

Lewisburg's Nineteenth Century Newspapers

by

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Introduction

In the modern age of rapidly-changing technology, we often forget that newspapers are an important part of everyday life for millions of Americans. It wasn't until the early twentieth century that radio news began to make inroads into the monopoly held by newspapers large and small. Television news did not become important until the later 1950s, and internet-aided news only surfaced in the past fifteen years. And even today newspapers have taken to the internet to survive the continued decline in print subscriptions.

This article surveys the nineteenth-century newspapers that brought the outside world to Lewisburg and vicinity and enabled local readers to find out what was happening in central Pennsylvania. Keep in mind that these papers were vastly different from the ones most people reading this article have been accustomed to. While many of today's papers try to beat a neutral path in politics, printing both conservative and liberal editorials, most older papers were virulently partisan in their approach to politics. Editors supported one political party and printed news and rumors of news that denigrated the opposition.

All of the newspapers included in this article were published once a week. Daily papers in places like rural central Pennsylvania were virtually unknown; only larger cities were able to support daily sheets. Most papers had four pages printed on one large sheet of paper folded in half and printed on both sides. Unlike today's papers, smaller papers were unable to afford correspondents and thus relied on gathering local news by the editor (who decided what to print) and perhaps one or two employees. Small papers unashamedly borrowed from larger city papers when they excerpted state, national, and international news; the sources of much of this news was at least identified after each article. State laws allowed newspaper publishers to exchange their papers at no cost with other publishers within a certain mileage, which facilitated the spread of

news from the big city papers to smaller ones like those in Lewisburg. Newspapers employed typesetters who laboriously assembled each word letter by letter, picking the font size from cabinets with drawers that separated each letter bin by bin.

Most of these early papers contained numerous advertisements to offset costs and supply income to owners; some ads were on the front page with the last page entirely composed of advertisements. These ads were the lifeblood of many papers. Because many people did not make large salaries, newspaper owners had to keep their prices low so that they could sell their papers. Annual subscriptions generally were \$1.00, \$1.50, or \$2.00 for most of the nineteenth century. Thus, ads were vitally important, not only for the newspaper owners, but also for the businesses placing the ads. In addition to newspaper advertisements, business owners could only inform their potential customers by using handbills or word of mouth. Because of the laborious process that was used to compose the paper, editors were generally very slow to change advertisements (some ads for businesses ran an entire year, especially if an illustration was part of the ad), also in part owing to the fact that many advertisements were paid to run for months and thus many were outdated by the time they were dropped to make room for new ads.

A typical early to mid-nineteenth century paper would have some ads and fiction or the text of speeches on page one. Page two often was kept for national and international news, with local and state news on page three, which also included ads. Page four usually was composed entirely of advertisements. To help their readers, many editors inserted brief notes about new ads on page three at the head of their local news material.

What else was in these newspapers? Local militia musters, court news, real estate sales, borough council meetings, historical articles, occasional fiction series, liquor license application notices, letters from local folks traveling abroad or elsewhere in the United States, editorials, business news, and the state-mandated mercantile appraisals. During the Civil War and later conflicts the papers included letters written by soldiers who sent them home for publication.

The Early Democratic Papers

There are no extant copies of Lewisburg's first paper, a Jacksonian Democrat

paper entitled *The News Letter*, which appeared for about eighteen months in 1824-1825. William Carothers was the publisher.¹ In February 1829, Carothers issued another Jacksonian paper called the *Union Hickory* from a New Berlin office. After ten issues, Carothers moved the *Union Hickory* to Lewisburg, where he continued the paper until April 1830. Like other papers that followed, the *Union Hickory* struggled to survive in a small town in which the majority of the residents were not subscribers. Carothers did not print four issues in January and February 1830, a sure sign that the paper was financially unstable. Its last issue was April 9, 1830, when its new owner, Daniel Gotshall, made the announcement that he was taking over from Carothers.²

Gotshall changed the title of his new paper to the *Lewisburg Journal* and launched it from a Market Street office on May 1, 1830. In his introductory editorial,

Gotshall mentioned improvements over the *Union Hickory* and stated that his new paper would include news about domestic and agricultural manufacturing. He told his readers that the paper would be democratic-republican and would be friendly to both the state and national governments. This first *Lewisburg Journal* is a good research tool for the Crosscut Canal, changes in local businesses indicated in the numerous advertisements throughout the paper, and a multi-part series about Captain John Brady that Gotshall reprinted from a newspaper in Blairsville.³ Even though there is no

¹ "Lewisburg Newspapers," *Lewisburg Chronicle and West Branch Farmer*, September 11, 1850. The author of this article has not located any information about Carothers. The same is true for most of the newspaper owners/editors mentioned throughout this article. A search of census records may yield some brief material about the backgrounds and ages of these men.

² The *Union Hickory* was in print from February 17, 1829 to April 9, 1830.

³ The Brady series, originally in eleven parts, appeared in the *Journal* issues of May 12, 19, 26, June 2,

indication that the *Journal* was having financial issues, the paper abruptly ceased with the October 30, 1832, issue.

On February 18, 1833, a new paper entitled the *Lewisburg Journal and Union County Advocate* made its appearance. Publishers George M. Miller and Edward S. Bowen stated that they had purchased the press of the *Lewisburg Journal* and would continue the same principles, “supporting the men and measures of the great Democratic party, which has raised our country, and particularly the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to that unexampled state of prosperity and happiness which we at present enjoy and being strict adherence to it, depends in a great measure, the permanence of our Republican government.”⁴

Former owner Gotshall wrote a letter that appeared in this first issue of the *Journal and Advocate*, apologizing for the abrupt suspension of the *Journal* last October, citing “circumstances beyond my control.” The new owners also noted in their first issue that the *Mirror* had been joined to the *Journal* and its literature contents would always be found on page four of the new paper. The new owners also promised to continue the *Mirror’s* support of equal rights for working men and mechanics.⁵ The author has conducted a search for the *Mirror* but has found nothing to indicate where and when this paper was published.

The *Journal and Advocate*, like other contemporary papers, is good for research into the changing nature of businesses in Lewisburg. The paper covered the argument over whether or not to lay gravel on Market Street, proposals for the new town of Churchville across the Susquehanna River, stories on the Crosscut, and temperance issues. In the issue of February 1, 1834, readers learned that editors Miller and Bowen were parting ways and any outstanding debts must be settled before March 1. The partnership was formally dissolved on February 15 and the paper ceased publication on February 22, 1834.

Lewisburg was without a newspaper until June 20, 1835, when attorney George R. Barrett began publication of the *Lewisburg Democrat* from an office on Market

July 14, 28, 1832.

⁴ “To the Public,” *Lewisburg Journal and Union County Advocate*, February 18, 1833.

⁵ David Gotshall, “To My Patrons,” *Journal and Advocate*, February 18, 1833; “To the Patrons of the *Mirror*,” *ibid.*

between Water and Front. This paper continued until March 3, 1836, when it went out of business without any formal notice in the paper.



The *Democrat* was not replaced until December 7, 1837, when D. G. Fitch issued the first number of the *Lewisburg Standard*. Fitch professed that his paper would be neutral in politics because it seemed that the local folks were generally evenly divided in sentiment. But six months later, Fitch's *Standard* was in trouble. In an editorial, Fitch stated that he had a good number of subscriptions within the borough, but very few outside. Puzzled, Fitch called a public meeting to get feedback about how he could improve the paper. To his surprise, people told him they preferred a political sheet, so in June 1838 Fitch announced that the *Standard* would favor the Democratic Party.⁶

In addition to the usual business advertisements and stories Fitch was very interested in the local education issue that surrounded the Lewisburg Academy. In the 1833-1834 legislative session, the state enacted a public education law that Governor George Wolf had been pushing for years. The bill allowed local entities to opt out of tax-supported, free public education; in Union County, only Lewisburg and White Deer Township voted for the new system. Plans were laid for an academy, but the opposition, led in part by General Abbott Green, accused backers of the academy of elitism because the academy intended to charge its students to attend. In spite of such opposition, the Academy opened in 1839. Fitch's paper carried numerous stories about the plans for the academy and its subsequent opening.⁷

⁶ "To the Patrons of the Standard," *Lewisburg Standard*, June 28, 1838. An untitled editorial in the July 5, 1838, issue also spoke about the change in politics.

⁷ The following issues of the *Standard* include stories related to the education issue: in 1838, March 1, 8,

The *Standard* also ran a column entitled “Port of Lewisburg” that chronicled the arrivals and departures of canal boats at the wharves along South Water Street, thus allowing today’s researchers to gain an understanding of the volume of traffic that the canal brought to Lewisburg. The paper also covered the activities of the Lewisburg Lyceum, the newly-formed Lewisburg Thespian Society, the borough council’s meetings, the problems with the borough’s graveyards, military companies,, and the occasional fires that plagued the area.

Fitch transferred ownership of the paper to H. L. Dieffenbach on September 1, 1839. In the September 5 issue of the paper, now entitled the *Lewisburg Standard and Buffalo Democratic Farmer*, Fitch wrote that he was leaving “with a view of engaging in a business more congenial to our health and inclinations.” New owner Dieffenbach stated in the same issue that he would reduce the number of ads in favor of more reading material. The title changed to *Lewisburg Standard and Buffalo Democratic Farmer* on December 4, 1839. The new title only lasted two issues; the December 11 issue was the last. Dieffenbach wrote that he was leaving, having purchased a newspaper in “another place,” not for lack of support.

The Three Whig Newspapers

The rise of the Whig Party in the 1830s in opposition to Andrew Jackson, occasioned the advent of Whig newspapers in Lewisburg. The first, and longest-lived, was the *People’s Advocate*, which began publication in August 1837. Launched by Jonas Kelchner, who owned the Milton-based *States’ Advocate*, the paper supported the re-election of Pennsylvania Governor Joseph Ritner and opposed the re-election of President Martin Van Buren. Instead, the paper advocated that war hero William Henry Harrison should be the Whig candidate in the next presidential election. Kelchner wrote that his paper would have something for everyone in all classes.⁸

In addition to the usual advertisements and other local news, the *People’s Advocate* included a column on the canal trade in Lewisburg. However, the occasional

15, 29, April 5, 12, 19, 26, May 3. June 7, 14, September 13, 20; and in 1839, March 28, August 15. For the local response to the education bill, see Charles M. Snyder, et al., *Union County Pennsylvania: A Celebration of History* (Lewisburg: Union County Historical Society, 2000), 248-49.

⁸ “To the Public,” *People’s Advocate*, August 7, 1838. Kelchner ended the *States’ Advocate* in February 1839 (*People’s Advocate*, February 16, 1839).

missed issue hints at financial struggles, and the paper ceased on October 24, 1840. Three weeks later, new owner William Fisher issued the first number of a new series with the same title. In the following week's issue, Fisher wrote that "Our columns shall always be open for the free discussion of Moral, Political, Literary and Scientific subjects; but personal abuse shall in no case and under no circumstances be admitted into our columns." Fisher continued the failing paper until April 9, 1841, when, he wrote, "for reasons best known to ourself," the paper ceased. Fisher transferred his subscribers to the *Union Star*, then published in Mifflinburg.⁹

On September 4, 1841, the *Independent Press* made its appearance. Edited by S. K. Sweetman, the *Independent Press* survived until December 16, 1842. The author has not examined the two or three surviving copies to ascertain their contents.¹⁰ The third Whig paper, entitled the *Union Weekly Whig*, was in print from July 1851 to July 1852. It was owned and edited by R. I. Nesbit & Company, and is an average nineteenth century paper espousing the Whig political philosophy of a one-term presidency, a better-regulated currency, protective tariffs, repeal of the sub-treasury bill, and economy in spending.¹¹

German Language Newspapers

Ludwig Derr came to Pennsylvania from the German states. Many of the early settlers who came to the Susquehanna Valley were also of German ancestry and it was only natural that they wanted to read the news in their native language. There were approximately a dozen German language newspapers in New Berlin, but only two in Lewisburg. One was entitled the *Lewisburg Journal und Union Advokat*, which was simply a German edition of the *Lewisburg Journal*. This edition was in print in 1832.¹²

⁹ "Editor's Address," *People's Advocate*, November 28, 1840.

¹⁰ "Lewisburg Newspapers," *Lewisburg Chronicle and West Branch Farmer*, September 11, 1850. For the surviving copies and their locations, see The Library of Congress "Chronicling America" series, at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>. This same website applies for all the other newspapers included in this article.

¹¹ *Union Weekly Whig*, July 3, 1851.

¹² The *Lewisburg Journal* issue of July 14, 1832, noted the German version. In Ruth Salisbury (editor), *Pennsylvania Newspapers: A Bibliography and Union List* (Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania Library Association, 1969), 67, indicated that the paper was issued in 1832-1833, with no surviving issues noted. However, since the *Lewisburg Journal* ceased publication later in 1832, it would seem logical that the German version also went out of print.

The second German paper issued in Lewisburg was the *Susquehanna Zeitung*, which was published from 1862-1864. Its publisher, Karl Volkmar, is one of Lewisburg's forgotten men of letters. Volkmar was one of the Germans who fled their homeland after the failed 1848 revolution. He came to Lewisburg by 1852 and advertised himself as a teacher of the German and French languages, drawing, painting, and architecture. He was also a lithographer and produced views of Lewisburg, the Union County courthouse, and the county itself. The *Susquehanna Zeitung* was a Republican paper and supported the war effort. In January, 1864, Volkmar moved the paper to Williamsport and continued as publisher until his death in 1886. I have failed to locate any surviving issues of this paper.¹³

Lewisburg's First Successful Paper—The Lewisburg Chronicle

On September 23, 1843, the *Lewisburg Chronicle* made its debut. Owners William B. Shriner and S. A. Burkenbine wrote that their paper would support “Democratic men and measures,” but would also be a family newspaper, not a “violent and abusive party paper.” In March 1844, Burkenbine left the paper “for my own welfare,” remarking further that Lewisburg was used to its newspaper owners leaving their jobs.¹⁴



¹³ On the paper, see John F. Meginness (editor), *History of Lycoming County* (Chicago: Brown, Runk, 1892), in Chapter 22, found online at www.usgenet.org/usa/pa/county/lycoming/history/Chapter22.html. Notices of Volkmar's activities while in Lewisburg can be found in various issues of newspapers during this period. His obituary is in the *Lewisburg Chronicle*, January 21, 1886.

¹⁴ “To the Public,” *Lewisburg Chronicle*, September 23, 1843; “To the Public,” *Lewisburg Chronicle*, March 16, 1844.

Indeed, the newspaper's office and title tells the story of the early years of the *Chronicle*. It was first published from a second story office on Market Street over the post office between Third and Fourth. In March 1845, the paper moved to the Armory, then two weeks later could be found on the second floor of a frame house near the Washington House. Two years later, the paper was located on Market between Second and Third. In July 1847, the paper's title changed to the *Lewisburg Chronicle and Union County General Advertiser*. On January 1, 1848, the title became the *Lewisburg Chronicle and West Branch General Advertiser*, followed a year later by the *Lewisburg Chronicle and West Branch Farmer*, before reverting to its original simple title in April 1850. In March 1853, the paper moved to the Beaver block on North Third for six months while its building was torn down and rebuilt.¹⁵

In the midst of the name changes and office moves, Oliver N. Worden arrived at the *Chronicle* and became its editor in 1848. Born in New York State, Worden began his newspaper career with a Utica paper before coming to Lewisburg. Worden, along with John R. Cornelius, became owner of the paper in 1854 and ran the paper until he sold his interest to Cornelius in December 1864.¹⁶

Long after Worden had retired, a former employee described his boss: Mr. Worden's convictions were the rule of his life; when he espoused a cause he did so from principle, and not from selfish motives. He was, emphatically, a positive man, and could always give a reason for 'the hope that was within him.' He always took an active part in the questions of the day, and his pen was ever ready to do its part. Controversy he did not incite, but when it was thrust upon him he was always ready to meet it, and generally came out best at the end.

As a writer, in his day, he had but few equals—and no superiors—among the country press. That there is some show for this claim, we need only refer to the fact that he was often called 'the Horace Greeley of the West Branch.'

He was conscientiously opposed to all manner of secret societies, and spoke and wrote against them—believing that they were detrimental to the best interests of the community.

Those who are acquainted with him know that he is a deep thinker; outspoken in his views; good writer (we do not refer to the legibility (!) of

¹⁵ See the following issues of the *Chronicle* for the information contained in this paragraph: September 23, 1843; March 29, April 12, 1845; July 17, 1847; January 1, 1848; January 3, 1849; April 3, 1850; March 25, September 30, 1853.

¹⁶ H. C. Ammon, "Our 'Remembrance Gallery,'" *Lewisburg Chronicle*, March 15, 1877; *Chronicle*, December 29, 1854; December 30, 1864.

his manuscript); a staunch friend, and just, though strict, teacher.¹⁷

Worden's arrival at the paper signaled a change in politics. Originally a newspaper supportive of the Democratic Party, Worden initially steered it to an independent course. Promoting also the idea of a family paper, Worden printed fictional stories by local authors, a series on various botany topics, stories about early history of the region, and letters from locals who were traveling both abroad and around the United States. All of this was in addition to the usual business notices and advertisements, militia notes, borough council meetings, the canal trade, and the formation and use of the new town cemetery. After gold was discovered in California, Worden covered the migration west of Lewisburgers in search of fame and fortune. In 1851, after William H. Chamberlin had returned from his California excursion, the *Chronicle* printed his "Notes of a Seven Months' Journey to California."¹⁸



Oliver N. Worden, owner/editor of the Lewisburg Chronicle, 1848-1864
Credit: Harry Ammon

The December 29, 1854, issue noted that Worden had taken John R. Cornelius into partnership as co-owner of the *Chronicle*. Cornelius would remain with the paper until his death in 1891. He bought out Worden's interest in the paper in December 1864

¹⁷ Ammon, March 15, 1877.

¹⁸ The December 11, 1847, issue of the *Chronicle* noted that Shrinier was leaving the paper and that Worden would take an independent course with it. The Chamberlin series can be found in the issues of January 1-April 16, 1851.

and controlled the paper for the next twenty-six years. A native of Lewisburg, Cornelius was sent to his grandfather's Ohio farm after his own father was killed in a mill accident. After an apprenticeship in the printing business, Cornelius came back home and became an employee of the *Chronicle*. In a tribute to the man who taught him the newspaper business, Benjamin K. Focht wrote that Cornelius was "the brightest editor we have ever known. He was not only possessed of rare native ability, but he had an acquired store of knowledge rarely possessed by any man, much less a country editor. He wrote English perfectly and spoke four different languages. He was also a Christian gentleman and of good heart and family devotion. . . . As a humorist paragraphist few humorists of his day surpassed him."¹⁹

Worden and Cornelius brought in Henry C. Hickok as editor of the *Chronicle*, but Hickok was on the job only six months. A lawyer by profession, Hickok moved to Harrisburg in June, becoming Deputy Superintendent of Public Schools, then State Superintendent of Public Instruction, among his important positions during his career.²⁰ After Hickok's departure, Worden seems to have resumed the editorial position and began to move the paper into the ranks of the Whig Party, and after that party's demise, into the new Republican Party. I have not seen any specific editorial announcing the change in party loyalty, but a general reading of the *Chronicle* reveals that Worden's choice of articles and news coverage suggests this change. He reprinted articles critical of the slave trade, covered the increasing number of Republican meetings in the area, touched on the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and the problems in the Kansas Territory (made all the more immediate because of the migration of several families from Union County to neighboring Missouri. Worden printed letters from these county emigrants), and, beginning regularly in 1858, letters from John A. Grier.

A former employee of the *Chronicle*, Grier had come to the University at Lewisburg, then worked at the newspaper before joining the United States Navy in 1855. Initially assigned to a vessel in the Mediterranean Squadron, Grier experienced the attempts to intercept filibustering (private military) expeditions in Central America,

¹⁹ Cornelius obituary, *Lewisburg Chronicle*, August 20, 1891; B. K. Focht, "Chronicle Office Passes on Rollers," *Lewisburgh Saturday News*, June 27, 1935.

²⁰ Henry C. Hickok seems to be one of those Pennsylvanians forgotten over time. The author of this article has been doing some research in an attempt to uncover more information about him. He seems to have been born in New York around 1818 and died in Philadelphia in 1898.

where his ship's crew was decimated by yellow fever. After participating in the failed attempt to lay the first transatlantic cable, Grier, rising in the ranks as an engineer, was part of the 1858-1859 Paraguay Expedition. Reassigned to the USS *Crusader*, which was based at Key West, Grier chronicled his vessel's interception of the slave trade off Cuba. His letters, published by Worden in the *Chronicle*, provide a glimpse into the navy's role in gunboat diplomacy and the demise of the slave trade.²¹

In May 1859, the *Chronicle* absorbed the *Union County Star*, which had been published in Mifflinburg. The paper's new title, which lasted through the end of 1864, was now the *Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle*. Worden and Cornelius were



strong supporters of President Abraham Lincoln and the paper reflected their patriotism during the war years. From the April 26, 1861, issue to that of December 30, 1864, the *Star and Chronicle* was published twice weekly, on Tuesdays and Fridays, as an abbreviated two-page issue, so that the local folks could keep up with the fast pace of war news. As a supporter of the war effort, the *Star and Chronicle* represented the soldiers in the field by printing their letters that were sent home to publish. Prominent correspondents included Captain James M. Linn of the 51st Pennsylvania, William Reed of the 8th Missouri (Reed was from Hartley Township originally), Captain Thomas G. Orwig of the 1st Pennsylvania Light Artillery, and Surgeon Theodore Christ of the 45th Pennsylvania. There were dozens of units represented, including several non-Pennsylvania regiments where former Union Countians were serving.²²

²¹ Grier was born in West Chester and came to Lewisburg in the early 1850s. He served in the United States Navy from 1855-1865, leaving the service as chief engineer. After the Civil War, he was engineer at the United States Mint in Philadelphia, then moved to Chicago where he died in 1902. The author of this article is preparing a monograph on Grier.

²² The title change to *Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle* took place on May 6, 1859.

The *Lewisburg Chronicle* reverted to its old name and went back to a weekly publication (Fridays) on January 6, 1865. The firm of Worden & Cornelius was dissolved effective December 30, 1864, in preparation for the change in ownership. Cornelius continued the paper as a Republican-affiliated sheet as well as providing the usual coverage that Worden had in the paper—local business changes, letters from travelers reporting what they saw, the 1865 flood and the new bridge, the arrival of the railroad in town, fires that destroyed businesses, the opening of the Music Hall, local and state politics, the role of veterans in the post-war society, and much more.

In the spring of 1877, Cornelius moved the office to a two-story frame house that he designed specifically for the *Chronicle's* office. It was located on South Second Street opposite the courthouse, where the paper remained until July 1887. At that time, Cornelius moved the building, rolling it from the South Second location to a new one on South Front (#22), where the old Buffalo Valley Telephone Company building now stands. Cornelius died in August 1891, having run the paper for twenty-six years. His widow Hannah arranged to sell the paper, which took place on April 30, 1892. The *Chronicle* reported that a new firm, the Lewisburg Chronicle Publishing Company Limited, purchased the paper, but a week later, the paper went into the hands of George W. Schoch of Mifflinburg.²³

After publication was suspended for a month to upgrade the facilities, the *Chronicle* resumed in mid-June 1892. Schoch continued the paper's varied approach to the local area with the usual news. In August 1892, war veteran and attorney James M. Linn began to serialize the history of the 4th Pennsylvania, in which he served for three months at the beginning of the Civil War. Linn then came home and recruited Company H, 51st Pennsylvania, and after finishing the history of the 4th, he continued with the 51st, detailing the regiment's formation, training, and campaign in North Carolina. Linn also wrote about the Pennsylvania Reserves and especially the role of the local Slifer Guards, officially Company D, 5th Pennsylvania Reserves. His recollections continued

²³ *Chronicle*, March 15, 1877; July 7, 1887; August 20, 1891; April 14, May 5, 12, 1892. The *Lewisburg Journal*, in its issue of May 5, 1892, reported that the new owners of the *Chronicle* were Charles H. Hassenplug, W. C. Gretzinger, and A. M. S. Potter. See Benjamin K. Focht, " 'Chronicle' Office Passes on Rollers," *Lewisburgh Saturday News*, June 27, 1935, for details on the *Chronicle* office and J. R. Cornelius.

in the *Chronicle* until his death in February 1897.²⁴

George W. Schoch continued as owner of the *Chronicle* until August 1907, when he sold the paper to L. K. Derr, a local businessman who at the time owned a confectionary. Throughout this time, the paper continued to be a very readable and informative sheet. Special interest material included a series of letters from Bucknell professor Lincoln Hulley, who chronicled his trip to Europe in 1897, and letters from Miss Esther Shields, who went as a missionary to Korea in 1897, sending numerous letters home that detailed her experiences a world away from Lewisburg. During the Spanish-American War, letters from the officers and men of Company A, 12th Pennsylvania, appeared in the paper. This regiment went to Camp Alger in Northern Virginia and never had the opportunity to go overseas. In 1905, the *Chronicle* printed a series of articles that presented the history of the Brown family, occupants of Union County since 1804.²⁵

L. K. Derr's first issue of the *Chronicle* was September 14, 1907, with A. D. Miller as editor. In addition to the usual material, the paper included letters from Mary Derr, who left town in the fall of 1907 on a tour that took her to Japan, Korea, Ceylon, India, Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, Italy, Germany, France, and Great Britain. Looking back, it is apparent that the *Chronicle* was in trouble, but I have seen nothing in the columns that indicated any problems. Yet the *Chronicle's* last issue came on June 29, 1912, without any explanation from either owner or editor. The *Chronicle* was Lewisburg's first successful paper and an indispensable source of information about Lewisburg during the years it was published.

The Second Lewisburg Democrat

Samuel Shriner began a new *Lewisburg Democrat* on October 1, 1850. The new *Democrat* was another typical nineteenth century newspaper, full of advertisements,

²⁴ Linn's articles can be found in most issues of the *Chronicle* from August 20, 1892-February 20, 1897. The paper also published the reminiscences of Joseph E. Orwig, Company A, 131st Pennsylvania, in most issues from March 9, 1895-May 9, 1896, as well as various other accounts from veterans. A thirteen-part series in the *Chronicle* from October 16, 1897-March 26, 1898, detailed the history of Andrew Gregg Tucker Post 58, Grand Army of the Republic, located in Lewisburg.

²⁵ *Chronicle*, August 30, 1907. The articles about the Brown family, written by A. W. and William W. Brown, appeared in the issues of October 21, 28, November 18, 25, December 2, 9, 16, 30, 1905, and in the 1906 issues of January 6, 13, 20, and February 17.

business news, politics, news of the canal and railroads, the impending division of Union County, and other local issues.

Like many other newspapers, the *Democrat* was unable to entice enough subscribers to keep it afloat. The paper suspended publication in 1854 until its issue of March 29. In that issue, Samuel Shriner briefly recounted the history of his newspaper, which had started “with but small capital” . . . “in a county in which the Whig Party is largely in the majority, and *division* in the Democratic ranks.” Shriner complained that too many people were reading his paper without paying for it. Since he had spent the last two months personally calling upon all the delinquent accounts and not getting very good results, Shriner announced that he was purging them all from his subscription list.²⁶



Thereafter, the *Democrat* occasionally missed an issue because of its deteriorating subscriber base. In the August 30, 1854, issue, Shriner remarked that newspapers were subject to more loss than any other business because of the credit system that many subscribers used to defer their small subscription payments. Starting with the September 13 issue, Shriner declared that he would accept only \$1.50 cash for subscriptions. This final appeal to his readers failed to work and the *Democrat* ceased publication with the December 27 issue.²⁷

²⁶ “To Our Readers,” *Lewisburg Democrat*, March 29, 1854.
²⁷ “Editorial Edict,” *Lewisburg Democrat*, August 30, 1854.

The Troubled Union Argus

On the last day of July, 1855, the *Union Argus* made its appearance as the latest newspaper in Lewisburg. Issued on Tuesdays from an office on the North Third Street side of William Frick’s building, the *Argus* was owned by F. M. Ziebach and Peter Stout. They dedicated their paper “to the principles of democracy—free from all factional disaffection and wild scheme of factionalism.” The introductory editorial went on to state that “A courteous and manly opposition, appealing to the good sense and judgment of men, is more effectual than traduction, falsehood and invidious comparison.” Ziebach and Stout declared that they had a local interest at heart and would sacrifice all party loyalties to support men who “are avowedly allied to our local welfare.”

The *Union Argus* was another typical nineteenth-century newspaper, containing the usual business news, advertisements, political news from around the country and world, and full coverage of the competition between Lewisburg and Mifflinburg over the location of the county seat. Although a Democratic newspaper, the *Argus’* editors



seemed to favor the Whig idea of forbidding the spread of slavery to the territories. In the October 16, 1855, issue, the editors published “Our Position,” an editorial confirming support of the Democratic Party, an editorial seemingly designed to end any confusion about what the readers felt about the newspaper.

Later that same month, Peter Stout sold his interest in the *Argus* to attorney James M. Linn, who, in a flowery Victorian prose editorial, welcomed his chance to help keep the interests of the Democratic Party alive. Linn worked as one of the

owner/editors only until March 1856, when he left the paper, citing the increasing pressures from his busy law practice. Henry W. Crotzer purchased Linn's half interest. In March 1857, Ziebach sold his interest, leaving Crotzer to continue the paper.²⁸

Because there are few surviving issues of the *Argus* after early 1857, it is difficult to piece together the subsequent ownership of the paper. I. H. Mauser, in his *Centennial History of Lewisburg*, noted that Ziebach and Crotzer continued publication until April 1856, obviously an error; he should have written the year 1857, but even then Mauser's information was wrong. The *Argus* noted that Ziebach sold out in March 1857 without mentioning Crotzer leaving as well. Mauser wrote that the paper was sold, the buyers taking the press and moving west to found a new paper.²⁹

We do know that the new owner was Truman H. Purdy, who changed the format of the paper and began a new volume 1, issue 1, on July 29, 1857. Born in Wayne County



Truman H. Purdy, owner/editor of the *Union Argus*, 1857-1860
Credit: *Sunbury Pennsylvania, Two Hundred Years 1772 to 1972*, page 199

²⁸ *Union Argus*, October 23, 1855; March 18, 1856; March 31, 1857. When the *Lewisburg Democrat* ceased publication in late 1855, the editors transferred the subscription list to the *Argus*. See the *Argus* issue of December 11, 1855, for this information.

²⁹ I. H. Mauser, *Centennial History of Lewisburg* (Lewisburg: The author, 1886), 119. Surviving issues (or at least those located by the author of this article) include only four issues for 1857 after Purdy started the new series, none for 1858, only two 1859 issues, and forty 1860 issues. For the period 1861-1864, this author has not seen any issues, although the Library of Congress located four issues. See the Library of Congress's *Chronicling America* section for their lists of repositories with *Union Argus* issues.

in 1830, Purdy had attended at the University at Lewisburg and was studying law, when, according to Mauser, he formed a new company and reissued the *Argus* as an essentially new paper. One of the new editors was J. G. Winegarden; his 1878 obituary stated that he was an editor of the paper from 1857 to its demise in 1864.³⁰

The lack of surviving copies of the *Argus* renders it difficult to determine how the paper fared during the last years preceding the Civil War. The paper vigorously defended the Democratic Party principles and lashed out at the new Republican Party and its presidential nominee, Abraham Lincoln. In its December 14, 1860, edition, the *Lewisburg Chronicle* reported that Purdy had been ousted from the *Argus*. “Considering his youth and inexperience,” wrote O. N. Worden, “and that he is not a printer by trade, we judge Mr. Purdy has developed talents, industry, and perseverance worthy of a better cause and greater rewards. We wish him well.” Worden went on to write that the *Argus* had been established by a “company of politicians and office hunters.” These unidentified men were not satisfied with their editor, who was “not sufficiently flexible to suit the personal and local design of some.” In spite of fiery anti-Lincoln stories that Purdy used to lash out at the Republicans, the paper had not grown fast enough to suit the company, and so Purdy was let go.³¹

After Purdy was ousted from the *Argus*, J. M. Baum became the new publisher with A. H. Dill as associate editor. Dill left the paper after a few months and Baum died in June 1862. Mauser indicated that the paper’s stockholders then elected J. G. Winegarden and Jacob Wolfe as editors. Wolfe remained with the *Argus* only a short time, leaving Winegarden as the editor until December, 1864, when the paper went out of business. The *Argus* was anti-war and anti-Republican. A Lewisburg soldier home on furlough in May 1864 complained about the “Copperhead paper” in a letter to the

³⁰ On Purdy, see Herbert C. Bell, *History of Northumberland County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Brown, Runk & Company, Publishers, 1891), 818-819. Other information taken from Mauser, *Lewisburg*, 119; with Winegarden obituary in the *Chronicle*, January 10, 1878.

³¹ After Purdy left the *Argus*, he established the *Northumberland County Democrat* in Sunbury, which he owned from 1861 until 1867. Under Purdy’s leadership, the *Democrat* became known as one of the worst of the Pennsylvania Democratic newspapers, attacking Lincoln, the Republicans, the war effort, blacks, abolitionists, and anyone else who opposed the peace Democrats. In spite of such sentiment, Purdy was elected to the Pennsylvania Legislature in 1864-1865. After the war, he was one of the founders of Steelton, wrote two books of poetry and one novel, was president of the Lewisburg Planing and Siding Mill, treasurer of the Lewisburg Nail Works, and a director of the Lewisburg Steam Forge Company. Purdy died in 1898. See Bell, *Northumberland County*, 818-819.

Chronicle, noting that the copy he was handed by a young boy was designed to discourage soldiers and inflame the public. The *Mifflinburg Telegraph*, excerpting from the *Bloomsburg Republican*, let its readers know that the *Argus* “has gone dead.”³²

The Lewisburg Journal

Mauser indicated in his *Centennial History of Lewisburg* that the *Lewisburg Journal* was essentially a continuation of the *Union Argus*, but there clearly was a break between these papers. The *Lewisburg Chronicle* noted that the first issue of the *Journal* appeared on July 19, 1865, “on the ashes of the Argus.” J. Ely Eicholtz was the initial publisher, but after only six months Eicholtz left and the paper languished until July 1866, when the *Chronicle* noted that Levi Sterner had just restarted the *Journal*. In November 1867, Sterner departed and turned the paper over to G. B. McGinley, who managed the paper until April 1871, when F. O. Whitman became the new owner. The frequent change in ownership and occasional lapses in issues indicate that the *Journal*, like its predecessor, had a rocky beginning.³³

Whitman seems to have stabilized the paper and remained its owner until 1895, when he sold the *Journal* to William L. Kurtz, who owned the paper until his death in August 1900. Kurtz had grown up in Aaronsburg, then moved to Centre Hall, where his father owned the *Reporter*. Kurtz graduated from Bucknell, then worked in the milling and hardware businesses before he purchased the *Journal*. In April 1901, J. Fred Kurtz (William’s brother) purchased the *Journal* from his brother’s widow and kept it until 1918, when he retired and sold it to Jacob P. S. Strickler. In July 1925, Strickler sold the paper to Charles Smith. The *Journal* continued as one of Lewisburg’s two newspapers until August 29, 1946, the date of its last issue. The *Journal* then merged with the *Lewisburgh Saturday News* to become a paper with the unwieldy title of *The Lewisburg*

³² Mauser, *Lewisburg*, 119-120; *Lewisburg Chronicle*, May 17, 1864; *Mifflinburg Telegraph*, December 22, 1864. Baum’s obituary is in the *Lewisburg Chronicle*, July 1, 1862. The paper was entitled the *Semi-Weekly Argus* for a few months in 1861-1862, based on the July 17, 1861, issue as noted in the Library of Congress Chronicling America series.

³³ Mauser, *Lewisburg*, 120; *Lewisburg Chronicle*, July 21, 1865; May 13, July 13, 1866; May 30, November 15, 1867. There seem to be no surviving issues of the *Journal* prior to the issue of June 24, 1885. Mauser, page 120, wrote that Eicholtz turned the paper over to Francis Graves, who remained the publisher until he gave the paper to Levi Sterner in May 1867. However, Mauser’s history of the paper contravenes what was printed in the *Chronicle*; the difference in facts indicates the convoluted early history of the *Journal*.

*Journal and the Lewisburgh Saturday News.*³⁴

In addition to covering activities of the Grand Army of the Republic and printing obituaries of Civil War veterans, the *Journal* later included letters from members of Troop M while they served on active duty along the Mexican border in 1916, then printed letters from various local men and women in service during World War I. During the latter half of the 1890s, the paper included travel letters from local residents Cyrus Hoffa, C. F. Lindig, Reverend Henry Gerhart, missionary Esther Shields, and Robert Slifer. In 1910, the paper ran a lengthy series on Union County real estate values, a Dreisbach family genealogy in the November 28, 1913, issue, a “Notables of Lewisburg” (and later Mifflinburg) in 1930, Mary W. Massey’s “Early History of Lewisburg in 1935, and a valuable “Survey of Leisure Time” series, also in 1935.³⁵

During the period from the late 1880s through the years before World War I, the *Journal* transformed from a typical nineteenth century newspaper to a more modern sheet. The *Journal* was always known as a Democratic paper, but as the Twentieth Century went on it became a more inclusive paper, especially after the *Journal* and *Saturday News* merged. In addition to the special coverage noted above, the paper included the usual business news, local, state, national, and international news, sports, Bucknell news, and other news of interest to local readers. The *Journal* is valuable for learning about the paving of Market and other streets, the water company issues, the development of Lewisburg High School and its band, the creation of the memorial field behind the high school, the creation of a community house, and other major events in town. The paper extensively covered the “Dollar Days” (many businesses offered discount sales) that ran in late February from 1924 until 1941, as well as the annual community chest drives, and the many activities and fundraisers of the Civic Club after its start in 1907. The paper is also a good source for its coverage of the Depression and its effects, as well as the multiple drives in support of the war effort from 1942-1946.

³⁴ Mauser, *Lewisburg*, 120; *Lewisburg Journal*, May 17, 1895; August 31, 1900; April 12, 1901; July 17, 1925; September 13, 1928 (J. Fred Kurtz obituary); *Lewisburg Journal and the Lewisburgh Saturday News*, December 20, 1946 (Strickler obituary). The spelling of Lewisburg with a final ‘h’ is explained in a previous article in *Accounts* by Roger Curran, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 39.

³⁵ The Cyrus Hoffa travel letters are in various issues in 1896-1897, C. F. Lindig in 1897, Reverend Gerhart in 1897-1900, Esther Shields in 1897 and 1904-5, and Robert Shafer in 1899-1900. The real estate series is in the issues of February 4-August 26, 1910, the “Notables” can be found in the June 12-August 7, 1930, issues, and Massey’s history is found in the February 21-May 30, 1935, issues. The “Survey of Leisure Time” is in the May 30-June 20, 1935, issues.

The Lewisburgh Saturday News

The founding of Lewisburg's last nineteenth century newspaper is shrouded in some mystery. Local printer James Shamp started a newspaper in his South Seventh Street home in January 1881. In August, Shamp partnered with 18-year-old Benjamin K. Focht, whose family had moved to Lewisburg from New Bloomfield in 1864. After attending local schools, Focht apprenticed with J. R. Cornelius, owner of the *Lewisburg Chronicle*. In a letter of recommendation for Focht, Cornelius wrote that Focht was “. . . the best compositor, taking into consideration the short time he served at the business, that I ever knew.”³⁶



³⁶ Snyder et al., *Union County Pennsylvania: A Celebration of History* 87; Justice, “A False Statement,” *Lewisburg Chronicle*, March 27, 1890. Justice may have gotten the year wrong; he wrote that the *Local News* began in 1881, but the Library of Congress indicates a start date of January 15, 1882.

Benjamin K. Focht (third from left) and other men pose in front of the *Saturday News* Office, probably in 1918.

Photo: Owen Mahon, The Open Door

The new partnership of Shamp and Focht moved to the North Third Street side of the Beaver block and in January 1883 introduced the *Local News* to local readers. T. C. Johnson and Truman P. Reitmeyer also seem to have been instrumental in perhaps financially backing this new endeavor. Physician Wilfred Gerhart was one of the editors. After five months, the paper became the *Lewisburgh Local News*, and on March 31, 1883, became the *Lewisburgh Saturday News*. Shamp left the paper in July after he purchased a confectionary business, leaving Focht as the principal owner.³⁷

Focht remained the owner and principal editor of the *Saturday News* until his death on March 27, 1937. A staunch Republican throughout his life, Focht admired small town America and reveled in pride for his adopted hometown of Lewisburg. Focht entered politics and was a member of the Pennsylvania House (1893-1897) and Senate



Postcard view of the Saturday News Building, 217-223 Market Street

Author's Collection

(1901-1905), and a Representative in Congress (1907-1913, 1915-1923, 1933-1937). In

³⁷ "Justice" in *Lewisburg Chronicle*, March 27, 1890; Library of Congress Chronicling America series for the titles. The Library of Congress also lists a *Lewisburg Local Noose*, together with question marks regarding the dates of existence for this title. Snyder, *Union County*, 87, wrote that Focht borrowed \$500 from his mother to start the paper. The "Justice" article in the *Chronicle* objected to Focht's claim that he started the paper and insisted that Shamp was the original founder. The *Chronicle* issue of August 11, 1881, noted the new partnership of Shamp and Focht, and in the July 12, 1883, issue, noted the Shamp confectionary purchase, as did the *Saturday News* in its July 7, 1883, issue.

between these stints, Focht was deputy secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1928-1929). He championed the common man and opposed extremism on both sides. Although his bill that would have introduced America to the first old-age pension was defeated, it was later incorporated into the Social Security law in the 1930s.³⁸

Focht's *Saturday News*, in addition to reflecting the party platform of the Republicans, was another typical paper, reporting on local business moves, printed soldier letters during conflicts, contained numerous obituaries and property sales, as well as the usual editorials, local news, and advertisements. Focht also liked local



history and printed numerous stories and series about Lewisburg and Union County. As time went on, the paper began a series that looked back at the old files of the *Saturday News* and printed excerpts of stories from 23 and 43 years ago. Eventually, the *Saturday News* ran Harold Musser's history of Lewisburg (October 31-December 19, 1925), Mrs. W. C. Bartol's research on local Revolutionary War soldiers (July 3-August 21, 1926), C. M. Steese's history of Mifflinburg (October 15, 1927-March 3, 1928), a list of Lewisburg High School graduates since 1866 (July 12-October 4, 1930), Reverend Morris Derr's History of Lewisburg Churches (intermittently from February 14, 1935-November 24, 1938), and a valuable series that reprinted the minutes of the Civic Club (July 13, 1944-August 16, 1945). After Benjamin Focht died in March, 1937, his son Brown took over the paper until it merged with the *Lewisburg Journal* in August, 1946.

³⁸ On Focht, see his brief political biography in *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress, 1774-Present*, available on-line at <http://bioguide.congress.gov>. See also Donald J. Baumgartner, "Benjamin K. Focht: Union County Politician," D.Ed. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1975; Baumgartner, "Benjamin K. Focht, Defender of Rural Conservatism," *Union County Heritage* 6 (1978): 15-24; and Snyder, *Union County Pennsylvania*, 87-88, 90.

The combined *Journal and Saturday News* ended the era of partisan political newspapers in Lewisburg. The initial editorial in the September 5, 1946, issue of the new paper looked back on the proud achievements of both papers, but also looked forward to presenting a combined paper:

It is with a feeling of real pride, tinged with considerable awe, that we take it upon ourselves to publish a single newspaper which will be subject to the criticism that was once split, but is now combined. We undertake this most difficult task because we believe that the future will prove the advisability of one newspaper for the community. A greater circulation, a “oneness” of purpose, and a combination of features from each paper should, following a period of adjustment so necessary at a time like this, provide the residents of Lewisburg and Union County with a newspaper that we hope will soon become “their” newspaper; a home product pledged to uphold, improve and serve the interests far better than publications “foreign” to Union County.

On March 13, 1947, the title changed to the *Lewisburg Journal-News*, and remained as such until January 29, 1953, when the paper became the *Union County Standard and Lewisburg Journal-News* for only this single issue. The name changed to the *Union County Standard-Journal* on February 5, 1953, and continued until yet another name change to the *Union County Journal* on June 29, 1961. On March 23, 1987, the name changed to the *Lewisburg Daily Journal*. In 2003, the *Daily Journal* merged with the *Milton Standard* to become today’s *Standard Journal*.³⁹

In tracing the history of Lewisburg’s nineteenth century newspapers, it is readily apparent that the townsfolk relied heavily on these papers to keep them informed about local events and businesses as well as state, national, and international news. Without the preservation of these valuable papers, researchers today would have difficulty locating detailed and accurate material about the history of Lewisburg, Union County, and vicinity. We have the Linn family to thank for preserving them. The Linn family has included prominent attorneys and historians—James Fleming, John Blair, James Merrill, and Merrill W. Linn. In 1951, noting the absence of a functioning county historical society, Bucknell University issued a call for local historical material that the university would collect and place in the new Ellen Clarke Bertrand Library. Chaired by

³⁹ The dates for all the name changes are taken from the Library of Congress Chronicling America series under each title.

Dr. J. Orin Oliphant, a committee began to speak with local people to identify materials of interest. Merrill Linn, a member of this committee, made a generous donation of old Lewisburg newspapers kept by his family through the years. The university microfilmed these newspapers and they are available for research in the university library.⁴⁰

In addition to the newspaper microfilm at Bucknell (which continues to collect and film local newspapers), Packwood House Museum has bound volumes of the *Chronicle*, *Union Argus*, *Saturday News*, and the second *Lewisburg Democrat*. Some of the museum's bound volumes contain issues not in the Bucknell collection. The Union County Historical Society has microfilm copies of many Lewisburg newspapers. The Library of Congress, as part of its "Chronicling America" series, has some Lewisburg titles available to read on-line.

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⁴⁰ "Name Unit to Collect Local Historical Data," *Journal-News*, May 10, 1951; "Collection of Area Newspapers Given to New Bucknell University Library," *Ibid.*, May 24, 1951.