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ARIZONA'S FIRST NEWSPAPER,
THE WEEKLY ARIZONIAN, 1859

By MARVIN ALISKY *

WHEN newspapers came to Arizona, the land area bearing that name was merely the western portion of the Territory of New Mexico. Not until four years after Arizona acquired its own journalism did it achieve governmental status as a territory. But unlike New Mexico, Arizona first acquired a newspaper in the English language, not in the Spanish language.

New Mexico's first newspaper, *El Crepúsculo de la Libertad*, begun in Santa Fe in 1835,¹ naturally was published in Spanish,² its potential readers being Mexicans. Arizona's first newspaper, *The Weekly Arizonian*, began in Tubac in 1859,³ carried not one story in Spanish. Only after eight English-language newspapers had been established during an eighteen-year period, did Arizona in 1877 finally get its first Spanish-language newspaper, *Las Dos Repúblicas* at Tucson.⁴

Just one century ago, relatively few residents, English-speaking or Spanish-speaking, were to be found in Arizona. Rapport between the two language groups could hardly have been at a maximum in the aftermath of the War of 1846-1848 and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853. To officials in Washington, Tucson and Tubac were the news centers of Arizona⁵ despite military installations at Fort Yuma.⁶ Tubac and Tucson

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1. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1580-1888* (San Francisco, 1889), 341; D. C. McMurtrie, *The Beginning of Printing in New Mexico* (Chicago, 1932), 1-10; Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism* (New York, 1947), 288.

2. *Ibid.*, 287.

3. Estelle Lutrell, "Arizona's Frontier Press," *Arizona Historical Review*, VI (January, 1935), 15; Marvin Alisky, "Early Arizona Editors," *The Quill*, XLVI (March, 1958), 10.

4. Lutrell, *op. cit.*, 22-23; *Pettingill's Newspaper Directory* (New York, 1878); *Arizona Daily Star* of Tucson referred to pioneer Spanish-language paper in a story on July 29, 1879. Selected issues of volumes I and II of *Repúblicas* in Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

5. *Hse. Ex. Docs.*, 34 Cong., 3 sess. no. 76, pp. 34-35. *Sen. Ex. Docs.*, 32 Cong., 2 sess. II, no. 1, p. 84.

6. Averam B. Bender, *The March of Empire: Frontier Defense in the Southwest, 1848-1860* (Lawrence, Kans., 1952), 42; Ralph P. Bieber, ed., *Frontier Life in the Army, 1854-1861* (Glendale, Calif., 1932), 260.

had been military outposts for the Spanish, then the Mexicans, then the Americans. Aside from the army, the vanguard of Anglo civilization in 1859 was epitomized in Arizona by the alliterative two E's: the engineer and the editor.⁷

Mining engineers came to dig mineral riches from the ground. Journalists came to dig mining news from the camp sites. The printing press upon which the first newspaper was printed was brought to Arizona by William Wrightson in 1858 upon specific direction to do so by the Santa Rita Mining Company of Cincinnati.⁸ The Santa Rita Company had set up a headquarters in Tubac to expand operations in mines in southern Arizona. Meanwhile, the home offices of the company in Cincinnati were frequented by Wrightson and his brother Thomas, editors of the *Railroad Record*, a periodical which advocated western railroad expansion and American exploration of the newest United States territorial acquisition.⁹ The company chose Wrightson as press custodian.

In 1855, the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company opened a trading post in the former Mexican barracks in Tubac.¹⁰ Americans and Mexicans came from as far as the border to buy goods at the company store. The newspapers brought in with other supplies were passed from hand to hand. When Wrightson brought the printing press into Tubac in 1858, the means at last were at hand for disseminating news of Arizona in a local publication. The Santa Rita Mining Company would finance it.

On March 3, 1859, the first issue of *The Weekly Arizonian* was published.¹¹ The four-page paper contained many advertisements of merchandise which could be ordered by mail from Cincinnati, plus advertisements for whiskey and guns

7. Lutrell, *op. cit.*, 15.

8. Estelle Lutrell, "Newspapers and Periodicals of Arizona, 1859-1911," *University of Arizona Bulletin*, XX (July 1949), 102.

9. *Ibid.*, 63, 102; D. C. McMurtrie, *The Beginnings of Printing in Arizona, 1860-1875* (Chicago), 9.

10. Sylvester Mowry, *Arizona and Sonora* (New York, 1864), 26.

11. Volume I of the *Arizonian* can be found at Arizona Pioneers Historical Society at Tucson; microfilm of volume I at Arizona State Department of Library and Archives in Phoenix; parts of volume I at Univ. of Arizona library, Bancroft Library at Berkeley, Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and American Antiquarian Society at Worcester, Mass. Volume II at Pioneers Historical Society, Tucson, and Bancroft Library.

for sale in Tubac. Coming only eleven years after the Mexican War and only six years after the Gadsden Purchase, the first issue of the *Arizonian* understandably devoted most of its front page to news about Mexico. The lead article, captioned "Mexican Politics," stated:

There are in Mexico three great leading parties, answering to the type of party wherever that product of imperfect civilization exists. The first, because the eldest, is the CONSERVATIVE, with principles cognate with its name; strenuously adhering to ancient realism. . . . This party was in power, in the person of Santa Anna, from April 20, 1853, to August 11, 1855. It was again in office only a few months since, in the person of Felix Zuloaga. . . . The second great division consists of the Radicals. . . . Intermediate between these extremes is the moderate party—the MODERADOS—in power from 1851 to 1853 . . . and from December, 1855, to January, 1858 . . . (among) the opposing factions . . . we may still look for a continuance of this strife. . . .¹²

This lead story occupied all of the first column adjacent to the left side of the front page, and one-fourth of the second column. Each page had four columns.

Directly under the end of the first story, in the second column from the left, the second story was captioned "Condition of Mexico." Columns three and four were devoted to news of Arizona under the headlines "Leech's Wagon Road" and "News from Arizona," with the exception of one-fourth of column four devoted to General Miramon, the new president of Mexico.

Tacked onto the end of the Miramon article was the following paragraph: "It is rumored at Washington that a proposition for the sale of Sonora and Chihuahua has been received from President Miramon. The price named is said to be sixteen millions. We do not credit the rumor."

In addition to foreign, mining, governmental, and trade news, the Tubac paper soon began carrying crime stories. The editor, Edward E. Cross, personally called on military

12. From page one, *The Weekly Arizonian*, March 3, 1859. Several news items about Mexico were reprinted from *The Times* of London. News of Arizona mining from the *New York Times* was contrasted with first-hand reports from the same mining sources contacted by the *Arizonian* editor, Edward Ephram Cross.

officials at both Tubac and Tucson to get clearance on transfers of military personnel in and out of Arizona. Finally, in the paper's fourth month of publication, military news yielded a crime story, which loomed large not because of the infraction of the law as much as from the severe terms of the sentence. A soldier convicted of stealing a horse and attempting to leave his post received fifty lashes with a cowhide whip on his bare back, was confined at hard labor while heavily ironed, forfeited all pay due him, had his head shaved and branded with a red hot iron with the letter "D," and was given a dishonorable discharge from the army.¹³

In July, 1859, the *Arizonian* began to carry editorials adverse to the creation of a Territory of Arizona. Editor Cross argued that the Arizona portion of the Territory of New Mexico contained only a few thousand inhabitants, that the agitation in Tucson for territorial status was prompted by Lieutenant Sylvester Mowry's ambition to become a territorial delegate to the United States Congress.¹⁴

Lieutenant Mowry had graduated from West Point in 1852, had resigned from the army in 1858 while stationed at Fort Yuma, moved to Tucson and began advocating territorial status for Arizona and his own candidacy as territorial delegate to the United States Congress.¹⁵

Mowry may have read with pleasure the editorial in the second issue of *The Weekly Arizonian* entitled "What Our Government Can do for Arizona." Editor Cross seemed to be pleading for territorial status, or at least the preliminary step, an Arizona judicial district distinct from that of New Mexico:

. . . The first great boon we have asked is a territorial organization; one which gives us a means of making and enforcing laws to protect life and property, and which will encourage the enterprising to come and settle within our limits. If this boon must be denied for a time, till other questions are settled, the next best thing for us, is the establishment of a separate Judicial District with a United States Judge and officers. This can be done without prejudice to the great ques-

13. *The Weekly Arizonian*, June 30, 1859.

14. "Arizona Correspondence" column in *San Francisco Herald*, July 15, 1859; *The Weekly Arizonian*, July 7, 1859, and July 14, 1859.

15. Jo Ann Schmitt, *Fighting Editors* (San Antonio, 1958), 2-3.

tion of a Territorial organization, and will give a semblance of a disposition on the part of the government to extend to this distant region the first dawn of favor.¹⁶

Two months before launching the *Arizonian*, Cross sent a dispatch to the *St. Louis Republican*:

The President in his late message to Congress, says, referring to Arizona: "The population of that Territory, numbering as is alleged, more than ten thousand souls," etc. Now, whoever alleges this, alleges what is not true. Raking and scraping together every human being within the proposed limits of Arizona—Americans, Mexicans, and Indians, white, black, yellow, and red—you cannot make a total of eight thousand inhabitants. The Indian population cannot be estimated with much certainty, but every tribe is greatly over-estimated, as is usual in such cases. The Mexican population at this end of the Territory is very small, not over one hundred and forty men, women, and children at Tubac, and perhaps twice that number at San Xavier (*sic*) and Tucson.

. . . There has been an enormous amount of falsehood uttered and published concerning this country and its resources. . . .¹⁷

That *St. Louis Republican* dispatch was published January 30, 1859, and reprinted in Washington, D. C., on February 26 in the *Washington States*. Now both Cross and Mowry wanted to see Arizona's resources developed. But Cross was a stockholder of the St. Louis and Arizona Mining Company, whereas Mowry's holdings were in rival mining operations. The two men lived less than fifty miles apart, but instead of disputing Arizona population figures in person, debated long-range in the columns of the *Washington States*.

Mowry consummated the formal challenge on population figures by writing a letter to the *Washington States* admitting that he was the source for the estimated 10,000 population in Arizona. He then asserted that Cross

. . . has stated what is absolutely untrue. Mr. Otero, the delegate from New Mexico, has certified in writing, that of his own knowledge, there were more than eight thousand people in the Rio Grande valley alone two years ago, and that the

16. *The Weekly Arizonian*, March 10, 1859.

17. *Washington States*, February 26, 1859.

present population of the territory is at least ten or eleven thousands. If it is necessary I can call witnesses, now in Washington—certainly ten—whose respectability and position cannot be questioned, who will testify, at the bar of the Senate or House, to this same fact. . . .¹⁸

By the time Cross read Mowry's reply, the editor perhaps was too engrossed in the newly-founded *Arizonian*, too busy engaging in journalism first-hand in Tubac, to pause to engage in a journalistic duel long-range in Washington. Mowry's letter appeared in print two days before the first edition of the *Arizonian* appeared, but reached Cross's attention sometime after that. Finally, late in April, Cross chose to continue the debate in the Washington newspaper :

I came to Arizona in November 1858, and my business was partially to correspond with several leading journals in the United States, to give, as far as possible, a true statement of the condition, resources, and prospects of Arizona. I had been a careful reader of Mr. Mowry's voluminous (and, as I now find, fabulous) productions regarding this country, and supposed them correct. I found, however, that many of his assertions were not true, and that all were exaggerated . . . that in representing Arizona to be a good agricultural country, he was absolutely injuring the Territory, and deluding people into a long and dangerous journey to a country whose agricultural resources, in all, are not equal to one first-class corn-growing county in Ohio.

I therefore, in writing to the East, endeavored to correct some of the false ideas prevalent concerning Arizona, but never, except once, mentioned Mr. Mowry's name. . . .¹⁹

Mowry felt obliged to challenge Cross to a duel, and the editor accepted. On July 7, *The Weekly Arizonian* editorialized that the population of Arizona did not yet justify territorial status.²⁰ The next day, the duel over population figures shifted from journalistic to physical combat. The duel was described in the *Arizonian*:

The parties met near Tubac, weapons, Burnside rifles, distance, forty paces. Four shots were exchanged without effect;

18. *Washington States*, March 1, 1859.

19. *Washington States*, May 24, 1859. Cross wrote the letter on April 24.

20. *The Weekly Arizonian*, July 7, 1859; *San Francisco Herald*, July 15, 1859; *San Francisco Bulletin*, July 22, 1859.

at the last fire Mr. Mowry's rifle did not discharge. It was decided that he was entitled to his shot and Mr. Cross stood without arms to receive it. Mr. Mowry, refusing to fire at an unarmed man discharged his rifle in the air and declared himself satisfied.²¹

In another part of the paper of that same issue, the editor commented that a high wind was blowing across the line of fire, thus preventing accurate aim. The two men shook hands, drew up a statement, which was carried in the following issue of the Tubac paper:

Mr. Edw. E. Cross withdraws the offensive language used by him, and disclaims any intention to reflect upon Mr. Mowry's veracity, or upon his character as a gentleman, in any publication he has made in reference to Arizona. Mr. Mowry withdraws any statement that he has made in his letters to the press, which in any degree reflects upon Mr. Cross' character as a man and a gentleman.

Any difference of opinion which may exist between them in reference to Arizona is an honest one; to be decided by weight of authority.

Tubac, Arizona, (signed) SYLVESTER MOWRY
July 8, 1859 EDWARD E. CROSS²²

The July 14 issue carried the statement of truce between Mowry and Cross, signed July 8, the day after the *Arizonian's* weekly publication date. Cross edited only one more issue, that of July 21. Arizona's first newspaper editor had served less than five months, from March 3 to July 21, editing the first twenty-two numbers of volume one.²³ The Santa Rita Silver Mining Company then sold the paper to the S. J. Jones and Company.²⁴ Speaking for the Santa Rita officials, William Wrightson had chosen Cross as editor. But the new ownership favored the political views of one of its stockholders, Mowry, and favored Tucson as publishing site.²⁵

21. *The Weekly Arizonian*, July 14, 1859. To contrast Cross's version of the duel see *Descendants of Nathaniel Mowry of Rhode Island* (Providence, 1878), 292-296; Mowry, *op. cit.*, 52, 61.

22. *The Weekly Arizonian*, July 14, 1859; Schmitt, *op. cit.*, 19.

23. Lutrell, *University of Arizona Bulletin* (July 1949), 65.

24. *Ibid.*, 65-66; Lutrell, *Arizona Historical Review* (January 1935), 18.

25. Sylvester Mowry, *Mines of the West* (New York, 1864), 1-14.

Issue 23 of the *Arizonian* appeared August 4, 1859, carrying a Tucson dateline, with J. Howard Wells listed as editor. A Justice of the Peace during 1859-1860, Wells edited the paper until its suspension on June 14, 1860.²⁶

On February 9, 1861, the *Arizonian* reappeared, with Charles L. Strong, a printer from New York, listed on the masthead as publisher, and T. M. Turner, a lawyer from Ohio, listed as editor. This issue of the paper contained a notice signed by Mowry advising the subscribers and general reading public that Strong had leased the printing press and other facilities of the plant, was now publisher though Mowry retained title to the physical properties of the newspaper. Six months later, Editor Turner was killed.

A military express arrived in Santa Fe on the night of July 14 bringing the information that T. M. Turner, late of Arizona, was found brutally murdered near Las Vegas, New Mexico. It is thought the man who committed the crime was one Watrous, who was his traveling companion. Turner had been a resident of Arizona for some three years. He resided some time in Tubac, but more recently in Tucson where he edited the *Arizonian* newspaper. He was the Arizona correspondent of the *St. Louis Republican*. He was an occasional correspondent of several other prominent newspapers. He formerly edited a paper at Terre Haute, Indiana, and a magazine at Cincinnati, Ohio. . . .²⁷

From February to September, 1861, the *Arizonian* was quoted in various California newspapers. None of the Arizona, California, Washington, D. C., nor Worcester, Mass., archives yield any copies of the pioneer paper from the autumn of 1861 to the summer of 1867. The September 2, 1861, issue apparently was the last edition until 1867.²⁸

The *Arizonian* was reorganized as a newspaper on June 15, 1867,²⁹ changed in name to the *Southern Arizonian* in Au-

26. *The Weekly Arizonian*, August 4, 1859, and June 14, 1860; Lutrell, *Arizona Historical Review*, 18; Lutrell, *University of Arizona Bulletin*, 64, 66.

27. *Sacramento (California) Union*, September 9, 1861.

28. Lutrell, *University of Arizona Bulletin*, 64; *Arizona Miner*, July 13, 1867; D. C. Poston in *Arizona Weekly Star* of Tucson, March 11, 1880; *Daily Alta Californian*, September 2, 1861.

29. "Autobiography," *The Weekly Arizonian*, April 24, 1869.

gust,³⁰ then by 1868 again called by its original name.³¹ The pioneer paper continued to publish during 1869 and 1870, and ceased publication on April 29, 1871.³²

Thus, the publication life of the first newspaper in Arizona chronologically was: from March 3, 1859, to July 21, 1859, in Tubac, then in Tucson from August 4, 1859, to June 14, 1860, and from February 9, 1861, to September 2, 1861, and finally from June 15, 1867, to April 29, 1871. *The Weekly Arizonian* antedated Arizona's territorial status, became involved in the debate over it, remained suspended during most of the Civil War, then chronicled a postwar growth of the mining industry.³³

When Confederate Colonel John R. Baylor seized Mesilla in August, 1861, he issued a proclamation that all of New Mexico south of the thirty-fourth parallel was to be Arizona Territory.³⁴ The consequences of this act were set forth in the *Arizonian* of August 10, 1861:

The only reason under Heaven that can be assigned for the injustice and bad treatment we have undergone is that the people of Arizona are southern in feeling and have dared to own it. The eleven starred banner that floats over Tucson shows that her citizens acknowledge no allegiance to abolition rule.³⁵

30. *Southern Arizonian*, November 17, 1867, is in the archives of the Arizona Pioneers Historical Society in Tucson. Issues not preserved in either Tucson or Phoenix are traced through California newspapers. The *Southern Arizonian* for August 18 was quoted in *Daily Alta Californian* of September 18, 1867; issue of September 5 quoted in *Daily Alta Californian* of October 21, 1867; issue of *Southern Arizonian* of September 29 quoted in *San Francisco Times* of October 16, 1867.

31. Quotations from California newspapers for 1868 show that the Tucson newspaper had by then resumed its original title of *Weekly Arizonian*. See quotes from the issue of November 28, 1868, in the *Los Angeles Weekly News* for January 2, 1869.

32. The last issue can be found at the Arizona Pioneers Historical Society in Tucson, and at the Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley. The printing press of the *Arizonian* was moved from Tucson to Tombstone by A. E. Fay and Carlos Tully, and later became the property of William Hattich, who presented it to the Arizona Pioneers Historical Association, which group has preserved it. See *Arizona Citizen*, October 15, 1870, and October 22, 1870; *Arizona Miner*, October 3, 1868; Luttrell, *University of Arizona Bulletin* (July 1949), 66-67; G. W. Barter, *Tucson Directory* (Tucson, 1881), 1; Rowell's *American Newspaper Directory* for the years 1870, 1871, 1872.

33. Richard J. Hinton, *The Hand-Book to Arizona* (San Francisco, 1878), 186, 197-198.

34. Donald Robinson Van Petten, *The Constitution and Government of Arizona* (Phoenix, 1956), 10.

35. Quoted in the *Daily Alta Californian*, September 2, 1861.

By the time the Union troops³⁶ entered Tucson on May 22, 1862, to replace the Stars and Bars with the Stars and Stripes, the pioneer newspaper had been dormant almost nine months. By the time the *Arizonian* was revived in June, 1867, the new Territory was more than four years old. Though Arizona's first newspaper chronicled various events of historical interest during its publication life, it missed the chance to record the ousting of Confederate troops by Union forces, and the establishment of the first territorial government. The *Citizen* was founded in Tucson on October 15, 1870,³⁷ by Richard C. McCormick,³⁸ thereby assuring the continuance of newspaper publishing in Tucson when the *Arizonian* ceased publication permanently³⁹ in 1871. A perusal of its pages indicates that whatever occasional shortcomings in accuracy and precision of expression it may have had, *The Weekly Arizonian* left a legacy of outspoken courage to Arizona newspapers which were to follow.

36. The "California Column" that chased the Confederate forces from Tucson consisted of the First and Fifth Infantry regiments, five troops of the First California Cavalry, and two artillery batteries. See *Arizona Daily Star*, May 23, 1891; Hinton, *op. cit.*, 187; Rodney Glisan, *A Journal of Army Life* (San Francisco, 1874), 114; Lurton J. Ingersoll, *A History of the War Department of the United States* (Washington, 1879), 113, 193.

37. Hinton, *op. cit.*, appendix II, 12.

38. Lutrell, *University of Arizona Bulletin* (July 1949), 56. According to Lutrell, during the territorial period, sixty towns in Arizona published more than two hundred newspapers, of which twenty-nine were still being published in 1949. The *Citizen* still appears, now as a daily.

39. Frank Griffin in 1957 printed an issue of *The Weekly Arizonian* on a press in Tucson, then mailed the "revived" paper from the Tubac post office. He issued his revived paper irregularly, four issues during a one-year period. See Hanson Ray Sisk, "Views," *Nogales Herald*, December 7, 1957. *The Arizonian*, published weekly at Scottsdale, Arizona, just east of Phoenix, claims a link with the first Arizona newspaper by virtue of its name. This Scottsdale weekly was founded in 1953. See Arizona Newspapers Association, *Directory of Newspapers and Other Publications* (Phoenix, 1957), 54.