

Peru Sentinel Printing, Inc.

Founded: 28 June 1848

Location: 17 East Main Street, Peru (1848–91); 22 East Third Street (1891–1919); 30 East Fifth Street (1919–)

In 1998 Peru Sentinel Printing, Inc., operated from a building on East Fifth Street—as it had done for more than seventy-nine years—a job printing plant that was once owned by a powerful Democratic weekly. Alfred Jeffrey, the company's owner since 1979, was the sole proprietor of one of the oldest businesses in Peru. The printing firm offered offset and letterpress printing, typesetting, and binding, with sales estimated at under \$500,000.

John A. Graham, a native of Baltimore, Maryland, and an ardent supporter of the Democratic party, began the *Peru Sentinel* after the *Peru Herald* ceased publication. The *Herald*, Peru's first Democratic party organ, had stopped printing newspapers in May 1848 after its owner, John H. Scott, became too riddled with debt to continue. Graham met Scott on the sidewalk one day and casually asked him if he would be willing to sell his printing press. Scott accepted the offer and the *Sentinel's* first edition hit the streets of the city on 28 June 1848.

Graham had come to Peru from Maryland in 1835. After investing in several ventures, including a pork packaging plant, he launched a political career, becoming Miami County's sheriff in 1841. His political rise continued. He served as a delegate to the 1850 Indiana State Constitutional Convention, county clerk in 1866, appointed mayor in 1882 (a post he held until 1889), and served on the town board. He tried to print a daily edition of the newspaper, but quickly found that the city could not support it. He

remained at the newspaper until August 1861, when he retired to pursue his other interests.

The paper remained suspended until Judge Wilson B. Loughridge, an old friend of Graham, bought the press. Loughridge remained a partner in the paper, adding Thomas J. McDowell as a partner until 1867 and selling an interest to John C. Foley in April 1874. Within a year of Foley joining the partnership, Loughridge sold his remaining interest to H. B. Jameson and Isaiah Conner. At some point before 1877 Jameson and Conner must have driven the business into insolvency, as J. A. Miller purchased the paper in a sheriff's sale. Miller quickly sold out to J. C. Maxey, who in turn sold the venture to a Mr. Ewing. Samuel F. Winter owned the business for a short time before selling it to Louis B. Fulwiler and Richard Cole in 1879.

Fulwiler and Cole brought back stability to the journal, keeping ownership in the weekly for a decade. Fulwiler was a Peru native and a Civil War veteran. After the war he served as the county's deputy clerk and was later elected Miami County auditor. After C. N. Kenton owned the paper for less than a year he sold it to F. A. Haimbaugh in November 1889. Haimbaugh operated it in association with his brother, F. D., and another man, T. J. Finch. During the crucial 1896 presidential election, Haimbaugh refused to back the Democratic party's choice, William Jennings Bryan, because of the candidate's, and the party's, support for free silver. The fortunes of the paper seem to have dimmed after 1896, in part because it lost much of its support among Democrats—almost causing its financial ruin. Around 1897 Haimbaugh sold the *Sentinel* to William H. Zimmerman and Frank McElheny.

Zimmerman and McElheny created the Sentinel Printing Company and retained control of the paper and job printing firm for seventeen years before Claude and Roy Kiser acquired an interest in the business in 1915. Like many of the paper's former proprietors, Zimmerman was active politically, serving as Miami County treasurer from 1893 until 1897. Zimmerman died in an automobile accident in 1913, and McElheny continued as the publisher of the *Sentinel* alone for two years. McElheny, the county's auditor on the eve of World War I, sold his interest in the journal to William R. Lehman. Lehman did not continue as a partner for long, selling to the Kisers in 1921.

In June 1924, after seventy-five years in the newspaper business, the *Sentinel's* name and subscription list was sold to the owners of the *Peru Tribune*. The Kisers continued to run the job printing portion of the company. Claude Kiser remained as a proprietor of the printing business until he sold his interests to Bill Manmiller, a partner of Kiser since 1936. Manmiller sold out to Alfred C. Jeffrey in 1979.