

# The Herald: Four-Page Beginning for 'Institution Since 1909'

## HERALD

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the ante-bellum and Civil War days.

Ahoscie's birth sprang out of a new mode of transportation—the railroad. The infant town was fertilized by industry—the big sawmill that was established on the railroad. The growing town of 1910 was nourished by increasing commerce created by the transportation and industry. Commerce was stimulated by men-on-the-make who came and were willing to work to make a stake for themselves in the raw little town of Ahoscie.

These newcomers to Ahoscie and to Hertford County also wanted schools for their children. They wanted churches of their faith and preference. They wanted improvements of streets and living conditions in the town they were building. They wanted political recognition from the political powers that ruled Hertford County, represented by the older communities whose history ran back to pre-Revolutionary days. They wanted liberation from the traditional ways of a dying social and economic order. They wanted progress and growth.

It was these things that W. G. Smith saw and understood when he moved to Ahoscie in 1910. A newspaper, a newspaper with editorial purpose, he knew was needed to encourage, foster and promote these things. As a former newspaper man, as well as a tobacco buyer, he set out to give the burgeoning town of Ahoscie the newspaper he felt it needed for the promotion of its economic, civic, cultural, educational, religious and political progress.

So, Smith revived the suspended Ahoscie Patriot. But he renamed it The Hertford County Herald, a name justified by the fact that the new town of Ahoscie was exerting a steadily stronger influence in all of the county's affairs and also by the fact that there was at the time no other newspaper published in the county.

The Hertford County Herald became a newspaper and a newspaper with a purpose. Smith backed his faith in the community by investing money in a printing plant to print his newspaper in Ahoscie and furnish the business men with the commercial printing service they needed in the conduct of their enterprises. He solicited and maintained a paid subscription list.

The Herald thus became a newspaper in fact in 1910. It became a newspaper with a purpose. The Herald has been "An Institution of Community Service" since that time.

It was at this time that I first knew of The Herald. I knew Mr. Smith, the editor and publisher. I knew his wife and his growing family of daughters. With the natural curiosity of youth, I visited the printing office and it was there that I had my first contact with printing. "The Art Preservative of All the Arts—the Inseparable Companion of Achievement."

I was at that time nine years old. My father was a subscriber to The Hertford County Herald. In the fall of 1910 I was in the fourth grade in school. It so happened that my name was printed in The Hertford County Herald in the honor roll. My mother showed me my name in print in that place, proudly. Her pride in that piece of publicity encouraged me to strive to get my name in print in the honor roll each month. And, in that small instance is an example of how The Herald began to serve its subscribers as a newspaper of purpose and as "An Institution of Community Service."

The Herald has continued through the fifty years since its beginning as a newspaper, devoted to the purpose with which it was founded by Editor Smith. The town and the newspaper have grown together, the newspaper a strong lever in the mechanism of progress.

Following Smith, the founding editor and publisher, there enter-

ed into the life of The Herald in October, 1915, an energetic and earnest young man. He was J. Roy Parker, just turned twenty-one and graduated from Wake Forest College. Smith, the founder, had sold one-half interest in his printing and publishing business to James S. Vinson, a young printer trained in Smith's shop. Now Smith was ready to dispose of his remaining interest to young Parker, who had got some inclination and taste for the newspaper business through vacation-



**LATE PUBLISHER** — J. Roy Parker, an Ahoscie native, purchased the six-year-old Hertford County Herald in 1915 and was its publisher until the time of his death in 1957.

time work in the print shop during his college years. A deal for Smith's remaining half-interest in The Herald was consummated and Parker, whose college training was for the teaching profession, abandoned a career in education for the more precarious business of small-town newspapering.

So, a publishing and printing partnership called Vinson and Parker, was formed. Parker was editor-bookkeeper; Vinson was printer and general manager.

The two, Vinson and Parker, also were the complete editorial and printing staff. Roy Parker was my brother. He was one of a band of adventurous and hardy youngsters who constituted the first juvenile and teen-age group in young Ahoscie's existence as a town, all of whom were imbued with considerable loyalty to, and pride in, the young town that strove for recognition among the older and larger towns of the area.

Parker threw his enthusiasm for progress and his loyalty to the community of which he was a part into his job as editor of the community paper, The Hertford County Herald. Editorially and in personal activity in local affairs, he became a forthright battler for progress and against bigotry, traditionalism and narrow prejudice. The Herald grew in influence, in circulation and in community service.

(Incidental to the above, it might be interesting to point out that James S. Vinson, the senior partner of the Vinson and Parker partnership is a present day resident of Ahoscie, he having retired from the printing and business in 1928 when the writer of this bought his interest in The Herald publishing firm. Another interesting sidelight of this era is that the purchase price of Roy Parker's one-half interest in the firm was \$800 and the deal nearly fell through because the older of the town's two banks in town in those days did not think the newspaper business a good financial risk and refused to loan young Parker the money to make the purchase, notwithstanding the security of my father's endorsement. Which goes to show that attitudes are slow to change, for negotiating a loan today is still a difficult business for this newspaper. Nevertheless, Parker secured the loan from another bank and so was able to get launched on his publishing career.)

The printing equipment of the printing plant set up by the first editor and publisher, Smith, was meager and antiquated, consisting of second hand machinery and a small quantity of type. All printing operations were done by hand without the benefit of mechanical power. The newspaper press was one of the G. Washington handpress design, similar in construction to the modified wine presses that Gutenberg and his successors after the invention of printing from moveable types, was invented some five centuries ago, used for their work. But despite limited physical facilities for printing, the function of The Herald as a newspaper was performed, and it served to spread information and enlightenment and encourage participation in civic affairs in the town and county.

When young Vinson and Parker took over the publishing and printing firm in growing young Ahoscie, they soon embarked on a program of improvement in their printing facilities to match the increasing editorial influence of the newspaper under Parker's forthright and stimulating editorship. This policy of physical improvement of plant and equipment has been continuing throughout the years until today, when the present publishing firm of Parker Brothers, Inc., is recognized to have at Ahoscie one of the most modern and efficiently equipped printing plants in the nation to be found in a community of equal size.

Roy Parker, whose death occurred in April, 1957, while he was serving as representative of Hertford County in the General Assembly, served The Herald as editor from 1911 until ill health forced him to suspend active participation in 1934. His service to the paper, and to the community the paper serves, was continuous except for two short interruptions. First there was service in World War I. The second was a sabbatical of about eighteen months following the death of his first wife, when he left the operation of the paper to his partner, Vinson, and himself took employment on newspapers in Hornell, N. Y., and Logan, W. Va., and a summer course in journalism at the University of Missouri in order to broaden his knowledge of and experience in the field of journalism.

Under his leadership, the Herald aggressively championed many causes for the community betterment and progress. He did not hesitate to stand against traditionalism and stagnation, became a liberal and a voice supporting the progress of Ahoscie as a town and in leading Hertford County through the transition from the old drums that followed reconstruction days into the modern age.

Many of these causes today may have a trifling sound and seem comic in character. But they were serious issues in those early days and caused many a heated argument, with differing opinions—sometimes creating schisms that estranged life-long friends. Among them were championing the no-fence laws that saw the end of the free range of cattle over woodlands; special taxes for better schools; street lights and electric power; paved streets and a water and sewer system for Ahoscie to take the town out of

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JOHN HILL



JOHN W. MITCHELL



JOSEPH M. PARKER



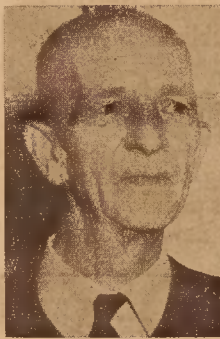
J. ROY PARKER, JR.



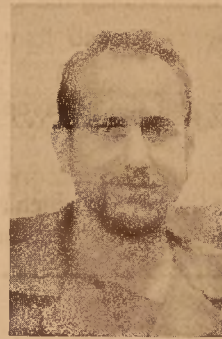
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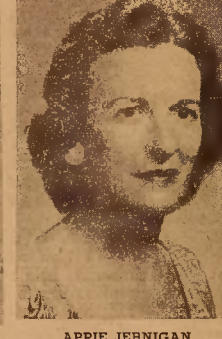
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MARY ELLEN ALBARES



A. BOONE CHANDLER



EUGENE WARD



**HERALD OFFICE—1920s**—Sandwiched between a palmistry shop and a general store, the offices of The Hertford County Herald in 1928 were located in the Railroad-Mitchell block of Main Street in Ahoscie, at a spot now (1955) occupied by the Colonial Food Store. The office of the newspaper included upstairs quarters, where some editorial offices and makeup areas were located. The big press which printed the once-a-week publication was located in the back area of the ground floor.