Albany Democrat-Herald

Albany Democrat-Herald newspapers on the western frontier were partisan and frequently flaunted their political affiliation. In the statehood era, Albany had two papers associated with the Democratic Party—the *Oregon Democrat* and the *State Rights Democrat*—and both carried its name on their nameplate.

The *Oregon Democrat*, the first newspaper in Linn County, first appeared on November 18, 1859, eight months after statehood. Delazon Smith and his brother-in-law, Jesse M. Shepherd, were the publishers. Smith, a lawyer and minister, served in the Oregon Territorial Legislature and was elected one of Oregon's first senators in 1859.

Shepherd sold the *Democrat* in 1861, and the pro-secession sentiments of its new editor, Pat Malone, caused Postmaster General Montgomery Blair to suspend the paper from the mails on February 15, 1862. Malone changed the paper's name to the *Albany Inquirer*, which was also quickly suppressed. The *Oregon Democrat*-cum-*Inquirer* returned briefly under its original name in 1863, but within two years it had disappeared.

The *State Rights Democrat*, founded in 1865, is regarded by the modern *Albany Democrat-Herald* as its ancestor publication. The weekly paper dropped the *State Rights* title shortly after Fred Nutting bought it in 1882; it became a daily publication in 1888. At the time, Albany had two dailies, the *Democrat* and the *Albany Herald* (founded in 1879 as a weekly, it became a daily in 1885). Among the early owners of the *Democrat* was George Chamberlain, later a U.S. senator and governor of Oregon.

William L. Jackson, an Albany businessman and school superintendent, bought the *Albany Democrat* in 1919 in partnership with Ralph Cronise, who became the paper's editor. Jackson and Cronise bought the *Herald* in 1925 and shut it down, adding *Herald* to the *Democrat*'s nameplate to create the *Democrat-Herald*. Jackson’s son, Glenn, later a business and industry leader and one of the most powerful men in Oregon, inherited the paper and published it, along with eight other small Oregon papers, until his death in 1980.

The *Democrat-Herald* was published for several years by former Oregon Governor Elmo Smith. A publisher of eastern Oregon newspapers, Smith was president of the Oregon Senate when the death of Governor Paul Patterson on January 31, 1956, elevated him to the governorship. After Smith failed to win election in 1958, Jackson named him publisher of the *Democrat-Herald*. Smith was elected to the Oregon Newspaper Hall of Fame in 1979. Named to the Hall in 2004 was John Buchner, who retired in 1999 after thirty years with the *Democrat-Herald*, the last ten as publisher.

The *Democrat-Herald* is currently owned by Lee Enterprises, which purchased the paper in 1997 from the Disney Corporation (which had purchased the paper from Capital Cities/ABC). Its circulation at the end of 2008 was 16,838 daily and 17,586 Sunday.

Written by Floyd J. McKay

Further Reading:

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