Press from Joe M. Chapple. Thus, 26 years of Joe Chapple & Co. ownership was concluded but ownership within the Chapple family was retained.

For the next 41 years the John C. Chapple family and the Press were synonomous. In addition, it was during the proprietorship of John C. Chapple that the Press outlasted all of its competition.

Ashland's Other Journalistic Offerings

The Press was the pioneer Ashland newspaper as well as the only one to endure but in between the community had 18 other newspapers, sources indicate. They are presented in chronological order. Data on the Press competition was gathered mainly from the aforementioned Guide to Wisconsin Newspapers 1833-1957 published by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin as well as the extensive 1929 historical edition article on the Press which also reports on the other Ashland newspapers.

The historical edition states that the "first real competitor" was the Ashland Chronical which made its debut on April 3, 1880, edited by W. H. Tompkins. The article goes on to state that the Chronical "received liberal support" from the people of Ashland County but that it was run as a branch of an Oshkosh, Wisconsin, publication.

---

91 Chapple.
which ultimately failed and took the Chronical down with it. The Guide makes no mention of this newspaper although it does list an Ashland Chronicle published from 1913 to 1916.

It was approximately 1882 that the Ashland Times began its 12-year life, according to the Oehlerts compilation, enduring until about 1894. The Guide reports that it was a weekly that was also entitled at times the Chequamegon Times and had as head man John A. Monger from 1882 to 1892 and Iver Anderson from 1892 to 1894. The Press article says that the Times was first a weekly and later a daily.

Evidence is strong that there was a daily newspaper in Ashland prior to the Daily Press. According to the historical article the "Ashland News was the first daily newspaper in Ashland" and was financed by John H. Knight. The article continues that the News was a Democratic newspaper, published mornings and "carried a good telegraph press report." The Guide reports that the News was published as a weekly from May 13, 1885, to approximately 1906 and as a daily from September 25, 1887, to May 21, 1915. This means that it preceded the Press as a daily by about six months. The Guide lists

93 Oehlerts, p. 4.
94 Oehlerts, p. 5.
John S. Saul as the first News editor-proprietor with Clarence Snyder taking over in 1890 until 1895 when J. C. Williams came in and served until 1900 whereupon Burt Williams took over for the last 15 years. The 1929 article also lists Billie Hooker and Clarence Dennis as News editors. The article adds that the News was changed to an evening paper under Burt Williams and eventually sold to the Press. The Guide says it was a merger.

There were a number of ethnic newspapers in Ashland, the first of which apparently was the Herald or Herold, depending on the source. The Who's Who Edition says the Ashland Herald was "a prosperous German newspaper" and was published for years by a Mr. Voll. The Guide reports that it was the Ashland Herold, it was a weekly published from 1887 to October of 1903 and that the paper was published in German. The Guide lists the following for the editor-proprietor role: W. Bangemann, 1887-1888; A. Sadlowsky, 1888-1890; Emil Gerth, 1889-1890; Rudolph Voll, 1892-1903, and Herman Roethig, 1903.

Another special interest newspaper of a different nature was entitled the Chequamegon but where to place it in a chronological

97 Oehlerts, p. 5.
99 Oehlerts, p. 5.
101 Oehlerts, p. 4.
continuum is difficult. The Who's Who Edition describes it as a "society paper" and adds that it was published Saturdays by Burt Williams prior to his association with the News. Williams became the News proprietor in 1900, as stated above. The Who's Who Edition also reports that the Chequamegon Critic was "a sort of consolidation" of the Chequamegon and the Times.\textsuperscript{102} The Times ceased about 1894, as stated above, but the Critic began in 1890, according to Oehlerts. The Guide gives no data on a newspaper called the Chequamegon but does list the Chequamegon Times as a varying title for the Ashland Times. There is no mention of Burt Williams in connection with it, however.\textsuperscript{103} Other evidence indicates that the Critic began in 1893.\textsuperscript{104} It seems logical that the Chequamegon preceded the Critic because of the apparent similar nature of the two publications so an approximate period of existence for the Chequamegon might be in the era of 1888 to 1892.

The newspaper entitled the Chequamegon Critic is recognized by three sources but, as seen above, there is a muddle surrounding it. The Who's Who Edition reports that it was a consolidation of sorts of the Chequamegon and the Ashland Times and put out by James S. Duket.\textsuperscript{105} The Guide reports that the Critic was a weekly newspaper

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{103} Oehlerts, pp. 4-5.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Anonymous, Ashland City Directory 1899, (St. Paul, Minn.: R. L. Polk & Co., 1899) p. 37.
\end{itemize}
published from 1890 to 1908 with James S. Duket the editor-
proprietor. According to the Ashland City Directory for 1899 the
Critic was organized in July, 1893, as indicated above, and published
every Saturday. We can conclude that for about 15 years around
the turn of the century Ashland had a weekly newspaper with an appar-
ent sophisticated tone published by James Duket.

The Guide lists a weekly newspaper known as the Ashland Inde-
pendent as being published approximately from 1891-92 and the editor-
proprietor James Anderson. The Press article does not mention it.

German-Americans were not the only ethnic group represented
journalistically in Ashland. A newspaper known as the Fribet or
Freiheit, depending on the source, was apparently the first of three
Swedish-language newspapers published in the community. The Who's
Who Edition says a Swedish newspaper called the Fribet "prospered for
some years." The Guide says a newspaper in Swedish, the Freiheit,
was published from 1891-94 with the editor O. Elander. Because of
the similarity of names plus the probability that being foreign the
spelling could be confused, the assumption is that the Fribet and the
Freiheit are one and the same.

106 Oehlerts, p. 4.
107 Ashland City Directory 1899, p. 37.
108 Oehlerts, p. 4.
110 Oehlerts, p. 4.
There were ethnic papers, society papers and also a labor paper. The interests of the workmen were represented by the Appeal, according to the Who's Who Edition. The Guide reports that the Ashland Appeal was a varying title from August to October of 1894 for a newspaper known as the Ashland Commonwealth which was a weekly published from August 15, 1894, to January 12, 1895. The Guide says the editor-proprietors for this short-lived publication were John O. Hall and John F. Miles, August to October, 1894, and Chalmers S. Baird from November, 1894, to its conclusion. The Who's Who Edition reports that Miles was the father of Kirk L. Miles of the Press.

Following the initial Swedish publication was the Svenska Forposten which, according to the Guide, was put out weekly from approximately 1897 to 1898 and published in Swedish by John Litonius.

And in addition to ethnic, society and labor newspapers in Ashland was a religious publication. It was known as The Helping Hand, according to the Wisconsin Blue Book, and published monthly in the late 1890's under the direction of S. E. Lathrop.

A newspaper of apparent general appeal was the Leader but it

---

112 Oehlerts, p. 4.
114 Oehlerts, p. 5.
"led" for less than six months. The Guide reports that this weekly was published from February 11 to July 29 of 1899. Arthur W. Bowron and D. E. Richter held the reins from February to April, Richter from April to June and George Schlecht in July.116

The third and last of the Swedish-language newspapers in Ashland was the Ashland Bladet, with the varying title of Ashland Posten in 1900-1901, according to the Guide. This weekly newspaper was published from 1900 to 1907 and was merged with the Svenska Amerikanska Tribunen in Superior, Wisconsin. Filling the role of editor-proprietor, the Guide reports, were James M. Engstrom, 1900-1903; Carl Friberg, 1903-1906; and Uno Lindstrom, 1906-1907.117

The Ashland Mirror was a weekly newspaper published from December 31, 1906, to 1908 says the Guide with the time of demise an approximation. The head men are listed as D. A. McCune, 1906-1907; W. M. Tompkins, 1907-1908, and S. A. Miller, 1908.118

We have seen publications devoted to ethnic groups, social affairs, working men and religion. Farmers were also heard from in print. The Press article says that the Lake Superior Farmer, of which Roy Beebe was the prime owner, prospered for some years and was later associated with the Wisconsin Farmer at Racine.119 The Ashland

116 Oehlerts, p. 5.
117 Oehlerts, p. 4.
118 Oehlerts, p. 5.
City Directory for 1913-1914 reports that the Lake Superior Farmer was published Saturdays by the Bowron-Murray Company with Roy H. Beebe the editor. The officers are listed as Arthur W. Bowron, president; David Murray, vice president and treasurer, and C. N. Cramer, secretary. In terms of chronology the Lake Superior Farmer was probably issued for a short duration in the 1912-1914 era as it is not listed in either of Ashland's 1911 or 1915 directories.

Mention was made above of the Ashland Chronicle, a newspaper published from April 11, 1913, to September 23, 1916, with its title varying from 1913 to August, 1916, to the Odanah Star, according to the Guide. It only had one editor-proprietor during its life, says the Guide, H. C. Ashmun. Later in the same decade came the Ashland Call, a newspaper published in 1918-1919 with Fred W. Haislet listed by the Guide as the editor-proprietor. The Who's Who Edition lists the Call proprietor as Mr. Haislette.

The apparent final other newspaper in Ashland was the Journal which, according to the Who's Who Edition, was first a weekly and then a daily conducted by the Peavey interests and Mr. Kautenberg.

---

120 Ashland City Directory 1913-1914, pp. 28, 67-68.
121 Oehlerts, p. 4.
122 Oehlerts, p. 4.
The Guide reports that the Ashland Journal was a weekly newspaper published from 1922 to 1924 with Hubert H. Peavy *sic* the proprietor in 1922-1923 and W. C. Kautenberg the proprietor in 1923-1924.\footnote{125}

Thus, the last of Ashland's other newspapers apparently created a one-newspaper city in the middle 1920's during the Press proprietorship of John C. Chapple, a dominant and dynamic figure in Ashland journalism from 1915 until his death in 1946.

**John C. Chapple's Lengthy and Literate Leadership**

The regime of John Crockett Chapple as head man of the Press lasted much longer than any that preceded or have followed his--31 years. Longevity as the head of a business may only signal the ability to keep the ledger in the black but for a newspaperman there must be more. It is also to his credit that he spoke out daily on the light and heavy happenings around him, he served at three levels of government and he was also prominent in church and civic affairs.

When Mr. and Mrs. John C. Chapple returned from Boston in 1915 to purchase the Press it was to be a husband-wife operation, at least in official terms. According to the couple's son, John B. Chapple, it was his mother's money that was used to buy the paper from his uncle, Joe M. Chapple. Therefore, Mrs. Chapple was the owner of record and was the publisher from 1915 until the paper was sold in 1956 while John C. Chapple, according to his son, was the editor-manager from 1915 until the time of his death in 1946. Asked who was the

\footnote{125 Oehlerts, p. 4.}
boss, Chapple emphasized that his father was always the head of the 

Press operation. 126

John B. Chapple described his father as "a remarkable 'gentle 
soul' with rare ability and discernment." Chapple said his father 
was known as 'The Squibber' because of his squib column in the Press 
which, according to the son, gained for him both the affection and 
esteeem of his readers. According to his son, one of John C. Chap-
ple's favorite commentaries was: "We don't know all the answers but 
we can be kind." 127

An examination of John C. Chapple's squibs reprinted in a spe-
cial edition in his memory shows both range and depth. They exhibit 
provincial and national insight and sensitivity and wit as the fol-
lowing four examples illustrate. The first one deals with one's 
hometown:

The community in which we live is more than our home more 
than a place to earn one's living and to raise a family. In 
a larger sense this community is a joint enterprise, a part-
nership in which every one of us—man, woman and child— 
shares in some measure in the success or failure of the oth-
ers. 128

He also exhibited insight with regard to national affairs as the fol-
lowing commentary illustrates:

Several years ago, before we got into this terrible World 
War of ours, we were making a trip through the south, and at

126 Chapple.
127 Chapple.
Galveston, Texas and also at New Orleans, we saw several ship loads of scrap iron being loaded on vessels flying the Japanese flag. At the time we didn't like it, and we squibbed to the effect that one of these days Japan would be shooting that same scrap iron back at us. Well, this all has come to pass and more. Now-a-days we are still pouring our scrap iron into Japan, but now we are doing the delivering in the shape of bombs from the mouths of great cannons and from the bomb-bays of our B-29's. 129

'The Squibber' evidenced talent too along parable lines. To wit:

"You can buy a dog with money. But if you want him to wag his tail at the sight of you, you'll have to earn his affection. Money values don't mean a thing to a dog." 130 No reviewer of the passing scene is complete without wit and the following tale offers an example of Chapple's:

Dr. C. J. Smiles, after bringing 4,000 babies into the world, has decided to turn over the obstetrical part of his organization to Dr. W. E. Bargholtz. Now with all due regard to Dr. Bargholtz and a host of other mighty good physicians in Ashland, a lot of women are not going to like this decision of Dr. Smiles. We heard one young woman remark that if Dr. Smiles was through taking care of baby cases, that she was through having babies. What do you know about that? Still, with four thousand babies to his credit, we should think it would be all right for him to back away from baby cases from now on if he desires so to do. Those women who think they can't have a baby without him are going to be surprised--maybe. 131

He also wrote regularly about farm life in general and about a pet pig in particular as well as about legislative activities with the emphasis on sidelights. In addition, he wrote often about religion

with a weekly admonition to his readers to observe Sunday as well as regular plaintive commentary on World War II which, as the following conclusion to a comment on growing casualties illustrates, dug into him: "The larger the list the more it hurts. Please God and may the war come to an end soon." 132 In addition to addressing himself daily to his environment, Chapple also actively immersed himself in it. He was prominent in the Presbyterian church in Ashland, serving as its choir director for 40 years. 133 He participated in politics at the local and state level and was serving his fifth term in the State Assembly at the time of his death. 134 He was appointed acting Ashland postmaster in April, 1923, and in June, 1924, was confirmed as Ashland's 11th postmaster, a position he held until June, 1932. 135 Chapple was involved in Ashland activities too as these sentences from the special edition of the Press devoted to him show: "He confessed he was a joiner. He belonged to almost every club and lodge and community group and civic enterprise." 136

With this type of activity in addition to his newspaper chores it was obviously necessary to delegate a lot of the work of putting out a paper every day. When Chapple returned from Boston in 1915 to

132 Press, Memorial Edition, pp. 3-10
133 Chapple.
take over the operation of the Press he served as editor with Kirk L. Miles business manager. Upon his post office appointment in 1923, Chapple made Miles the managing editor and it was also at this time that his son, Joe M. P. Chapple, became city editor. Miss Hildur C. Eckman subsequently became business manager. John B. Chapple, who took over as city editor for his brother in 1924, has been with the Press in various roles for most of his life. Mrs. John C. Chapple served as society editor from about 1942 to 1962.

The energy and ability plus the capacity for hard work that characterized John C. Chapple and his staff combined for many accomplishments during the 31-year regime. One of these was in 1929 with the publishing of the 48-page special Who's Who Edition, a newspaper-size picture and print history of all facets of the Chequamegon Bay area similar in format to the aforementioned 1893 special edition. A second accomplishment of impressive proportions was the 86-page special World War II edition put out in 1945 which contained biographical data on virtually every area serviceman.

On May 1, 1946, John C. Chapple died in his sleep at his home about one month short of his 71st birthday. Those sending

138 Chapple.
condolences included the governor of Wisconsin, Walter S. Goodland, and President Truman's chief of staff, a former Ashlander, William D. Leahy. From the obituary:

The richness of his life lay not in what he retained, but in what he gave away--squibs, money, service, friendship, understanding--an open hand extended equally to folks like Admiral Leahy or Governor Goodland or to the farm lad next to his farm.

Following the passing of John C. Chapple, the Press became a mother-son operation.

After the death of her husband, Mrs. Myrta Chapple retained her publisher role but the responsibility for running the Press fell to her son, John B. Chapple, 46 at the time with a newspaper career spanning 42 years.

John B. Chapple in Charge: A Mercurial Decade

On May 1, 1946, John Bowman Chapple, whose uncle purchased the Press in 1889 and whose father had presided at the newspaper since 1915, began what was to be a decade of proprietorship concluding with the sale of the paper after 67 years of Chapple family ownership.

The new boss was the only Press proprietor named Chapple who was Ashland-born, the date being November 20, 1899. He attended Ashland grade schools, was graduated from Ashland High School, studied at the University of Wisconsin for one year and was graduated

144 Chapple.
from Yale. Professionally, he had gotten an early start. Chapple related that he was only four when he was permitted to "throw in pi" in the back shop, that is distribute the spilled individual letters. At the age of 15 he began working summers full-time at the Press, first as a linotype operator, then in the news department. This was prior to going away to school, serving with the Army and getting a regular job. His work experience besides the Press has included employment with the family's publishing firm at Boston plus stints on both the Journal and Sentinel at Milwaukee and the Gazette in Janesville, Wisconsin. He returned to Ashland and its newspaper in 1923 and served as city editor and managing editor under his father followed by his decade of proprietorship. Since 1956 he has been a reporter with the Press. His outside interests have closely paralleled those of his father in that he has participated in politics, is an active churchman and is also involved civically.

In the 10-year era between 1946 and 1956 the Press was characterized by an emphasis on local news and circus typography. As an example of local emphasis, on what might be called an average news day for a city of 10,000 the Press on April 30, 1947, used 13 local stories on page one. To exemplify the circus makeup, the front page for December 27, 1952, included one three-column picture, three

146 Chapple.
eight-column ribbons, one two-column and two one-column drop heads, four two-column heads and 20 one-column heads with 14 stories jumped plus the standing weather head and data and this would also be an average news day. 148

During the John B. Chapple regime, an era around the Press which the product indicates must have been exciting to say the least, there were a number of achievements highlighted by special editions, photographic coverage and feature articles. One of the special projects was a 10-page edition published in memory of John C. Chapple a year after his death, two pages of which were tributes to him and information about him followed by eight pages of his writing. 149 Another project worthy of note was the 20-page edition published prior to the community’s centennial in 1954 containing a wealth of historical and contemporary information and photographs. 150 The Press often went all out to cover a story pictorially in this era. When the high school at nearby Washburn was destroyed by fire in February of 1947 the Press carried a sequence of six four-column pictures. 151


152 Ashland Daily Press, June 27, 1946, pp. 1, 3.
There is no doubt that John B. Chapple has had his high points and low points with the Press but perhaps the apex came 13 years after the newspaper was sold. On May 10, 1969, his family, friends, associates and townspeople gathered to honor him as an outstanding citizen of the community. The following editorial entitled "Man of the Year" appeared in the Press that same evening and, despite some historical and spelling errors, offers insight into John Chapple's long-time mutual love affair with Ashland and journalism:

For their choice this year as "Outstanding Citizen" the local Veterans of Foreign Wars organization has chosen a man whose name is synonymous with enthusiasm. His name is also synonymous with friendliness and generosity, with principle and courage, with newspapering, with Ashland, with service to the community and the list could go on and on.

You would be able to find him, for example, leading a community sing in the park, excitedly discussing the history of Ashland, helping out the latest "cause" emanating from Northland College or a local church, coming to the aid of a "down-and-outter" or, with tireless devotion and detail, reporting on the activities of local governmental bodies.

He is the author of several books, pamphlets and musical selections. He has served on the Ashland city council and the board of supervisors of Ashland County. He was three times a candidate for United States senator. He has been an active newspaperman in this city for most of the last 54 years.

He was born and raised in Ashland and was graduated from Ashland High School and later from Yale College. His first newspaper job was in the mechanical department away back in 1915 when he was still a teen-ager. He is a former editor and publisher of the paper which his uncle had founded in 1888.

Ashland's Man of the Year is John B. Chapple. It is an honor well deserved, long in coming and applauded throughout this city and area.

John Chapple has been "honoring" Ashland for many, many

---

years and at the St. Agnes Social Hall tonight Ashland will
turn the tables and honor him.
- He is a newspaperman's newspaperman but, more important, a
citizen's citizen.154

That evening at St. Agnes probably helped to erase what was probably
his abyss, the sale of the Press 13 years earlier.

It was 10 years and five months after taking over the Press
operation that the regime of John B. Chapple, and indeed the 67-year
regime of the Chapple family, came to an end. One wonders about the
words "pleased to announce" used in connection with the front page
report on September 25, 1956, of the sale of the Press.

From a Family Newspaper to a Newspaper Family

It was in May of 1889 that the Press reported to its readers
that the newspaper had come under the ownership of Joe M. Chapple.

In September of 1956, after 67 years in the family, it was announced
to the people of Ashland and vicinity that Myrta B. Chapple and John
B. Chapple had sold the newspaper.

A two-column announcement on the Press front page of Tuesday,
September 25, 1956, bears the headline "To The People of Ashland and
Chequamegon Region" and states:

The undersigned are pleased to announce on behalf of our
publications that negotiations have been completed whereby
the ownership of the Ashland Daily Press has been transferred
to the Evening Telegram Company. The new owner takes posses-
sion immediately. Details of plans for expansion and devel-
opment of the Ashland Daily Press will be announced later.

We express the conviction of the people interested in both

these upper Wisconsin newspapers in saying that this move is in the interest of the home cities of both publications which have long been the sole local sources of daily newspaper service for the dozen and more counties of up-state Wisconsin. As the pending early completion of the deep waterway brings new hope and new problems to this area the Evening Telegram and the Daily Press are thus in position, through joint effort, to aid their home communities in taking full advantage of the opportunity for growth and development that their unmatched natural facilities afford Wisconsin's two famed Lake Superior ports.

The announcement was signed by Myrta B. Chapple, owner, and John B. Chapple, editor, for the Press and by Clough Gates, vice president, for the Evening Telegram Company.\footnote{155}

The day after the initial announcement the Press carried a wire story with a Superior dateline about the purchase. The four-paragraph report headlined "Details of Sale of the Daily Press" leads off with the news of the sale followed by a brief resume of the Chapple ownership and then adds: "No purchase price or other details of the purchase were announced." The concluding paragraph details the extent of the communications chain by reporting that, in addition to publishing the Evening Telegram at Superior, it has three other Wisconsin newspapers, one in Minnesota and four in Louisiana plus six radio stations and one television station.\footnote{156}

Within a short time there were changes in the Press under the new ownership and subsequently there was a new boss. As indicated above, John B. Chapple stayed on as a reporter.

\footnote{155}{Ashland Daily Press, Sept. 25, 1956, p. 1.}

\footnote{156}{Ashland Daily Press, Sept. 26, 1956, p. 1.}
Bill Gunderson's Tranquilizing Tenure

Two weeks after its takeover the Press had its first Telegram Company general manager in J. W. (Bill) Gunderson, a man who emphasized a more conservative approach to newspapering than the paper had evidenced previously and public relations with the community.

On October 9, 1956, it was announced to Press readers that Gunderson had arrived in Ashland to "take over new duties" with the newspaper. Gunderson was born at Stanley, Wisconsin, and was graduated from Chippewa Falls (Wisconsin) High School in 1941. He served with the U.S. Army and saw extensive action during World War II including the Battle of the Bulge, in which he was wounded, and he was awarded the Purple Heart, Silver Star and Bronze Star for his wartime service. Following the war he entered the insurance business, then established a shopper at Chippewa Falls and then was reactivated because of the Korean War during which he served stateside. In 1951 he became advertising manager of the Telegram chain's newspaper at Chippewa Falls, the Herald-Telegram, a position he held until 1956 when he came to Ashland.

It was within a very short time after the Telegram takeover that the Press began to change. Two days after the initial announcement, lighter, old style type faces appeared on page one. At the

end of the first month the front page was decidedly more conservative than previously with one three-column head, two two-column heads, no drops, 18 one-column heads excluding stock heads and eight local stories plus a local three-column picture with an overline. After three months the changeover was complete with typography typical of the Gunderson era in evidence. One four-column head, one three-column head, two two-column heads, no drops and 12 one-column heads and five local stories plus one two-column picture and two three-column pictures, one with an overline and story, all local, and stock material made up page one on December 22, 1956.

To say that the Press head man played an active role in the community is an understatement. The extent of his involvement included the Urban Renewal Committee, Ashland County Fair board of directors, Ashland County Republican Party treasurer, Saron Lutheran Church council, Rotary Club board of directors, Ashland Chamber of Commerce vice presidency, Ashland City Council and the Ashland County Board of Supervisors. Upon his departure in June of 1965 there were 200 Ashlanders on hand for a dinner in his honor.

One June 10, 1965, the announcement was made on the front page of the Press that Gunderson was being transferred to the general

managership of the Telegram affiliate at Virginia, Minnesota, the Mesabi Daily News, with the appointment effective on July 1. On June 24 the dinner was held for Gunderson in recognition of his Ashland achievements and his promotion to a larger newspaper. One of the many speakers at the dinner, Norris Swanson, Press managing editor, stated that Gunderson "faced a big responsibility here" adding that "the way he succeeded in doing his job and establishing himself so firmly in Ashland with so many loyal friends, is proof enough that he will succeed in any new responsibilities he will face." Gunderson, however, stayed in Virginia only about five months as he joined the Tribune at La Crosse, Wisconsin, in November as the display advertising manager and was promoted to advertising manager in October, 1967. He was holding that position when he died on March 27, 1970, at the age of 46 following a heart attack.

The nine-year reign of Bill Gunderson would have to be described as tranquilizing, a regime in sharp contrast to not only the one that preceded it but also to the one that followed.

**Larry Asbach’s Regime: Short but Fiery**

In conjunction with the June, 1965, announcement of Gunderson's promotion to Virginia it was also announced that Larry Asbach


would be moving up from Press advertising manager to general manager. On July 1 Asbach assumed his new role, six months later the Press building burned down, four months following that the first Press at the new location was published and a year later it was announced that Asbach would be promoted to the Virginia general managerness effective July 1.

Larry R. Asbach, a native of Ashland and a lifelong resident prior to going to Virginia, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Asbach. He was graduated from Ashland High School in 1945 and from Northland College in 1951 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He served with the U. S. Army in Germany from 1945 to 1947 and with the National Guard from 1952 to 1962. Following college he was employed at an Ashland clothing store, then became an advertising salesman for The Evening Telegram in 1953 until 1959 when he was transferred to the Press as advertising manager. On June 10, 1965, it was announced that Asbach, 37, would be the new Press general manager at the start of the next month. Probably no edition published under Asbach's general managerness carried as sensational news as that of Monday, January 24, 1966. The lead paragraph of the lead story states: "A spectacular fire which broke out in 10-degree below zero weather early Sunday morning completely destroyed the building housing the Ashland Daily Press.

---

with damage expected to run into several hundred thousands of dollars." The next sentence says: "The loss included the building itself and all of its equipment." The building, located at 109 Second Street West, was the fourth home of the Press which was moved there from the Odd Fellows building on Fourth Avenue West and Third Street in 1925. Actually a move was already in the works because prior to the fire the firm had acquired another structure on Third Street and Second Avenue West and the January 24 article reports: "The work of preparing the building for occupancy was partly done, and now with the present crisis, it will be rushed full speed ahead." Temporary quarters for the Press office were set up at 204 Second Street West. 169

While the Press perpetuated itself via an office in Ashland and the new home was made ready the newspaper was printed by The Evening Telegram at Superior and trucked in from the time of the fire until May 2. It was on that date that the first Press was printed in its new Ashland plant and the page one article says that "it certainly was gratifying to again be publishing in Ashland" adding: "It seemed to be the only topic for discussion about the whole building the entire day . . . ." 170

A building and equipment were lost and regained within a few months but the publication site disappeared from the flag. Whereas

the newspaper had been previously entitled the Ashland Daily Press, it became The Daily Press on May 2, 1966. The reason behind the change is given thusly: "It is the aim of the Daily Press management to serve the entire two-county region, and parts of others, as a solid community worthy of a publication devoted to news of interest to readers of the entire area."171

After a hectic first year Asbach could now settle down to a more routine day-to-day operation of the newspaper in the second year of his two-year term. In addition to his role of manager he, like his predecessor, had an active community relations role. The article concerning his transfer to Virginia reports that Asbach was "particularly happy and gratified as the opportunity to participate through the Daily Press with the city, the Chamber of Commerce, and all others in the rapid and substantial expansion of Ashland during the recent period . . . ."172

On June 7, 1967, it was announced that Asbach had been named to manage the Virginia Paper, almost two years to the day after he had been named Ashland general manager. Unstinting in admiration for the boss, the Press page one piece reports: "The one-time Armour Co. meat-packing plant, a fine-looking, substantial brick structure, has been transformed under Mr. Asbach's guidance, into one of the finest

newspaper plants in the middle west. It is also to Asbach's credit that Press circulation showed a substantial increase during his regime. The average total paid circulation for the 12 months previous to October 1, 1965, was 4,589. The same figure a year later, as provided by the Ashland postmaster from the official filing, was 5,112. The June 7 article adds that the circulation at Asbach's new assignment "is about three times that of the Daily Press at Ashland" with his new job to begin the first of July.

Out of a smoking rubble on a frigid Sunday morning in January, Asbach put the Press firmly on its feet again. However, it remained for his successor to make "one of the finest newspaper plants in the middle west" also one of the most modern.

**Byron Johnson Comes and Clanking Machines Go**

On October 19, 1970, the Ashland Press, under the general management of Byron W. Johnson, made two as traumatic changes as had ever occurred in its almost 100-year history. The newspaper shifted from evening to morning publication in conjunction with its conversion from letterpress to offset production.

Johnson, who followed Asbach as general manager, was born in

---


175 Rudolph Anich (personal communication).

Little Falls, Minnesota, on December 18, 1927, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Eric Johnson. He was graduated from St. Cloud (Minnesota) State College with a Bachelor of Science degree in business education and taught for a time before joining the advertising staff of the Evening Telegram Company paper at Virginia, Minnesota, the aforementioned Mesabi Daily News. From Virginia he was transferred to Two Rivers, Wisconsin, where he served as general manager of the Two Rivers Reporter, the position he held before being transferred to the Press at Ashland. He took over as head man of the Ashland operation on July 1, 1967.177

Three years after Johnson's arrival the Press joined the nationwide newspaper trend from hot metal to photocomposition. In the last letterpress issue, October 17, 1970, a Saturday, Press readers were informed in a seven-paragraph, page one notice that on Monday the offset Press would debut. The article reports that computerization will replace the 600-degree molten lead pots and adds: "Gone are the clanking, mechanical typesetting machines, replaced by the almost silent electronic keyboards that will be used for all typesetting."178 In the initial offset issue of October 19 more details of the new process are offered:

We are in the electronic age throughout the world. Now, the equipment used to produce your Daily Press is the most modern available today. From new electronic typesetting

177 Byron W. Johnson (personal communication).

keyboards, to computers which read the perforated tape produced by these keyboards and produce a razor-sharp print, to the automatic film processors used to process the negatives for the pictures and the pages of the newspaper, to the brand-new Goss Community offset press....nothing has been spared to bring you a newspaper that you will enjoy reading, and we will enjoy producing. 179

Also included in the October 17th article was the report to the readers that beginning Monday they would "be receiving an all-new Daily Press, delivered in the morning" plus the notation that "through the past years there have been numerous requests for a morning newspaper to serve the people of northern Wisconsin." 180 The Monday morning article reports that the Press is the "first morning daily devoted entirely to the readers of northern Wisconsin" and amplifies on the alleged demand with: "During the past few years, many readers and many advertisers have expressed their wish for a morning daily paper serving northern Wisconsin. Now it is a reality." 181 Perhaps a clue to a motivation for morning publication can be ascertained from the following section of the October 19th pronouncement:

We have gone one further step in our planning for you, the reader. With the co-operation of the Superior Evening Telegram, we will be able to give you 24-hour news coverage of the area, the state and the world....in depth. Special communication lines are set up so that all the news will be available to you.

To start this out, you, the subscriber to the Daily Press receiving your paper either by carrier boy or by motor tube, will be receiving your Daily Press in the morning and also

will be receiving, without additional charge for six weeks, The Evening Telegram in the evening.

If, after this initial period, enough of you like the arrangement, it will be continued. 182

The changes have apparently been successful, at least in terms of readership. The average total paid circulation for the 12 months previous to the last publication day of September, 1967, was 5,126. 183 The same figure for 1968 was 5,133. 184 For 1969 it was 5,258, increasing to 5,424 in 1970 and 5,634 in 1971. 185 For 1972 the figure neared the 6,000 mark with a 5,955 circulation. 186 Thus, under what might be termed the Johnson administration, the Press is selling more papers although there has been a decline in population. Ashland was listed with 10,132 persons in the 1960 census. 187 In 1970 it declined to a 9,615 population. 188

Despite the fact that the circulation has been increasing there are indications that the economic condition of the newspaper and its marketing area is not what it might be. In response to a question concerning his goal for the Press in the future, Johnson

185 Johnson.
responded it is to make it a more financially-successful operation
plus to add two more units to the press. Asked for his philosophy of
journalism, Johnson said that for a small-town paper the size of the
Press it is to have "as much local coverage as possible" adding that
it is his belief that Ashland is the smallest city in the state with
a daily paper. 189

The Press in 1972, with its circulation approximately 6,000
and with up-to-date offset equipment, observed its 100th anniversary
and is entered upon its second century of service.

189 Johnson.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The community of Ashland, Wisconsin, developed on the south shore of Lake Superior in an area rich in history. Its first newspaper, the Press, was founded in 1872 and has survived the competition of 18 other publications to today stand as the sole printed servant of the community. The Press has been basically under three ownerships in its 100-year history. It was started by Sam Fifield and under him it evolved from a small, three-man shop into a strong and prosperous publication although the publisher's political activities detracted from his active role. Under the Chapple family ownership the paper evidenced a highly personal type of journalism and there were also several significant historical publications. Since its purchase by the Evening Telegram Company it has been more bland than previously with a businesslike attitude outweighing involvement in the direction of the community. Today the Press is a modern offset publication with a growing circulation.

Suggestions for Further Study

I stated in the introduction that 100 years of history is a lot of territory to cover in a thesis. Therefore, the possibilities for further study are endless. Virtually every section could be
expanded into a study all its own or even a thesis. In some cases a
single paragraph could qualify. For example, in the section on other
Ashland newspapers one paragraph was devoted to each of the 18 Press
competitors. Each of these newspapers, although none endured nearly
as long as the Press, would make a good study. The student could al-
so choose any of the several people who have been Press proprietors
for a biographical study. Probably the most interesting would be
John C. Chapple. There are other study possibilities outside of the
realm of history. The student could compare and contrast the Press
under family ownership and chain ownership. Other possibilities in-
clude: 1) A study of the effects of a small town morning newspaper
both on the people who put it out and on the community; 2) A study of
whether readers feel today's Press is fulfilling its responsibility
to the community in terms of local and area news and editorial com-
ment; and 3) An efficiency study of a small town morning newspaper as
contrasted with a small town evening newspaper. The fact that the
Press recently changed from evening to morning publication makes it a
good laboratory for comparative studies. This history is in a sense
a framework and example. It was not only the intention of its author
to gather in one place a history of the Press but to inspire in oth-
ers a desire to pursue other aspects of northern Wisconsin newspaper
history.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Articles and Periodicals


Newspapers

The Ashland Press, March 10, 1888.


Ashland Daily Press, August 3, 1939.


Ashland Daily Press, May 1, 1946.

Ashland Daily Press, June 27, 1946


Ashland Daily Press, October 9, 1956.


The Daily Press, October 1, 1968.

**Personal Communications**

Anich, Rudolph.

Chapple, John B.

Johnson, Byron W.
THE ASHLAND PRESS: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Paul J. Skamser Jr., M.A.

South Dakota State University, 1973

Adviser: George H. Phillips

This study attempted to present a concise history of the newspaper at Ashland, Wisconsin, the Press. It also examined the geographic and historical background of the area in order to put the newspaper in context and examined the other newspapers which have been published in the community.