

Kankakee Valley Publishers (*Starke County Leader*)

Starke County Press (may have been predecessor to *Starke County Democrat*)

Founded: 1861

Location: Original location unknown, Knox

Starke County Democrat

Founded: As *Starke County Ledger* (ca. 1866–67)

Location: Original location unknown, Knox

Starke County Republican

Founded: As *Starke County Enterprise*, 1875

Location: Original location unknown, Knox; Lake Street

Starke County News

Founded: 1958

Location: Original location unknown, Knox

Starke County Leader

Founded: 1979

Location: 4 South Main Street, Knox (1979–)

In 1861 Joseph A. Berry began publishing the *Starke County Press* with a printing press that had been hauled by wagon from La Porte to Knox. Berry subsequently sold the paper to James H. Adair, who in turn sold it to William H. Burns. Accounts differ as to the fate of the *Press* after that. It may have been the predecessor to the *Starke County Ledger* owned by Oliver Musselman, or Musselman may have merely acquired its presses after the paper failed. Whatever the case, Oliver Musselman edited the *Ledger* until 1888, when he sold the newspaper to C. O. Musselman. In 1892 two brothers, J. Don and Joseph J. Gorrell, acquired the paper and renamed it the *Starke County Democrat*. The following year Samuel Mark Gorrell assumed editorial control. Samuel Gorrell, from Ossian, was the son of a store owner and had previously worked as a railroad telegrapher and train dispatcher.

Samuel Gorrell published the paper from an upstairs room in a two-story building in Knox. The paper did not prosper. Gorrell was a fiery Democratic editor in a predominantly Republican county. In 1908 he decided to retire from the paper and cast

about for a successor. He chose Henry F. Schricker, the young cashier of the Starke County Bank in nearby Hamlet. Schricker, hardworking and outgoing, had become the bank's cashier at the age of twenty-three. He had already served as deputy county clerk, tried unsuccessfully to be elected county clerk, and been admitted to practice law before the circuit court. The night after Schricker had become cashier of the Starke County Bank, the building and safe were severely damaged by a bomb blast in an attempted robbery, although the deposits were not stolen. Schricker had carried a suitcase with the \$3,000 to \$4,000 in bank deposits wherever he went until the safe was replaced. Schricker accepted Gorrell's offer to purchase the paper after Gorrell assembled a group of backers who would put up the purchase money. Schricker used the *Starke County Democrat* to build his reputation in Democratic politics. He moved his office to the first floor, bought a new press, and boosted Democratic candidates for office. He dutifully defended President Woodrow Wilson's call for America to enter World War I in 1917, even over the protests of Starke County's large German-American population. Schricker sold the paper in 1919 to Carroll W. Cannon. He went on to serve in the state senate, as lieutenant governor, and, from 1941 to 1945 and 1949 to 1953, as governor.

Cannon edited the *Starke County Democrat* until the early 1940s, when, after becoming the postmaster of Knox, he was required under the federal Hatch Act to surrender editorial control of the paper. His cousin-in-law Mary E. Cannon became editor. In 1948 Carroll Cannon sold the paper to Helen and Ware Edgar. In 1950 the Wares formed the Knox Publishing Company and eventually acquired and published two competing Starke County papers: the *Starke County Republican* and the *Starke County News*.

The *Starke County Republican* was founded as the *Starke County Enterprise* in 1875 by William W. Garner and a partner named Peele. It was independent in the 1880s, but S. B. Davis purchased the paper in the late 1880s and renamed it the *Republican*. The *Republican* changed hands several times until John L. Moorman purchased it in 1898. Moorman, a farmer and businessman, had previously published a paper in Idaville, Indiana. A leader in Republican politics who later had a role in running Ohio senator Warren G. Harding's 1920 presidential campaign, Moorman sparred editorially with Democrat Henry Schricker during the years they were both editors in Knox. Moorman sold the paper in 1922 to Herbert K. Laramore. In 1925 Claude S. Steele purchased the paper. Steele had been a store owner and realtor and was active in Republican politics; he served in the state senate during the 1920s. He edited the paper until 1943, when he sold it to Leonard Fenwick. In 1950 the Knox Publishing Company acquired the paper, and Steele briefly returned as editor.

Melvin J. White founded the twice-weekly *Starke County News* with his wife in October 1958; they had moved to Starke County from Chicago in 1951. They initially used the presses of the *Culver Citizen* but moved to Knox when Edward L. Hasnerl acquired a substantial interest in the newspaper. Melvin White died in 1959. The Edgars had formed Starke Publishers, Inc., in January 1960, and their new firm, which controlled the *Democrat* and *Republican*, purchased a controlling interest in the *News*. Hasnerl held a minority interest in the firm and edited the *News* and *Republican* from 1960 to 1966. In December 1972 and January 1973 the Edgars sold all three papers to the Starke County Publishing Company. The three papers merged in 1979 as the *Starke County Leader*. (At

some point the papers or the company were acquired by, or the company changed its name to, Kankakee Valley Publishers.)