

NNA: The Fifth Decade

Journey through the National Newspaper Association's history



"Radio has become a keen competitor to the daily newspaper and a genuine nuisance to the weeklies."

-- George B. Dolliver, publisher of the Battle Creek Moon Journal in Michigan
NNA's annual convention, 1931



The new trend of public relations, which had caught on during World War I while the government tried to promote its war efforts, was irritating rural papers. Sometimes journalists — in acts of protest — returned their press releases, which they often called "camouflaged advertising," to the sender.

The NNA distributed political cartoons that spoke out against the U.S. post office's government-funded advantage over the local printing and mailing shops, and also distributed cartoons against free all-advertising publications called handbills. NNA encouraged small news outlets to publish the cartoons on their front pages. Two of them (pictured left) took on the postal system and free shopper handbills.

1925



"The sheer necessities of life became critical to many families, and yet the demand for a newspaper remained great. ... There seemed to be more time to read, and people were vitally interested in the latest developments affecting them and their communities."

- Robert Karolevitz, author "From Quill to Computer"

1927

The National Newspaper Association, like most of the country, experienced unprecedented financial trouble in the aftermath of the 1929 stock market crash.

The Great Depression was felt by small-town newspapers. When advertisers couldn't afford to buy ads and readers had a harder time purchasing subscriptions, many papers began bartering. Instead of cash, the newspapers would receive produce from customers and advertisers.

At the Marshfield (MO) Mail, a customer could trade a 5-pound chicken for a year-long subscription. Most rural papers survived the depression.

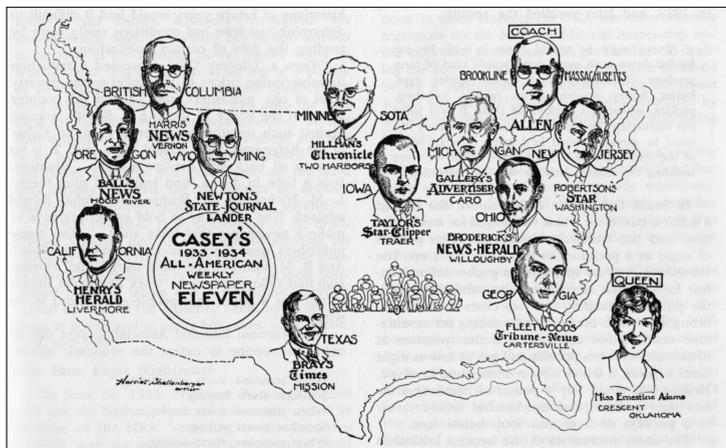
At the NNA's 42nd convention, Santa Clara (CA) Journal Editor Bernice Downing told the crowd that during the newspaper association's third decade, she and her sister had inherited the small California paper from their father.

When the sisters took over their father's paper, they also inherited a \$10,000 debt, had only \$7 in the bank and eight- to 12-hour working days. A year later, the paper endured an earthquake that ruined the business office.

"But with all those trials and tribulations," Downing said, referring to herself in the third-person, "those young girls never became discouraged nor disheartened to the point of quitting — though there were days when they longed for the taste of a porterhouse."

Her paper gained recognition on the west coast, and Bernice Downing also became the postmaster of Santa Clara, CA.

1929



During the 1930s, University of Oklahoma journalism professor John Casey and the NNA picked an all-star team of 11 weekly newspapers to highlight their exemplary work.

Presidents of NNA's fifth decade

1. Frank O. Edgecombe of the Nebraska Signal in Geneva, NE, 1925
2. Herman Roe* of the Northfield News in Northfield, MN, 1926
3. Charles M. Meredith* of the Quakertown Free Press in Quakertown, PA, 1927
4. Erwin Funk of the Rogers Democrat in Rogers, AR, 1928
5. Lemuel C. Hall* of the Wareham Courier in Wareham, MA, 1929
6. George B. Dolliver of the Battle Creek Enquirer and News in Battle Creek, MI, 1930
7. L.M. Nichols of the Bristow Record in Bristow, OK, 1931
8. Justus F. Craemer* of the Orange Daily News in Orange, CA, 1932
9. Walter D. Allen* of the Brookline Chronicle in Brookline, MA, 1933
10. Kenneth F. Baldrige* of the Bloomfield Democrat in Bloomfield, IA, 1934

* No photo available

Political ambition

Justus Craemer served as California Republican Party chairman 1936-1938, a few years after his stint as a president of NNA. In 1936, former NNA president Kenneth Baldrige, D-IA, ran for a U.S. House of Representatives seat but lost to his Republican opponent.



