

The Need of a Printer in Indiana Territory

By DOUGLAS C. McMURTRIE

As is well known, the first printing office in Indiana was established by Elihu Stout, who published the initial issue of the *Indiana Gazette* on July 31, 1804. Stout had previously been employed by William Bradford, dean of Kentucky printers. Other relationships between Indiana and Kentucky are known to have been close.

The identity of Elihu Stout's employer, just prior to his coming to Indiana, is known to us from a passage in the Journal of the Senate at the second session of the sixth General Assembly of Kentucky, 1798 (p. 15), which was encountered in the course of a study of early Kentucky printing. This passage occurs in an appeal by John Bradford for reappointment as public printer, in the course of which he names "all the artists in the printing business in the state." These numbered eleven in all, and Stout was one of the five in Bradford's employ.

In 1802, the territorial laws had been sent to William Hunter at Frankfort, Kentucky, for printing. In 1803, Governor William Henry Harrison again felt the need for making available in printed form, to the widely scattered residents of the region, later enactments of the territorial legislature. He evidently wrote on November 17, 1803, to this effect to his superior officer at Washington, James Madison, Secretary of State. The letter of the governor cannot be found, but an idea of its contents can be gained from Madison's reply under date of December 21, 1803, a copy of which is preserved in the archives of the State Department:

Department of State,
Dec. 21st, 1803.

Wm. H. Harrison Esq.
Govr. of the Indiana Territory.
Sir.

I have just received your letter of the 17th ult. requesting permission to employ a printer in Kentucky to publish some of the laws of your Territory. I have no authority by law to cause such publications to be made, that of the 8th may 1792, being inapplicable to the present case, I can only suggest that the contingent fund, annually appropriated for the government of the Indiana Territory, seems to embrace such an expense, and that on the account being transmitted to the Treasury with

your or the Secretary's certificate to its correctness payment would be made.

I am Etc
James Madison

The printer referred to was undoubtedly William Bradford, who was then operating two printing offices in Kentucky—one at Lexington, the other at Frankfort. A later reference tends to confirm this conjecture.

The probability is that Governor Harrison was thinking, not of publication of the Indiana territorial laws in the columns of a Kentucky newspaper, but of having them printed by Bradford in book or pamphlet form.

In addition to printing the territorial laws, it was considered important that the laws enacted by the national Congress should be printed serially in various newspapers throughout the country. For such publication the local printer was compensated by the federal government. The type of arrangement between the national authorities and the newspaper publishers is indicated by the following copy of a contemporary circular letter to "District Printers," which is also found in the archives of the Department of State:

Department of State,
Dec. 20th, 1803

To the several District Printers.

Sir.

Being desirous of continuing your Gazette as a medium of promulgating the laws of the present Congress within the State of ———. You will find enclosed copies of the first laws passed by them. The compensation like that of the last will be at the rate of 50 Cents p. page of the octavo edition of the laws printed at the seat of Government a specimen of which was sent you in my last. You will be pleased to inform me without delay of your determination to accept or decline the reappointment. If you accept you will commence the printing as soon as possible and during its continuance, as heretofore, forward your paper to this office free of expense as part of the contract.

I am Etc
James Madison

It was left to territorial governors to designate the newspaper or newspapers within the area under their jurisdiction who should receive the coveted plum of publishing the Laws of the United States. Evidently Governor Harrison of Indiana was asked to designate a local newspaper. As there was none then being printed in Indiana, he named a newspaper

being published in Kentucky by William Bradford—undoubtedly the *Kentucky Gazette* at Lexington, as we learn by the following reply to his communication (archives of the State Department) :

Department of State
June 14th, 1804

Govr. Harrison
Vincennes.

Sir.

I have received your letter of the 17th inst.—It was my intention to confide the appointment of a Gazette to print the Laws of the United States, entirely to you, and the reasons you assign for the choice of Wm. Bradford's are satisfactory. I have no control over the sum appropriated for the contingent expenses of your Territory; and therefore cannot prevent the payment of the accounts for stationary out of it; but if neither yourself nor the Secretary of the Territory direct supplies of stationary to be furnished your object will be attained provided no outstanding accounts exist to absorb the appropriations.

An appropriation was made to pay the expense of the civil government of Louisiana, but it is feared that it will not be sufficient to cover the expenses incurred and to be incurred under the Administration of Governor Claiborne; no part of it can therefore be counted upon for printing the Laws, which may be made for that part of the Territory which after the 1st of Octr. next will be united with the Indiana Territory; but no doubt can be entertained that Congress will at their next session make provision for all the expenses which may be necessarily incurred. By recurring to the 13th Section of the law providing for the Government of the two territories in which Louisiana is to be divided, you will find that the laws of Louisiana will remain in force after the first of October under certain modifications; and therefore the entirely new code you contemplate is unnecessary and ought not to be published: all that appears to be indispensable are laws for organizing the Courts, the Militia and laying out the Territory into districts. Exclusively of the annual appropriation of 350 Dolls. for the contingent expenses of the territory, which will be sufficient to pay the current expenses of the year, there is an unexpended balance of 480 Dollars, which may be applied to the expense of printing territorial laws.

I am Etc
James Madison

From the latter part of this letter it is apparent that Governor Harrison also wished to have printed a code of territorial laws, a project which Madison discouraged.

Soon, however, after the receipt of this letter by Governor Harrison, Elihu Stout must have arrived at Vincennes, with his printing materials. This solved all problems, for the local newspaper could publish in its columns, to be broadcast to all

the residents of the territory, the laws of the United States and the laws of the territory as well.

Stout's services were also available for printing local laws in book form. They were soon utilized to this effect, for later in that same year we find his imprint on a volume of one hundred thirty-seven pages:

"Laws for the Government of the District of Louisiana passed by the Governor and Judges of the Indiana Territory, at their first session, begun and held at Vincennes, on Monday the first day of October, 1804. Published by authority. Vincennes, (I. T.) Printed by E. Stout, 1804."