

NC Press Association

The shape and business of collegial gatherings of North Carolina editors was set in the earliest days of the North Carolina Press Association, formed on May 15, 1873, at a “convention” of 29 journalists gathered in the Wayne County courthouse in Goldsboro. The convention was called for both professional and political purposes.

Professionally, the new organization hoped to better regulate the flood of patent medicine and other forms of Victorian Era quack advertising that inundated the journalists’ offices. Some editors rejected the medicine while others accepted the ads gratefully, even offering cut-rate advertising fees. A resolution called for the new association to “examine the character and reliability of all advertising agencies seeking business with members.”

The gathering also had political aims. It prepared a resolution for the North Carolina General Assembly calling for preparation of statistics and other information on the state that could be used not only to further economic development but also probably to dampen the propensity of editors to make far-fetched claims about their communities.

The association was also fraternal. Editors and publishers generally liked each other's company. The Georgia Press Association sent a telegram to the new association saluting “the fraternity of the ‘Old North State’” and asking for a report on its activities.

The social aspects of the association quickly rose to the fore at this founding meeting, when members were invited for a free ride on the cars of the Atlantic Rail Road to the developing town of Morehead City, located on the sound just down the tracks from Goldsboro.

By 1875, the social aspect of NCPA was traditional. At the meeting that year in Wilmington, the gathering took on a “carnival atmosphere” as members rode the steamship Raleigh along the Cape Fear to Smithville or Southport. The Wilmington Concert Cornet Band joined the group.

The trip to Wilmington also set a pattern of holding NCPA conventions around the state, rotating between east and west. Asheville hosted its first convention in 1881 and Morehead City, in

1886. By 1900, Asheville would have another convention; Morehead, two more.

Another ironclad tradition established early was to rotate the presidency each year, usually requiring the vice president to prepare the program for the coming year.

By 1900, with Asheville once again the scene of the convention, more than 130 editors and publishers, many with spouses and children, were in attendance. NCPA itself had become a tradition for newspapers in the state.

By Roy Parker Jr.
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