Aubrey Sherwood of the De Smet News

Dale Blegen

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AUBREY SHERWOOD
OF THE DE SMET NEWS

BY
DALE BLEGEN

A thesis submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree Master of Science, Major in
Journalism, South Dakota
State University
1979

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Dr. Richard Lee
Thesis Advisor

Date

Dr. Richard Lee
Head, Journalism Department

Date
Aubrey Sherwood
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When Aubrey Sherwood retired from publishing The De Smet News on April 17, 1977, he had spent fifty-seven years at a job he did not expect to take. His father was editor of The News when young Sherwood graduated from South Dakota State College in 1917 with a major in agriculture. "I had other plans," Sherwood recalled.¹

His plans changed, and during the years that followed Aubrey Sherwood amassed a long list of significant accomplishments. During his editorship he promoted civic activities, commerce and the cultural heritage of his hometown. He enjoyed a long and lasting friendship with Harvey Dunn, prairie painter, and used his newspaper to promote interest in Dunn and his works. Sherwood was instrumental in getting Dunn to bring a collection of his paintings to South Dakota in 1950. The artist made a gift of thirty-five paintings for a permanent collection at South Dakota State University following their exhibition at De Smet. Other paintings have since been added to the collection.

Sherwood used his newspaper to promote the writings of Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of the "Little House" books, which have provided the basis for the recent television series, "Little House on the Prairie." He was instrumental in forming the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society, which has preserved the author's heritage in De Smet. The Society has served as a nucleus of De Smet's tourist industry that is based on interest in Mrs. Wilder.
The sale of the newspaper in 1977 brought to an end ninety-three years of publication by the Sherwood family in De Smet—a period that began four years before South Dakota became a state and grew through the pioneering era and Great Depression into the space age of the late twentieth century.\(^2\)

To understand fully Aubrey Sherwood and his contributions to De Smet, one must look at the newspaper, its formation, its role in the community and the role of the father, Carter P. Sherwood. All influenced his long editorship. And for Aubrey Sherwood, who is a man who understands and has reverence for the decision of history, they were all important.

**Purpose and Methodology**

The author has selected two major contributions by Sherwood for the focus of this paper—Sherwood's roles in developing the Dunn interests and the Wilder interests. In order to put those efforts into perspective, the author will review the history of *The News* and provide a brief biography of Aubrey Sherwood, emphasizing the kind of editor and businessman he was. This will set the stage for the exploring of the relationship between Sherwood and Harvey Dunn and the years Sherwood spent promoting the works of Dunn. The paper also will record the manner in which Sherwood used *The News* to promote the works of Laura Ingalls Wilder and the tourist attractions in De Smet that tie to the *Little Town on the Prairie* years.

There is no chronicle of Aubrey Sherwood's life except for feature stories in the *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, *Huron Daily Plainsman*,
Watertown Public Opinion, and Brookings Daily Register. Further, the only known biographical study of a South Dakota rural journalist is a 1969 master's thesis done at South Dakota State University by Kenneth Schaack, entitled George W. Hopp: Brookings County Press 1879-1890.³

Information for this paper was collected through recorded personal interviews with Sherwood on March 23, 1978, and February 3, 1979, and through numerous unrecorded conversations; interviews with John Sittner and Gerry Sturges, neighboring publishers at Lake Preston and Arlington on February 15-16, 1979; and conversations and interviews with other Sherwood associates. The file copies (bound volumes of The De Smet News) were researched from 1900-1977. Other documents, such as unpublished speeches written by Aubrey Sherwood, were used as were the books, De Smet Yesterday and Today, edited by Caryl Lynn Poppen, and The Prairie Is My Garden, written by Robert Karolevitz.

This thesis should give a better understanding of the contributions of Aubrey Sherwood, to De Smet and to the state of South Dakota, and call attention to the influence a country editor can have beyond his print shop. The paper serves the author, who is now editor of The De Smet News, by providing a deeper understanding of the history of his newspaper and its community.
Formation of The News

The De Smet News was formed from the consolidation of The Kingsbury County News and The De Smet Leader in 1891. The Kingsbury County News was formed on April 1, 1880, when George Mathews and J. W. Hopp hauled printing equipment to De Smet from Volga. They brought the equipment down the roadbed of the railroad just before the track was laid. Mathews was a Brookings attorney; Hopp was a Brookings printer. They set up their equipment and began publishing a paper. There is no copy of their first issue.4

The De Smet Leader was started in 1883 by Mark Brown, son of the Reverend Edward Brown, who is mentioned in the Wilder stories. Brown was minister of De Smet's first church, the church that Charles P. Ingalls helped build. The younger Brown was soon joined by Carter P. Sherwood, who had moved to De Smet from Whitehall, Wisconsin, in 1882. Brown's health was poor, and C. P. Sherwood became editor of The Leader on February 7, 1885, and publisher on October 31, 1885.5

The decade was marked by the arrival of the railroad. The Kingsbury County towns of Arlington, Oldham, Lake Preston and De Smet were plotted by the railroad in 1880, and people began to settle in them almost immediately. De Smet was incorporated in 1883, although it had been named county seat in 1880. The town at that time probably contained several hundred people and had 60 buildings, including many still standing on Main Street. The Dakota Territory was being settled and was only a few years away from statehood. Men were indeed building their own futures.6
The Kingsbury County News and The De Smet Leader were published separately for a time and without change in ownership. But in the late 1880s, Mathews returned to his Brookings law practice, and Hopp sold his paper to C. B. MacDonald. In 1891, C. P. Sherwood and MacDonald merged their papers and renamed the resulting paper The De Smet News and Leader. The name was changed to The De Smet News by February 16, 1900 (the first such newspaper in the files), and was published by MacDonald and Sherwood until April 26, 1901, when Sherwood was joined by L. W. Hubbard after Hubbard purchased MacDonald's share of the business. C. P. Sherwood emerged as the sole owner of the paper with the April 17, 1903, issue.

De Smet's Other Newspaper--

The Kingsbury County Independent

Another newspaper was started in De Smet in 1894--The Kingsbury County Independent, published by George W. Lattin, a farmer and attorney. Fred Wright, immortalized as a country printer in an oil painting by Harvey Dunn, purchased The Independent in 1889 and published it for thirty years. Wright was employed by C. P. Sherwood as a printer when Lattin decided to sell. Sherwood encouraged Wright to buy the paper.

Aubrey Sherwood recalled:

That started a very unusual newspaper history. They were good friends and never competitive. They respected each other and each other's presence. It was out of that that Fred Wright, in the spring of 1929 said: 'Carter, you told me that if I ever wanted to give up The Independent
that you'd like to have it. I decided last night to give it up. You want it?' Within two weeks we met with an attorney and Dad and I bought The Independent. Fred retired to a farm eight miles south of town.

C. P. Sherwood and The News

C. P. Sherwood used his paper to boost the community and the Republican party. In page one stories as early as March 2, 1900, he was endorsing Republican candidates and in later years would give the GOP front page exposure while giving no exposure at all to the opposition party. He was secretary of nearly every organization in De Smet and at some time was an officer of the savings and loan, creamery board, telephone board and library board. He was named South Dakota's first food and dairy commissioner, a political appointment, but "Dad was never a political figure any more than I was," Aubrey said.

Nevertheless, the father's influence was felt, and Aubrey Sherwood never in the columns of his newspaper supported a Democratic candidate. (He did not, however, devote excessive amounts of space to politics or the Republican party.)

The News began as an eight-column, four-page, broadsheet publication, published without headlines until June 5, 1903, when some stacked heads appeared for the first time. The News contained mostly local social news, but it also contained some preprinted news and cartoons obtained from a syndication.

In June, 1905, the paper was changed to a six-column format and was increased to eight pages. The News continued to use the six
column format throughout C. P. Sherwood's publishing career and did not change format until 1933 when a seven-column system was used. The newspaper adopted the eight-column format, used until September 12, 1979, with its February 22, 1961, issue.  

News coverage remained basically unchanged from 1905 until 1914, when more attention was given world issues as the United States entered World War I. It was in 1914 that the first picture, a war photograph, appeared. War photographs and cartoons appeared throughout United States involvement in the war; by 1917 the technical appearance of photographs in the paper had improved noticeably.

**Aubrey Joins The News**

Aubrey joined C. P. in 1919 as an associate editor. He worked first as an area reporter covering purebred cattle sales.

After he joined the paper, there was more frequent use of headlines, and headline type was larger. And soon an editorial appeared, urging merchants to adopt a policy of consistent advertising because, the younger Sherwood wrote, more advertising made for a more interesting and better read newspaper and all would gain from it. This was a frequent editorial theme during his career.

Aubrey was given partial ownership in The News as a wedding present in 1925, and he and his father continued to publish the paper until the father's death on October 18, 1929. C. P. Sherwood was sixty-eight when he died and had been a part of the newspaper since 1883. His passing was noted with detail in a two-column story with picture on page one. (See appendix.)
Father and son had worked together for nearly ten years and during that time had improved the printing production facilities of The News. A Chamberlain press with a Miller feeder was added to the job shop after Aubrey joined the paper. Linotype composing equipment was purchased, and Aubrey learned to operate it. The paper itself was printed on a Babcock sheetfed press.

To the casual observer, it would seem that Aubrey Sherwood had inherited quite a valuable property. He recalls, however, that financially the paper was not in good shape. The economy of the area was soon to slump into the Great Depression. Despite what would seem like a difficult beginning, The News remained solvent under Aubrey's editorship, and its circulation and number of pages per issue grew.

In 1953, the first year for which the South Dakota Press Association has records of circulation and advertising rates, The News had 1,631 subscribers and charged forty-nine cents a column inch for its advertising. When Sherwood sold the paper to Dale and Lynne Blegen on March 17, 1977, it had a circulation of 2,109 and charged $1.12 per column inch for its advertising.

Eight-page papers were large issues when father and son worked together. The paper grew to an average of twelve pages per issue, and during the mid-1960s sixteen-page issues were frequent. And there were occasional issues of twenty and twenty-four pages. After Dale Coughlin, an advertising salesman for The News for more than twenty-five years, left the paper in 1972, advertising lineage declined, and issues of more than twelve pages became increasingly rare.
The sale of The News to the Blegens in 1977 ended more than ninety-three years of Sherwood involvement in publishing De Smet newspapers. It did not end Sherwood involvement in De Smet civic organizations; Aubrey Sherwood did not retire from Main Street.

He had for years sold Dunn reproductions and what he called heritage publications about De Smet and its early residents. These publications included postcards and booklets about Laura Ingalls Wilder and other members of the Ingalls and Wilder families. Also for years he had spent much of his time visiting with tourists who were interested in Dunn and Mrs. Wilder. After he sold The News he opened a small shop called Heritage Items and received visitors fulltime.

His shop was just three doors south of the newspaper for more than two years. But in May, 1979, he lost his lease on his storefront on Main Street and moved to a location on a side street about one block north of the newspaper.

5 Ibid., p. 304.
7 Interview, March 23, 1978.
8 News, Feb. 16, 1900, p. 2; April 26, 1901, p. 2; April 17, 1903, p. 2.


12 News, June 5, 1903.

13 Ibid., June 2, 1905.

14 Ibid., June 12, 1914, p. 1.


16 Ibid., Jan. 14, 1917.


CHAPTER II

SHERWOOD AND THE DE SMET NEWS

Aubrey Sherwood was born November 7, 1894, to Carter P. and Elgetha Sherwood. He was the youngest of three sons and the only one to enter the newspaper publishing business.

Vincent, the eldest Sherwood son, was born in 1889, and became a music salesman and formed the Sherwood Music Co. in New York, N. Y. Reginald, born in 1891, obtained a master's degree from South Dakota State College and a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Minnesota. He worked for the federal government during World War II, was once head of the research laboratories at General Mills, and was vice president of a division of Sterling Drug Company when he retired.1

Life for the Sherwoods could be described as genteel, based on a photograph of the family in its back yard about 1902. The photograph shows a tennis court and Aubrey with a pony.2 Aubrey recalls, as a young boy, riding horses often and running up and down the halls of the laboratory at State College while his father was food and dairy commissioner. He also recalls working in The News print shop after school with his older brothers.3

Aubrey graduated from De Smet High School in 1912 and received a bachelor's degree in agronomy from State College in 1917. While at college he worked in the bulletin department of the Extension Service and became acquainted with the editor of the Dakota Farmer. He was offered a job on that magazine after graduation, but he never took it.
It was while he was working in the bulletin department that he became interested in journalism and took some writing courses. There was no department of journalism at State College at that time.

Before he graduated in 1917, he looked into getting an advanced degree in journalism and wrote to Columbia University and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Sherwood recalled:

I applied for a fellowship at Madison. There was none. So I asked for a job. The department chairman wrote back and said he would find me some kind of job for sixty dollars a month and I could receive my master’s degree within two years. Then the war broke out.⁴

Sherwood then spent six months at Hallock, Minnesota, teaching agriculture in high school. He spent another six months as a field agent for the U. S. Bureau of Entomology, assigned to the Extension Service at State College. He worked in grasshopper control under an emergency appointment because he had a high draft number. He was then asked by the government to consider transferring to rodent control with the military in lieu of being drafted. He studied rodent control by correspondence for more than two months but was never commissioned into action.

Sherwood said: "I decided they couldn't keep me hanging much longer. You couldn't enlist, but you could get yourself inducted if you could get your board to release you."⁵ For three weeks out of every month, the local draft board had control over prospective draftees. But during one week out of the month the prospective draftee was free. It was during that free week that a friend told Aubrey that the Army
Signal Corps needed motorcycle riders and airplane mechanics. The pair went to St. Paul, Minnesota, for induction, and Aubrey was designated an airplane mechanic.

Sherwood recalled:

I had ridden motorcycles, but they took me as a mechanic. The Army made of men what it wanted, that was the first thing I learned.

I told a young lieutenant who said they wanted mechanics that day that I'm not a mechanic and I'm not a woodworker. Well, he said, we've got no problem with you, Sherwood. You've had manual training. I said, no, I haven't had manual training. Well, he said, you must have had some in high school. No, I said, they didn't have that in my high school. Well, you must have worked for a carpenter in the summer time, he replied. I said, no, I rode horses in the summer. Well, he said, what's the difference between a rip saw and a cross cut saw? I couldn't be that dim. They made a mechanic out of me and before I was through I could make a three-in-one strut.6

Aubrey entered the Army Air Corps in 1918, immediately applied for flight training, and was assigned to ground school at Urbana, Illinois. By the time he graduated, the Armistice had been signed. He returned to De Smet.

He could no longer teach because certification requirements had changed. He still had the offer to join the Dakota Farmer. But his mother had broken a hip and his brothers were not living in the area and already had careers of their own. The family in De Smet needed help.
A Newspaper Career Begins

A job with the U. S. Department of Entomology was offered if Aubrey would accept a transfer to Massachusetts. Sherwood described the situation:

It seemed to me that whatever I could offer the Dakota Farmer I could offer a newspaper. My dad said: 'You've got $1,750 salary a year with the Department of Entomology. You can't make that here.' I wrote to the two brothers. They couldn't give me any advice, but they did realize that dad had a heavy load.7

So late in 1919, Aubrey joined his father in publishing The De Smet News. And on January 20, 1920, his name appeared as associate editor in the masthead. His appointment elicited this comment from the Volga Tribune:

The De Smet News is now forty years old, and under the management of C. P. Sherwood and his son Aubrey it has never been as good a paper as it is today, and that is saying a good deal. Long may it and its publishers live and prosper is the wish of all newspaper men of South Dakota.8

The paper did prosper. A Chamberlain press with a Miller feeder was purchased to print sales catalogs for the many purebred cattle breeders in the area. Aubrey worked as an outside man, covering stories throughout the county and helping to sell advertising and printing. "There was never any salary. I was living at home like a school boy and Dad and I were buying clothes and automobiles, but everything else was going into equipment," Sherwood said.9

In 1923, Laura Engrebretson, a Garretson native with a degree from State College, came to De Smet to teach school. She and Aubrey met and dated and were married June 27, 1925.
Sherwood recalled:

We were driving around one night and I said, here we're going to be married, and you have no idea whether I have any income. 'No,' she said, 'I don't know anything about it. You can tell me if you want, but I haven't asked you. So she didn't ask and I didn't tell her.10

The business went well during the first years of their marriage. A daughter, Phyllis, was born. But by 1929, after the purchase of The Independent in June and a Model 14 Linotype that summer, things began to sour.

On July 22, 1929, a gasoline burner in the rear shop of The News exploded, and the resulting fire burned the plant, damaging the entire building and much of the equipment. Production of the paper was moved to The Independent plant. The Sherwoods were in the process of consolidating the papers at the time of the fire. The Independent's Linotype had been sold. It was held back from its purchaser and put into operation so The News could continue publication. Not an issue was missed.11

Additional stress was placed on Sherwood because Laura was pregnant and his father had taken ill. C. P. Sherwood died in October, and a few days later, Mary, the Sherwood's second daughter, was born.

Sherwood commented:

If anyone had a year of hell, we'd had it. Fortunately we had Smitty (Regnald Smith, a man who worked for The News for forty years). I'm sure people thought he was a partner. I once sounded him out on that. But all he said he wanted from us was a paycheck.12

Sherwood's mother had died two years earlier on January 12, 1927, and neither of his two brothers expressed an interest in the paper.
Aubrey had received one-quarter interest in The News as a wedding gift, and after his father's death he and Laura closed the estate and became the sole owners of the paper. It was a debt-ridden business in October, 1929. The paper contained little advertising. Subscriptions were hard to collect in cash. And there was a need to rebuild the plant following the fire.

Sherwood recalled:

The attorney we closed it up with said, 'I suppose the people of De Smet think you've inherited a business. With all respect to you, if you can make this thing go, you deserve everything you get out of it.'

The Son on His Own

Despite the dismal financial conditions, improvements were made in the town and in the newspaper in 1929. De Smet got electric street lights. And Aubrey began a push to make merchants out of the storekeepers of De Smet.

There was little advertising in the paper when Aubrey became sole owner, and there was little money. "We bartered for subscriptions and ads," he said. He encouraged storekeepers to buy merchandise in quantity and use his newspaper to advertise their products to sell their products quickly and throughout the year. A dry goods and grocery merchant, Paul Bouchard, helped by buying twenty-two full page ads in one year. He also bought several ads that were nearly a full page and several smaller ones. Sherwood said, "That did for The News what purebred livestock did for the printing in De Smet." Sherwood
sought advertising on the street and through his own publication by using large ads promoting the paper's services.

A number of services and editorial features present in The News today appeared in 1930. In that year, the first Early Files column appeared. An advertisement noted that The News provided its advertisers with cut outs of their advertisements to be used as point-of-sales posters to encourage buying throughout the week. The first story about the Ingalls appeared. It was followed by hundreds of Ingalls stories during the years of Sherwood's editorship. 16

By 1933 there was heavy use of pictures of national figures, and maps, graphs and cartoons were used to illustrate news stories. Editorials dealt with national issues such as relief from the depression and the value of the Work Progress Administration, the need for agriculture to do a better job of marketing its products, and the need for a free press. Editorials were changed from a single-column format in 1933 to the two-column format found in the newspaper today. 17

Aubrey the Businessman

The economy was sagging in De Smet as elsewhere, and a news story noted that ad rates were reduced twice during 1932 and 1933 (although the stories never mentioned how much rates were reduced, and there are no other records of rates). Subscribers were offered bargains through "clubbing," the offering of other publications in addition to The News for one low subscription price. The Minneapolis Journal, a daily, and The News cost eight dollars a year. McCall's magazine and The News were
available for two dollars and fifty cents a year, and for three dollars a year subscribers could receive McCall's, Redbook and The News. 18 Clubbing with other publications was not the only maneuver used by Sherwood to build his subscription list. When The Independent was purchased, combined subscriptions totaled 1,000-1,200. But few were paid in cash and even fewer were cash in advance. Subscription lists were bolstered by offering thirteen months of The News for the price of twelve if the subscription was paid by the second Saturday of the month in which it was due. This tactic was used for four or five years, and by the end of that period eighty-five percent of subscriptions were paid in advance. Other newspapers borrowed the idea. 19

Collection of advertising revenues was always a problem, and Sherwood did not advocate a publisher attempting to collect slow accounts himself. Instead, he advocated hiring an attractive school girl to make the contacts.

Sherwood recalled his recommended approach:

Have her go to the manager or owner of a store when he's not occupied. Approach him and say 'I have your monthly account for The De Smet News,' hand it to him and don't say another word. If he starts talking about the weather or the pretty dress you've got on, stand there and stare him down because men don't like to admit to a nice young lady that they won't pay a bill. 20

The system worked and collections improved.

During World War II, Laura taught school in De Smet. She taught for three years, although Aubrey never liked it because it made house-keeping difficult for her. She cleaned house and washed clothes on Saturdays. Sundays were always reserved for church and reading at the
Sherwood household. "I was so happy one day when she said, 'I've told the school board I'm not interested in teaching another year.' And I said, Thank you. I think we can manage without," he said. Shortly after that she started working at The News three days a week, gathering local social items and reading proof. The Sherwood daughters also helped at the paper by reading proof and doing odd jobs in the print shop. But Laura mainly devoted herself to her family and home and was active in the community.

She joined several organizations and was asked to join the local bridge club. "She loves to play bridge and can't understand why I won't play. I can't afford to see someone else suffer, and I'm not going to play a game that someone can lose a friendship over," Sherwood said.

Aubrey sold advertising himself much of the time during the first years he owned the paper. He hired an intern from State College, but the intern did not work out. The intern read magazines in the park instead of attempting to sell advertising, Sherwood said. "I didn't know until after I let him go he was doing that. How could I? I was down working, not up in the park keeping my eye on him."

He tried several other persons in advertising sales, but had little luck finding a person who could really produce and work as though he owned a part of the paper. He finally found that person in Dale Coughlin, a printer in the back shop of The News, who asked whether he could try to sell. Coughlin was with The News for twenty-five years and spent more than twenty-three of those years as an advertising salesman. By all accounts it was Coughlin who was largely responsible for the economic well-being of the paper.
Sherwood credits the choosing of Coughlin as an ad sales person to advice given him by his father:

Dad always told me not to trust anyone who had not been an employee and who did not know your business to represent you on the street. Dale had been an employee and did know our business. It worked well.24

Sherwood was progressive when it came to employing new, but tested, ideas, both for himself and for De Smet. The town was without sanitary sewer during his early years as a publisher. He pushed editorially for installation of a sanitary sewer, and two years later it became a reality.25

In 1947 De Smet was in "The Heart of Pheasant Paradise," and hunting was a booming industry bringing in thousands of dollars to De Smet residents. Sherwood could foresee the day when hunting would wane and editorialized that while pheasant hunting was good, new and more stable industries were needed.26 Some small industries began to move into De Smet in the early 1960s, and Sherwood was a charter member of the De Smet Development Corporation, a group whose purpose was to attract even more industry to town. The group has been successful. There now are Alfalfa Feeds, Inc., a manufacturer of alfalfa feed products; De Smet Farm Mutual Insurance Company of South Dakota; Lyle Sign Company, a manufacturer of reflective highway signs; Raven Industries, makers of sportswear; a Good Samaritan Center; and De Smet Rendering Company.

Sherwood also adopted new methods and new equipment for The News. Several additions of equipment were made through the years in the job printing plant. A Harris S-7L Sheet-fed offset press was acquired in
1959 to print the newspaper itself. The Harris press was put to use early in 1960 and made The News one of the first full-sized South Dakota newspapers to be printed by offset.27 The fact that it was printed offset was proudly reported in the flag (near the name of the newspaper on the front page) until 1979. A news story announced the purchase of the press and reported it would print three times faster than the old letterpress in use and promised better picture quality. The better picture quality came as promised.

Aubrey the Republican

Aubrey Sherwood was a staunch Republican, just as his father before him had been. He worked hard for the party, supported most national ideas editorially, but never sought any special favors or paid party positions. He was conservative, believing in home rule, less centralized government, the need for both guns and food in a foreign aid program and the need to fight Communism wherever it existed. The Republican tone of his beliefs came through strongly both through the coverage devoted to Republican party members and issues and through the lack of coverage of Democratic party ideas. He did not, however, editorially endorse candidates (although there was little doubt as to which candidate he supported).

He says now that he is sorry there was so much Republican news in the paper for so many years but justifies it by adding: "This was a Republican area."28
It was as a veteran party member that Sherwood first met Karl Mundt, a candidate for Congress in 1938. (Sherwood said in an interview that Mundt was a school teacher and administrator at Bryant, a town near De Smet, when he first ran for the House of Representatives. But Mundt had left Bryant in 1927 and had taught for ten years at General Beadle Teachers College in Madison before entering politics.)

Mundt served in the House from 1938 until his resignation in 1948, when he was appointed to fill the Senate seat vacated by the death of Harlan J. Bushfield and the resignation of Vera C. Bushfield. He served in the Senate until he did not seek reelection in 1972. Mundt died in Washington, D.C., August 16, 1974, and was buried in Madison, South Dakota.

It was during Mundt's early political career that Sherwood became acquainted with him, and he visited Mundt on his frequent trips to Washington, D.C., as the western representative of Greater Weeklies, an organization designed to strengthen weeklies in the national advertising market. The two men corresponded frequently, and Mundt's Congressional column appeared regularly in The News between 1940-53. His stands on various pieces of legislation provided some editorial material for Sherwood, and those editorials were always supportive.

In 1956 Mundt was given the honor of choosing the U.S. representative to a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) tour of Norway and Denmark. Mundt chose Sherwood. "I think it quite natural he chose me," Sherwood said, referring to the years of friendship the men shared.
Laura accompanied Sherwood and eight journalists from other NATO countries on a five-week tour early in June, 1956. The News was filled with reports of what the Sherwoods saw and did during their trip. Little was said about NATO itself, however.31

Aubrey the Editor;
His Philosophy and His Style

The newspaper apparently continued to prosper, and according to rate bulletins of the South Dakota Press Association, circulation of The News grew from one thousand three hundred in 1956 to two thousand one hundred thirty in 1977. The paper was filled with country correspondence and local social items and responded heavily to a readership that liked to see its name in print. "People always say they don't want their names in the paper. But they always like it when they are. It ties the individual to the community," Sherwood said.32

The purpose of the paper was to serve the people and report the news, which Sherwood described as the births, deaths and accomplishments of the people of the area.

Names made the newspaper, he said, and that was why he placed heavy emphasis on correspondents' reports and at one point even used school children in the circulation area to write reports from their neighborhoods. It was an exercise that Sherwood believed helped the children learn to observe and to write about what they learned. It helped his newspaper by providing news from a large area.
He describes the role of a country editor:

A country publisher day-by-day, week-by-week is involved with all people in the community. You have the opportunity to be of service to them by reporting their activities, the births, deaths and so on.33

Sherwood rarely attended a school board or city commission meeting; he reported those governmental actions from the official minutes. But he was a frequent visitor to county commission meetings, and he always reported all the county court news. No one was spared his name in print if he was involved in court.

"My dad told me that if you don't meet your obligations, they'll be snapping at your heels the rest of your life and any week you put it off makes it twice as bad," Sherwood said of the necessity of printing all the court news.34 A trait of his that annoyed some people (a practice that changed with the sale of the paper, a change that was commended by those it annoyed) was his insistence on placing driving while intoxicated convictions on page one. "I tried to let people know there were certain things that deserved display on page one," he said.35 Sherwood was and is a teetotaler.

The De Smet News was as modern-appearing as most other weekly newspapers in South Dakota during Sherwood's editorship. He tried to follow the latest trends in typography. But the newspaper was not the neatly packaged product frequently found among newspapers today.

The only certainties each week were that the editorial would be on page two and that driving while intoxicated stories would appear on page one. Front page makeup was hard to follow. Photographs were oftentimes
placed on the page without connection to the story they illustrated. If a story was too long for one column, it would be run to the bottom of the column and then be moved over, usually to the right, and finished. One could never be certain, however, whether the story would be in the next column, or over two or three columns. And one could never be certain whether the remaining paragraphs would be at the bottom of the page or somewhere near mid-page.

Headlines frequently contained phonetic spellings for such words as bought, brought and thought. Sherwood said someone started that style of headline writing and he liked it, but he could not remember who started it. Verb headlines (headlines beginning with a verb) were also common. One such headline said: "Brot home spelling honor to county." Sherwood today thinks brot, bot and thot spellings are a good idea in headlines but not in body copy.

Headline styles changed throughout the years. In the 1930s and 1940s, stacked, double-legged headlines (major heads with two minor heads in smaller type beneath them) were common.

Stacked headlines disappeared from The News during the 1950s and 1960s and reappeared in the 1970s.

The following is a brief history of the headline styles used in The News:

**1930s**

- Pay Tribute to Soldier Dead in Two Services
- But One Civil War Veteran to Join in Decorating Graves
- Patriotic Organizations Arrange for Sunday Memorial Services

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36 Verb headlines (headlines beginning with a verb) were also common. One such headline said: "Brot home spelling honor to county."
37 Sherwood today thinks brot, bot and thot spellings are a good idea in headlines but not in body copy.
38 Headline styles changed throughout the years. In the 1930s and 1940s, stacked, double-legged headlines (major heads with two minor heads in smaller type beneath them) were common.
39 Stacked headlines disappeared from The News during the 1950s and 1960s and reappeared in the 1970s.
1940s

Members 45 4-H Clubs

to Join in Competition

on Achievement Days

Committees are Named

for Club Competition

County Seat Host

Annual Event Next

Wed'n'day, Thursday

40

1950s

Achievement Days Aug. 23, 24;

De Smet be Host Annual Event

41

1960s

School Reorganization Be Subject

County-Wide Meeting Monday

42

1970s

De Smet played host to two great events

Attendance at School Reunion

exceeded committees hopes

Weather contributed all day,

shower cut evening crowd

43

The most common treatment of stories under the stacked head style

was to have two legs of type split by a picture with the main headline

over it. The minor headlines would appear over the individual legs of

type.

Another Sherwood editing trait was the rambling lead and the comma

splice sentence. For example, in an editorial headlined English to be

International Language, Added Reason for Good Grammar, Few Innovations,
he wrote:

The English language is moving along rapidly as an international language, so a press release informs us, this coming as no great surprise after we learned six years ago that it had been adopted as the official language of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, required to be used by all personnel in every area except the office at Paris where the number of French employees made this hardly possible. 44

Aubrey at Work

Sherwood's writing was frequently unclear, and no one, he felt, could write as well as he could, and no one, not even Reginald "Smitty" Smith, who worked in his back shop for forty years, could compose a headline as well as he could.

He claimed to be able to operate every piece of equipment in the shop, although no one still living who worked for Sherwood remembers his ever running a press. Sherwood claimed that during World War II he ran the presses himself because help was difficult to get. Fred Wright, in his waning years, used to run the Babcock letterpress that was used to print the paper, and, as the story goes, his pipe would let go a puff of smoke each time he fed a sheet into the press. Smitty apparently ran the job shop presses during that period.

Sherwood is a small man, about five feet, two inches tall, and he probably never weighed more than 130 pounds. He wore glasses, even when he was quite young, and was not cut out for physical labor and rarely did any.

He did, however, learn to run the Linotype but needed help to change the heavy brass-filled magazines when a different type font was needed.
In the last years the Model 14 Linotype was used, its mats would stick in the chute, and Sherwood would hammer on the brass magazine with his pica pole. The belt would also slip and the machine would not turn over. His employees described him as an elfish figure alternately beating on the Linotype magazine with his pica pole and running behind it to help the pulley, which drove the machine, move under the slipping belt.

None of his former employees described his work habits as orderly. News releases cluttered his desk, spilled onto the floor, and were piled on other work tables throughout the shop. When his desk was moved from a small room so that a new photo typesetting machine could be installed, an employee wondered what had happened to the roll top desk that had sat in the room. The desk was never a roll top model; it was simply piled high with news releases.

Sherwood started many projects in a day but rarely finished any. Former employees said he would begin working on page one for the next issue almost immediately after the current week's issue was printed, and he would make and remake the page right up to the last minute. The front page was rarely ready for the press before 3:30 p.m. Wednesdays. The mail left De Smet at 5:00 p.m., and workers said it was always difficult for them to get the paper in the mail on time.\footnote{45}

The last twenty or so years he was publisher, more and more of his time was spent greeting Wilder and Dunn visitors and showing them around De Smet. And after a full day at the office, Aubrey and Laura would often go out socially. They rarely missed a wedding, an anniversary
open house, funeral, school play or athletic event, even when he was in his eighties. Into retirement the Sherwoods have kept a full social calendar.

**Aubrey and the Competition**

Other Kingsbury County publishers describe Sherwood as a good newspaperman, aggressive competition and an unceasing promoter of his hometown.

John Sittner, publisher of *The Lake Preston Times*, described Sherwood as historically oriented—a traditionalist—who editorially held to three subjects: Wilder and Dunn (seen as one subject), Karl Mundt, and historical preservation. (There is ample evidence in *The News* files to support Sittner's observation that Sherwood editorialized frequently about Wilder, Dunn and historical preservation. There is less evidence of the frequency of Karl Mundt as a subject.)

Sittner purchased *The Times* on September 1, 1956, and met Sherwood shortly after he began publishing the neighboring paper. He described Sherwood as an aggressive businessman who competed unceasingly for advertising and circulation. But his competitiveness was always aboveboard and fair, Sittner said.

Sittner and Sherwood shared a stormy relationship for many years because of Sherwood's reaction to Sittner's move to acquire subscribers in the Oldham area about 1959 or 1960. Sherwood had purchased the circulation of the *Oldham Register* some years before Sittner came to Lake Preston. Sittner took a good portion of that circulation away from
Sherwood when he convinced the banker in Lake Preston to purchase a subscription for every depositor at the Oldham bank. The Lake Preston banker owned the banks in both Oldham and Lake Preston and went along with the plan, purchasing subscriptions for one cent over one-half their regular price.

Sherwood found out about the subscription purchase plan and filed a complaint with postal authorities. When the matter was finally settled, Sittner had to pay transient second class rates on the Oldham circulation for one year. It cost him one hundred forty-five dollars and "colored our relationship for years. I regret us getting off on the wrong foot." 46

Gerry Sturges, publisher of The Arlington Sun, has known Sherwood since the early 1930s. Sturges' father, Hal, and Sherwood exchanged setting the county legals, and Sturges first met Sherwood when he brought work over to The De Smet News.

"He was always very cooperative. But he never let you forget that De Smet was Kingsbury County," Sturges said. 47

Sturges described Sherwood in his younger years as a thorough, conscientious reporter who was always sure of his facts before going to press. "In the last few years his ability slipped. But with the exception of the last few years, he was almost 'Mr. South Dakota Weekly Newspaper,' the Fred Christopherson [one-time publisher of the Sioux Falls Argus-Leader] of weekly newspapers," Sturges said. 48
Aubrey Receives His Tribute

While his writing and logic may not have been polished and he may not have been able to perform every function in the shop, as he claimed, it did not stop the community from reading The News, and it did not lessen their love for their editor. In 1973 the community gathered in the high school auditorium to pay tribute to Sherwood's more than fifty years as editor with an Aubrey Sherwood Appreciation Day, better known as Aub's Day. The Chamber of Commerce coordinated the event, and signs were displayed all across the auditorium stage with what Sherwood described as "the most clever wordings of recognition for the publisher that it has taken him an hour of the afternoon and two rolls of film to record for souvenirs of the occasion."49

Speakers included Charles Card, publisher of the Britton Journal; Sid Glanzer, a professional photographer and friend of Sherwood; Dale Coughlin of Watertown, a former employee; and former Governor Sigurd Anderson of Webster. Sherwood told the crowd of his long association with employees Regnald Smith, Dale Coughlin and Craig Munger. In an editorial the following week, Sherwood said:

What a home town to return to and put in my years! And how those years, and the many persons with whom I have been privileged to be associated came through my mind that night after The News in an under cover operation announced an appreciation day for me!

For the idea itself, the planning and execution, I cannot repeat enough the thanks I and my family feel. To that marvelous group—the Chamber of Commerce Committee—goes our appreciation for an evening and a gathering we will treasure the rest of our lives. Undercover had relieved me of the initial announcement, and a contributed news story for the next issue, but to the editor is left the report expected—and due—
this week. Space limitations prevent the pictures I would like to use. They come later.

The miles traveled and the evening given over to the occasion and the expressions made are beyond the fondest dreams that could come as the day approached.

Thank you, all...thank you. 50

Not only had Sherwood edited the community's newspaper for more than fifty years, he had been a member of the First Congregational Church, De Smet American Legion Post 138 and De Smet Lodge No. 55 for more than fifty years. He also is a charter member of the De Smet Kiwanis, a charter member of the South Dakota Arts Council, a past president of the South Dakota State College Alumni Association, and a past president of the South Dakota Press Association. He has received numerous newspaper awards in South Dakota. 51

But it has only been in the past several years that De Smet residents and South Dakotans generally have become aware of Sherwood's contribution to the promotion of Harvey Dunn, the prairie painter, and of Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of the Little House books. For more than twenty-five years he promoted these two South Dakota artists through the pages of his newspaper, through personal appearances, and through constantly reminding fellow De Smet residents of the importance of these two artists who immortalized the De Smet area by canvas and word.

On April 11, 1976, he was honored with the Artistic Achievement Citation presented by the Memorial Art Center, South Dakota State University, for "continued support of the Arts in South Dakota, in particular his support of the paintings of Harvey Dunn and the literature of Laura Ingalls Wilder." 52
1 Sherwood, De Smet Yesterday and Today, p. 118.

2 Ibid., p. 117.


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.


10 Ibid.


13 Ibid.


16 Ibid.

17 News, Jan. 10, 1930, p. 2; June 6, 1930, p. 6; Sept. 19, 1930, p. 3.

18 Ibid., Feb. 17, 1933, p. 2; Sept. 29, 1933, p. 1.

19 Ibid., Jan. 13, 1933, p. 3; Feb. 10, 1933, p. 2.


21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
36 Colonel McCormick, Chicago Tribune, pioneered this headline style.
45 Collected comments of Dale Coughlin, Craig Munger, Bert C. Stewart, Marie Langland and Randy Bohn, all former employees of Aubrey Sherwood.
48 Ibid.
51 Sherwood, De Smet Yesterday and Today, p. 119.
52 Ibid., p. 120.
CHAPTER III

THE PROMOTION OF HARVEY DUNN

Harvey Dunn was bigger than life to a young Aubrey Sherwood, who watched the native son's artistic career through the pages of the Saturday Evening Post and other popular publications of the day. Dunn was a Kingsbury County native and was born on a farm south of Manchester and west of De Smet.

As a popular illustrator of advertising and fiction stories of the day, it was easy for hometown people to watch Dunn's progress. Sherwood said, "I grew up watching those [the magazine illustrations] and was somehow influenced by them." C. P. Sherwood carried several accounts of Dunn and his work in The News, mostly reports from relatives that probably were not accurate, Sherwood said. While Aubrey was in St. Paul attending airplane mechanic's school during World War I, he remembered that the Minneapolis Tribune had carried a long feature story about Dunn, the war artist.

A Friendship Grows

It was several years after Aubrey returned to The News that he thought about approaching Dunn to speak at Old Settlers Day, the big June 10 celebration in De Smet. He got Dunn's address from a Dunn relative and wrote to him. Dunn answered immediately and came by train. Sherwood remembered, "We sat on the front porch until long after midnight, me listening to him tell war stories." Dunn returned to
De Smet almost annually after that first visit and always stopped at Aubrey and Laura Sherwood's for coffee and cookies.

On about the third year Dunn visited De Smet, he came by car with a mattress and cooking utensils, camping along the way.

Sherwood recalled:

He'd pull off the highway a half mile or so, find a creek or hill he'd like and ask at the farmhouse whether he could sleep there. Most often he could. And he'd probably come away with some fresh eggs and cream. He loved most people.

After some years, Dunn was invited to the Sherwood house for Sunday dinner and was told not to come too early since the Sherwoods attended church until after noon. "Laura left church right after choir to get there before Harvey. When she got to the house, there he was stretched out on the davenport sound asleep. He'd been out walking since six o'clock," Sherwood recalled.

Dunn's wife came with him to De Smet twice. She came for a short time during the fourteen weeks he was in De Smet during the exhibition of his forty-two paintings in 1950. "She once thanked me for what I had done for her husband. When he died she wrote us notes and letters, and when we could no longer read her handwriting, she would call," Sherwood said.

Mrs. Dunn was a wealthy woman whose family owned DuPont stock, and Dunn would often make light about "Tulla's small change."
The Exhibit

It was the exhibit of Dunn's paintings in De Smet that finally cemented the collection's staying in South Dakota. Dunn realized that he had accumulated too many paintings and was looking for a home for them late in the 1940s. He told Sherwood: "I guess I'd better hunt up a lawyer. You know I'm accumulating too many paintings and if something should happen to me the government would be pretty hard on Tulla's small change." That conversation tipped Sherwood off that Dunn wanted his paintings to have a permanent home in South Dakota.

On one of his trips to De Smet, Dunn went to Mitchell to meet with members of the Friends of the Middle Border at Dakota Wesleyan University. One of that group's members was a classmate of Dunn, and it was that connection that got Dunn to look at the university. He donated two or three paintings to the group. The Friends proposed constructing a building to house the Dunn paintings. Sherwood recalled, "He said, 'You build it and I'll give you thirty paintings to hang there.' They never did it."7

In May 1950, Aubrey and Laura were in New York visiting Sherwood's brothers. They called Dunn and visited him at his Tenafly, New Jersey, home. While there they viewed the paintings on display in his home.

Sherwood explained:

I said I wish the people back home could see what I see. He said: 'Aubrey, everyone wants an exhibit. But no one has a wall to hang paintings on. What have you got?' I thought, well, we've got the new auditorium there. 'Auditorium. Aub, isn't it a gymnasium? You can't hang pictures on bleachers.' Well, I thought, that didn't last very long. But then he said: 'Masonic Temple
across the street from the telephone office. Didn't that used to be a church?' I said, yes. 'Well, churches have walls in between the windows,' he said. So I tried to guess what the size was. 'If it's the same building that I think it is, I'll give you more pictures than you can hang on the walls.'

Several days later Dunn flew into De Smet, looked over the building and returned to his home. The News reported: "The showing was suggested to Mr. Dunn some weeks ago, and he responded with an offer of whatever number of canvasses might be shown here." The canvasses were scheduled to arrive in time for the 70th annual Old Settlers Day observance, and on May 23, 1950, four large cases containing the forty-two Dunn paintings arrived, all of them framed. "Mr. Dunn has framed, crated and shipped this large collection at his own expense as a contribution to the anniversary occasion," The News reported.

Aubrey, Laura and Dunn's sister Caroline uncrated the pictures and hung them in the Masonic Temple for the showing, which was to begin June 10 without admission charge. Some 1,500 persons viewed the exhibit during the Old Settlers celebration.

In July, Sherwood invited several editors to De Smet to view the paintings and to meet Harvey Dunn. Two wrote about him when they returned home. Bruce Campbell of the Huronite (now the Huron Daily Plainsman) wrote about Dunn in his personal column. Charles Mitchell of the Brookings Register came, telling Sherwood he wasn't sure he even liked art or artists. But Mitchell was later to write:

Some artists are entirely human. I'm thinking about Harvey Dunn. At the invitation of the Sherwoods, my Lady and I went over to De Smet the other evening to see his paintings which have been on exhibition there. He's so
thoroughly human you'll find yourself calling him Harvey if you aren't careful. Big framed man. He insists he was born out there on the Dunn homestead south and west of Manchester about in 1884. But he could easily pass for 15 years younger. And completely informal. He even pronounces art the way it is spelled rather than 'aht.' No fuss and feathers about his work. He just does it because he wants to do so.¹²

Mitchell's assessment of Dunn must have pleased Sherwood, for he wrote following the editors' visit: "I had hoped in suggesting the editors gather here, that they might meet the artist--to know the man is to further appreciate his work."¹³

Meanwhile, not a week went by while the Dunn pictures were exhibited that The De Smet News did not carry at least one story about it. Some were reprints of publicity given the exhibit by other newspapers. And stories were written about the number of visitors to the exhibit. The number who came greatly exceeded expectations. By August 10, 1950, 3,518 persons had registered. When the exhibit had been up nine weeks, it was estimated that 10,000 visitors had come.¹⁴

The Gift to South Dakota

During the exhibit it seemed to Sherwood that Dunn wanted the paintings to stay in South Dakota, and that Mitchell was the most likely spot since the Friends of the Middle Border had already approached the artist.

Sherwood related the scene:

Three or four of those Mitchell men came and visited him in the lobby, but I don't remember them looking at the paintings. Then the editor of the Mitchell weekly editorialized that when the exhibit was over it was
assumed that the paintings would come to Mitchell. Harvey came and shouted at me: 'You see this? What do they think I am, a circus?' 15

With that outburst Sherwood could see the paintings were not going to Mitchell. He called the principal of the Huron High School. The school could accept a couple of the Dunn prints, but Dunn would not hear of it. "Aubrey, I appreciate your interest and devotion. I know what you've got in mind, but scattered paintings don't make a collection. They're not going to be scattered." 16

Dunn not only was a South Dakota native, he had received his early art training at South Dakota State College. He later received art training in Chicago, became an illustrator for Saturday Evening Post fiction stories, did advertising art for the Post and other publications, was a World War I Army artist and painted a number of subjects, including nudes. He is best known for his paintings of pioneer life in South Dakota.

All these factors, no doubt, influenced Dunn in choosing a place for his paintings. While the artist was wrestling with where the paintings would come to rest, the president of South Dakota State College, Dr. Fred Leinbach, came to visit the exhibit, Dunn and Sherwood. After seeing the paintings and talking with the men, Leinbach offered space in Pugsley Union at State College. Dunn went to the college and looked over the offered building and returned to De Smet. "I know it's a big disappointment to you, Aubrey. If this building [the Masonic Temple] were available, they could stay here. This is good enough," Dunn said. 17 Thirty-seven of the Dunn paintings went to State
College, two went to the De Smet Library, one was returned to its owner in New Jersey, and one was given to Sherwood.

Sherwood wrote:

The announcement of the week will be received gratefully by thousands of South Dakotans, who through the weeks of showing have insisted that these great canvasses, particularly the ones depicting pioneer life on the prairie, should be in the state.18

Trucks came from the college to get the paintings, and when Dunn saw that the trucks were open and not covered, as he had been promised, he almost backed down from making the donation to the state. But he gave in and went with the trucks to oversee the unloading. The Sherwoods, and Dunn's sister Caroline, went with him.19

It was with great personal satisfaction that Sherwood saw the Dunn paintings harbored at his alma mater. In an editorial concerning the Dunn gift he wrote:

It is our further privilege, however, to join with all the people of the state in the permanent possession of the paintings, now that they have been put in keeping of the college, and we can always have the satisfaction of knowing that the showing here made the canvasses known and desired, and at least further, if not actually made possible, the acquisition which is now South Dakota's.20

Dunn's Career Ends

While in De Smet for the exhibit, Dunn went to Rochester, Minnesota, where doctors diagnosed cancer. He returned to his home with the knowledge, as he expressed it, that "the sands are running out."21 Dunn was treated for cancer over the next two years. He had surgery at Mayo Clinic and was being treated in Chicago according to
Christian Science precepts when, on June 9, 1952, Aubrey Sherwood accepted for his longtime friend an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from South Dakota State College. On October 29, 1952, Dunn died at his home in Tenafly, New Jersey. A page one obituary in The News noted Dunn's career as outlined in a New York Times story. It also told of his exhibit in De Smet in 1950 and his donation to the state of thirty-seven paintings.

In an editorial, Sherwood wrote:

The death of Harvey Dunn came as a personal loss to friends in Kingsbury County, these including a number who knew him as a farm boy south of Manchester and many more who had come to know him from his visits of the last quarter of a century. Knowledge that he was seriously ill had saddened some of us for months before word came that his life and work were over—that huge hand that was so bold and yet so delicate with a brush would not again touch canvass.

His career had been followed here since he left the farm to become an artist. For many years there was the weekly question of "what does Harvey Dunn have in The Post this week?" His habit of returning here almost every summer...renewed interest in him and widened his acquaintance...

We came to know that the experience of that summer was a great satisfaction to Harvey Dunn...

...it seems to me he came back to South Dakota and let us know him and appreciate him—when he didn't have to. He had made his name, enjoyed fames as an illustrator for the leading magazines and as a teacher of art... Yet he came back—returning again and again, often staying for weeks. He loved the prairie and its people.
The Promotion Continues

Death ended the friendship of Aubrey Sherwood and Harvey Dunn, but it did not lessen the love Sherwood had for the man and his work, nor did it lessen the pace with which he promoted the artist. For the people of the De Smet area would read about Harvey Dunn over the next twenty-five years almost every time anything was published about the artist, if it came to Sherwood's attention, and they would be informed of every newsworthy happening that involved Dunn.

In October, 1953, five of Dunn's paintings were reproduced in color in the Minneapolis Tribune Picture magazine. And in 1954 a showing of C. H. Russell's paintings in Omaha, Nebraska, gave Sherwood a lead for an exposition of Dunn's contributions to Western art. Later in 1954 plastic name plates were fastened to the Dunn paintings at State College, and New England painter Grant Reynard visited the college and De Smet to discuss Dunn's works. Another report noted that Arthur Mitchell, Trinidad, Colorado, a student of Dunn, had visited De Smet to see the countryside where Dunn had grown up. And still later in 1954 a State College bulletin was produced featuring the Dunn paintings.25

In 1957, Sherwood, in an editorial, raised the question of what could be done to honor both Dunn and Laura Ingalls Wilder (his interest in Wilder lore began to grow publicly with her death in 1957), since all that was in the De Smet area was a marker east of town noting the two had lived in the area. By 1958 a plaque honoring Dunn was erected along Highway 14 near Manchester, the town closest to Dunn's birthplace.26
William McLean, Stamford, Connecticut, donated a Dunn nude to State College in 1959. The nude hung in The De Smet News office for several weeks and was then transferred to Pugsley Union.  

In 1961, a 1943 Dunn painting of Fred Wright, the country printer, was made into a color print at State College. And in 1962 seven more paintings from various sources were added to the State College collection. Sherwood editorialized on the addition, saying the paintings would surely attract more visitors to both Brookings and De Smet because of the high interest in the prairie painter.

While interest in Dunn's works existed, many who saw them did not have the high appreciation or love for them that Sherwood had. Most Dunn paintings are large, and his brush strokes are equally large and rough looking on close inspection. Paintings from his war period are somber. His paintings of pioneers are rough-hewn, without joy, and depicted the harshness of prairie life.

Sherwood noted in an editorial that the paintings were sometimes appreciated by returning students who remembered seeing them while attending State College. "It is so with all history and heritage--appreciation is to come slowly, be acknowledged belatedly," he wrote.

Reports of interest in Dunn continued to dot the pages of The News. In 1963 South Dakota Cherry Blossum Princess Mary Felker of Madison presented an essay in Washington, D. C., on "Harvey Dunn--The Prairie Painter." In 1965 a large page one reproduction of Dunn's "I am the Resurrection and the Life" was run in The News. The only apparent reason to use the reproduction was that it was the issue just before Easter.
In 1968 a movie made by John Whalen at South Dakota State University premiered in De Smet with a free showing. The movie included an interview with Sherwood concerning his long association with Dunn.

In 1970 Sherwood gave page one display to a story concerning a request before the South Dakota legislature for funds to restore sixteen Dunn paintings being destroyed by heat and lack of humidity at South Dakota State University. And in 1971 a state historical group visited Dunn's birthplace near Manchester. In 1972 Dunn was featured in the VFW magazine, and pictures from his World War I paintings were reproduced.

And in 1975 a page one story related a showing of Dunn paintings at Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, where twenty-four paintings from the South Dakota State University collection and one from Sherwood's personal collection were shown.

Dean Cornwell, muralist and illustrator who was a friend of Dunn, wrote to Sherwood: "I wonder if you can understand the appreciation Harvey Dunn has had for the space you've given him in the home town newspaper.

It seems apparent that, whether appreciated or not, the newspaper space was given as unselfishly as the artist bestowed paintings upon his publisher friend.

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1Interview, March 23, 1978.
7Ibid., March 23, 1978.
21Aubrey Sherwood, untitled, undated paper on Harvey Dunn.
24Ibid., Nov. 20, 1952, p. 2.
29 Ibid., Nov. 15, 1962, p. 2.
CHAPTER IV

THE PROMOTION OF LAURA INGALLS WILDER

To read The De Smet News from the time of Laura Ingalls Wilder's death in 1957 until Sherwood ceased publishing the newspaper in 1977 is to read the history of the development of Wilder heritages (heritage is a term Sherwood uses interchangeably with legacy to describe the historical significance of Wilder and Dunn to De Smet) and the tourist industry in De Smet. Sherwood was actively involved in promoting that industry through both his newspaper and personal appearances.

It was perhaps a natural thing that he would become involved in promoting Mrs. Wilder and the literature she produced about the De Smet area. The journey westward of his mother's family paralleled that of the Ingalls family; they lived neighbors to one another in Walnut Grove, Minnesota, where his mother taught school in Currie at the age of fifteen. Her brother George stayed with the Ingalls family during the hard winter of 1880 just after they moved to De Smet. And a cousin of Sherwood—Arthur Kingsbury Masters—was the first child born in De Smet. He was born in the Ingalls store.¹

There are other family ties as well. Carrie worked for Carter Sherwood at The De Smet News as a printer. The families lived near one another in De Smet.

Sherwood remembers:

The Ingalls did not indulge in any social activity. I don't recall they were ever in our house. Dad worked with Carrie, they attended our church. We knew them all. My grandmother was once pictured with Ma (Caroline)
Ingalls. They weren't very popular. Some of the neighbors hardly knew them. They kept to themselves. They were sturdy people who lived alone.  

Laura Ingalls was not a part of the De Smet community while Aubrey Sherwood was growing up. She had married Almonzo Wilder and left De Smet the year Sherwood was born—1894—and wrote her first book about the area in 1939 after a summer visit.

Sherwood first met the author in 1939 at the fiftieth anniversary of Old Settlers Day. She was invited to the celebration as a daughter of the town's earliest settler. And although she had written some magazine and newspaper articles, he said, there was little interest in her at that time as an author.  

The Promotion Begins

There was little in The News about Mrs. Wilder prior to 1949, except for announcements of her latest books. When her husband, Almonzo Wilder, died October 23, 1949, in Mansfield, Missouri, a page one obituary appeared in The News recounting the fact they had lived in De Smet prior to 1894.

After Almonzo's death, appearances of the Wilder name in The News became more frequent.

In 1950, while the Dunn exhibit was in the Masonic Temple, Sherwood wrote this editorial:

It was a couple, beyond middle age as she had finished 29 years of teaching, traveling from their home in Los Angeles by car on a three month's tour of the United States, and they had routed themselves through De Smet, South Dakota, to see the locale of these wonderful books for children written by Laura Ingalls Wilder.
They visited the post office and were sent to The News, for the editor to show them the places mentioned in the Little House series. They were interested in the Harvey Dunn paintings, of course, and spent hours there in an overnight stop, the next morning driving to look at Lake Henry and Spirit Lake before they said thanks and goodbye. Lovely people and they enjoyed their visit here. Within an hour a party of four, parents and two children in their early teens came to the office: They wanted to know what we knew about the Laura Ingalls Wilder stories, had driven this way from Washington state to New York City. In the trip about town they took pictures, recalled the stories of pioneer life here—were pleased to learn of the Dunn exhibit and spent some time there before continuing on their way. It was later in the afternoon that a woman and her daughter called—interested in the anniversary issue of The News as they had been told it had something in it about Mrs. Wilder. The woman had taught school south of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and had read the books to her pupils. Yes, they had been to see the paintings, surprised to find such a treat in De Smet.

Not such an unusual experience, this, for while the Dunn paintings have exceeded by far the visitations Mrs. Wilder's books bring, there is scarcely a week in the summer but someone mentions them, some family stops here because of them. So it does seem that De Smet, with the encouragement of all Kingsbury county, might well make more of its famed former residents, including Rose Wilder Lane (Laura Ingalls Wilder's daughter), of course. 5

It was the first of many such editorials he was to write during the next twenty-seven years. He never gave up on encouraging De Smet residents to make more of the town's heritages. It was encouragement he never felt was too openly accepted. And if De Smet residents did not know about Mrs. Wilder, her works and what the town's newspaper publisher thought the community should be doing to capitalize on the situation, it had to be because they were not reading the paper. Hardly a month went by when there was not something in The News about Mrs. Wilder.
A March 21, 1951, report noted that a radio drama "The Long Winter," was presented on the Hallmark Playhouse. It was the first reported dramatization of Laura Ingalls Wilder's works.6

In 1952 The News added the slogan, "Little Town on the Prairie," to its postage meter. And later that year it reported on the number of persons inquiring about Laura Ingalls Wilder and the Little House books. Reports mention only visitors but no specific numbers, a practice Sherwood observed almost to the end of his publishing career.7

In 1952 Sherwood wrote to Mrs. Wilder inviting her and her daughter to again attend Old Settlers Day. In a longhand letter, she replied:

Dear Aubrey Sherwood,

Thank you so much for your invitation to Rose and me for Old Settlers Day. If I were only able I would be delighted to visit De Smet at that time, but Dr’s orders are that I must keep quiet and when I disobey him it puts me in bed. So it is not possible for me to make the trip and stand the excitement however great the pleasure would be.

Things from our old home were scattered as were Carrie's later and I do not know what has become of them.

Some were sent me and those are in the museum of State Historical Society at Pierre.

I would so love to see Dakota again. Please give my best to enquiring friends.

With kindest regards to yourself and family.

Yours Sincerely
Laura Ingalls Wilder8

Determined to make the most of De Smet’s heritage, Sherwood continued to use the newspaper to promote Mrs. Wilder even if he could not arrange her personal appearance. As he had done in promoting Harvey
Dunn, he did not let any published material about the author pass him by without republication in The News.

And so there appeared an account of an Indiana school teacher's evaluation of Mrs. Wilder's writing. A story from The New York Times noted that one-half million children had now read the Little House books. And The Horn Book, a magazine devoted to children's books, featured the Wilder books and included a quote from the June 6, 1930, issue of The News concerning the history of the Ingalls and Wilder families.9

In 1954, I. P. Myers and his wife, De Smet residents, visited Mrs. Wilder at her Mansfield, Missouri, home. She was 86 at the time and the story in The News recounted the circumstances of the visit and a history of Mrs. Wilder's moving to Mansfield from De Smet in 1894.10

Sherwood himself never visited Mrs. Wilder at her Missouri home. He once stopped there to see her, but the author was visiting in California at the time.11 Sherwood never again attempted to visit Mrs. Wilder before her death in 1957.

The Formation of the Memorial Society

By 1955 a number of De Smet residents were beginning to understand the value to De Smet of being mentioned in Mrs. Wilder's books. And Sherwood began to ask what could be done to honor her. Some suggested that Silver Lake, drained in the drought of the 1930s, be rejuvenated. Others suggested reconstruction of the homestead site. Neither project seemed possible. Others in the community suggested that the dust
jacket from the book, *Little Town on the Prairie*, be made into a highway sign for direction of tourists.\(^\text{12}\) Nothing was ever done with Silver Lake, and no highway sign from a dust jacket was ever erected. Simple highway signs were erected, and historic sites were marked after the formation of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Group in 1957.

That was a year of activity. Laura Ingalls Wilder celebrated her ninetieth birthday February 7, 1957, and died February 11. Her obituary appeared on page one of *The News*.\(^\text{13}\)

A page one story in May told of Sherwood's effort to gather material about Mrs. Wilder to have on file at *The News*. His efforts did not go unnoticed. Mr. and Mrs. Ed May came into *The News* office and told Sherwood that they owned a quarter section of land on which the Ingalls homesteaded. They told Sherwood that if he could get something together to commemorate the site, they would donate it.\(^\text{14}\)

A week later *The News* reported plans to attach a plaque to a boulder that would be erected at the homestead site. This report preceded by more than a week the formation of a formal group to handle the commemoration.\(^\text{15}\)

It was on May 27, 1957, that a group of interested persons from De Smet met to form an organization to mark and preserve the sites that Mrs. Wilder mentioned in her books. The first meeting was held in the city library, and the organization was called the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Group. Aubrey Sherwood was elected its first president.\(^\text{16}\)

Sherwood recalled:

I can't believe we started the society at that time. Up to that time I was all alone. But then we did. We had to be educated. We were stumbling along. There
wasn't a publicist in the group except me. We all had read the books, but we had no plan. Like Topsy, we grew. 17

Erection of the boulder and plaque was the first significant project of the newly organized group. The boulder was taken from the farm of John Knudson, three miles south of Spirit Lake, and transported to the Ingalls homestead site by the National Guard and the county highway workers. A base was constructed for the boulder and the plaque was mounted. It was dedicated June 10, 1958. 18 The boulder itself had no apparent significance other than that it was large and of a shape easy to mount on a concrete base. The plaque marks the homestead site, the first of eighteen sites of importance to the Ingalls while they lived in De Smet that have been identified by the Wilder Memorial Society.

The Society Grows

As a fund raising project, a circular was sent to all South Dakota schools asking them to join the Wilder group by contributing two dollars. The schools received certificates of merit for the contribution. Money raised through the project was used to pay the group's half of the cost of having the boulder erected. The state historical society paid the other half. 19

The group's second project was to place new grave markers at the De Smet Cemetery, burial site of Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Ingalls, Carrie, Mary and a son of Laura and Almonzo Wilder. There was intense tourist interest in seeing the Ingalls graves. 20
By 1959 Sherwood was able, in an editorial, to refer to an *Argus-Leader* editorial calling De Smet a tourist attraction along Highway

The heritage of Laura Ingalls Wilder was beginning to grow and gain statewide recognition. But growth was slow at first, and Sherwood attempted to maintain and promote interest through the pages of *The News*.

Interest in Mrs. Wilder was also growing elsewhere. Her home in Mansfield, Missouri, was made into a shrine. And a historical marker noting Mrs. Wilder's birthplace in Pepin, Wisconsin, was erected in 1962. Aubrey and Laura Sherwood attended the dedication ceremonies at Pepin.

The schools that provided the Wilder group with its first finances also provided the town with many of its visitors. Sherwood always spoke of numbers of visitors in vague terms, apparently because there was no official registry. Tourists stopped at *The News* office to inquire about Mrs. Wilder, and it was the barbershop across the street from *The News* that first alerted other townspeople to the out-of-state cars that were stopping each day.

The *News* apparently was one of a limited number of places to which visitors could go for accurate information about the Ingalls family or places mentioned in Mrs. Wilder's books. Sherwood began editorializing in 1964 about the apparent lack of knowledge of many De Smet residents about their heritage. He said many recent visitors had talked to local residents who possessed little knowledge of Laura Ingalls Wilder, and he urged local residents to know their history well. "And then there
are those local residents who question The News mentioning the heritages of De Smet so often, he concluded.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1964 the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Group was reorganized and incorporated to become the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society, Inc.\textsuperscript{25} And in 1965 the society erected plaques on historic buildings in De Smet--those buildings mentioned in Mrs. Wilder's books--in an effort to aid visitors to "The Little Town on the Prairie."\textsuperscript{26}

The Wilder Society in 1967 purchased the surveyor's shanty and restored it to look as it did when the Ingallses lived in it. The shanty is mentioned in On the Shores of Silver Lake.\textsuperscript{27}

The year 1967 marked the one hundredth anniversary of Mrs. Wilder's birth. The Wilder Society met to coordinate a birthday celebration throughout the community.

Sherwood editorialized:

The observance of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Laura Ingalls Wilder, being observed here, is actually but the second community effort in recognition of the tremendous contribution made to this area by its former resident, whose series of eight books have brought thousands--uncounted thousands--to visit their setting, and made the name of this town known around the world.

The first recognition was the establishment of a memorial to the beloved author following her death--an accomplishment made by a rather small group of persons and with the financial contributions of children and adults over the nation and even from foreign lands.

Most of the few hundred dollars expended for the memorial came from others than residents of the community, and in the years in which Little Town on the Prairie has attracted people from all over the nation and foreign lands this community has not expended a hundred dollars to further this interest.

Until last summer the memorial association had but a few members and even with a welcomed increase in members the total in lifetime dues would not reach the
hundred dollar figure. "We're 10 years behind, in recognizing the value these books have for the community," one local man said, this sentiment agreed to by others.

With several proposed developments to further the interest in those devoted to Laura Ingalls Wilder, there is a natural starting point in the acquisition of the railroad shanty of '79-'80--assumed to be the only such structure remaining in all Dakota from the years of laying railroad ties across the prairies.

The hundredth anniversary of the birth of Mrs. Wilder provides an occasion for starting the fund needed for this second step in development of our heritage attractions. An effort is to be made toward this next week, and it is the hope of those who have devoted so much of their time and labor in accommodating visitors through the years that there will be generous response in contributions. Children will give their pennies, quarters and perhaps dollars; it is up to the adults to donate larger amounts toward a most worthy development.28

The birthday celebration also included a big "cake" on Calumet Avenue, De Smet's main street, where local residents could deposit their donations. There were window displays and visits to local schools. Similar observances were held in Mansfield, Missouri; Pomona, California; and Aberdeen, South Dakota. The News, in succeeding issues, carried more stories and pictures about the observances, in an apparent effort to develop interest. Sherwood editorialized that the community was finally beginning to awaken to the legacy of Wilder and Dunn. And the February 16, 1967, issue noted $745.40 had been contributed to the shanty preservation fund.29

While The News helped promote the anniversary celebration of Mrs. Wilder's birth, it also promoted itself by printing a special four-page issue made up of the front pages of its last four issues, which contained stories about the celebration. That special issue sold for one dollar per copy.30
Money from the anniversary celebration continued to come in, and the society set a three thousand dollar goal for the funds needed to restore the shanty.31

The shanty was purchased in September from Mrs. Delbert Davidson of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, for $2,350. She told the society it couldn't complain about the price, Sherwood said, "since you've been using it for years by driving people around and by pointing it out to people."32

In addition, the anniversary celebration was the theme of Old Settlers Day that year. Placards were provided De Smet businesses that told tourists the city library and The News were the places to go for information about the Ingallses and the Wilders.33

The Promotion Continues

But even this activity and community involvement did not satisfy Sherwood. He editorialized in November that the area was slow to recognize the value of Wilder and Dunn, a recurring editorial theme. In May a page one story lamented the lack of publicity given De Smet by the official state highway map.34

De Smet continued to attract tourists (although no specific figures are mentioned in news stories), and places tourists could visit were frequently listed in The News. Rose Wilder Lane, 81, daughter of Mrs. Wilder, died October 30, 1968, and a page one obituary was published in The News.35

The News continued, with frequent stories, to follow the progress of the number of tourists visiting De Smet. Visitors from fourteen
states signed the guest registry at the shanty June 3, 1969. By the end of the year, one thousand persons had registered.

Sherwood continued the practice of republishing stories concerning the Wilders. He noted in October, 1969, that De Smet and other Wilder sites were detailed in a half-page story in the New York Times travel section.

The Pageant Begins

In 1970 Wilder fans and Sherwood got something more to look forward to--The Long Winter Pageant. The pageant's forerunners were presented in 1955 and 1968. In 1955 a play adapted from a 1951 Hallmark Playhouse radio script was produced in the De Smet Auditorium as part of Old Settlers Day. The same play was presented February 10-11, 1968, as part of an arts festival.

The outdoor pageant as it exists today was started in 1970 with financial support from the South Dakota Arts Council and was presented for the first time in 1971. It is presented on land bordering the Ingalls' homestead site, the Big Slough and Silver Lake, all places mentioned in the book, The Long Winter, which serves as a basis for the pageant. More than ten thousand persons saw it in 1976. Attendance in 1979 dropped to less than four thousand, primarily due to the gasoline crisis which existed that summer.

Another important event in the successful promotion of Wilder in De Smet happened in 1970--William Anderson came to spend his first summer working with the society. Anderson first wrote to Sherwood in
1965, asking for information about Laura Ingalls Wilder and later informing the publisher that he and another thirteen-year-old were forming a Laura Ingalls Wilder Fan Club.\(^{40}\) Anderson, from Flint, Michigan, is a grade school teacher who has spent every summer since 1970 in De Smet helping the society capitalize on the tourist market.

Anderson has written six booklets about the Wilders and the Ingallses from information he began collecting when he was thirteen. He later became director of acquisitions for the society and has been largely responsible for gathering the society's rather complete collection of memorabilia.

"What a find he's been. And of course the town doesn't appreciate it. We have a little problem on our board because he's so far ahead of us. Where would we have been without Bill Anderson because we were just puddling along?," Sherwood said.\(^{41}\)

The *News* continued to follow the growth of tourism closely in De Smet and noted in 1972 that cornhusk dolls were being added to the souvenirs that tourists could purchase at the shanty. Another story noted that "Little Town on the Prairie," a designation used by *The News* on its mail for years, was known throughout the world.\(^{42}\)

The Wilder Home

The 1972 heritage season opened with purchase by the Wilder Society of the Ingalls home on Third Street for four thousand dollars from Mr. and Mrs. Orval Christensen.\(^{43}\) The Christensens had inherited the home from his mother and did not know for some time whether to sell it or
tear it down. A funeral home next door to the home wanted to buy it and tear it down for a parking lot. The society negotiated for about a year and finally borrowed the money to make the purchase. The society still owed three thousand dollars on it when Roger MacBride, attorney for and heir of Rose Wilder Lane, offered to pay off the mortgage. 44

The De Smet Jaycees helped remodel the Ingalls home to accommodate visitors. While tearing out a wall during the remodeling process, Jaycees found a July 29, 1890, issue of The De Smet Leader, a paper that was published by C. P. Sherwood, Aubrey's father. It contained an article written by Eliza Jane Wilder, a sister of Almonzo. The News report of the find showed a picture of Sherwood's grandson, Bryce Bell, holding the paper his great-grandfather had published. 45

The remodeling project won the De Smet Jaycees second place in state competition, and The News reported that accomplishment along with a complete account of all that had taken place to lead to the award. 46

Historical Interest Grows

Interest in Wilder and Dunn and in history in general apparently was growing.

In 1972 Sherwood editorialized:

Interest in history, in old items and customs, seems to be on the increase over the nation in recent years. Antiques are in demand and bringing a high price. Several books of old songs have been published. Pictorial reviews of various trades are published. Shows and sales of yesteryear items are common. This county is fortunate in having acquired a certain and growing position in matters historical. It didn't start that way: the area was settled in a peaceful, lackluster manner by persons seeking a new home on the land or
in business or profession. Entirely lacking was the drama and color of the mining camps, and the big cattle and sheep operations. This is recognized by histories written and published of the settlement of the prairies which pass over this area with few pages devoted to it, and with scant record of the people and the lives they led.

But as often comes from humble beginnings the very hominess of life on the prairies in settlement years finally came to be recognized by one of its own. A farm housewife, long removed from the scenes of the settlement years, coming to take a pencil and tablet and write down for her daughter—a professional writer—accounts of the experiences of two families in pioneering in five states.

With some experience in writing for farm magazines she took a pencil and tablet and wrote the oddities of the two families. Search for new places ended for the parents at a town in East Central South Dakota—then Dakota Territory—so the last four books of the series had this as their setting, she giving De Smet another name in Little Town on the Prairie. The success of the series of eight books brought publication of two more based on diaries found after her death, so there are now six books with this their locale.

A native of this vicinity, born on a homestead a few miles south of neighboring Manchester, turned great natural talent in art to become one of the leading illustrators of fiction in magazines and books, acquired recognition as a teacher, then as one of the official artists of World War I. In more relaxed years he came to recall the pioneering of Dakota, and he painted it on canvas.

The Westerns of Harvey Dunn, many of them exhibited at De Smet and then given to the people of South Dakota, were given exposure in books and magazines, and he acquired a fourth acclaim to fame. Fortune it is for this area so little recognized by historians that this daughter and son of the prairies—related by marriage and appreciative of each other though never associated in their work—should have brought this area and De Smet to become widely known and have thousands of visitors each year because of their books and paintings.

Interest this summer centers in the several sites and the restored railroad shanty, the presentation of The Long Winter on four dates this month, and the Dunn paintings on display here.

The area becomes host to the thousands who will visit it for Old Settlers Days this coming week and four showings of The Long Winter in succeeding weeks. Knowledge
about the Ingalls, Wilder and Dunn histories and of the sites here is essential to being a good host to these people, some of whom come long distances.47

If local people knew little about Laura Ingalls Wilder and her life in De Smet, it was not because Aubrey Sherwood was not trying to educate them. The News was filled with historical stories and stories relating what was currently happening to the growth of tourism in De Smet.

Total pageant attendance in 1973 reached seven thousand over a six-night period, reportedly one thousand fewer than pageant officials had anticipated.48 But a steady stream of visitors came to Peoples State Bank to see an exhibit of the original hand-written manuscripts of The Long Winter and Those Happy Golden Years, which were displayed at the bank throughout the summer.49

In an editorial at mid-summer, 1973, Sherwood praised the work of volunteers, helping with the Wilder Society's tours and with the pageant, for making De Smet's heritage such an important attraction for tourists.50

In 1973 there were all kinds of activities used in promoting the Wilder legacy. The society held an open house in July to dedicate the restored Ingalls home on Third Street. The home was constructed by Pa Ingalls and lived in by family members until 1924. William Anderson was credited with helping the growth of Wilder lore in a page one story under the headline, "Summer visit of Ingalls-Wilder research, writer brot heritage additions, displays." A report of an English girl who was interviewed in London on the Dick Cavett show about her reading By
the Shores of Silver Lake was republished, and another item reported that hours at the shanty were shortened in September because tourist traffic had fallen off. 51

Television Lends Promotion Hand

The Little House on the Prairie television series began on the National Broadcasting Company network in 1974, and Roger MacBride was hired to help in its production. (MacBride was the heir of Rose Wilder Lane who helped the society pay off the mortgage on the Ingalls home.) He later left the series in a dispute with its producer and star, Michael Landon. 52 The number of visitors to De Smet increased dramatically after the television series began. But Sherwood worried about the quality of visitors, because they did not know as much about the Wilders or the Ingallses as earlier visitors.

He wrote:

Television has increased the number of visitors, but it has confused them. The show has not been historically accurate. That's too bad. Senior citizen groups provide the most trouble because they have only information from the television show. The people who really know and love the books, they pretty much forget about the show. Those who read the books only a little and have liked the entertainment and have nothing else to watch, they're more trouble then they are worth because they just don't identify with De Smet. 53

Absence of identity with De Smet has been a source of disagreement between Sherwood and the television show's producer from the very beginning. Shortly after the series started, Sherwood reported on page one that despite the lack of mention of De Smet in the series, it must
be on the minds of viewers since the town had played host to hundreds of visitors over the years. And later that year he editorialized about the lack of authenticity in the show in a piece titled "Lovers of Wilder books hope for filming to come to De Smet...for historical facts":

"Are they going to bring a cast and crew to De Smet for a series at Little Town on the Prairie?" is a frequent question of visitors to De Smet, in letters and even in a few telephone calls, so great is the interest in the television presentations of NBC on Wednesday evenings.

Even the young viewers of the productions would recognize that "Along Plum Creek" is not photographed at Walnut Grove, Minn. No such hills, no trickling brook over rocks, surely never such a two-story house with a half second floor—not then and not now. So it can be concluded that the production will be made at or near Hollywood.

Evidencing the deep interest the books by Laura Ingalls Wilder have aroused in persons of all ages, the pilot showing on television started a flood of questions made at and to De Smet as to the possibilities of the producers doing as others had done in bringing the cast and the cameras to South Dakota for the authenticity this would give the productions. For thousands--is it millions—who would follow the series there would be recognition for Main Street, Big Slough, Surveyors House and the Ingalls home. The producers would indeed have given a portrayal unique in movie history. For the reported eight millions claimed for the pilot production there would have a thrill far surpassing that given by Little House on the Prairie or any of the "Along Plum Creek" stories.

Sadly, through all of the moving picture history that the public will watch is far more important than what will add to their learning while increasing their interest.

Ignoring the period history of the Wilder stories has brought criticism—things just weren't like that in 1879—but apparently moving picture privilege may be expected, certainly little association with Mrs. Wilder's stories of the family.
But despite the lack of authenticity, no one could deny it had spurred the interest of the public, and the number of visitors to the shanty increased. In 1975 some fifteen thousand visitors registered. More than twenty thousand registered in 1976. Six years earlier, only one thousand had registered. Even Sherwood admitted the television show had helped and reported in 1957 a "flood of mail and visitors" since the television series started. Typical to his reporting style, he mentioned no specific numbers of visitors or letters.

Society Activity Continues

A historical marker was erected at the Wilder homestead site in 1975. That was the birthplace of Rose Wilder Lane. De Smet was named a Bicentennial Community, and Arnie Stenseth, South Dakota Bicentennial director, said in a letter that De Smet was fortunate to have its Wilder and Dunn lore. Then Governor Richard Kneip spent more than two hours in De Smet visiting the Ingalls and Wilder sites. A new foundation was sought for the Ingalls home, and the Wilder sites in De Smet were featured in the Minneapolis Tribune's Picture magazine.

The tourist season continued strong through October, 1975, with seven hundred registered guests that month. Sherwood, in a page one story, listed more than a dozen names of registered visitors who came from some distance.

The number of visitors was reported as heavy in 1976, with 1,500 registering the weekend preceding the July 14, 1976, issue of The News, and another 2,700 registered the weekend before the July 21, 1976,
issue. It was a rare occasion for Sherwood to mention specific numbers of visitors. 60

In the remaining months of his publishership, Sherwood noted how a picture story of De Smet and the Wilder sites and pageant appeared in the December 20, 1976, issue of Co-op County News. And in a last effort he noted that the Ingalls home would get its new foundation the summer of 1977. 61 That was the last story Sherwood published about Laura Ingalls Wilder in The De Smet News. The paper was sold March 17, 1977, to Dale and Lynne Blegen.


3Ibid., Feb. 22, 1979. (She had by 1939, however, completed three of the six books she finished prior to her death. None of the three was about De Smet, however, and may have accounted for the lack of interest in her as an author.)


6Ibid., March 21, 1951, p. 1.

7Ibid., April 17, 1952, p. 2; June 5, 1952, p. 1.


18 *De Smet Yesterday and Today*, p. 375.

19 Interview, Feb. 22, 1979; *De Smet Yesterday and Today*, p. 375.


21 Ibid., June 11, 1959, p. 2.


25 *De Smet Yesterday and Today*, p. 376.


39 *De Smet Yesterday and Today*, p. 433; *News*, July 11, 1979, p. 3.
41 Interview, Feb. 22, 1979.
47 Ibid., June 1, 1972, p. 2.
56 *De Smet Yesterday and Today*, p. 376.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Aubre y Sherwood did not intend to become publisher of a weekly newspaper when he graduated from college in 1917. His education was in agriculture; his interests during World War I were in aviation. And while his father was a weekly newspaper publisher, there was little reason to believe he would want to be one: the business was not lucrative, and two older brothers had chosen other careers. Aubrey worked with his father for ten years after joining the paper, and the father's influence was felt in the development of news judgments and editing standards the younger Sherwood would employ the rest of his life.

But the younger Sherwood was not a carbon copy of his father. He was somewhat better equipped to edit a paper. He was better educated than his father, and was quick to adapt new production techniques, and was an innovator in the employment of business practices designed to make The News more profitable, larger, and more viable as a force in the community. "I wanted the paper to be larger than the town," Sherwood recalled.¹

He was basically successful in reaching that goal. Competing editors in Kingsbury County marveled at the advertising lineage and circulation The News acquired. And while the nameplate of the newspaper boasted The News was an area paper, "The County Paper of Kingsbury," it was chiefly concerned with promoting De Smet. Rivalry among county towns was intense and remained intense throughout Sherwood's publishing career.
Without doubt Sherwood's most lasting contribution to South Dakota was his successful encouragement of Harvey Dunn to bring his collection of paintings to the state. Dunn brought forty-two paintings to De Smet in 1950 to show for fourteen weeks. From the De Smet showing the paintings were permanently donated to the state and were hung in Pugsley Union at South Dakota State College. The paintings were later transferred to the Memorial Art Center.

Sherwood mentioned editorially that the paintings hung first in De Smet--the town near the birthplace of the famed prairie painter. He is intensely proud that Dunn chose to hang his paintings in De Smet during their first display in South Dakota.

He also speaks with a tear in his eye of the privilege of knowing a famed person well, and he knew Harvey Dunn well. They shared a friendship that spanned more than twenty-five years. His voice will choke when he tries to put into words how much he admired Dunn.

It is difficult to measure how successful his attempts to promote Dunn were. Certainly his attempts were largely successful during the showing of Dunn paintings in 1950. The thousands who came are testimony to that success. But whether the reams of material he published in The News over the years following the showing had any lasting effect on readers is impossible to say. Word of the painter was spread in so many ways other than through this small weekly newspaper.

Measuring the success of his promotion of Laura Ingalls Wilder faces the same difficulty: how do you separate his influence from the influence of dozens of other writers, researchers, promoters and showmen?
Sherwood was among the first to recognize there was a potential tourist industry in those persons interested in Wilder lore. He recognized that long before producers of the television series; he recognized that long before most De Smet residents did.

But his enthusiasm for Mrs. Wilder and her works, the history of her family and of the family of Almonzo Wilder have not been shared by a majority of De Smet residents. Many living in De Smet will admit they have never read the books, have no real interest in the author or the history of their town, and are unable to answer many questions put to them by tourists. This lack of knowledge and interest aggravated Sherwood during his long career, and he tried for years to interest local residents in Wilder lore. In that respect—the attempt to encourage people to know Wilder lore and to take an interest in the subject—The News failed in its mission. Little progress was made.

But his interest and his editorial support have kept a small core of interested persons dedicated to promoting Wilder lore in De Smet. Who is supporting a group that is a definite minority of the population is oftentimes more important than the number supporting it. Sherwood and The News were significant supporters.

Sherwood, as publisher, reported not only what was, but what he thought should be. He frequently laced news reports with editorial comment.

Sherwood knew above all else that a small town publisher speaks of and for his community. His newspaper was an extension of the man and reflected his biases, his prejudices, and his desires. Those qualities
must strike a responsive chord within a community for a newspaper to remain a viable force. For the fifty-seven years Sherwood was editor and publisher of The De Smet News, there was relative harmony.

1Interview, Feb. 22, 1979.
C. P. Sherwood Obituary

The De Smet News, October 25, 1929

Carter P. Sherwood, publisher of The De Smet News and resident of De Smet since 1882, passed away at St. Mary's Hospital, Rochester, Minn., Friday evening after a month's battle to build up his health.

Mr. Sherwood had been suffering from stomach trouble for about a year and in June had gone to Rochester to go through the clinic. His trouble was diagnosed as ulcer of the duodenum and he was sent home to rest and diet. After a gain in weight and health and a partial resumption of his activities he was troubled so that he returned a month ago and underwent an operation.

The operation showed a more serious ulcer than diagnosis had indicated, but the surgeons hoped for recovery. A new opening was made for outlet from the stomach. After indications that the patient was improving there came discouragement and he was again operated on Wednesday, October 9, a tube inserted for direct feeding. Even this measure failed to bring the response hoped for and after a rally over the week-end he became weaker, to slip quietly away.

The body was brought to De Smet by train Sunday morning and placed in the Masonic Temple, where it lay until 2:30 that afternoon, when services were held from the Congregational church with W. C. Besselienville, minister officiating. Fellow Consistory Masons acted as pall bearers and services at the grave were by the local Masonic lodge, with E. F. Green officiating.

Dr. and Mrs. R. C. Sherwood of St. Paul were with his father at his death, the other sons, Vincent M. of New York and Aubrey H. of De Smet having left after spending many days with him. Vincent was called back from Chicago and accompanied the body home, while Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood and son Neil drove.

The deceased was the only surviving brother of Mrs. J. E. Floran of this city and Mr. L. E. Whiting, former resident who now lives at Dickinson, N. D. A niece, Mrs. L. A. Thune, who had spent her early years in the Sherwood home, was unable to come from her home at Iron Mountain, Mich. More than forty relatives gathered for the services.

Mr. Sherwood was president of the state press association at the time of his death and was honored by officers of the association who attended services Sunday.

Pall bearers were Dr. P. L. Scofield, Peter Jorgenson, Charles Walstrom, Dr. A. E. Bostrom, N. E. Tackaberry and H. O. Fritzel.

Iroquois; L. W. Robinson, Mitchell; John Craig, Tripp; William Tamblyn, Miller; Casper Nohner, Hayti; Charles McCaffree, Sioux Falls; Paul Dutcher, Brookings; Ernie Yule, Alexandria; and E. B. Oddy, Woonsocket.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


