

Mishawaka Enterprise

Founded: 1853

Location: Enterprise Building opposite Town Hall (1867); 101 South Main Street (1920); 215 South Church Street (1960); 100 Center Street (1971); 111½ South Main Street (1934, 1993); 410 Lincoln Way East (1993–96); 1115 Spring Street (1996–)

DeWitt C. Ireland launched the *Mishawaka Free Press* in 1853, selling the business to Larry A. Elliot two years later. Ireland made the *Free Press* independent of political party. Elliot reoriented the politics of the weekly, making it a pro-Republican party journal. Elliot changed the name to the *Enterprise* in 1855, but remained as the publisher of the journal for only two years before selling it to Archibald Beal. Beal held on to the weekly until 1865, when he sold it to N. V. Brower. As with most small city newspapers, the publishers also ran a job printing business that crafted handbills, cards, circulars, bill heads, “blanks,” and other material.

A. Montgomery purchased the weekly in 1870. The Great Mishawaka Fire of 1872 destroyed most of the town’s business section, including the offices of the *Enterprise*. Lost in the blaze were the back files of the newspaper and all records of the paper from 1865 to 1872. Just prior to the fire, Montgomery had sold the weekly to Edward A. Jernegan. With the press in ruins and his first issue not yet published, Jernegan turned to Beal of the *Register* for aid. With Beal’s help, the paper did not miss an issue.

Jernegan, a Hoosier native, made the *Enterprise* a true success. He had learned the newspaper trade from his father, publisher of the *Michigan City Enterprise*. After serving in the Union army during the Civil War, at one point as an assistant naval paymaster under his father, he joined the Michigan City journal as the assistant editor,

remaining for four years. His open and genial personality helped to raise advertising revenue. Like many nineteenth-century entrepreneurs, Jernegan was active in every aspect of his community, including city and state politics, organized social organizations, and civic life in general. During his tenure, editorials attempted to nudge the city's citizens toward accepting numerous municipal reforms and technological advances, including street lamps and a publicly funded water company. He also attempted to remain current with the latest crazes, developing a regular column at the turn of the twentieth century on bicycling.

Under Jernegan the *Enterprise* was issued every Friday, ran eight pages in length, and offered readers six columns of news per page at the rate of \$1.50 a year. The editorial page was filled with advice or a few paragraphs of wisdom by famous people. One could learn of the world's celebrities and pick up a little information about the international scene in the "Who's Who in the World" column. Local news was featured on page one, while national and world events filled the last two pages. Each issue contained a Sunday school lesson provided by the Moody Bible Institute. Many of the era's most popular books were serialized in the *Enterprise's* pages. Similar to many community newspapers of the day, personal news, reports on who came to dinner or who fell ill, and club news could fill several pages of print, but did not dominate the paper.

Stuart H. Carroll purchased the weekly in December 1920. The new editor struggled, trying several tactics to hold on to adequate revenues and maintain circulation, but by late 1921 the paper fell into receivership and was not issued again until 1924. Eugene Noon and Ralph E. Jernegan bought the weekly in 1926, but also found it hard, especially after 1929, to keep the paper going. During the depths of the Great Depression

Jernegan surrendered the journal to the Cooperative Publishing Company. Frank Stegman, Ralph H. Lall, and John J. Rhodes, the owners of the company, switched the allegiance of the editorial page to the Democratic party, but kept it independent from any editorial association. By 1943 Stegman held full control of the paper.

Under the new management the number of columns in each eight-page issue was increased to eight. The trio started a “Brickbats and Roses” column on page one to briefly approve of or denigrate local activities. News became even more organized within the pages of the *Enterprise* than they were under Jernegan. News of local interest continued to make page one, but the society page included not only weddings and club meeting dates and news, but also records of parties and personal activities. The team switched the publication date to Thursday. They added new features, such as a page on household hints and recipes, but continued to run older popular favorites, such as serials and the Sunday school lessons. During World War II Stegman devoted an entire page or more to war news and items concerning area soldiers.

In 1949 Stegman sold the paper to Bert Enos and S. E. Boys. Surprisingly, the price of the weekly remained \$1.50 for a year’s subscription. The price had not changed for more than thirty years. Enos and Boys added more personal items and devoted less space to national news, but the basic format remained the same as in the 1930s.

Edith Boys Enos took control of the journal in 1951. Sixteen years later the *Enterprise* was combined with the *South Bend Record*, forming the *Mishawaka Enterprise-Record*. Under Enos the paper began sponsoring a citizen banquet in February in which one man and one woman would be named the outstanding citizen of the previous year. By 1960 coverage throughout the paper was dedicated to local items

of interest, and she added columns concerning area college life. While the journal was nominally a Democratic party weekly, only rarely were editorials of a politically partisan nature. Seven years later the content of the twelve-page weekly had again been changed to report more serious news than before. Subscribers could enjoy a recurring column on the history of the area, and coverage of various organizations around town kept readers informed on their activities. Enos also brought back a section containing small reports from area churches, and her editorials, as well as the flavor of the news pieces, encouraged Mishawaka citizens to become involved in civic life.

In 1977 Margaret McCandless purchased the paper, continuing to direct it until 1980. Sam Mercantini owned the paper for about a year before allowing William H. Wilson to purchase the weekly. Wilson could not keep the *Enterprise* financially viable, however, and ownership reverted back to Mercantini, who took over the publishing duties until he could find a buyer, ECOM Publishing of Wakurusa. In 1999 the four-column-wide, twelve-page “tabloid-style” paper was issued every Thursday by ECOM Publishing. The weekly’s fourteen hundred subscribers paid \$12.50 a year for delivery. Bill Nich was the editor. Nich’s company also owns the *Wakurusa Tribune* and the Yoder Brothers Building. The content of the weekly remained focused on news of local interest. The paper remained committed to the Democratic party, but most editorials continued to focus on nonpartisan issues.