

The Newspapers of Cross County

(Much of the information in this article collected from the Cross County Historical Society archives by Jimmie James, Secretary.)

Wittsburg, Arkansas, county seat of Cross County from 1868 through 1886, was first incorporated as a town on December 11, 1848. It was the first incorporated town in what was then St. Francis County. In 1853, the first newspaper to be started in this area began publishing in Wittsburg. **The Arkansas Traveler** continued from 1853 through 1855, when it was changed to **The Wittsburg Messenger**. The **Messenger** was discontinued, and there was no paper during the Civil War.

Cross County was created in 1862, during the Civil War. Wittsburg was made the county seat of newly created Cross County in 1868. On June 2, 1871, **The Wittsburg Gazette** began publishing in Wittsburg. **The Wittsburg Gazette** was initially published by T.O. Fitzpatrick and W.H. Cole. Cole sold his interest to H.S. Johnson, and he, in turn, sold to T.O. Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick was a Republican, and his paper reflected his views during the days of reconstruction politics. Fitzpatrick sold to Elisha Ferry in January, 1874. November 7th, 1874, saw the newspaper office, along with nearly one half of Wittsburg, destroyed by fire.

After the fire, Elisha Ferry and his son, C.E. Ferry, established **The Wittsburg Phoenix**, which began publishing in July of 1875. The elder Ferry died in 1876, and the paper was discontinued.

In 1878 Fletcher Roleson founded **The Wittsburg Chronicle**. A receipt in the old papers recently recovered indicates the **Chronicle** was moved to Vanndale by October of 1885, and Frank Evans was listed as "one of the publishers". It was renamed **The Cross County Chronicle**. It was sold to Block and Killough in January, 1887. O.N. Killough was listed as publisher in October, 1887. J.R. Robertson was an editor at one time.

The first newspaper in Wynne was **The Wynne Ripsaw**, published from October, 1888 through 1891. It was sold to Wren and H.M. Phelps who changed the name to **The Cross County Gazette**, which was soon discontinued. An 1889 receipt from the **Ripsaw** lists D.J. Burks as Editor and Proprietor.

In 1895 W.A.H. McDaniel started **The Cross County Democrat** in Wynne. T.E. Wood operated this paper in the early 1900's. Another paper started around the turn of the century was **The Blade Exchange**. **The Blade Exchange** was consolidated with **The Cross County Democrat** and published by Fred Cogbill as the **Blade-Democrat**. J.C. Brookfield edited and published the **Cross County Democrat** through the early 1920's. Frank Jones then took it over and re-named it the **Wynne Star**.

In 1904 the Cross County Publishing Company was incorporated by F.D. Rolfw, S.L. Austell, W.H. Newsom, C.B. Bailey, and 10 or 12 others. They began publishing a paper called **The Wynne Progress**. This was purchased by H.J. Bradfield and A.T. Benton. Then, in 1924, Frank Jones joined, combining his **Wynne Star**, and together he and C.O. Wahlquest published the weekly **Wynne Progress** and the daily **Wynne Star**, later to be called the **Wynne Daily Star-Progress**. In 1935 these papers were sold to Donald Murray and Roland Hughes. In 1941 Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Murray became the major stockholders, and after 18 months, the **Wynne Progress** became a weekly. In 1970 Bonner McCollum became the owner and publisher.

Some other Cross County papers during the early 1900's included **The Epworth News**, **The Cross County News**, **The Lifeline**, and **The Pilot**. **The Lifeline** and **The Pilot** were published by blacks.

In Parkin, ***The Parkin Sentinel*** was begun in 1911, with Buford Holmes as Editor. ***The Parkin Free Press*** was established in October, 1933, by Homer Johnson. Shortly thereafter, Sterling Melhorn became editor and publisher, renaming it the *Parkin Times*. This later became the ***Cross County Times***.

The Wynne Shoppers News was started in 1972 by Lonnie Floyd of Forrest City. In September, 1976, the paper was purchased by the Wynne Publishing Company, W.M. Courtney, President and Editor. For a short time they also published the ***Tri-County Sunday News***, which was discontinued. Both of these papers were distributed free to most of Cross County.