

Royal Center Record and Printing Company

Founded: 1890

Location: 218 Sixth Street, Logansport (1890); corner of Market and North Streets, Royal Center (1890); 111 South Chicago Street (1998)

Dr. John J. Burton, a native of Cass County and a medical doctor, founded and edited the *Royal Center Record*. His partner, J. E. Sutton, published the weekly in Logansport. Burton later bought out Sutton's interest, consolidating the publishing and editorial duties into one office. Burton had attended the Eclectic Medical College of Cincinnati, graduating in 1876. Two years later he moved from Logansport to Royal Center, later opening a drugstore and serving as both the postmaster and president of the town's school board.

The paper began as a four-page weekly, issued every Saturday, and subscriptions cost \$1.00 a year. Editorials supported the Prohibition party and were also partial to the Democratic party. The paper's major concern was the local area, however, and politics never played a major role in the weekly's development. The first issue hit the city's streets on 23 August 1890.

Like so many weeklies of the period the *Record* changed hands several times after Burton sold it to a Mr. Grimes and J. C. Wentworth in the early 1890s. Six years after the paper's founding, however, the ownership shuffle stopped with the purchase of the weekly by Oliver H. Hand. The Hand family continued to run the paper for ninety years.

By 1900 the paper ran commentary on its front page and had expanded in size to eight pages. A summary of news from around the world appeared on page two.

Editorials continued to defend the Prohibition party and deride Republican officials, but the publishers took a more independent stance than they had a decade before. Editorials

in 1910 continued to be independent, but were generally pro-labor and anti-Republican. By the 1920s the cost of subscriptions had risen to \$1.50 a year, and the number of pages had increased to ten.

After the turn of the century a publishing company was added to the newspaper business, and the firm bought a Chandler & Price Platen Press. Oliver Hand continued to operate the weekly until his death in 1924. His sons, Frank and Jessie, became the second generation of Hands to operate the paper and publishing company. In 1927 Frank and his wife Mary bought Jessie's interest in the enterprise and continued to operate the business together until 1958.

During the Great Depression the Hands backed the Democratic party officially by joining the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association and inserting the subtitle "A Democratic Weekly" under its subscription information. By 1940 "The Rooster's Spurs" column blasted Republican claims and officials, one of the only blatantly partisan columns to appear in the journal. In the mid-1950s Philip Hand, the son of Mary and Frank, became a partner in the company. After the death of Frank, Philip and his mother ran the business as partners into the early 1980s.

Many community newspapers stopped their partisan pose by the 1960s or 1970s, but the *Record* continued to support Democratic party nominees into the 1980s. By 1984, while the paper continued to be a member of the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association, it did not give any space to the Democrat's nominee nor did it endorse a single candidate. In 1998 the paper was independent in its politics.

The weekly did not follow trends set by other community newspapers in areas beyond politics. Serials, which many newspapers did away with after the turn of the

twentieth century, continued to be published in the *Record* until the 1960s. Social notes, vacations, and visitors continued to be reported into the 1990s, a practice not followed by many weeklies after 1970. Columns do not last very long in most newspapers, but seem to have a special longevity in the *Record*. The “Down Memory’s Lane” column began as “The Old Timer” in the 1940s and fifty years later continued to retell anecdotes and tales from as many as one hundred years before.

In 1988 Philip Hand sold the paper and publishing company to Bobbi and Stephen Fisher. In the late 1990s the paper continued to be published weekly. Community news, church activities, and personal stories and reminiscences dominate each issue. Several columns offer readers a look back at the community through the years.

In 1998 Stephen and Bobbi Fisher sold the paper and the Hand Printing Company to Jeffrey C. Funk. Sales were expected to be under \$500,000 for the year, and the company employed four people. Beyond publishing the paper the company offered offset and letterpress printing, typesetting, and binding services.