

Princeton Publishing Company, Incorporated

Founded: 1846

Location: North side of the square, Princeton (1846, 1871); 112 South Main Street (1923–78); 100 North Gibson Street (1978–)

William F. Hutchen started the *Princeton Democratic Clarion* on a hot August day in 1846. His four-page, five-column paper survived without many advertisers for some time. In the first issue only the Morris National Press, a New York newspaper, and the *Democratic Clarion* itself, rented space in the weekly. Three months later William Kurtz, the Gibson County auditor and longtime school board member, purchased the venture. He simplified the name of the publication to the *Clarion* in October 1855. A year's subscription cost \$1.50 while he was publisher.

The *Clarion* remained a Democratic party paper during the first part of Kurtz's tenure. He supported Stephen A. Douglas for president in 1860 and supported the Union cause after the election. After the Civil War erupted he switched his allegiance to the Republican party and became actively involved in recruiting volunteers for the Union army. In fact he became so involved that in November 1863 publication of the *Clarion* was suspended after he and his entire crew enlisted.

In September 1864 Andrew J. Calkins purchased the weekly and changed its name to the *Union Clarion*. Calkins changed the paper's party allegiance officially to the Republican side. By 1868 circulation reached as high as eight hundred, and the cost for a subscription was up to \$2.00 a year. The four-page format had been discarded for an eight-page paper by 1871. The business was located over the Andrew Lewis & Sons

Hardware Store on the northwest corner of the square. Calkins dropped the “Union” from the weekly’s title in 1873.

After the loss of a pro–Democratic party paper, leading Democrats purchased a printing press and started the *Union Democrat*. It began publication on 17 August 1861. William H. Evans and James M. Keyes edited the weekly for several months before Evans became the sole owner. He was later named postmaster of Princeton after Grover Cleveland took office. A decade after its first publication the title of the weekly was shortened to the *Democrat*. Evans sold the paper to a Mr. Spitzer in 1885. Three years later the Democrat Printing Company, a corporation headed by Evans, took over the journal. The company retained control until 1893 when C. N. Douglass purchased the weekly and began publishing a daily edition. He sold the paper to John C. Gorman two years later. In 1937 Gorman sold the paper to Edmund Scheerer. His wife, Vera Scheerer, succeeded him as publisher in 1941, combining the *Democrat* with the *Clarion* a few years later.

Gilbert R. Stormont bought the *Clarion* in August 1877. Stormont was a Gibson County native and a Civil War hero. After the war was over he attended Indiana University for a time, leaving to establish a newspaper in Albion, Illinois. After selling the *Albion Journal* at a profit he moved back to Princeton and bought the *Clarion*. Twenty years later he began offering a four-page daily, as well as a weekly edition. In April 1898 the weekly *Clarion* merged with the *Gibson County Leader* and the weekly publication was renamed the *Clarion-Leader*. After selling his interests in newspapers, Stormont became more active in politics. He was a delegate to the Republican National

Convention in 1876, a presidential elector in 1900, and a collector for the Internal Revenue Service until 1912.

The *Gibson County Leader* was a Republican party journal, first issued in April 1884. A. J. Calkins and W. D. Robinson started the paper. Calkins, the former editor of the *Clarion*, soon became sole proprietor, selling the weekly to John Dunlap and Newt Selby around 1889. Gil Stormont purchased the *Leader* in 1896.

Fred R. Ewing, Samuel R. Adams, and James A. Westfall purchased the *Clarion* in early 1901. Ewing and Adams served as Gibson County auditor successively from 1896 to 1904. In 1902 the partners added Harry K. Stormont to their business and formed a stock company, designated the Clarion Publishing Company, and renamed the daily paper the *Clarion-News*. The partners quickly discontinued the weekly *Clarion-Leader*. Harry had purchased the *News*, Princeton's first daily newspaper, in 1902. Ewing eventually became the majority owner in the company after years as both the editor and manager.

In 1937 the *Clarion-News* bought the *Democrat*, and the stock company was renamed the Princeton Publishing Company. The two papers continued as separate entities with different editorial staffs but were managed by A. J. Wilhelm. Four years later Vera Scheerer gained control of both newspapers. Scheerer merged the *Democrat* and *Clarion-News* in 1955, forming the *Clarion-Democrat*. Five years later she shortened the title of the paper back to the *Clarion*.

Vera Scheerer acquired the *Herald* in the fall of 1948 to serve as the Sunday edition of the *Clarion-News*. The arrangement did not work out, however, and the

Herald was discontinued after mid-January 1949. N. F. Roberson, a Republican party supporter, had launched the Sunday *Herald* in 1941.

Edward C. Cochrane and his son, Ned, bought the *Clarion* in 1966. They modernized the plant by installing a five-unit Goss Community Press, capable of printing, cutting, and folding up to 16,000 twenty-page newspapers per hour. A sixth unit was added to the press in 1987. National events, especially the Vietnam War, could be found on the first page, but most of the paper was dedicated to the Princeton area. The paper continued to have various pages devoted to different types of subjects, such as sports or social activities, but it was not divided into formal sections.

In 1978 the *Clarion* moved to new quarters on North Gibson Street. The Indiana limestone building doubled the floor space available compared to the old office. W. J. McGiffin Newspaper Company purchased the Princeton Publishing Company in 1979. Later in the year Brehm Communications, Incorporated, of San Diego assumed ownership from the McGiffin family. Brehm installed a new Macintosh computer system in 1994, allowing for computerized billing, modern display ads, and easier editorial control of information. By the late 1990s the daily included sixteen pages, and moderate to conservative editorials gave readers the opinions of the publishers.

In 1998 the company had fifty full-time employees and a circulation of around 6,800. In addition to the *Clarion*, the company produced the *Oakland City Journal*, the *Journal Dollar Saver*, and *Gibson County Today*. Gary Blackburn, a sixteen-year employee, served as the publisher. Brehm Communications continued to own the printing firm. Three shifts operate around the clock to print the four papers published by the company, as well as special orders and other printing jobs.

