Colonel A. B. Crampton

By MINDWELL CRAMPTON WILSON

An interesting souvenir of one of the most momentous events of the Civil war—the surrender of Vicksburg by the southern general, Pemberton, to General Grant and Admiral Porter on July 4, 1863—is in the proud possession of Mindwell Crampton Wilson. It is a genuine copy of the edition of the *Vicksburg Citizen* issued on wall paper a few hours after the union forces entered the fallen city at the end of the memorable siege, and is of special interest to her because it was printed by her father, Col. A. B. Crampton, now of Indianapolis, and two subordinate printers.

The life of Col. Crampton is in reality a history of Indiana newspapers during the long period of his career as a printer and editor. Though now in his eighty-sixth year, he can hold the interest of the younger generation by his most interesting narrative.

Adelbert Bernard Crampton was born on March 8, 1843, in Elkhart, Indiana. At eleven years of age he was “bound out” or assigned to the family of the Rev. Loyal A. Alford, a Baptist minister, who was then publishing the *Elkhart Review*. In that office he commenced to learn the printer's trade. He served there for several years until Alford sold the equipment, which was moved to Three Rivers, Michigan, and “Del” Crampton, as he was known then, went along to help print the *Three Rivers Herald*, the first paper printed in the town. At the time of his service on the *Review*, it was the custom of newspaper men to exchange help when they were crowded with work and “Del” was loaned on several occasions to the *Goshen Democrat*, then published by Robert Lowry, and on one occasion to the *St. Joe Valley Register* of South Bend, which was
published by Schuyler Colfax. After serving his three years' apprenticeship, young Crampton worked on several newspapers as a tramp-printer, among them being the *Mishawaka Enterprise*, published by Archibald Beal, the *Grand Rapids Eagle*, and the *Ligonier Banner*. In 1861, he drifted back to the office of the *Elkhart Review*.

That paper boiled over with intense patriotism. A recruiting officer was conducting a campaign in Elkhart. One day at noon the editor, C. H. Chase, went home to dinner leaving his "devil" in charge of the office. When he returned the "devil" had taken unceremonious flight to volunteer in order to share the adventures of war with his pals and give vent to the patriotic impulses that had been inspired by his association with the fiery editor.

The big, raw-boned, courageous "Private Del", six feet and two inches in height, became Color Sergeant Crampton of the 48th Indiana infantry. He was serving in that capacity, when, a few days before the fall of Vicksburg, General Grant, knowing he would require the use of a printing office as soon as the city should be occupied, issued a call for printers in the ranks to volunteer for that duty. Crampton and two others were selected from the number of volunteers, with the Sergeant detailed as foreman of the trio. They received proper written authority to take possession of any printing office in Vicksburg.

Sergeant Crampton decided that the office of the *Vicksburg Citizen* was best suited to the purposes for which it was required, and he and his two typos took possession.

On the composing stone they found the type (still undisturbed) of the last issue of the *Daily Citizen*, which had been printed on July 2, 1863, two days before. It wasn't much of a paper, however—only four columns, each column 17½ inches long. The issue had been printed on the blank side of wallpaper, white print-paper stock having long since been exhausted in Vicksburg. Being a newspaper man and interested in what the editor had been saying in reference to the War, Crampton picked up that last copy and read the editorials. The first article was headed "On Dit" and read as follows:

The great Ulysses—the Yankee generalissimo, surnamed Grant—has expressed his intention of dining in Vicksburg on Saturday next and celebrating the Fourth of July by a grand dinner and so forth. When asked if he would invite Gen Jo Jackson to join, he said, "No. for fear
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there would be a row at the table." Ulysses must get into the city before he dines in it. The way to cook a rabbit is first to "catch the rabbit."

Crampton thought that a Union seizure of the town would be incomplete without some reply to the Citizen's statement. He shifted the original article two columns, seized a printer's stick and with his own hands set up this reply:

Two days bring about great changes. The banner of the Union floats over Vicksburg. General Grant has "caught the rabbit"; he has dined in Vicksburg and did bring his dinner with him. The Citizen lives to see it. For the last time it appears on wall-paper. No more will we eulogize the luxury of mule meat and fricasseed kitten—urge southern warriors to such diet nevermore. This is the last "wall-paper" edition and is, excepting this note, from the types as we found them. It will be valuable hereafter as a souvenir.

Crampton was right. The next day a supply of paper was sent into town, and he set about using the newspaper equipment to publish the dispatches.

Upon his discharge from the army at the close of the war, the Rev. and Mrs. L. A. Alford with whom he had formerly lived having moved from Elkhart to Logansport, Crampton went there and again became a member of the Alford family. Two years later he married their youngest daughter Lovisa. She was a nine year old girl when he first met her. To this union four children were born, Adelbert B., Charles C., Lovisa E., and Mindwell. The first-born died in infancy. The others are residents of Indiana, all graduates of Purdue University and Mindwell also a graduate of Indiana University.

During his residence in Logansport, Crampton resumed his former occupation as printer; first, in the Logansport Journal office as a compositor; later, in the Logansport Pharos office as foreman and finally as the local editor. During this period he was three times elected as a member of the Logansport City Council, and three times appointed from that Congressional District as a member of the Democratic Central Committee of the State. For two years he served with Eb. Henderson as chairman; for two years with Joe McDonald; and for two years with Wm. H. English.

In 1878, he bought the Delphi Times. Recalling a vow that he had made while in the Vicksburg Citizen office, that, if he lived to own a newspaper, he would call it The Citizen, he having sold the Times, started not long afterward The Carroll
Mr. Crampton served as postmaster of Delphi during the Cleveland administration. While a resident of Delphi he was appointed a member of the Board of Trustees of the Northern Indiana Hospital at Logansport, by Governor Samuel Ralston for a term of four years. He was elected president of the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association, president of the Northern Indiana Editorial Association, and served as Vice President of the National Editorial Association.

In 1914, he was elected Commander of the Indiana Department, Grand Army of the Republic, and in 1915, was appointed Governor of the National Military Home at Marion, Indiana, with the rank of Colonel. At this time he sold The Citizen to his son-in-law and daughter Mindwell, Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Wilson. He served six years as Governor of the Marion Home. When it became a Sanitorium for World War veterans he was transferred to Milwaukee as Governor of the Home there. He served in Milwaukee a little over three years, when he resigned and located in Indianapolis, having been appointed by Commander VanPelt, Assistant Adjutant and Assistant Quartermaster-General of the State Grand Army of the Republic. For three successive years he was elected Commander of the Loyal Legion, Department of Indiana. He was appointed a member of the Soldiers' Monument Board by Governor Warren T. McCray, and by that Board made its Chairman. He was reappointed by Governor Branch and again by Governor Leslie. At a meeting of the Grand Army of the Republic held in Martinsville on June 10, 1929, he was elected a member of the Council of Administration and again appointed by Commander Charles E. Hale, Assistant Adjutant-General and Assistant Quartermaster-General. He is serving in that capacity now.

While at home on a thirty day Veteran Furlough during the Civil War, Sergeant Crampton was made a Mason two days

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[The two rival political papers of Delphi for many years were the Times (Democratic) and the Journal (Republican), the former having been established about two years before the latter. The present editor of the Indiana Magazine of History began his reading of newspapers with the Delphi Times. Mr. Crampton acquired the Times in 1878. In 1887, he sold it to John and Jacob McMinnus who conducted it for a short period. At about the same date the Journal was bought by Charles B. Landis and V. L. Rickets. It was in 1892 that the Civil War veteran who printed the rep to the editorial found in the last half-penny edition of the Vicksburg Citizen in 1863 found the Carroll County Citizen at Delphi. The Times, which had been in the hands of R. H. Isherwood for several years, was re-purchased by Mr. Crampton in 1900 and consolidated with the Citizen. Though the Times was much the older newspaper, the name Citizen was given prominence and the successor to the two papers that were merged became the Citizen-Times and later the Citizen.—Editor]
before he was twenty-one years old, making him now one of
the very oldest Masons in the State. After the close of the
war he advanced in Masonry from time to time and is today a
thirty-second degree Mason. He is also a member of the Order
of Elks, a Knight of Pythias and an Odd Fellow.

At this writing (September 1, 1929), Colonel Crampton
makes daily trips to his office in the State House. He is an
imposing figure, commanding in stature, erect in carriage,
with a crown of white hair upon his head. He resides at 2108
N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis. He is an exemplification of
what it means to follow the advice that he himself has always
given to his children: “We must not fear life; we must love it.”