

"The Democratic Advocate Established in 1838"  
Carroll County Times article for 12 March 2000  
By Jay A. Graybeal

Newspapers have played an important role in local life from the earliest days of the county. In fact, John K. Longwell, editor of The Carrolltonian and Baltimore and Frederick Advertiser newspaper, effectively used his paper to promote the formation of the new county in the 1830s. Shortly after Carroll County was founded in 1837, a second paper was started in Westminster, The Democrat and Carroll County Republican. A history of this paper, and its successors, was published in the July 31, 1953 issue of the Democratic Advocate:

"In February, 1838, or about nine months after the inauguration of the county government, William Shipley founded 'The Democrat and Carroll County Republican' which he continued to publish in Westminster until 1840, when he sold it to the late Joseph M. Parke, the father of Mr. George M. Parke, who was a man of wide experience, liberal education and strong Democratic principles. His ability was soon recognized and in 1846, the paper had grown until a partnership was desirable. He then sold a half interest to Mr. Josiah T. H. Bringman and the paper became 'The Carroll County Democrat'. The partnership continued until 1848 when Mr. Bringman became sole owner. On October 2, 1851, Augustus C. Appler purchased the paper and published it until July 3, 1856, when he sold it to Joseph Shaw. Mr. Shaw conducted the paper until 1861 when he sold it to W. Scott Roberts, who changed the name to 'The Western Maryland Democrat', shortly afterwards Mr. Shaw again became owner and fearlessly published it during the Civil War until his death in 1865.

The late Jos. Parke was the grandfather of Judge Frances Neal Parke, this city.

During the dark days of the war when sectional feeling governed the actions of men, when might constituted right and civil liberty was denied, Joseph Shaw bravely exercised his rights of speech. When President Lincoln was shot on April 14 the excitement spread over the country and in Westminster, as in many other parts of Northern and border states, and the lives of Democrats were imperiled. The Republicans held a mass meeting in the court house and a resolution was adopted to notify Mr. Shaw 'that the publication of his paper would no longer be permitted.' Sometime after midnight of the same night, the office of the Democrat was raided and the entire equipment, including presses, books, papers, type, and furniture was destroyed and burned in the street in front of the office about a half a block east of its present location.

The writer is credibly informed that Mr. Shaw then went to Baltimore and issued his paper. He returned to Westminster, contrary to the advice of friends, and while asleep in his hotel a few nights after the destruction of his office, a number of men forced an entrance to his room. He offered resistance and was shot, beat, stabbed, and thrown down the steps from the effects of which he afterwards died. A bullet hole in the pillar of a door on Pennsylvania Ave., at 'The Forks' is said to have been made by a stray bullet fired in this fight. The wrongdoers were tried, but acquitted in those days when men looked upon death only as one of the evils of the war.

The late M.W.H. Davis took charge of the debris of the office, and in November following, he published the first number of the Democratic Advocate. In February, 1866, Mr. Jos. M. Parke again bought the paper but in November of 1867 he was elected Register of Wills and in the latter part of the month Mr. W. H. Davis, again became owner. In the following March he sold it to the late William H. Vanderford

and the Democratic Advocate entered upon its long career of uninterrupted success as the strongest factor in Carroll economic, educational, and social progress.

Mr. William H. Vanderford was assisted by his father, Henry Vanderford, editor and journalist, who was widely recognized as one of Maryland's best newspaper men, until 1878, when the former sold a half interest to his brother Charles H. and their father retired from active editorial and journalistic work. For nearly half a century this family gave Carroll County one of the best homepapers enjoyed in Maryland.

The widow of the late Wm. H. Vanderford is still living and resides in Westminster. Mrs. Harry Bond of Washington, D.C. is a daughter of the late Charles H. Vanderford.

In 1906 shortly after the death of Charles H. Vanderford, the present company was formed with the late Dr. H. Howell Billingslea serving as its first president. Dr. Billingslea possessed those attributes of character that maintained the high standard attained by this paper.

William H. Vanderford conducted the paper for the company until his death in June of the same year. For a time, Mr. Paul Winchester became the editor, who was succeeded by Mr. W.J. Wlikinsin. The late Guy W. Steele, of Carroll County also served as editor for many years.

The late George W. Albaugh was one of the main stockholders in the re-organization in 1906 and served for many years as the president until his death in 1933.

The Advocate building, corner of Main and Center Streets, was finished and occupied in October, 1877, and has been at the same location since that date. Mr. Edward O. Diffendal, its present manager, has been connected with the Advocate since 1891.

The present directors and officers of the Advocate are: D. Eugene Walsh, Westminster, President; E. Sterling Brown, Hampstead, Vice-President; Edward O. Diffendal, Treasurer and Manager; Mrs. Virginia Minnick, Secretary; Dr. Charles R. Foutz and Robert Brilhart, directors."

The Democratic Advocate was purchased by the Carroll County Times in 1968 and a joint paper was issued until 1972. Next week's column will trace the history of the American Sentinel newspaper.

Photo caption: J. Leland Jordan, former editor of this newspaper, amassed a collection of local newspapers and used this image of mastheads in his 1937 booklet describing the history of Carroll's weekly papers. His newspaper collection was acquired by the Historical Society in 1955. J. Leland Jordan Collection, Historical Society of Carroll County, gift of the Commissioners of Carroll county, 1955.