

Albion New Era

Founded: 1872

Location: Courthouse Square, Albion (1876); next to Albion Opera House (1897); above Fischer Pharmacy (ca. 1930s); 407 South Orange Street, Albion (ca. 1956–)

Samuel E. Alvord launched the *Albion New Era* on 19 September 1872. Alvord had been a loyal member of the Democratic party and would in the future be a candidate on its ticket, but the *New Era* supported “liberal” ideas and Horace Greeley. By its second issue the paper’s masthead announced that it was “Liberal and Independent.” Alvord attacked both political parties but saved his best barbs for the party of Lincoln and Grant. The first editions measured 8½ by 11 inches, ran four pages, and were issued every two weeks. It cost \$1.00 for a year’s subscription and ran mostly national and political news within its four columns. In the early 1870s the paper became a weekly and was enlarged to a six-column folio. It became a popular journal, read by some twelve hundred subscribers by 1875.

Alvord was born in Bradford County, Pennsylvania, in 1824 and began writing for a newspaper at the age of twenty-three, the same year that he started to pursue a career in law. Two years after his first journalism job he moved to Noble County, Indiana, settling in Albion by 1850. At first he attempted to both practice law and to publish the *Albion Observer*, but by 1853 he found the pace too hectic and sold the newspaper in order to focus all of his energies on the legal profession. He switched to politics by mid-decade, becoming the clerk of the Noble County Circuit Court in 1855 on the Democratic ticket, and was reelected in 1857, the same year he became the editor of the *Noble County Democrat*. In 1876 he was elected the county’s clerk, serving until

1884. He could never decide between any one profession, and in the nineteenth century he did not have to do so. He later started a new Democratic journal in Albion, afterwards returning to practice law and, still later, was induced to take up a political post shortly before his death.

In January 1876 Alvord sold the *New Era* to Jacob P. Prickett and Thomas A. Starr. Prickett and Starr changed the format from six columns to nine and began charging \$2.00 a year. They also changed the tone of the paper's editorials to side with Republican party opinions but officially remained "independent." The *New Era* reached readers on Thursdays and continued to run mostly political news, but it also carried information of local interest, including a "local department" that told of the personal happenings in the community such as dinners held, travels taken, and babies born. The partnership dissolved in 1878 when Starr retired, and Prickett was left as the sole proprietor.

Prickett made several changes including reducing the number of columns by one and organizing the journal topically. In an unusual move for a small city paper at the time, news items were grouped by subject and gathered together under rubrics such as "News of the Week," "Political Points," "Washington Notes," or "Indiana News." The paper continued to run four pages in length and to be published every Thursday. With a break from the paper's tradition, Prickett officially declared the journal a Republican paper in 1881.

In September 1895 J. Edgar Buchanan bought the weekly, retaining ownership until 1903 when he sold it to Edwin L. Adair. Under Buchanan, national and international news remained the most prominent items throughout the paper, but personal

reports covered the front page. Buchanan also ran serials of famous books, added news on agricultural advances in a regular column, and saved space for sermon notes and a jokes department. Buchanan bought new printing presses after he acquired the paper, allowing the number of pages in a normal issue to double by 1897. He also reduced the number of columns to seven. Buchanan was a native Hoosier, born in De Kalb County in 1868, who attended Hillsdale College. He later taught in the De Kalb County schools and was named principal of Waterloo Schools in the 1890s. He was active in local Republican party politics and was elected secretary of the party's county committee in the first years of the twentieth century.

Adair shared several characteristics with Buchanan. Adair was an educator who was born in Indiana. After graduating from a Wisconsin normal school, he taught in the public schools of Noble County and was elected the county superintendent of public schools in 1895 on the Republican slate. After Adair bought the weekly he increased the number of columns to eight. The amount of national news coverage lessened during Adair's tenure, and the price dropped to \$1.50 a year. The publisher continued to run serials, sermons, and state news but added a "Women and Fashion" page. During the 1920s the face of the weekly was changed thanks to the creation of inexpensive photography equipment. Pictures donned almost every page. By 1922 the publication day was changed to Wednesdays. During the 1930s the paper looked much the same, excluding pictures, as it had in 1906. It continued to cost the same amount of money for a year, run serials and comics, and let readers know who visited whom and when someone traveled to a distant city. Adair kept the weekly until April 1940 when Richard C. Prickett, a relative of Adair's, bought the journal.

Prickett changed the format to a seven-column layout, introduced a sports page, and further decreased the paper's coverage of national news and politics. During World War II the front page rang with news of transfers, service records, and homecomings, as well as unpleasant items in the "News of Our Men and Women in the Service of Their Country" section. During the 1950s local news dominated the paper, national political news was disseminated through a column written by a Republican congressman, a farm topics section reappeared, and a "Bible Speaks" column filled the space given to sermon notes in decades past. The paper shrank to four pages by 1954 and rose in cost to \$2.00 a year. After the late 1960s even national political news dropped from the pages of the *New Era*. By 1978 political opinion could scarcely be found in any of the journal's eight to twelve pages, even though it continued to proclaim itself a "Republican Newspaper" and to belong to the Republican Editorial Association. Prickett continued to publish the *New Era* until his death in 1978, when his widow, Susan T. Prickett, took over the post of publisher.

Susan continued to run the paper until 1986. She hired Joy LeCount to take on the duties of editor in the 1980s. Susan wrote articles from time to time and expanded the number of columns from five to six and the number of pages to around twenty per issue by the mid-1980s. The journal dealt almost exclusively in news of local interest but had dropped personal items of visits and dinners before the mid-1970s.

Robert L. Allman began purchasing the journal in 1978, becoming the business manager of the weekly in the mid-1980s, and completing the acquisition in 1986.

Allman, an Indiana University graduate and a native Hoosier, started in the printing business in 1957 at the *Tri-County Truth*. He retained LeCount as editor, a position she

held at the end of the century. In 1999 the newspaper and commercial printing firm remained nominally a Republican paper, cost \$15 a year for a subscription, employed ten, and expected sales of under \$1 million. Allman started two other newspapers in the 1990s, the *Northwest News* and the *Churubusco News*, which, along with the *New Era*, are members of the All Printing and Publications Company.