

# Mifflinburg's Union County Press

By

Sidney Dreese

"Firm, United, Let us be, Rallying round our Liberty" was the motto of Mifflinburg's newspaper, *Union County Press*. The newspaper, aligned with the Republican Party, began publication a few years prior to the publication of the *Mifflinburg Telegraph* by Joseph Orwig and Charles Haus. The *Telegraph's* first issue appeared on June 10, 1862.<sup>1</sup> The first issue of the *Union County Press* was printed on March 7, 1858 with Frederick Smith as the proprietor and publisher, and Jacob Kuhney as the printer.<sup>2</sup> The paper was printed every Wednesday, and, if paid in advance, subscriptions were \$1.00 annually. Money was not the only means of payment. Autumn, 1860, Frederick Smith made a plea, "WOOD WANTED: we are very much in need of the article." Subscribers "will please bring it in immediately."

**THE UNION COUNTY PRESS.**

"Firm, United, Let us be, Rallying round our Liberty."

Vol. 2.) MIFFLINBURG, UNION COUNTY, PA., WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1860. (No. 31.)

<p><b>Union County Press.</b></p> <p>PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY BY SMITH &amp; KUHNEY.</p> <p><b>TERMS.</b></p> <p>IN ADVANCE \$1 00 WITHIN SIX MONTHS 1 50 WITHIN THE YEAR 2 00</p> <p><b>RATES OF ADVERTISING.</b></p> <p>One square (12 lines) 3 insertions, 1 00 Every subsequent insertion, 25 Our square 3 months, 3 00 One square 6 months, 5 00 One square 1 year, 8 00 One half a column 6 months, 12 00 One half a column 1 year, 20 00 One column 6 months, 20 00 One column 1 year, 30 00</p> <p>For business cards, not exceeding eight lines, inserted for five dollars per year. Advertisements not marked with the number of insertions desired, will be published 'at' and charged accordingly, except legal advertisements, which will be published the number of times required by law.</p> <p><b>POETRY.</b></p> <p>For the Press.</p> <p>MY COUNTRY.</p> <p>BY AMERICAN, JR.</p> <p>My dear native country, bright home of</p>	<p>Charley did very well when you had no other string to your bow, but Mr. Moss has a thousand dollars where Charley has a cent. Young folks shouldn't let romance stand in the way of solid common sense, my child.</p> <p>Mrs. Waters paused here, to concentrate her attention on the threading of a needle, and May, sweeping her flowers into the fire, replaced the half-arranged vase on the piano, and gilded out of the room with a bright dew shining in her blue, lustrous eyes. She had a 'real good cry,' when she got to her own room, with no witnesses but the red glowing fire and the golden-winged canary bird, and that certainly was a relief, to say nothing of the sly little note she wrote to Charley to tell him all her troubles.</p> <p>'You needn't put on any more coals, Betty,' said Mr. Moss to his housekeeper, 'It's only a waste of fuel. And Betty, don't light the gas so high in the hall; people must look after their pennies if they don't expect to go to the poor-house. Oh dear,' he muttered, as Betty flounced</p>	<p>Waters. You know her, don't you? 'Yes,' said Charley, wincing. 'I don't suppose it will be any more expensive to keep two than one, will it?' observed the old gentleman, a little uneasily, as though the question still bothered him.</p> <p>'O, no,' said Charley, in an off hand way. 'Of course you'll have to take her to Newport or Saratoga every year, but that won't be much—a thousand or two dollars will cover the annual expense entirely—and she'll expect her box at the opera and her carriage and her balls and parties, but you are so rich you will never feel the outlay.'</p> <p>Mr. Moss sat upright, and instinctively clapped a hand on either pocket.</p> <p>'I—I couldn't possibly afford it!' he exclaimed. 'She won't expect it, will she?'</p> <p>'To be sure—all women do. They are expensive luxuries, Mr. Moss.—You will of course dress your wife richly—Miss Waters is accustomed to such things?'</p> <p>'I—suppose—so!' faltered the old gentleman. 'Does it cost very much</p>	<p><b>I'LL NEVER FORGIVE HIM.</b></p> <p>The following sketch of an event or two in real life should be read by every one. It contains a moral worth treasuring in the memory:</p> <p>'I'll never forgive him—never!'</p> <p>'Never is a hard word, John,' said the sweet-faced wife of John Locke as she looked up for a moment from her sewing.</p> <p>'He is a mean dastardly coward, and upon this Holy Bible I—'</p> <p>'Stop, husband, John, remember he is my brother, and by the love you bear me, forbear to curse him.—He has done you wrong, I allow, but oh! John, he is very young and very sorry. The momentary shame you felt yesterday, will hardly be wiped out with a curse. It will only injure yourself, John. Oh, please don't say anything dreadful!'</p> <p>The sweet-faced woman preailed; the curse that hung upon the lips of the angry man was not spoken; but still he said, 'I'll never forgive him—he has done me a dreadful wrong!'</p> <p>The young man who had provoked his bitterness, humbled and repent-</p>	<p>he walked forth once more among the living.</p> <p>'Oh! if he had died with my unkindness clouding his soul, never should I have dared to hope for mercy from my Father in Heaven!' said John Locke to his wife, as they sat talking over the solemn event that had threatened their lives with a living trouble. 'Never—now I have tasted the sweetness of forgiveness—never again will I cherish revenge or unkindness towards the erring; for there is new meaning to my soul in the words of our daily prayer, and I see that I have only been calling judgements upon myself, while I have impiously asked, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.'</p> <p><b>LOOK BEFORE YOU KICK.</b></p> <p>A minister recently, while on his way to preach a funeral sermon in the country, called to see one of his members, an old widow lady, who lived near the road where he was traveling. The old lady had just been making sausages, and she felt</p>	<p><b>STRANGE OCCURRENCE.</b></p> <p>A man named Samuel Stanly, who had been according to his own story, a wanderer for the last six years, has voluntarily surrendered himself to the sheriff at St. Paul, Minnesota, and desires to be sent back to Cabel county, Va., where he says he is charged with the homicide of a man named Peyton. The murder took place six years ago. He tacitly confessed his guilt, in stating that the homicide was caused by his having discovered Peyton in criminal connection with his wife, and by saying that he did not think his punishment would exceed a short term in the penitentiary. For the past three years Stanly (who is a native of Ohio) has worked in Minnesota, and previously in Wisconsin. He recently returned from a visit to Pembina, on the Red River. The editor of the St. Paul Pioneer, who had an interview with him in jail says:</p> <p>—Without manifesting much contrition for the crime, or fear of punishment, he imagined, wherever he lived, that everybody looked upon him</p>
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An 1860 issue of the newspaper depicting its masthead

<sup>1</sup> *The Union County Press* was not Mifflinburg's first newspaper. The first known newspaper there was the short-lived *The Union*, which appeared in 1813.

<sup>2</sup> No surviving photographs of Smith or Kuhney have thus far been located.

There is a perpetual fallacy that has continued from one publication to another over the years stating that the newspaper ended in 1862; however, the author has seen copies from 1863. It might also be assumed that the Union County Press was the forerunner of the Mifflinburg Telegraph, but it is known that the Telegraph began in the summer of 1862. Indeed they were two separate serials. When the Press ceased publication is unknown, and it is possible that it had too much competition with the Telegraph and then folded. No extant *paper* copies of the Union County Press have been located.



The masthead and upper part of the first page of the first issue of the Mifflinburg Telegraph

The citizens were anxious to hear war news, especially of Union victories, so Smith prominently printed such news on the first and second pages. Of even more

importance were letters—also printed in the newspaper--received from the local boys who were serving in the army. The people of Mifflinburg wanted to hear that the soldiers from Union County were doing well. Not only were letters encouraging to those at home, but when a soldier came home on furlough, the visit was newsworthy. For instance, in the June 25, 1862 issue, it was reported that J. H. W. Lawrence, a resident of Mifflinburg who had been married to Miss Catherine Bair on June 22, stopped into the Press office. He was in camp at Manassas Junction and stated that “the Mifflinburg boys were in fine spirits,” and he left some relics that he had found on the Bull Run battlefield.

Some other war-related news included the following: The sheriff, L. H. Albright, offered a \$5 reward for bringing back an escapee from the Lewisburg jail. Elias Edinger was a deserter from the Army and was wearing a cavalry uniform. Early in the war, men who had enlisted for three months service in 1861, and had returned to Harrisburg to be mustered out were angry. They had not been paid and riots broke out in Harrisburg. In the spring of 1862 it was reported that all of the sick soldiers at the hospital in Camp Curtin, Harrisburg were sent to the United States general hospital in Philadelphia. Governor Curtin was authorized to keep a roll of honor of all Pennsylvania volunteers. The names would appear annually in the report of the Adjutant General.

To bolster patriotism and nationalism, poetry and fictional stories with a patriotic tone, appeared on the front page. One event occurred in Wolf's Hall in Mifflinburg: for 15¢ a person could see a “grand panoramic view of the battles, skirmishes and encampments of the present war.” Men were needed, not only as soldiers; Army teamsters were needed and men could earn \$25 a month if they could drive four horses.

On the home front the readers were reminded not to forget about the families of the soldiers; the wives and children needed to be cared for with food and clothing. Also, the ladies of Lewisburg were paid \$79.65 by the county for providing housing for soldiers, and Ann M'Gregor and others were paid \$18.75 for scrubbing the court house. Other items of interest to women were advertisements for toilet powders, perfumes and jewelry. In the lost and found department, a woman had lost a black lace veil on the road between Mifflinburg and Hartleton. One article was on advice to women seeking a beau, and one on how to make good butter. A gallon of cider vinegar could be purchased for 25¢ from Charles Stees. A warning was issued to ladies and children to be

very careful around fire and handling lamps, as many deaths occurred when clothing is accidentally caught on fire. Also, “ladies purchasing hoop skirts will need to pay a tax.” As early as May 11, 1859 William Ranck in Mifflinburg had “a room ... fitted up for the special accommodation of ladies.” He had a Ladies Saloon where no gentlemen were allowed, and women could drink the best Reading Ale. William R. Sechler in 1860 had a new boot and shoe shop where he would make boots and shoes to order. His wife, Priscilla née Loudenslager, in 1859, was the proprietress of the Traveler’s Hotel. Both businesses were located at the east end of Main Street in Mifflinburg.

While the men, far from home, were sick, wounded and dying on the battlefield, there were hardships and tragedies at home. Businesses caught fire and burned, there were drownings including a 2 year old little girl, Sarah A. Leiby, and in two separate incidents two men, Jacob Klose and John Taylor, were both severely injured when their horses fell on them. George Charles, a drover from Hartleton, while driving a lot of sheep, shot off part of a finger, when his pistol accidentally discharged. Someone broke into the home of Mr. Francis Wilson and stole \$50, a watch, silver spoons and a set of artificial teeth, and Mr. A. R. Clemmens was robbed of his pocket book containing \$75 in currency and a \$25 promissory note.

Yet, also, there were signs of prosperity as many double-eagle coins were being produced at the Philadelphia mint. In April, 1859, Jeremiah Harman was the new proprietor of the Selinsgrove and Mifflinburg stage line. Passengers in Mifflinburg could board the stage—“a splendid covered carriage able to carry up to six persons”—at Crotzer’s Hotel, Main Street. Franklin Crouse, a year later, took over the stage line—a two horse carriage—ran every Tuesday and Saturday.

Employment could be had at the White Deer Mills which was in need of 25-30 wood choppers, and 40¢ per cord could be earned. The courthouse was in need of a stable and the Union County Commissioners were seeking proposals. In contrast in June 1862, the price for corn in Mifflinburg was 44¢ per bushel and in Philadelphia the price was 50¢ per bushel.

Education was not neglected as both the Mifflinburg Academy and Mifflinburg High School were accepting new students. The Mifflinburg singing class was to give a concert, but those attending had to give the exact amount--15¢ for an individual and 50¢ for a family—no change would be given. A music school was conducted in Deckard’s

Union House where C. Hess gave instruction on the piano and the melodian [melodeon?], and in singing and in harmony.

An advertisement appeared in the April 2, 1862 issue which had been running since October 19, 1859, was for a Mifflinburg hotel, the Union House, also known as the Deckard Hotel, which had “facilities to keep horses, carriages, buggies and sulkies.” Persons could also board the stagecoach at the hotel. In Vicksburg, the Great Western Hotel was “one of the happiest places of resort in this part of the state.” Thomas Tunes had recently purchased the building. (In 1862 a Union Celebration of the Fourth of July was to be held in John Benner’s orchard, next to the Great Western Hotel. The Mifflinburg Brass Band was to play and several speakers were to deliver addresses. Several men from Mifflinburg were on the committee including the Union County Press’ Frederick Smith.) Henry Strunk, “a fashionable tailor,” was seeking business and “payment could be made with country produce.” Edward Smith, Frederick Smith’s brother, in New Berlin had a drugstore and had new drugs for purchase, and the post office was also located in the drugstore. The store was located “one door west of the old jail.”

Words of advice were given on being a good parent and young people needed to be cautious of the company they kept. Also, there were practical articles, such as, a remedy for diphtheria, and a cure for diarrhea.

Frederick Smith wrote in 1862, two months prior to the first issue of the Mifflinburg Telegraph – the author not having seen any issues from the 1850s, it might be implied the Press was filled with the same content – the paper “will make its appearance regularly every Wednesday, filled with a choice of reading matter, containing historical sketches, dialogues, wit and humor, all the interesting war news, local items &c. Now is the time to subscribe.” In the next issue, April 9, he noted that an anonymous gentleman encouraged 32 new subscribers to the Press. “Come along, there is room for more.” By October, 1862, the paper was having financial difficulty as indicated by this notice, “subscribers and advertisers need to settle their accounts.” Probably, for purely economic reasons, by 1863 the Union County Press was reduced to two pages, and from 1858 until 1862, it was four pages.

Frederick Smith, proprietor and publisher, was born in Union County in 1820 to Frederick and Sarah Smith. On May 12, 1846 he and Mary Ann Harrison were married

in Mifflinburg by Lutheran minister, Rev. J. G. Anspach. The couple resided in New Berlin with his in-laws and the 1850 census reveals that he was a printer. By 1851 in New Berlin Frederick Smith and his younger brother, Edward, were printing a German language newspaper, *Der Volksfreund und allgemeine Neuigkeits-BoteI*, [the people's friend and general news]. About 1855 the Smith brothers sold their interests to Andrew J. Peters who then moved the newspaper to Middleburg, PA. His business interests then changed to an English language newspaper, as stated above, the Union County Press beginning in the spring of 1858. It is unknown what became of Frederick Smith. He, however, paid tribute to his wife, Mary Ann née Harrison Smith, upon her death, in the March 12, 1862 issue of The Union County Press. He wrote:

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February in Mifflinburg (of lung fever), Mary Ann, wife of F. Smith, Proprietor of this paper, aged 49 years, 5 months and 12 days.

The deceased bore her illness with great fortitude for more than two weeks; she was a kind and affectionate mother, and dutiful wife. She died in the full triumph of faith, confidence and trust in her Lord and Redeemer, and has left behind her the evidence that her spirit is now in the full enjoyment of that rest that remains for the people of God.

The remains of the deceased were taken to New Berlin and interred on Sabbath morning the 2d inst. Mr. Smith returns his thanks to the neighbors for their numerous acts of kindness, and to the citizens of New Berlin for their kindly acts of condolences.

Two others in the Smith family were also newspapermen, Edward and Winfield. Edward Smith (September 23, 1830-January 14, 1883) Frederick's brother lived in New Berlin much of his life. His wife was Anna Catherine Sanders (June 19, 1839-February 11, 1916). In addition to being a printer, Edward managed a drugstore in New Berlin, and also served as the postmaster for the town. The two of them are buried in the New Berlin cemetery.

Winfield Scott Smith (1847-1902), Frederick's son, continued in his father's footsteps in the newspaper industry. About the age of 17 during the Civil War, he became a soldier in Company D, 51<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry. He and several other soldiers were captured and were held prisoner in Andersonville for nearly a year. After

his release and honorable discharge, he returned to live in Mifflinburg. In New Berlin in 1868 he married Sarah Catherine Breyman, and shortly after, they made a new life in Ohio. He worked for several newspapers: Niles Weekly Register, Youngstown Register & Tribune, and the Youngstown Vindicator.

Jacob Kuhney, the Press' printer, was the son of Peter and Elizabeth Kuhney (the 1850 Union County Census spelled the surname, Koony; the name no matter how spelled is a variation of Cooney), and was born on March 9, 1834 and he had an older brother, David, born on March 23, 1828. Jacob Kuhney began in the printer's trade in 1853 at the age of 19. On March 16, 1856 Susan Leitzel became his bride.

During the Civil War the *Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle* noted, "We learn that Mr. Kuhney, late in the Mifflinburg Press office, also joined a Snyder Company" (November 21, 1862). Indeed Jacob Kuhney was mustered into Company F of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania Detached Militia on November 5, 1862, and he enrolled at Camp Curtin, Harrisburg. He began his military service as a corporal and later was promoted to sergeant on January 28, 1863. After being mustered out on July 31, 1863, then a few months later, he went back into the service having enlisted at New Berlin. He was recruited by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant David Mitchell. He was mustered into Company D, 208<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry, on September 1, 1864 at Camp Curtin. He retained the rank of Sergeant and was mustered out of the service on June 1, 1865. He then returned to Union County to be with his wife and children. Around 1870 both he and his brother, David, and their families, migrated to Cedar County, Iowa where they were farmers.

Jacob and Susan were married for 51 years and lived most of their lives near Clarence, Iowa. They had six daughters, some born in Union County, the rest born in Iowa. She passed away on March 17, 1907, and he, June 6, 1917. Both are buried in the Dayton Valley Cemetery, and their farm was nearby. His obituary printed in *The Clarence Sun* on June 14, 1914 stated, "Mr. Kuhney was a man highly respected by all. He was a great reader and kept himself well posted on current topics."

Mifflinburg's Union County Press, although short lived, provided the news to the residents of Mifflinburg, and the surrounding area. The readers learned of national news and local news. They read about war news, both victories and losses, and about the local men who were serving to preserve the Union. The people were informed of weddings and deaths, mishaps and tragedies, election results, businesses, such as,

saloons (restaurants), hotels, stores to purchase clothing, boots and shoes, or perfumes, stage coach lines to transport travelers, and schools to educate the young people, and “help wanted” advertisements.

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