

The Rural Press—A Survival

Contrary to the predictions made a few decades ago, rural newspapers seem to be thriving. In the same way that TV was going to oust radio, and the VCR would sound the end of movie theatres, new media has not made the local paper irrelevant. Our local papers are a continuation of a proud tradition.

A new village might have been considered to have “arrived” when it had a paper. For quite a while some towns had competing papers.

Today, thriving local papers in Melita, Deloraine and Boissevain can trace their roots back to the first years of each community.

“Deloraine Times and Star”

The Deloraine Times was established shortly after the town moved to its new location. William Henry Daubney, a twenty-seven year old English-trained printer from Brandon was recruited to produce a weekly paper for the new settlements in Southwest Manitoba. The first issue of *The Deloraine Weekly Times and Turtle Mountain and Souris River Gazette*, appeared November 19, 1887. Daubney's first editorial proclaimed that 'since farming is the backbone of this country' his newspaper would always be open for discussion of the needs and interests of the agricultural community.

The first edition of *The Deloraine Weekly Times and Turtle Mountain and Souris River Gazette* was a large (17” by 23”) broadsheet that featured “District News” under the headlines Sourisford Items, Melita Notes, West Hall, Waftings, Rowland News and Boissevain Locals.

For many years it was called *The Deloraine Times and Waskada News*. Then following the discontinuance of *The Hartney Star* a page was incorpo-

▼ The title page from the very first volume of the Deloraine newspaper.



rated into the *Times* called 'Hartney Star', and the name of the paper was changed to *The Deloraine Times and Star*.

“Boissevain Globe”

While Deloraine might lay claim to having the first newspaper, James Musgrove, who farmed most of his life south of Boissevain, at one time edited a news sheet in Boissevain. It is probably an exaggeration to call his paper a newspaper or Mr. Musgrove a publisher, but he was definitely Boissevain's first editor, and his newsletter was also a first.

W. H. Ashley from Oshawa, Ontario, published the first issue of *The Globe* on September 4, 1890. The Boissevain Printing and Publishing Co. was formed in 1899 for the purpose of publishing a new paper, the *Recorder*. The two papers competed directly until 1914.

“Melita Enterprise”

On November 26, 1891, James White established the *Melita Enterprise* with F. T. Harvey as publisher. In January 11, 1899 the *Western Progress* was started. In 1906 this newspaper's name was changed to *The Melita Progress and Pierson Review*. In September 1915 both papers were taken over by Mr. Thomas Beveridge, a Presbyterian minister from Deloraine, and the combination resulted in the paper being named the *New Era*.

“Hartney Star”

In 1893 Dr. Fred Woodhull established the *Hartney Star* and operated it with the help of his father and brothers. Dr. Woodhull was a tireless promoter of Hartney and area and his paper reflected his wide range of interests.

Competition

It was common in those early days for a paper to proudly proclaim its political affiliation. Most of the first papers were Liberal papers, reflecting the

preferences of their owners and the prevailing sentiments of the times. Then, in 1898 and 1899, five Conservative papers appeared in this area. The *Napinka Gazette* arrived in 1898, but in 1899 moved into Deloraine as the *Advertiser*, in direct competition with the *Times*. It was followed in Napinka by the *Standard*, and by the *Melita Western Progress*, and the *Boissevain Recorder*, all in 1899.

An editor for the *Morden Chronicle* summed up the situation:

"By reason of politics there are about twice as many news-papers being published in Manitoba as there is a decent living for . . . Shortly before the last provincial campaign (1899), a score or more of newspapers commenced publication, not on business principles, but on political principles."

Centralization

Aside from the more well known papers even the smaller centres once had papers. In Napinka a newspaper, entitled *The New Century*, issued every Thursday by the publisher, A. Cates, was one of three papers to serve the village at various times.

Waskada had two papers in its early years, the *Waskada Expositor* being one of them. By 1913 it was *Waskada Expositor and Goodlands Star*.

As with other areas of commerce, education, and even social life, the trend from a very local focus evolved as the forces of centralization came into play. Perhaps there was no real need for a paper in Napinka if the larger paper in Melita could adequately cover the affairs of the community? Even so the local paper was just one thing that helped create the identity of a community.

Sources:

Boissevain History Book Committee. *Beckoning Hills Revisited. "Ours is a Goodly Heritage"* Morton – Boissevain 1881 – 1981. Altona. Friesen Printing, 1981.
Brenda History Committee. *Bridging Brenda Vol. 1*. Altona. Friesen Printers, 1990.
Deloraine History Book Committee. *Deloraine Scans a Century 1880 - 1980*: Altona. Friesen Printers, 1980.
Hartney and District Historical Committee. *A Century of Living - Hartney & District 1882 – 1982*. Steinbach. Derksen Printers, 1982.
Melita - Arthur History Committee. *Melita: Our First Century*. Altona. Friesen Printers, 1983.
Waskada Memoirs. Morden. Morden Commercial Printers, 1967.