Early Struggles of Anacortes
Newspaper Men Graphically Told

The part that newspapers have played in the building of the city of the Great West has been written about in Anacortes. Even almost before Anacortes was a line on the political map, there was a newspaper here exploiting the advantages of Skagit Island as a site for a metropolis and on the staff of that pioneer paper were some who had more than common ability.

At the time of the writer’s first visit here there was no wharf, passengers being put ashore in a rowboat and landed on the beach. This particular day, the only other passenger to land was a keg of beer — and it should be unnecessary to say the keg of beer was the most popular of the new arrivals.

An incident happening in ‘93, if dates are remembered correctly, illustrated the good fellowship of the times. On a beautiful summer evening, such as made all the old pioneers think this a paradise and dreamland, while the “fresh” set at once on the beach in front of the log cabin, in which the Enterprise was published, a row-boat vessel hove in sight down Guemes channel. The visitor was a stranger to these waters and with Fays flying it is not unlikely that he was the first hand of Anacortes on the beach, not accustomed to and excitedly excited that they were about to the second time. “Frazzle” was a current word at that time, and in a short time he was wondering a single coal with such vigor that a responding signal whistle was given by the vessel. This was all the encouragement necessary to landing on the beach. There was a drive out, a horse carried and hurriedly displayed until his social media posts of today.

HE MAY NOT KNOW

A newspaper is a type of printing that duplicates entire pages of a newspaper, including both type and illustrations. The main outcome of the two, creating an oversimplified impression of a person or group of people, is to present the printing text.
Another Newspaper for Anacortes: “Our friend, the enemy” have put an appearance in the shape of a large consignment of printing material, the freight alone on which will run into the hundreds. We wish them joy – great chunks of it – and only trust their path in the stormy sea of journalism may be as pleasant and smooth a one as ours has been in the past. The new paper will be known as the “Anacortes American,” and has a substantial backing.

– from the Daily Progress, April 26, 1890
Origin of the Paper

The journalism class of 1927 decided that the Anacortes High School needed a paper of its own, because almost every high school in the county, and a great many of those smaller than our high school, printed and supported weekly papers. Previously, the class were not limited to the publication of the Seahawk alone, but also planned and put on a very fine assembly before the student body which featured by the printing and presentation of poetry on the stage, a speech by the principal, and supported several other entertainers.

The editor, yes, he's the guy who has to skimp and sweat and lie and take an awful ragged chance in stooping in half nude is what we call ingratitude. We praise the teachers and the schools, the wise and community booster, Gant was a songbird of rare talent. Throughout his life, his take on everything from politics to religion was sure to be published in one of his newspapers. Gant talked to the San Francisco Chronicle in June of 1928, as he waited to catch a boat for Orcas. Poet, newsman, community booster, Gant was a songbird of rare talent. Throughout his life, his take on everything from politics to religion was sure to be published in one of his newspapers. Gant called it as he saw it in technicolor phrases. Anacortes pioneer Gus Hensler noted that Gant hated only sham and humbug. “If the man ever made a mistake it had all the appearance of a blunder. Almost everything he had in his newspaper was sure to be published in one of his newspapers. Gant called it as he saw it in technicolor phrases. Anacortes pioneer Gus Hensler noted that Gant hated only sham and humbug. “If the man ever made a mistake it had all the appearance of a blunder. Almost everything he had in his newspaper was sure to be published in one of his newspapers. Gant called it as he saw it in technicolor phrases. Anacortes pioneer Gus Hensler noted that Gant hated only sham and humbug.

The Seahawk name for school sports teams in 1925. At the high school, printed and supported weekly papers, the class were not limited to the publication of the Seahawk alone, but also planned and put on a very fine assembly before the student body which featured by the printing and presentation of poetry on the stage, a speech by the principal, and supported several other entertainers. The editor, yes, he’s the guy who has to skimp and sweat and lie and take an awful ragged chance in stooping in half nude is what we call ingratitude.

As a young newspaperman, Gant made his way west. In 1909, he became editor of the Anacortes Advance after the editor resigned without notice. Gant learned the printing trade while working for the Advance. Shortly thereafter, he began to publish his own hometown newspaper. The Tillikum published a pa...
In its earliest years, the Anacortes Citizen was located in a building across from City Hall. The office was in the Fry McMillan Building on the NE corner of Sixth and Q, which was the site just vacated by the Anacortes American. The McNarys purchased the Anacortes Citizen newspaper in 1915, then started a second weekly newspaper, the Anacortes Mercury. They combined the two papers to form the Anacortes American. Cornelius Root owned the Anacortes American newspaper for almost half a century, although most old histories tend to give the lion's share of credit to her husband, Joseph. The relationship of the McNarys, complicated at best, deteriorated over the years. By 1940 they lived in Seattle, and the paper covering Fidalgo Island was the Daily Mercury, which debuted on March 26, 1927. Margaret Hamilton McNary, who was party to the marriage, was a native of Anacortes. She was the daughter of John and Emma Hamilton, who moved to Anacortes in 1897. Margaret's domain was the office, where she worked as reporter, news editor, proofreader, office manager, newsboy and typesetter. She was a “specialist,” according to the 1956 city directory of Anacortes, in antiques, hospitality and interior decoration. She was a charter member Anacortes Business and Professional Women's club; and active member and long-time supporter of Delta Kappa Gamma and Tri Sigma. Margaret Hamilton McNary died in 1984 at the age of 92, after a long illness. The marriage did not fare well. Joseph finally left Anacortes in 1942, leaving her as publisher of the Daily Mercury. She acknowledged Margaret McNary's personal investment in the business. By 1942, Joseph was unable to pay his personal address was in Seattle. In 1956, Root was a journalist who started his journalistic career at the Mercury in 1941, describes the paper covering Fidalgo Island: "The American’s share of credit to her husband, Joseph. Active and deeply interested in all civic and cultural affairs, she spearheaded and supported through her newspaper many projects for city improvement during the years she served as publisher of the Daily Mercury, according to her obituary in the Anacortes American.

The only daily paper covering Fidalgo Island"
The rest of the story is pretty well known. The American changed hands (in 1950) with John Webber and Wallie Funk purchasing the interests of Cornelius Root. They did a "Daily Progress" number on the AA, augmenting it with the American Bulletin, a four-day-a-week tabloid, a move that industry peers deemed "insane."

Another "peer" declared Anacortes "the boneyard of Washington State journalism. (The American Bulletin) will be buried within a month."

First published in October 1950, it lived through Dec. 31, 1961, at which time the American/American Bulletin merged with the Skagit Valley Herald. By 1964 the entire operation was purchased by the Scripps League Syndicate, which has been in charge of the Herald and American ever since.

Who's this Faith? She was the long-time society editor of the American (back then all women's news was classified as "society") and Faith could turn it out voluminously on her typewriter with one hand, the other working on a crossword puzzle.

We recall Faith's social items were replete with meticulous details of bridal showers, weddings, luncheons (a.k.a. "dainty collations"), evenings of bridge, whist and pinochle and always a complete listing of who made the cut. The latter could provoke snitty reaction if everyone in your block was asked and you weren't.

In years of service, Art Olson, a 1928 graduate of Anacortes High School, holds the record for longevity at the American. He came direct from AHS to the newspaper, and in 31 years ran the gamut from printer's devil, to press operator, to roving reporter, head of circulation department, to ad salesman. The Bulletin was distributed by carrier under the direction of Art Olson, the jack-of-all-journalistic-trades and who didn't know a man he didn't like.

"Look out your front window," ordered the voice on the other end of the line. We lived then in the 1200 block on 12th Street, a couple of doors down from Whitney School. We looked due north. From a distance of some six blocks away we stared directly into an A-bomb-like cloud of fire and smoke. It was Farwest Fishermen, Inc., going up in flames. The American's staff wasn't a big one, but it was up the challenge. Quickly assembled at the scene of the fire, at the foot of K overlooking Guemes Channel, assignments were shouted out—even to pressman Art Olson. The fire was a big one and damages would total into the hundreds of thousands of dollars—1957 dollars.
Douglas Allmond Print Shop after the Great Seattle Fire of 1889

Month before establishing the Anacortes American

How I began business after the fire of June 6, 1889
Northwest Enterprise, Bowman’s Store & Anacortes Post Office

The general store built by Amos Bowman was photographed by J.O. Booen c. 1889. The store and the first Anacortes Post Office opened in 1879 at the foot of what would become Q Avenue: "At high tide one could stand on the front porch and toss a stone into Guemes Channel," according to a 1915 article in the Anacortes American. James M. Moore, the shopkeeper and post office manager, is on the left side of the wagon, hands on the wheel. William Allard, with a large beard, is in the cart. Marion Clark Watkins is one of the small children at far left. The back row includes Charles Mitchell, Sarsfield Kavanagh, Mamie Hyatt, her mother, and three or four Wooten family members, according to information on the photograph.
What are your strongest memories of reading the newspaper?

What news clippings have you saved? Share them with us!

What future news do you want to read?
Carrie May White
“Carrie White is by far the most charming of the chroniclers of early days in Anacortes. She was just twelve years old when her family took up residence on Fidalgo Island in 1873. She died in Anacortes in 1904 when she was still a relatively young woman. Her life had been filled with many good works and bright observations that she was always pleased to share with others.”

- Dick Fallis

Sophie Walsh
Sophie Walsh had lived on Fidalgo Island for twenty years when she began publishing biographical sketches in the Anacortes American in the late 1920s, documenting dozens of pioneer stories with a rare inclusion of the perspective of women.

Bill Mitchell
A muralist, historian and “authenticiterian,” Bill began working in local newspapers in the 1970s, illustrating for the Northwest Passage, a Bellingham underground bi-weekly. He immersed himself in the 1979 Anacortes Centennial celebration, creating a scrapbook, flag and numerous historic cartoons and articles for the Anacortes American. Bill coordinated many efforts to preserve historic structures and vehicles. He also created a series of Anacortes history calendars in the 1980s. His biggest and most enduring work is the Anacortes Mural Project, a team effort for which he was the primary artist, designer, fundraiser and wrangler. Over 100 murals depicting local people in history adorn the buildings of downtown Anacortes.
ANACORTES ADVERTISEMENTS

1882 to 1886

1890 to 1899

1900 to 1909

1910 to 1922
BILL MITCHELL’S
ANACORTES CENTENNIAL CARTOONS

City centennial flavors July 4 fun

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!

ANACORTES

Old Fashioned Picnic on Bowman’s Bay

Rowing Susie’s Mollusk

ANACORTES

ANACORTES AMERICAN

Arts festival!

If You Want

Dutchess

These House Capture the Medals

PACIFIC

Our Prices are right. We want your business.

FIT

Penny’s

An interesting package Floats near Cap Sante

B. L. Martin

Anacortes

Special rates for Family Laundry Work
Strictly first class work guaranteed