

Roy and J. Mayon Parker

The Parker brothers, Joseph Roy (1895-1957) and James Mayon (1901-1977), made Ahoskie a weekly newspaper hub in the 1930s with one of North Carolina's first newspaper chain operations.

In a single printing plant, built just before World War II, they published four weeklies, including their hometown Hertford County Herald and papers in Bertie, Gates and Northampton counties.

The older Parker became owner-editor of the Herald just after graduating from Wake Forest College in 1915. He had been a summer printer's devil and pressman while at school. Mayon, who had a similar back-shop beginning, joined him in 1928. When they acquired the Bertie Ledger-Advance in Windsor, Mayon moved there to edit it, and then moved to Ahoskie to take over the firm when Roy Parker became ill in 1934.

In the 1920s, Roy Parker was among the first to acquire a linotype machine for a weekly newspaper, and the Herald twice won the coveted Savory Loving Cup, then the state's most prestigious journalism award for content and design.

In the early 1930s, Roy Parker and several other editors, notably Victor Meekins of the Coastland Times in Manteo, commissioned a Nags Head beach cottage, planned as a clubhouse and retreat for North Carolina's press and named "the Fourth Estate."

Parker was president of the North Carolina Press Association in 1933-34, a professor of weekly journalism at the University of North Carolina in the 1940s and a member of the 1957 General Assembly from Hertford County when he died.

Mayon was equally innovative. He acquired one of the first press cameras owned by a weekly, a Graflex, in 1928 and took thousands of photographs of the region. He called the first meeting of the Eastern North Carolina Press Association.

Mayon's earliest and enduring claim to fame was that as sports editor of the Wake Forest College newspaper in the early 1920s, he coined the team nickname, the "the Demon Deacons." Throughout his career, Mayon Parker used stationary identifying himself simply as a "Printer." And it is on his gravestone.

For a quarter century, the Parker Brothers, Inc. weeklies won dozens of NCPA awards for all phases of news and editorial

operations. A 1939 historical edition was later expanded into a local history book, *The Ahoskie Era of Hertford County* by Roy Parker.

The newspaper group remained in the family, led by Mayon's son, Joseph M. Parker, until the 1980s.

By Roy Parker Jr.
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