

Chapman Printing

Founded: 1889

Location: 311 West Street, Madison (1889); 315 West Street (1895); 306 West Street (1950s); 107 East Second Street (1980)

In 1889 Alonzo S. Chapman, in partnership with Joseph M. Cravens and Joseph C. Abbott, began publishing the *Madison Democrat*. The newspaper was first issued on 7 September 1889. Chapman was born in Daviess County in 1847. His mother died in the cholera epidemic the following year, and his father went to California in search of gold. At the age of sixteen Chapman left home and joined the Merchant Marine for ten years. Upon his return he went into business—manufacturing, at least at one point, soda fountains. In 1884 Chapman established the *Sorghum Growers' Guide and Farm Journal*, which he published at 311 West Street. When Chapman and his partners established the *Madison Daily Democrat*, Chapman became editor and general manager.

In conjunction with the *Democrat*, Chapman ran a job printing press. Indeed, the five-column newspaper initially was printed on an outfit the value of which, Chapman later estimated, was only \$300. After the first six months Chapman obtained a new Campbell cylinder press. The paper was profitable enough for him to later purchase a book and news Potter press. Chapman eventually obtained complete ownership of the newspaper and printing company. Sometime prior to 1895 the *Democrat* moved to a larger office just north of its old address. A fire in the adjacent building damaged the front of the *Democrat's* new quarters in 1895. The establishment later expanded into the fire-damaged building.

The *Democrat* prospered over the course of the decade. It originally printed weekly and daily editions, but, beginning in 1893, the editors converted the weekly into a biweekly edition. By 1899 the biweekly edition sold for \$1.00 per year and the daily for ten cents a week. In addition, Chapman's press specialized in fine specialty printing and supplied advertising paper for traveling theatrical companies, making large shipments to Chicago, New York, St. Louis, and cities in the South and West. By 1904 the *Democrat* added a four-page morning edition for rural subscribers in addition to the regular evening edition.

Chapman had benefited from the patronage of the Democratic party, having been appointed by President Grover Cleveland superintendent of construction of the Madison post office in the 1890s, but in 1912 he switched the paper's allegiance to the Progressive party out of disgust with his own party's machine politics. He was the Progressives' reluctant nominee for Congress in 1914. The *Democrat* ended publication in 1916, but Chapman's printing house remained in business. Ownership of the Democrat Printing Company stayed in Alonzo Chapman's family after his death in 1924, passing first to his son, Harry Chapman, and later to Charles Frederick "Fritz" Chapman. By the 1950s the business had moved to 306 West Street. At some point in the late 1960s or early 1970s the Democrat Printing Company became the Chapman Printing Company. It remained under Fritz Chapman's ownership into the 1970s. After his death, his widow, Libby Chapman, ran the company. In the late 1970s she sold the printing firm to Harold L. Hadley, who moved the company around the corner to 107 East Second Street. In 1990 Ann Hutsell purchased the printing firm.

