

Bloomington's first newspaper published in 1824

Considering the number of newspapers that were started in Monroe County in its infancy it looked like local residents couldn't decide whether they wanted to know what was going on the world or not.

Little is known about Bloomington's first publisher except that he should have gotten some award for persistence. When the state capitol was moved from Corydon to In-

Looking back

By Rose H. McIlveen

dianapolis, Jesse Brandon loaded his press on a wagon and carted it as far as Bloomington. He set up shop here in 1824 and called his newspaper the *Indiana Gazette*.

UNFORTUNATELY THE *Gazette* lasted only two years, ceasing publication with the April 1, 1826 issue. Brandon's problem was probably financial. Subscriptions were usually paid for in goods (flour or corn meal) rather than cash, since coins and printed money were in short supply in those days.

Two years later Brandon resurfaced in the newspaper business with the *Bloomington Republican*. The choice of name reflected his political sentiments in general since The Republican Party was not formed until the 1850's. Although Brandon took on a partner and presumably more capital in 1828, that newspaper lasted only one more year.

IN THOSE DAYS MOST editors or publishers had a political axe to grind and preached to their readers in a flamboyant style on every page. That may have accounted for the rapid turnover in newspaper publications here, because Monroe Countians took their politics very seriously.

On New Year's Day in 1830 local residents started getting the Whig Party point of view in the *Independent Whig* published by W.D. McCullough. He should have paid more attention to the election statistics. In 1840 Monroe Countians voted Democratic 715 to Whig 591 in three townships — apparently not enough Whig readers to keep a newspaper solvent.

THE INDEPENDENT WHIG floundered but not the cause. Marcus Deal and Jesse Brandon teamed up to publish *The Far West*, also unabashedly Whig in editorial sentiment. Their motto: "Willing to Praise, But Not Afraid to Blame" may have gotten them into hot water financially. In one of the last issues the editors complained about subscribers who didn't pay.

Both Brandon and Deal tried repeatedly to get a solvent newspaper going. Brandon's *Gazette and Literary Advocate* died shortly after it bravely began publication. Deal's *Bloomington Post* lasted eight or nine years. The secret of his success was I.H. Brown and I.N. Norris, who had capital as well as ambition.

BRANDON EMERGED AGAIN briefly with *The Ben*

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