
Abraham Van Vleet and the Early Press of Fayette County, Indiana

Fredric Brewer*

One morning in 1823 a wagon burdened with a printing press and hundreds of pounds of type creaked out of Lebanon, Ohio, and passed through the clearings of Turtle Creek Valley. Abraham Van Vleet (1783–1832), a printer, was headed for Indiana. He was not unlike other printers who found their way to the new West of early nineteenth-century America, ever seeking a virgin locale in hopes that it would offer financial rewards which the previous place had not, there to establish a newspaper, an urge that seemed to be stamped in the sinews of migratory printers. After all, as one pioneer publisher in Ohio mused, who “would not take a newspaper . . . who would refuse to pay for it[?]” But reality quickly replaced optimism.¹

“*Cash*,” wrote Nathaniel Bolton of the *Indianapolis Gazette*, “is an article that printers do not often see.” Pleading with their subscribers to pay up, Copeland Arion and John Lodge of the *Madison Indiana Republican* said “it cannot be expected that we can subsist on water and air alone.” In Vincennes, Elihu Stout of the *Western Sun* carried subscribers on the cuff for years, now and then reminding them that he “wants to be paid—he well recollects the old adage, and he thinks it cannot be applied to him—he is a cross dog that bites before he barks’ as he has been growling and barking at some of his subscribers for some time” After sixteen months of sharing the financial responsibilities of the Connersville, Indiana, *Fayette Observer*, David Rench—an associate of Van Vleet—made a gloomy appraisal of newspaper publishing. “Truly this must be a very unhealthy occupation, especially in this state,” he wrote, “and we commiserate every unfortunate devil who may be engaged in it.”²

* Fredric Brewer, a native of Huntington County, Indiana, taught mass communications at Indiana University, Bloomington, for twenty-five years before retiring in 1989. He is the author of “Rushville’s *Dog Fennel Gazette*: Indiana’s Mythical Newspaper,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXXIX (March, 1993), 18-34.

¹ Ohio has two communities named Lebanon. This Lebanon is the county seat of Warren County in southwestern Ohio. Chillicothe, Ohio, *Supporter*, September 16, 1817.

² *Indianapolis Gazette*, July 15, 1823; *Madison Indiana Republican*, February 24, 1820; Vincennes *Western Sun*, January 28, 1809; Connersville *Fayette Observer*, October 3, 1827.

But limited income was only one of the banes of publishing. Lack of paper was a common complaint. In Indiana and elsewhere no pioneer newspaper held to a regular publishing schedule. In favorable weather, little cash in the printer's till prevented stockpiling newsprint for which mill owners wanted hard specie. Furthermore, printers had to go by the loose calendar of freight wagon and river craft operators who brought paper to them. Inclement weather would hold up a shipment for weeks. And coupled with these problems was the wanderlust inherent in many journeymen printers and apprentices who bolted printing offices before completing their obligations. Mail service was inefficient and erratic, and since western editors depended on exchange papers from the east for national and world news, a common complaint was "No mail this week"; hence, no news. Subscribers who lived at a distance from the printing office, thus receiving their paper by mail, sometimes would go for weeks before seeing an issue. Snapped one Indiana editor: "The [mail] contractors in this state have got into the mischievous habit of *farming* out their business, and it often falls into the hands of ignorant, negligent, slothful, careless fellows, who know no more of their business than the starved brutes upon which they ride Until a different arrangement and peremptory change takes place in the Mail Department, printers and their patrons must suffer from the brutality of those who have it in their power to perplex them."³

Although Indiana printers were some distance from printer supply houses, their presses were simple yet sturdy in construction and virtually unchanged from the wood press developed by Johann Gutenberg in the mid-fifteenth century. If the need arose, they could be repaired by a local blacksmith or carpenter. Printers short on ink could make their own although the process was messy and smelly.⁴

Given the problems, frustrations, and low rewards of pioneer printing, it may seem puzzling that Abraham Van Vleet sought a

³ Cold months were especially a trying time. Since water is necessary in the paper-making process, vats in the few mills scattered across the western country were often frozen solid, thus unable to produce the precious commodity. Even if printers had newsprint in stock, the cold could throw up an impasse. "It was not uncommon . . . to suspend work for several weeks," observed William H. P. Denny, who apprenticed in Lebanon under Van Vleet. "The paper, when 'wet down' [to receive ink] . . . would freeze as hard as an iceberg; the type in the form would be frozen solid; and the [ink] 'balls'—sheepskins stuffed with wool and tacked to handles—would be incased [*sic*] in ice in the trough." *The History of Warren County, Ohio* (Chicago, 1882), 468; *Charlestown Indiana Intelligencer and Farmer's Friend*, January 2, 1822; *Vincennes Indiana Centinel & Public Advertiser*, November 20, 1820.

⁴ Readers wishing more information about the nature and inherent problems of pioneer newspapering as well as the tools employed in printing may wish to consult Fredric Brewer, "Against All Adversities: The Pioneer Printers of Brookville, Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXXVII (December, 1991), 303-33.

fresh horizon in Indiana. What drove him and other printers ever westward? "Why did they cling so tenaciously to their chosen job?" asked newspaper historian Douglas McMurtrie. "Why were they willing to endure all the hardships of a pioneer printer's life? Why did they go on year after year, with very little improvement in their status? I think it was because most of these printers were idealists. They had seen, out in this western country, materials for the making of a new empire. They had caught some vision of what these little towns could some day become, and one of the important services they rendered to their communities was that of promotional salesmen."⁵

A native of New Jersey, Van Vleet for some eleven years had been a journeyman printer. He also had been part owner and occasional editor of the Lebanon *Western Star*, a weekly news sheet founded on February 13, 1807, by a young lawyer named John McLean (1785–1861).⁶

Like almost all pioneer newspapers, the *Western Star* struggled along under various hands. Around 1814 Van Vleet acquired part interest in the weekly. In early January, 1817, he was joined by William A. Camron, a roving printer who, four years earlier, had been associated with the Indiana Territory's second newspaper, the Madison *Western Eagle*. Camron (also spelled Cameron) was with a number of Ohio newspapers before and after his association with the Madison and Lebanon printing offices. Another footloose printer, George Smith, was also connected with the *Star* until he left in late 1816 to start a competing weekly, the Lebanon *Farmer*. Smith may have been the George Smith (1784?–1836) who was affiliated with newspapers in Jeffersonville and Indianapolis.⁷ In February,

⁵ Douglas C. McMurtrie, "The Contribution of the Pioneer Printers to Illinois History," *Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the Year 1938* (Springfield, Ill., 1939), 37–38.

⁶ *History of Fayette County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1885), 90; Clarence S. Brigham, "Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690–1820. Part XI: Ohio," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, XXIV (1919), 163–64, 175; *The History of Warren County, Ohio, passim*; Osman Castle Hooper, *History of Ohio Journalism, 1793–1933* (Columbus, Ohio, 1933), 28, 310 (Hooper erroneously gives July 4, 1806, as the *Star*'s founding date); Reuben Gold Thwaites, *The Ohio Valley Press Before the War of 1812–15* (Worcester, Mass., 1909), 37. McLean had left the *Star* by the time Van Vleet arrived, having turned the office over to his brothers Nathaniel and William, both of whom eventually quit. In 1823, McLean became postmaster general of the United States, and in 1829 he was appointed by President Andrew Jackson to the United States Supreme Court.

⁷ Brigham, "Bibliography of American Newspapers," 156, 163–64, 175, 177–78; Brigham, *History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690–1820* (2 vols., Hamden, Conn., 1962), II, 806–808, 815; Hooper, *History of Ohio Journalism*, 59, 69; *The History of Warren County*, 310; Bert S. Bartlow, *Centennial History of Butler County, Ohio* (n.p., 1905), 261; *Sketches of Springfield* (Springfield, Ohio, 1852), 22, 25; Alfred E. Lee, *History of the City of Columbus, Capital of Ohio* (2 vols., New York, 1892), I, 424; Chillicothe, Ohio, *Scioto Gazette*, June 24, 1829; "The Pioneers of Jefferson County, Reminiscences of James B. Lewis, Esq.," undated manuscript, genealogy files (Madison–Jefferson County Public Library, Madison, Ind.); John

1819, Smith relocated the *Farmer* to Springfield, Ohio, and sold it two months later. Some time after the summer of 1820, he and stepson Nathaniel Bolton (1803–1858) acquired printing equipment from lawyer Reuben Nelson and printer Isaac Cox, who had used it to print their Corydon *Indiana Herald* (1816–1818) and Jeffersonville *Indianian* (1818–1820). The press and type were freighted to Indianapolis where, on January 28, 1822, Smith and Bolton started the *Gazette*, Indianapolis's first newspaper. In 1825 Smith was appointed an associate circuit court judge in Indianapolis.

Besides being busy with the *Star*, Van Vleet probably was the author and printer of *The Ohio, or Western Spelling Book* (ca. 1814); in 1821, he compiled and printed *The Justice and Township Officer's Assistant*, a compendium of judicial forms for constables, township officials, and justices of the peace. In January, 1822, he started a magazine, the *Ohio Miscellaneous Museum*, a monthly whose pages contained items reprinted from various sources. The magazine did not survive past its fifth number. Despite the failure of the magazine, as well as such setbacks as competition from the burgeoning and business-hungry printing operations in nearby Cincinnati and frequent personnel changes, the *Western Star*, unlike many news sheets of the period, survived. If one pioneer's reaction to the weekly is a measure of the paper's value and endurance, *Western Star* readers looked forward to each issue. As a youth living eight miles from Lebanon, David Stewart made a roundtrip on foot to Lebanon each week to "get and carry back to a subscriber the *Western Star*, their only source of news, that he might have the coveted privilege of perusing its contents."⁸

Unfortunately, Van Vleet's *Star* was an instrument that fueled animosity toward the Shakers, a prejudice that was more the rule

H. B. Nowland, *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis* (Indianapolis, 1870), 91-92; Madison, Ind., *Western Eagle*, September 10, 1813, April 18, 1814; Ruth Dorrel, *Pioneer Ancestors of Members of the Society of Indiana Pioneers* (Indianapolis, 1983), 200; Austin H. Brown, "The First Printers in Indianapolis," *Indiana Magazine of History*, II (September, 1906), 121-26; W. P. Hendricks, *1889 Biographical and Historical Souvenir, Jefferson County, Indiana* (Knightstown, Ind., 1977), 206; William H. Venable, *Beginnings of Literary Culture in the Ohio Valley* (Cincinnati, 1891), 42; John W. Miller, *Indiana Newspaper Bibliography* (Indianapolis, 1982), 154. Although George Smith is a common name, it is noted that Clarence Brigham in his exhaustive compilation of pioneer American printers (see citations above) lists only one printer with that name.

⁸ *The History of Warren County*, 467. A copy of the *Assistant* is in the archives of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington; *The History of Warren County*, 467; *History of Fayette County* (1885), 90. The Wisconsin State Historical Society possesses a full run of the *Museum*. The *Museum* also is available on microfilm (APSII, reel 218, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Mich.); The *Western Star* still exists, making it one of the oldest, continuously published U.S. newspapers that fly the original name and maintain the original frequency of publication. In 1836 David Stewart would become the pastor of the Presbyterian church in Homer, Indiana (Rush County). Stewart, who was born in 1809, lived in the Lebanon area until early 1831. *A Biographical History of Eminent and Self-Made Men of the State of Indiana* (2 vols., Cincinnati, 1880), I, 6th District, 79.

than the exception in many parts of frontier America. Several years before Van Vleet arrived in Lebanon, the United Society of the Believers in Christ's Second Appearing—the so-called Shakers—established Union Village, a communal settlement a few miles west of Lebanon where the practice of celibacy was a cardinal principle. Shakers believed that only through withdrawal from the world could a life without sin be realized. Union Village was a tidy, industrious place whose population would grow, through converts, to about five hundred. Almost at the beginning of the settlement the religious rituals of the Shakers, characterized in part by rhythmical dancing (hence the appellation “Shaker”), and their communal lifestyle made them suspect to their neighbors who, save for the Quakers among them, celebrated religion openly, tumultuously, and hysterically at camp meetings, perching on logs in a clearing to clap and shout encouragement to a circuit rider who, bellowing “like a scrub bull in a canebrake during cocklebur season,” assured them sulfurous fires awaited if they were not repentant. During these open assemblies considerable emotional intensity developed with many attendants falling in trances and others babbling “in tongues.”⁹

The Union Village Shakers were falsely accused of beating their children, castrating their males, abusing their women, breaking up families of God-fearing folk, goading Indians to wage war, babbling devil-talk, and dancing naked at their night meetings after which they blew out the candles and “went into a promiscuous debauch.” Trouble erupted in October, 1805, when several roughnecks invaded Union Village and tore down fences, trampled orchards, broke windows, and set fire to several buildings. This was the first of several ugly incidents. In 1810 about five hundred men confronted the Shakers and made vulgar accusations. During Van Vleet's tenure with the *Western Star*, Union Village was invaded in 1813, 1817, and 1819, the mobs whipped to excitement by letters and articles in the *Star*, and there was still a fifth invasion the year after Van Vleet left Lebanon.¹⁰

⁹ Thomas D. Clark, *The Rampaging Frontier: Manners and Humors of Pioneer Days in the South and the Middle West* (Indianapolis, 1939), 145. In a letter to his daughter, Anna, John Cleves Symmes, founder of Cincinnati, wrote: “One sect, Quakers, worship Him in silence sitting with hats on from beginning to end of their meeting. Another sect, Methodists, worship Him by grunts and groans, stamping, raving and roaring like so many bulls and wolves and crying amen, at every ten or twenty words of the preacher. Another sect, Newlights, worship Him by screaming, clapping hands, crying hell fire and damnation, as loud as they can yell, tumbling down, lying on their backs. Another sect, the Shakers, say they worship God best by singing merry tunes and dancing and hornpipes. They almost dance themselves to death, for they all look pale like so many ghosts.” Symmes's letter was written in the period September 11-17, 1809. His daughter was the wife of Indiana Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison. Beverley W. Bond, Jr., *The Correspondence of John Cleves Symmes* (New York, 1926), 300.

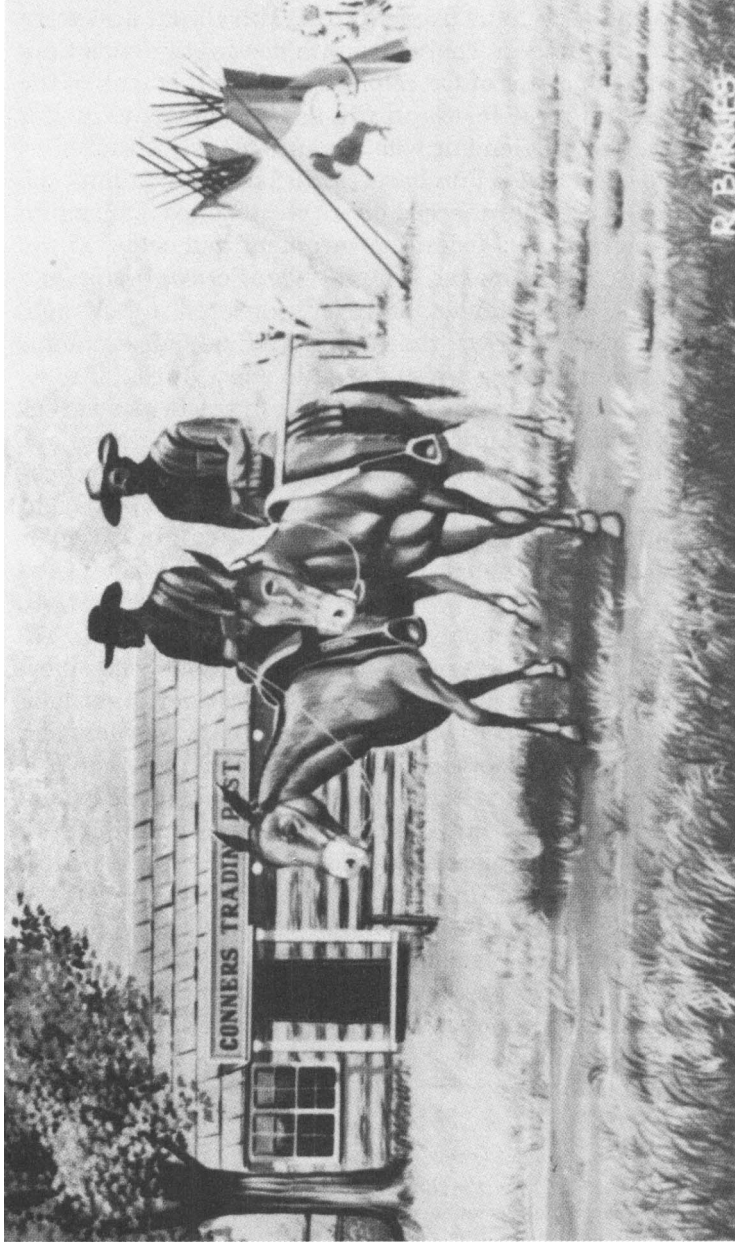
¹⁰ J. P. MacLean, “Mobbing the Shakers of Union Village,” *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications*, XI (1903), 112-14, 130-31; Theodore E. Johnson, ed., “Violence at Turtle Creek,” *The Shaker Quarterly*, XII (Fall, 1972), 109.

At first, the *Star* enjoyed a business relationship with the Shakers and in 1808 printed for them a six hundred-page volume, *Christ's Second Appearing*, whose object was "to inform the public, as well as novitiates, of the faith, doctrines, and disciplines of the church." After John McLean left the *Star*, however, the relationship began to fall apart; the newspaper became anti-Shaker. Historian Stephen J. Stein has suggested that the *Star* under Van Vleet's control "spearheaded the [Shaker] opposition in the West." A frequent contributor of anti-Shaker letters to the *Star* was James Smith, a Kentuckian whose opposition to the sect was ignited when his son joined the order.¹¹

In the autumn of 1817 Van Vleet charged that Union Village Shakers had punished a child by rolling her around in a barrel for several hours. In 1818 he published this and other accusations in a pamphlet, *An Account of the Conduct of the Shakers*. The Shakers replied in 1819 with *The Other Side of the Question, an account of "the proceedings of Abra[h]m Van Vleet, Esq., and his Associates, against the Said United Society at Union Village, Ohio,"* which was printed in Cincinnati. The "Esq." (Esquire) attribution recognized Van Vleet's official status which, ironically, was that of a justice of the peace for Warren County's Turtle Valley Township. In 1823, the Shakers established a printing office at their village, prepared to counter the *Star* word for word. They also began reprinting *Christ's Second Appearing*, the volume that the *Star*'s job office printed in 1808. The Shakers' introduction of printing paraphernalia, with its competitive potential, may have been among the factors that recharged Van Vleet's migratory nature. It was time to move on.¹²

¹¹ Hooper, *History of Ohio Journalism, 1793-1933*, 29; MacLean, "The Shaker Community of Warren County," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications*, X (1902), 261; Edward Deming Andrews, *The People Called Shakers* (New York, 1953), 92; Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America* (New Haven, Conn., 1992), 85; In Indiana, Elihu Stout, on the "almost unanimous solicitation of his readers," reluctantly granted Smith admittance to the pages of his Vincennes *Western Sun*. Smith's diatribe was printed in two installments, filling more than eight columns. The Shakers "are learned, cunning, artful men," he claimed; "... the leading shakers [*sic*] live in luxury in wine and women as far as their plan of secrecy will admit of." However, the Shaker village of Busro at Busseron Creek several miles north of Vincennes had caused only minor controversy when it was founded in 1808, and in the years the settlement was maintained, the Shakers sold various items of farm produce and home manufacture to the residents of Vincennes and the surrounding area. Busro was not permanently abandoned until March, 1827. Vincennes *Western Sun*, October 6, 13, 1810; Mary Lou Conlin, "The Lost Land of Busro," *The Shaker Quarterly*, III (Summer, 1963), 44-45, 55, 57; Oliver W. Robinson, "The Shakers in Knox County," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXXIV (March, 1938), 34-41; Robert M. Taylor, Jr., et al., *Indiana: A New Historical Guide* (Indianapolis, 1989), 291.

¹² R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840* (2 vols., 1950; Bloomington, Ind., 1978), II, 477; Ralph Leslie Rusk, *The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier* (2 vols., New York, 1926), I, 226; *ibid.*, II, 252; *The History of Warren County* (1885), 440, 448. Eventually several Shaker elders went into Lebanon and settled all the Union Village accounts, advising the store owners there would be no more business with them if their harassment continued. The people of Lebanon "concluded to mend their manners." MacLean, "Mobbing the Shakers," 131. Union Village was not abandoned until 1910.



ARTIST R. BARNES'S RENDERING OF CONNERSVILLE'S FIRST STRUCTURE,
THE TRADING POST, AS IT MIGHT HAVE LOOKED IN 1813

Reproduced from *The Book of the 150th Year of Connorsville, Indiana* (Connorsville, 1964).

In Lebanon, Van Vleet may have become acquainted with John and Samuel Caldwell Sample who arrived in Lebanon with their families in the late autumn of 1819. Carpenters by trade, the Samples had made the long haul from Elkton, Maryland, and were intent on traveling farther. Their ultimate destination was Connersville, Indiana, a cluster of log cabins alongside the bank of the Whitewater River's west fork and the seat of government for Fayette County. The settlement was advantageously situated at the eastern edge of the "New Purchase," a vast stretch of almost 8.5 million timbered acres that merged on its western extremity into tall, lush prairie grass. The federal government had acquired the fertile package in 1818 from the Miami, Wea, Potawatomie, and Delaware Indians. The Samples, however, wintered in Lebanon, perhaps because of the bad weather but more likely for economic reasons. A new federal land act would go into effect April 24, 1820, permitting settlers to buy public domain land in tracts as small as eighty acres at a minimum price of \$1.25 an acre, payable on purchase. Under the previous land act of 1804 the minimum purchase was 160 acres at \$1.64 per acre, although the land could be bought on credit. With the awakening of spring, 1820, then, the Samples said good-bye to their Lebanon acquaintances and set forth for Connersville.¹³

Despite a depressed economy brought on by the panic of 1819 (the nation's first great depression), little Connersville was enjoying a boom. Emigrants arrived almost every day, either to settle in or to stock up for the trip farther west. On Saturdays, farmers and traders swarmed into the settlement "to buy goods, trade in live stock or lands or 'swap' horses, hear the news and settle up old scores by arbitration, and not infrequently by fisticuff fights." According to one Indiana historian, about four thousand whites were living in the whole of the New Purchase at the time of the acquisition, and of that number, around two hundred resided in Connersville. Within ten years after the Samples' arrival, there were nine thousand whites in Fayette County. John Sample established a hotel and for a time was county coroner as well as Connersville's second postmaster. Samuel Sample abandoned carpentry for law and politics.¹⁴

¹³ *A Biographical History of Eminent and Self-Made Men of the State of Indiana*, I, 6th District, 74; Connersville was founded by John Conner who settled in Indiana Territory around 1800 with his brother, William. At some time between 1804 and 1808, he built a fur trading post at the site. In 1813 Conner platted the town, which assumed his name. Fayette County, named in honor of the Marquis de la Fayette, was organized in January, 1819. *History of Fayette County* (1885), 135-36; Ronald L. Baker and Marvin Carmony, *Indiana Place Names* (Bloomington, Ind., 1975), 33, 52; Richard B. Morris, *Encyclopedia of American History* (New York, 1953), 437.

¹⁴ "Reminiscences of Judge [Fabius M.] Finch," *Indiana Magazine of History*, VII (December, 1911), 155; Charles Roll, *Indiana: One Hundred and Fifty Years of American Development* . . . (5 vols., Chicago, 1931), I, 385; *An Illustrated Historical*

Van Vleet's motives for moving to Connersville are unclear. Fayette County was in need of a printer since the closest press was at the *Enquirer* printing office in Brookville, which was seventeen miles to the south. John Sample may have had something to do with Van Vleet's decision to put his quarrels with the Shakers behind him and come to Connersville; Sample's son, also named John, had an interest in printing. Whatever his reasons, Van Vleet sold his share in the *Western Star*, loaded his press and type in a wagon, and began his journey to Fayette County.

Van Fleet founded his new printing office near Connersville's town square. Nearby was a dry goods store, Barnet and Jonas Levi's jewelry shop, a cooperage, Austin Bishop's grocery, two hat makers, a saddler, law offices, three blacksmiths, and the tailoring shop of David Beck. Taverns and hotels flourished. Among the most popular was John Sample's inn, which was regarded as having the best cooks. Joshua Harland's inn, however, was celebrated for serving the finest whisky. Travelers who wanted their horses well cared for while they were in town were directed to the hotel run by Newton Claypool. The town, whose main part was about five blocks long and two blocks wide, was burgeoning, having spread to the east side of the Whitewater where several cabins, a tannery, and a carding and fulling operation were located.¹⁵

The first issue of Van Vleet's *Indiana Statesman*, a four-page weekly, appeared on an unknown date in 1823. John Swayze, a journeyman printer, might have assisted Van Vleet. Only the twenty-ninth issue, that of January 10, 1824, has survived.¹⁶

In the summer of 1823 Van Vleet issued a prospectus for *The Western Ladies' Casket*, a monthly magazine that he claimed would be "Edited by a female":

Atlas of Fayette Co., Indiana (Chicago, 1875), 6, gives Fayette County's 1820 population as 5,950; U.S., Fifth Census, 1830, Population Schedules for Fayette County, Indiana; *History of Fayette County* (1885), 96; *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Fayette Co., Indiana*, 8; Frederic Irving Barrows, ed., *History of Fayette County, Indiana: Her People, Industries and Institutions* (1917; Indianapolis, 1973), 187, 521; Samuel Sample served Fayette County as its state representative (1828–1829). In 1833, he relocated to South Bend, Indiana. He was a member of the United States House of Representatives 1843–1845. *A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1980), I, 343.

¹⁵ *History of Fayette County* (1885), 137–39; *The Book of the 150th Year of Connersville, Indiana* (Connersville, 1964), 117–18; Barrows, *History of Fayette County*, 523.

¹⁶ Indiana historian Logan Esarey listed the *Indiana Statesman* in his penciled notes about early Indiana newspapers but did not suggest a starting date. Compilation of Indiana Newspapers, Logan Esarey Papers (Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington). He placed Van Fleet in Connersville as early as 1820, yet at that time Van Vleet was in Ohio, associated with the *Western Star*. Miller, *Indiana Newspaper Bibliography*, 103, and Barrows, *History of Fayette County*, 521, give 1824 as the founding year of the *Statesman*. However, since twenty-eight issues preceded the extant copy, the *Statesman* was unquestionably started by Van Vleet in 1823, soon after his arrival in Connersville. In the Miller work the printer's surname is consistently spelled Van Fleet.



THE BUCKLEY HOUSE (BUILT C. 1820), SHOWN HERE IN A 1906 PHOTOGRAPH, SERVED AS AN INN, GROCERY GENERAL STORE, AND POSSIBLY CONNERSVILLE'S FIRST POST OFFICE

Reproduced from *Pen and Camera of the Pretty and Progressive City of Connersville, Indiana* (Connersville, 1906).

The entire tendency of this publication will be to disseminate [*sic*] useful knowledge and to excite a taste for mental improvement, particularly among the female part of the community . . . As this perhaps, is the first publication attempted to be published by a female in the western country a hope is entertained that it will not be deficient in merit or short in duration for want of a liberal support. \$1.00 a year.¹⁷

If Van Vleet maintained a regular publication schedule, the first issue of the *Casket* appeared in October, 1823. Only the fifth number, February, 1824, is known to have survived. It bears the motto:

Improve, excel, surmount, subdue your fate!
So shall at length, enlightened men efface
That slavish stigma seared on half the race.¹⁸

This issue of sixteen pages contains a historical sketch about galvanism (the process of producing electricity with chemicals) "extracted from the American edition of the Edinburgh Encyclopaedia [*sic*]; an item on the principles of dyeing cloth attributed to *Compensations on Chemistry*; and a short story, "The Rose in January—A German Tale" credited to the *London Magazine*. If the contents of other issues of the *Casket* were consistent with the extant

¹⁷ Corydon *Indiana Gazette*, September 10, 1823, quoted in Charles Moores, "Old Corydon," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XIII (March, 1917), 34; Mary Alden Walker, *The Beginning of Printing in the State of Indiana* (Crawfordsville, Ind., 1934), 18.

¹⁸ Source of poem not located.

issue, the reader was served brow-wrinkling reading matter, hardly the stuff to offer a brief escape from the stresses of frontier life or to "improve" her fate. States "Principles of Dyeing," "Tin is used as a mordant in three states, dissolved in nitro muriatic acid, in acetic acid, and in a mixture of sulphuric and muriatic acids. Nitro muriat of tin is the common mordant used by dyers. They prepare it by dissolving tin in diluted nitric acid, to which a certain proportion of muriat of soda, or of ammonia is added."

The reader may have found some pleasure in "The Rose in January." Written in the first person, the tale is told by a professor of philosophy intent on winning the hand of the fair Mademoiselle Amelia de Belmont by presenting her with a bouquet of roses on New Year's Day. After several failed attempts to cultivate a rose bush, he at last succeeds only to discover one evening a sheep feasting on the plant's buds. Furious, he bludgeons the animal to death with his cane. A moment later he learns from a servant that the sheep was Amelia's pet. Filled with remorse, he tries to revive the animal with *Eau de Vie*. While doing so, a valuable ring, which Amelia's dead father "had got as a present from the Emperor," tumbles from a collar around the sheep's neck. Meantime, a frantic Amelia searches the streets for the ring; it had slipped from her finger when she was collaring the sheep. The ring is returned, but Amelia, on being told of her pet's brutal end, is inconsolable. But all ends well. On New Year's Day the professor presents Amelia with a newborn lamb garlanded with roses bought from a gardener. In gratitude, Amelia's mother gives the professor permission to marry her daughter.¹⁹

Indianapolis lawyer Calvin Fletcher (1798–1866) received the December, 1823, issue of the *Casket*, "which," he confided to his diary, "I read and considered the contents very good."²⁰ How long the *Casket* lasted is unknown.

At some point in 1824 Van Vleet sold his printing office to John Swayze and unknown partners. In a satirical article titled "Steam Boat News," John Scott (1793–1838), editor and printer of the Centerville *Western Emporium* in neighboring Wayne County, suggested that the cause of the *Statesman's* demise was the journal's political character. Van Vleet's printing press, he wrote, "performed well until the commencement of the [1824] Presidential Election, at which time she unfortunately ran foul of an 'Old Hickory' [presi-

¹⁹ *The Western Ladies' Casket*, February 1, 1824. The badly spotted issue is in the periodical archives of the Library of Congress and is available on microfilm (APSII, reel 252, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Mich.).

²⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, ed., *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, Vol. I, 1817–1838, *Including Letters of Calvin Fletcher and Diaries and Letters of His Wife Sarah Hill Fletcher* (Indianapolis, 1972), 94. The diary entry is dated January 25, 1824. Fletcher, a native of Ludlow, Vermont, and new bride, whom he married in Ohio, settled in Indianapolis in 1821. He was the community's first lawyer. He served as state attorney for the Fifth Judicial District and spent seven years in the Indiana senate.

dential hopeful Andrew Jackson] and stove in her bow. She was afterwards sold to one of the 'Firemen' [Swayze] . . . " Van Vleet apparently now turned to weaving for his income.²¹

On December 2, 1824, Swayze and Company launched Connersville's second newspaper, the *Village Press*, also a four-page weekly. In the maiden issue it was hinted that the *Statesman* had failed because of Van Vleet's frequent lack of newsprint, which resulted in an erratic publishing schedule. Swayze and Company assured subscribers that a sufficient supply of paper was on hand "to continue the regular operation of the establishment for a considerable part of a year." Perhaps so, but within two months the *Village Press* "was compelled to stop for want of 'steam.'" Swayze removed to Brownsville in neighboring Union County to start, with lawyer Henry C. Hammond and printer Cason Buckhalter, *The Flying Roll and Union Advertiser*. Founded in February, 1825, the weekly did not last out the year.²²

Lawyer Daniel Rensch (1799–1872) undoubtedly was the catalyst for reestablishing a newspaper in Connersville. It would be called the *Fayette Observer*. Van Vleet gave up his weaving to join Rensch, and it is likely that Swayze, back in town after his ill-fated Union County venture, sold to the *Observer* the press and type that he had acquired from Van Vleet and was now content to work for the new enterprise as a journeyman printer. John Sample, Jr., also may have been employed by the office. An apprentice was William Stewart (1815–1865), only a few days past his eleventh birthday when the newspaper started. The first *Observer* appeared June 17, 1826, with Rensch as the editor. Initially, the weekly was printed by Van Vleet for Rensch, but in September "for" was replaced with "&" suggesting that the two had entered into a partnership.²³

The *Observer* displayed a journalistic touch that may have eluded the *Indiana Statesman* and the *Village Press*. Letters that

²¹ John Scott was one of early Indiana's best-known printers and editors. In 1829 he founded Cass County's first newspaper, the Logansport *Pottawatomie and Miami Times*. For his biography, see Gayle Thornbrough's introduction to the Indiana Historical Society's reprint of Scott's *Indiana Gazetteer* (1826; Indianapolis, 1954), 7-20; Centerville, Ind., *Western Emporium*, March 12, 1825; *History of Fayette County* (1885), 138.

²² *Village Press*, December 2, 1824. Van Vleet once apologized for failing to publish two successive issues of the *Statesman* because he was out of paper and "unfavorable weather and bad roads" prevented getting a supply from Cincinnati. *Indiana Statesman*, January 10, 1824; *Western Emporium*, March 12, 1825. Only the first issue of the *Village Press* has survived; Miller, *Indiana Newspaper Bibliography*, 446. The first part of the *Flying Roll's* name was borrowed from the fifth chapter of the Bible's Book of Zechariah; obviously Swayze intended the *Roll* to be fearless in exposing those whom he considered politically capricious or perverse. Hammond later moved to Liberty, Union County's seat, where he was probate judge from 1829 to 1833. Buckhalter's surname appears also as Burckhalter and Burkhalter in Union County histories and county records.

²³ A Marylander by birth, Daniel Rensch arrived in Indiana with his parents around 1812 and settled in Fayette County's Jackson township. Rensch served as the

lacked constructive substance were rejected, thus giving the paper's four pages more columns for reprinting national and international intelligence from exchange papers. As the canal fever heated up in Indiana, space was devoted to canal news including one item that hopefully contended that a canal between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans "seems at length in a fair way of being attempted." News about the progress of the National Road, slowly inching its way toward Indiana, was not overlooked. The schedule of traveling preachers frequently appeared; many sermonized in the courthouse. In one issue Van Vleet and Rench listed the names of the Methodist circuit riders serving Indiana and Illinois. Once, a half-page was devoted to data about the world's principal rivers. In a later issue, there was a legal argument on capital punishment. Readers were implored to use the town's library: "The county contains perhaps 3 or 4 thousand persons of the age of 16 years & upwards—Yet we have less than one hundred readers! . . . without more reading, perhaps our state may lack a good many great men, when those we now have are *used up*."²⁴ The *Observer's* most worthy service, though, was its fight for better schools in Fayette County:

It is very painful to observe, that in this whole district of country, a school of very respectable character is rarely, if ever, to be met with . . . [One cause is] the want of capable teachers; but the remote and prime cause is the carelessness and neglect of the employers. The latter, being content with any one who calls himself teacher, inquire for, or demand little else than a tolerable *hand writing*, some knowledge of *figures* and a *low price*, for teaching.²⁵

county's first auditor (1841–1852) and as the county recorder (1865–1872). *History of Fayette County* (1885), 62, 93, 138. In the summer of 1827 Swayze was an unsuccessful candidate for trustee of the Fayette County seminary. In October, 1830, he was appointed a justice of the peace for Fayette County. *Fayette Observer*, July 28, August 11, 1827; Barrows, *History of Fayette County*, 190. Swayze later worked as a printer-editor in New Castle, Muncie, and possibly Hagerstown, Indiana. Elwood Pleas, *Henry County: Past and Present* (New Castle, Ind., 1871), 118; *The County of Henry, Indiana* (n.p., 1893), 14; Miller, *Indiana Newspaper Bibliography*, 90; *An Illustrated Historical Atlas*, 243, incorrectly states that the *Observer* was co-founded by Rench and Sample; Stewart and his parents arrived in Connorsville from Pennsylvania in 1821. He was associated with Fayette County newspapers for a number of years but also was active in the lumber business and was a contractor for both the Whitewater Canal and the Wabash and Erie Canal. He served Fayette County in the Indiana House of Representatives 1845–1847. *History of Fayette County* (1885), 93; *An Illustrated Historical Atlas*, 10, incorrectly places the founding year as "about 1821."

²⁴ *Fayette Observer*, November 18, 1826. The canal item, reprinted from the Charleston, S.C., *Mercury*, also expressed hope for a canal across Florida; *ibid.*, October 14, 1826. The preacher tabulation lists twenty-nine circuit riders in Indiana, thirteen in Illinois; *ibid.*, November 4, 1826; *ibid.*, May 12, 1827. The capital punishment item, signed "Juvenis," was probably by Rench. It was more against than for capital punishment; *ibid.*, February 17, 1827. The library had 250 volumes, among them Charles Buck's *Theological Dictionary*, Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, Seneca's *Morals*, Homer's *Iliad*, Oliver Goldsmith's miscellaneous works, a work on cattle medicine, a biography of George Washington, and a nine-volume edition of George Washington, and a nine-volume edition of Shakespeare. There was a fifty-cent yearly fee to users age sixteen and up.

²⁵ *Fayette Observer*, February 17, 1827. Usually schools were for boys, and the quality of their instruction was generally indifferent. It was not uncommon "for a

Meetings of townspeople to discuss the issue were held in the printing office's "lower room." In November, 1828, Samuel Wilson Parker (1805–1859), fresh from receiving a degree from Ohio's Miami University, arrived in Connersville to start a private school and to read law in the office of Oliver Hampton Smith. As a co-founder of Miami's Union Literary Society and "an extemporaneous debater and declaimer," the abilities of the "slim, flaxen-haired stripling" were quickly recognized by Rensch who certainly saw in Parker a person to assist him in his quest. He appointed Parker an editor, and although such a post provided little or no monetary reward, the position gave Parker a chance for "the advancement of great public interests." The struggle for a better school was successful. The county commissioners approved the construction of a two-story brick seminary, and in May, 1829, the structure nearly completed, Parker was named the school's principal. Classes began two months later.²⁶

As its advertisements suggest, the *Observer* was well patronized by Connersville business people, indicating not only general support for the weekly but the growth of the town and county. By 1826 around five hundred persons lived in Connersville, which had, "in abundance," cabinet makers, hatters, tailors, shoemakers, bricklayers, plasterers, saddlers, and carpenters vying for customers. Such industry might suggest that the times were economically healthy for Van Vleet and Rensch, but many advertisers probably were slow in settling their accounts. Subscribers who could not come up with the two-dollar yearly subscription could meet their obligation with produce, which Van Vleet and Rensch

school-teacher to manifest his goodwill toward the big boys by freely offering them the use of pipes and tobacco, and also the refreshment of an occasional draught from his whisky jug." Venable, *Beginnings of Literary Culture*, 191. Despite the good intentions of the framers of Indiana's 1816 constitution, calling for "a general system of education . . . wherein tuition shall be gratis, and equally open to all," Indiana did not have a common school system until after the Civil War. For a concise history of pioneer education in Indiana and the struggle to establish public schools see James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986), 108-15.

²⁶ *Fayette Observer*, February 17, 1827; Samuel Wilson Parker served in both the Indiana House and Senate (1839–1844) and in the United States House of Representatives (1851–1855). He was president of the Whitewater Valley Canal Company and the Junction Railroad Company. *A Biographical Directory*, I, 306; *Biographical and Genealogical History of Wayne, Fayette, Union and Franklin Counties, Indiana* (2 vols.; Chicago, 1899), I, 239-40; Oliver Hampton Smith (1794–1859) was born near Trenton, New Jersey; he came to Indiana in 1817. He was a prominent lawyer, politician, and railroad executive. He served Fayette County as state representative, 1822–1823 and in 1827 was elected to the United States House of Representatives. He was a United States senator 1837–1843. Smith eventually moved to Indianapolis where he was president of the Indianapolis and Bellefontaine Railway. *A Biographical Directory*, I, 364; *History of Fayette County* (1885), 93, 116-23; William E. Richmond, first editor of the Providence, R.I., *Journal*, founded in 1820, quoted in Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States from 1690 to 1872* (New York, 1873), 317; *History of Fayette County* (1885), 119.

then retailed. In August, 1827, the *Observer's* office was selling "bacon hams and pickled pork." Town and county growth also required considerable paper work for which official forms were needed.²⁷

With the beginning of the *Observer's* second year, Rench and Van Vleet acknowledged the weekly's support by the townspeople:

In what manner we have discharged our duty, we leave to the judgment of our *constant* and *impartial* readers . . . we have assiduously endeavored to render our paper intelligent and useful . . . As to politics, the character of our Journal has been so strictly neutral, that our distant readers, with whom we have no personal acquaintance, have been unable to decide to which party we belong &, there are intelligent men, of both parties, who have read, and continue to read the paper, with a degree of satisfaction highly pleasing to us . . . the columns of the *Observer* shall, at all times, be open alike to the friends of Mr. [John Quincy] Adams, and to those of Gen. [Andrew] Jackson.

For the most part, however, the paper "was quiet on political questions."²⁸

In the early summer of 1827 the *Observer* began advertising the publication of "a new little work," the *Indiana Analogical Primer*, "Important to Parents & Instructors of Primary Schools." The advertisement appeared for a number of weeks. If Van Vleet indeed published a speller while at the *Western Star*, he likely was the motivater behind the primer, which was lauded as containing "lessons in spelling and reading, adapted (both in manner and matter) to the capacities of children—and is ornamented with a variety of ENGRAVINGS." It probably was bound in paper and may have been illustrated with printers' ornaments, such as those of animals, which were readily obtainable in 1827 from the Cincinnati Type Foundry.²⁹ Whether the primer was successful is unknown, but it seems likely that Van Vleet was soon pressed for money for in June,

²⁷ Scott, *The Indiana Gazetteer*, 45, 53; *Fayette Observer*, August 25, 1827. Besides pork, Van Vleet and Rench accepted wheat, corn, oats, firewood, flax, linen, beeswax, tallow, sugar, feathers, and whisky. *Fayette Observer*, July 29, 1826. Such payment for subscriptions was accepted by almost all early American newspaper publishers. As retailers, pioneer printers dealt in anything they could get their hands on. For example the proprietors of the Salem, Indiana, *Annotator* offered "Levi Jacobs' celebrated improved durable RAZOR STRAPS." *Salem Annotator*, July 12, 1828.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, June 23, 1827. Because there was no electoral college majority in the 1824 national election, the decision as to who was to be president was left to the United States House of Representatives. Adams was chosen over Jackson. During all of Adams's presidency, Jackson supporters vented their spleen in newspapers willing to propagate their anger. Jackson was easily elected president in 1828. *History of Fayette County* (1885), 87.

²⁹ *Fayette Observer*, June 23, 1827; The primer has been overlooked in bibliographies of pioneer Indiana printing that otherwise list "presumed" publications drawn from newspaper advertisements. Since no copies are known to exist, one might question whether the primer ever saw the light of day. The advertisement, however, stated that the primer was for sale at the printing office and in italic type declared: "Neighboring merchants, and others, who wish to encourage 'home industry,' may rely on having any demand, by the dozen or gross, supplied by the above office at any time." Given these assurances there is little doubt Van Vleet and Rench had copies of the primer in stock.

1828, he sold his moiety in the *Observer* to John Sample, Jr. Apparently he remained in Connersville for several years, perhaps supporting himself and his family by returning to weaving although there is the possibility that he stayed on at the *Observer* as a journeyman.³⁰ On May 8, 1830, Rensch announced in the *Observer* that that issue "will forever remain the last." He disposed of his interest to Samuel Parker, who had retired from teaching and would soon start on a productive legal and political career. Two weeks later, Parker founded the *Political Clarion*, which was unabashedly a political puffsheet, giving "a hearty and unwavering support to Henry Clay for the Presidency." "As a warrior and a martial benefactor," wrote Parker in the *Clarion's* salutatory, "we esteem Gen. Jackson as second only to the Father of this country, but against many of the acts of our Government since he came in civil power, we enter an unqualified protest."³¹

There is no evidence that Van Vleet was associated in any way with the *Clarion*. Around 1831 he left Fayette County, heading east. On July 23, 1832, he died in New York City at the age of forty-nine, possibly a victim of cholera that was ravaging New York at the time.³²

³⁰ *History of Fayette County* (1885), 90; The 1830 census of the United States lists four children—two boys and two girls—in the Van Vleet household. No female above the age of twenty is tabulated. The printer married twice in Connersville: to Elizabeth Harrison in 1824, then to Jane Miers two years later. Whether death, divorce, or desertion ended these marriages is unknown. U.S. Fifth Census, 1830, Population Schedules for Fayette County; Dorothy L. Riker, *Genealogical Sources* (Indianapolis, 1979), 8, 13.

³¹ Parker was admitted to legal practice in August, 1831, a profession in which he became "the literary pride of the Connersville bar. He was known for his eloquence throughout his own [district] and in adjoining states. His style was the most distinctly literary of any public man of his time . . . He had something of the Hoosier flavor of [James Whitcomb] Riley, the easy grace of [Washington] Irving, the broad humor of Mark Twain, but nothing of the pungent, biting sarcasm of George G. Dunn." Leander J. Monks, Logan Esarey, and Ernest V. Shockley, *Courts and Lawyers of Indiana* (3 vols., Indianapolis, 1916), I, 96. George Grundy Dunn (1812–1857), referred to in the quotation, was an avid Whig and a loose-tongued lawyer, his first recorded tiff with authority occurring when he was a junior at what is now Indiana University. During a class taught by Andrew Wylie, the school's president, he made a cutting remark to Wylie who at once threatened him with a caning. Dunn gathered up his books and walked out of the room, never to return. In March, 1852, while speaking at the Indiana Whig convention, he spied Governor Joseph Wright, a Democrat, in the audience. "I'm glad you are here, Governor," he said. "Don't leave until I am done. I propose going through you with a lighted candle that all may see what a mass of putrefaction and political rottenness you are." William Wesley Woollen, *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1883), 241–51, 245–46; Clay W. Stuckey, "Moses Fell Dunn: A Biography," typescript, 1983, 2–3, 7–8 (Main Library, Indiana University, Bloomington). *History of Fayette County* (1885), 93; *Political Clarion*, May 22, 1830, quoted in *History of Fayette County* (1885), 87.

³² *History of Fayette County* (1885), 90; *Indianapolis Indiana Journal*, September 1, 1832. There were more than one hundred deaths from cholera in the city on the day Van Vleet died, many victims dying within several hours after contracting the disease. See Board of Health death tables, New York City *Cholera Bulletin*, July

CALEB BLOOD SMITH

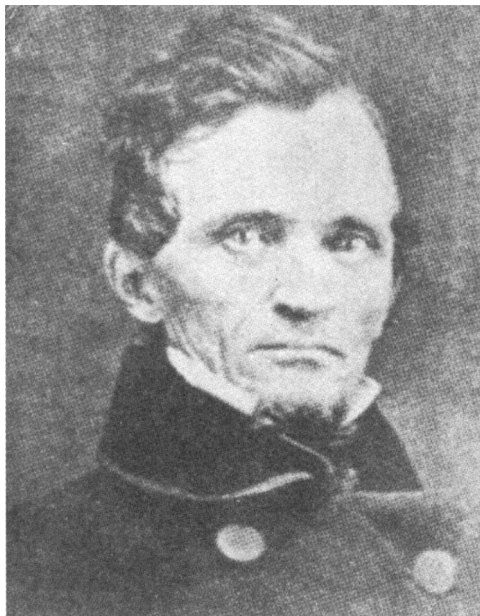
Reproduced from *The Book of the 150th Year of Connersville, Indiana* (Connersville, 1964).



Parker's *Clarion* survived for two years, but soon after the May 26, 1832, issue the office passed into the hands of Caleb Blood Smith (1808–1864), a lawyer, and Matthew R. Hull (1809?–1875), who owned a saddle and harness business. On June 2, 1832, they launched the *Indiana Sentinel*, which, like the *Clarion*, supported Henry Clay. At some point in early 1834, the *Sentinel* was acquired by new owners remembered only by their surnames, Gallagher and Crosby. Under them, the *Sentinel* quickly failed. Samuel Parker returned to the printing office and, on May 31, 1834, started still another weekly political sheet, the *Watchman*, which he edited for two years. This newspaper ended around 1841 under the ownership of Edwin T. Gabriel.³³ By that time the pioneer period of Indiana journalism, in Connersville and elsewhere in the state, was over. Newspapering, in the manner it started and was practiced in the days of Abraham Van Vleet, had moved far beyond Fayette County,

23 and 25, 1832. During the 1832 cholera pandemic, at least 2,251 fell to the disease in New York City. The unnamed author of "Fayette County and Connersville—The 'Garden City of Indiana,'" which appeared in *The Indianian*, III (1899), 165-95, places Abraham Van Vleet in Connersville in 1834, which certainly was unlikely. This Van Vleet may have been one of Abraham's sons. *History of Fayette County* (1885), 93; Miller, *Indiana Newspaper Bibliography*, 105. Miller notes that a D. Van Fleet was associated with the Connersville *Watchman* and apparently died in the autumn of 1834, the year the newspaper was founded; however, the *History of Fayette County* (1885), 93, gives the surname as Van Vleet.

³³ Caleb Blood Smith served in the Indiana House of Representatives 1833–1837, 1840–1842; in the United States House of Representatives 1843–1849, and was secretary of the interior 1861–1862. In 1863 he became judge of the Indiana district of the United States court. Matthew R. Hull served in the Indiana House of Representatives 1839–1840. *A Biographical Directory*, I, 197, 361-62; *History of Fayette County* (1885), 115-16, 283; Miller, *Indiana Newspaper Bibliography*, 103-105.



SAMUEL W. PARKER

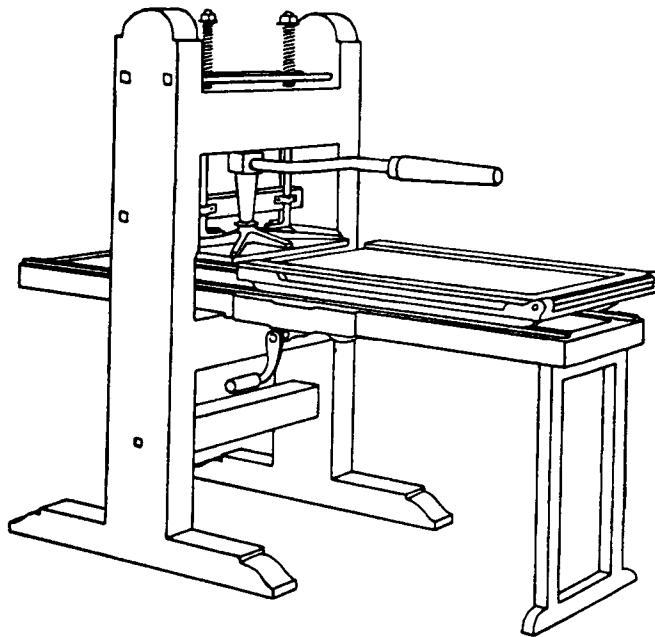
Reproduced from *The Book of the 150th Year of Connersville, Indiana* (Connersville, 1964).

across the Wabash, and on past St. Louis, to follow the trail of pioneers bound for a newer West.

In early 1837 the Richmond *Palladium* printed an editorial asking for a state convention of newspaper publishers. By that date Indiana had fifty-two newspapers in forty-two of her towns. When Van Vleet set off for Fayette County in 1823, there were only ten newspapers in the state representing nine communities. On May 29, 1837, eighteen "gentlemen, connected with the Press of Indiana, assembled in Convention in the Council Chamber of the City of Indianapolis." Among them was John Sample, Jr., now associated with the Connersville *Watchman*. Two more publishers arrived the next day. The main purpose of the convention was "that the Printers of Indiana adopt a uniform bill of prices for job printing and advertising." Such an agreement was reached but apparently was not adopted statewide. On a philosophical key, Theodore J. Barnett, of the New Albany *Gazette*, said, "If a newspaper is to be of any service—if it is to effect any useful end, it is requisite in the *first* place that its character should insure the confidence of the community Calm, dignified, and argumentative language must supply the place of acrimonious, abusive assertions, and a careful regard to authority be observed in giving publicity to any matter of moment."³⁴

Stabilization and modernization set in. Iron presses, known generally as the Washington, replaced the ink-stained wood presses in

³⁴ Richmond, Ind., *Palladium*, January 21, 1837; Indianapolis *Indiana Journal*, June 3, 1837.



RAMAGE TWO-PULL PRESS

Reproduced from *Adam Ramage and His Presses*
(Portland, Me., 1942).

many small printing offices, and although they worked on the same principle, they were more efficient. In 1847 a printing press powered by steam was installed by the Indianapolis *Indiana State Journal*. An eighth of a cord of wood fueling its pork-barrel-sized boiler would run it for ten hours, and in a single hour the press could churn out more than two thousand impressions. One printer could operate it. "This enterprise has been accomplished at a great expense," the *Journal* crowed, "and we confidently look to the Whigs of the State to increase our circulation in such a manner as will afford us ample remuneration."³⁵ In contrast, the press Van Vleet brought to Connersville, most likely a Ramage two-pull press, was capable, at the most, of around two hundred impressions an hour and to attain that speed three persons worked at a frenzied pace, one inking the type, one laying on and taking off paper, and a third pulling a bar that lowered a plate (the platen) on the press which pressed the paper against the type. Printing offices also underwent organizational changes with the printer relegated to the press room while editorial tasks were delegated to paid reporters who in turn were supervised by paid editors. With the advent of the

³⁵ Indianapolis *Indiana State Journal*, June 22, 1847. This was the first number of the *Journal* printed on the steam press.

telegraph and the Atlantic cable the latest national and international news was fed directly into the editorial room. Advertising and subscriptions were solicited by still other divisions of the newspaper plant. As for the free roaming printer, he lingered on into the early part of the twentieth century, showing up at newspaper offices in hopes of picking up piece work handsetting type for a week or so. Known as a "tramp printer," he was soon doomed by automatic typesetting machines. Eventually newspaper offices quit altogether printing handbills, official forms, and other ephemeral whatnot, surrendering these tasks to printing offices specializing in such jobs. The era of Abraham Van Vleet was forever ended.