

## Sandpoint Newspapers

by Gary Pietsch

Newspapers came and went over a long period of time in Bonner County. There were years of bitter competition among editors-years that resembled the biting language of the Tombstone Epitaph of Tombstone, Arizona. It was a time when men differed in their views and did not hesitate in renouncing the views of a competing editor. It was a time before people preyed on every written word in order to scream "libel" or "slander." It was a good time.

The beginning of the newspaper business in this area had its roots in Rathdrum, Idaho. There the Kootenai County Republican first appeared on Friday, May 19, 1899. What is now Bonner, Boundary, Benewah, and Kootenai counties made up one huge county called Kootenai.

John F. Yost edited the Republican, which consisted of four pages. The outstanding feature was its editorials, which often conflicted with the Coeur d'Alene Press, a paper backed by the Democratic Party. The Republican covered some national news as well as everyday events of the local citizens. The cost of the paper was \$1.50 per year or \$2.00 per year if not paid in advance. Probably the most read section of the paper was page two where "Seen and Heard About Town," was found.

On 12 July 1901, the Republican announced that the paper had moved to Sandpoint, Idaho. Two things prompted the decision to move. Rathdrum had two other papers with which Yost had to compete while Sandpoint had none. The closest paper to Sandpoint was the Bonners Ferry Herald, which made Sandpoint a prime target for Yost and his Republican.

The Republican was published as a semi-weekly beginning in May 1903. The paper came out on Wednesday and Saturday but the subscription rate remained the same. It was during this time that local citizens could read, on the front page, events that were happening in Sandpoint and the county.

Two men, Al Filson and George Barker, arrived in Sandpoint in 1903. Both had extensive newspaper experience and they were looking for a paper to buy. They contacted John Yost and he agreed to sell the Republican. George Barker later gave an account of the purchase, which gives a picture of Sandpoint at that time. Barker stated, "On arrival in Sandpoint we found the newspaper office in a thick forest of pines at the corner which was occupied in after days by John Bode's saloon and later by Dr. Peet's office. The Allen Bros. Drug store was just being completed and there were a few frame buildings on First street, most of which were occupied by saloons." Filson and Barker changed the paper's name to the Northern Idaho News and published it as a weekly. The emphasis of the News provided coverage for Sandpoint as well as the surrounding communities.

A split between Filson and Barker occurred in 1904. Barker sold his share of the paper to Filson and moved from the area. In the summer of 1905 Barker re-appeared in Sandpoint. He had purchased the Priest River Enterprise and moved the paper to Sandpoint. The Enterprise was renamed the Pend d'Oreille Review and was housed in the Solomon Building located at 105 South First Avenue.

The competition between Filson and Barker was intense, to say the least. Their conflicting views on various subjects, especially politics, were aired in both papers. Their remarks often became personal in nature.

In 1924, a mimeographed daily paper called the Daily Bulletin hit the streets of Sandpoint. Laurin E. Pietsch and J.L. Stack published it. It was free and other papers treated it as a joke. After four months of free distribution the Bulletin began charging 25 cents a month for distribution. In 1926 Pietsch was the sole owner of the Daily Bulletin.

In 1928 Sandpoint was a four-paper town. J.C. Parsons had taken over the Pend d'Oreille Review and later established the Daily Panidan. This was in direct competition with the Daily Bulletin. His other paper, the Pend d'Oreille Review, was competitor to the Northern Idaho News.

The little mimeographed paper that had been "a joke" survived Parson's efforts to shut it down. Not only did it survive but also on August 1, 1929 Laurin Pietsch purchased both the Panidan and the Pend d'Oreille Review. He consolidated the three papers into two – The Pend d'Oreille Review, a weekly, and the Daily Bulletin, which was distributed daily. Pietsch dropped all political ties and the papers were declared independent.

In 1936 the Review was discontinued for financial reasons and to give Pietsch more time with the Daily Bulletin. During the first part of 1940 the Bulletin became a weekly and was renamed the Sandpoint Bulletin.

The newspaper feud ended in 1944 when the Northern Idaho News and Sandpoint Bulletin merged and became the Sandpoint News-Bulletin. Sandpoint was once again a one-paper town.

Pete Thompson started another paper in 1966, which he called the Bee Hive. In 1975 Thompson purchased the Sandpoint Bulletin from Pietsch and for a time published both the Bee Hive and the News Bulletin. Eventually the papers were combined and became the Sandpoint Daily Bee. Pete Thompson acquired papers in Post Falls, Priest River, and Bonners Ferry.

In 1984 Duane Hagadone purchased the Daily Bee and at a luncheon speech told of his plans to start a Sunday paper. This paper would be in direct competition with the Spokane based Spokesman-Review that, at that time, was the only Sunday paper in the area.

In 1988 the name of the paper was changed to the Bonner County Daily Bee and is distributed as a morning paper to this date.

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