

Register Publications

Founded: 1824

Location: The Bank Building, Lawrenceburg (1825–29); 55 East High Street (1829); Burk's Building, Main and Walnut Streets (1860, 1876); 110 East High Street (1918, 1945); 105 East High Street (1946–56); 37 West High Street (1956–66); 126 West High Street (1966–)

Milton Gregg and David Culley launched the *Indiana Palladium* on a cold day in January 1825 on the second floor of a building known as the Bank Building. By the end of their first year in business the partners had purchased the *Indiana Spectator*, a paper that began publication only three weeks earlier than the *Palladium*. Gregg and Culley hired Col. J. Spencer, the *Spectator*'s editor, to edit their four-column folio. For the first several years the paper pledged to be “unbiased by party spirit.” Because of partisan differences, however, Gregg left in 1829, leaving Culley the sole owner. Gregg was a National Republican in politics and was later affiliated with the *Madison Tribune*. Culley later sold the paper to take a Democratic party-appointed position with the land office in Indianapolis. After 1829 the *Palladium* supported the cause of the Democratic party and was especially supportive of the candidacy of Andrew Jackson.

After a decade of publishing the *Palladium*, Culley sold his interests to Victor Cole and Edward Curtis. The partnership did not last long, however, and after Cole attained sole ownership he sold the company to W. A. Cameron, who hired Milton Gregg as his editor. Cameron and Gregg actively supported the presidential candidacy of William Henry Harrison and the Whig party. Soon after Harrison's election the partnership dissolved, and the paper ceased publication.

Gregg quickly began publishing a new newspaper in 1837 named the *Political Beacon*. Until the *Beacon* was purchased by C. W. Hutchen in 1842, it continued to

support the Whig party. Hutchen, a staunch Democrat and the proprietor and editor of the *Gazette*, merged the two papers, keeping the name of the *Political Beacon* for the weekly. A year after the merger Hutchen sold the paper to John P. Dunn and Squire Watts. Dunn was later elected state auditor in 1852. Interestingly both he and Milton Gregg were delegates to the Indiana Constitutional Convention of 1850. The partners sold the paper two years later to John B. Kent, who combined the *Political Beacon* and the *Whig* to create the *Register*.

A succession of owners kept the *Register* a Democratic party-oriented weekly throughout the 1850s. In 1851 the name was changed to the *Democratic Register* to underline its editors' allegiance to the party. Addison Bookwalter brought some stability to the paper in 1853, keeping ownership of the weekly until 1871. During Bookwalter's tenure patrons of the printing shop could purchase signs or bulletins printed in either English or German.

In 1877 a stock company, the Democratic Register Printing Company headed by J. H. Burkham, bought the weekly from Edward F. Sibley and changed its name to the *Lawrenceburg Register*. The company retained control of the newspaper into the 1990s. Burkham quickly sold his shares to Dr. W. D. H. Hunter and William H. O'Brien. W. H. Rucker bought controlling interest in the company in 1894, taking W. T. Gooden as a partner a year later. Bernard McCann purchased stock from Gooden's widow in 1923, joining Bruce McLeaster who had purchased an interest in the company four years before McCann. In 1925 the *Register* took over the subscription list of the *Lawrenceburg News* after McCann purchased the paper from its owners.

The *Register* in the mid-1920s was a mixture of an older era and the modern age. Its focus on local news and events foreshadowed what other local papers were to become by the 1950s. The paper's inclusion of serials and reports on who was visiting whom in the various cities, however, reminded readers of a simpler day. Almost twenty years later the weekly continued to publish reports on out-of-town guests but also included news concerning World War II and highlights on the soldiers fighting in both the Pacific theater and in Europe.

McLeaster's son, Dale, sold his portion of the business to McCann before World War II. In 1945 the printing plant was destroyed by fire, stopping publication for almost a year. When the new plant opened on the corner of Short and High Streets in February 1946 the McCanns continued to hold a majority interest in the company. A year later the McCanns hired Robert Terry as editor, a position he held for six years. They changed the name of the paper to the *Dearborn County Register* to reflect the paper's broader interests. The demise of the *Aurora Bulletin*, the only other Democratic party paper in the county, and the accompanying rise in circulation for the *Register* outside of the Lawrenceburg area, led to the change.

In 1957 Dale and Gene McCann purchased a large interest in the company, assuming management and editorial duties at the paper through the 1990s. By the mid-1960s the number of pages ran from eight to ten in each edition, down a little from the 1920s and 1940s. The editors no longer included the names of visitors and the length of their stay, but they did include reports on the biggest social events in the county. In addition, the publishers began printing at least two editions, one for Lawrenceburg and another for Aurora.

By the 1980s Gene McCann ran a weekly editorial, usually filled with musings about life and the county. The partisanship of earlier decades had virtually disappeared from the pages approved by the McCann brothers. Congressman Lee Hamilton had his own column, a tradition continued since his first term in 1966. Two large sections greeted readers every week, with one section devoted to the county and the second arranged for a city. The brothers sold the weekly to Delphos Herald Incorporated, an Ohio-based newspaper and printing company.

In 1998 Register Publications was a division of Delphos Herald Incorporated. Delphos Herald published five weekly newspapers in Lawrenceburg, Aurora, and Rising Sun, as well as one in Harrison, Ohio. Joe Awad edited the *Register*, and John Reininger published the weekly. The company employed thirty-five workers and offered offset printing services as well as newspaper publishing.