

Excerpts from Bob Edmonds' books

On a crisp winter day in 1885, a wagon pulled up to a building in the three-year-old town of McCormick carrying a cargo. An enthusiastic gentleman stepped down onto the dirt street. The gentleman was T. M. Scott, master printer, who brought light and sound with him in the form of a small printing press lashed securely in the wagon, several fonts of type, and a quantity of paper, ink, and other printers' miscellanies. Within a matter of a few hours his equipment was in a small building and being set up. Days later on March 19, 1885, Scott presented the citizens of McCormick with their first newspaper, Volume I, Number 1, the first issue of his weekly newspaper, *The McCormick Advance*. The newspaper presented Democratic views, and its masthead carried the slogan, "Devoted to the general welfare." The *Advance* sought to record those events, both major and minor, that marked the area's progress. One of the ideas presented by the newspaper was for the creation of a new county. Through the untiring efforts of area citizens and the voice of the local press, seven newspapers and thirty-one years later the goal would be attained – the founding of McCormick County.

By November of 1886, R. R. Martin was publisher of *The McCormick Advance*. Sometimes during 1887, *The McCormick Advance* ceased publication.

The McCormick Sun, McCormick's second weekly newspaper, was being published in 1888.

A. Harmon began publishing *The McCormick News*, a Democratic weekly probably in 1888. By June 1888, a partnership had been formed with Harmon and Calhoun as editors and proprietors. *The News* ceased publication in 1894.

M. Carpenter began publishing *The McCormick Times*, an Independent Democrat, weekly newspaper, in 1894, filling the void left by the demise of *The McCormick News*. *The McCormick Times* ceased publication c. 1897.

G. McGowan published *The McCormick Herald*, another weekly newspaper, from 1898 into the twentieth century until sometimes during 1902.

In 1908, Brannum and Berry, editors and publishers, established *The Industrial Enterprise*, a black, semi-monthly publication. The publication ceased c. 1912.

The McCormick Messenger was established June 5, 1902, by Julette P. Smith and his brother-in-law W. O. Sturkey with the express purpose of forming a county. In 1904, Smith sold his interest to John Edward McCracken.

John E. McCracken was recognized as a renowned printer at the Abbeville *Press and Banner*. McCracken moved from Abbeville to Aiken where he owned half interest in *The Aiken Recorder*, which he published there. He moved from Aiken to Rose Hill Plantation on the Savannah River near Willington, a community north of McCormick to take over a thriving farm. During this period he began teaching school at Willington High School. At Christmas of 1899, he moved his family into the town of Willington to be near the school. Eventually in 1904, the school board noted that McCracken was not a member of a church in town – Presbyterian, Episcopal or Baptist. The board called him in and ordered him to unite with one of the churches. McCracken, not professing either faith, and fiercely independent at that, refused; he promptly told the board what they could do with their teaching job. He resigned and moved his family to McCormick where he became associated with the *McCormick Messenger*.

A few years later, Edmond Joye McCracken, son of the co-owner, began working on the newspaper. He had to quit school in the seventh grade to help his father run the newspaper.

In 1912, Edmond J. McCracken bought Sturkey's interest, and in 1918, he bought the newspaper from his father.

John E. McCracken continued to work on the newspaper with his son. In 1926, on the last day of his life he proofed the final galley for the week's edition, then went home to bed and died.

The first printing press used by *McCormick Messenger* was the Washington Hand Press. Later Edmond J. McCracken bought the Country Campbell press from *The Press and Banner*. The Country Campbell press had been modified to accommodate a large electric motor. The large original flywheel was quickly turned by hand to act as an auxiliary to start the electric motor. Originally the operator powered the press with the flywheel. The press was used to print the newspaper until 1963, when



Bob Edmonds

the *Messenger* went to the offset process of printing.

In the early days when type was set by hand for the newspaper, it took about three hours to set a column of type.

In 1917, the newspaper advanced its technology when Edmond J. McCracken bought a Model L Linotype machine, which produced type on metal slugs. In 1922 the Model L was replaced by a Model 14 Linotype, which was used to set type until 1966, when the *Messenger* staff began setting type on a Compugraphic and in 1987 switched to the Apple Macintosh computers.

Andrew Jennings, James Talbert, Nathan Hanna, and John S. McCracken were master craftsmen at operating the Linotype. Jennings worked a few years, quit several times and came back again. Talbert worked only a short while. Hanna worked with the newspaper from 1938 to 1942.

When barely a teenager, John S. McCracken, son of Edmond J. McCracken, began helping his father on the newspaper on a regular basis.

After the death of Edmond J. McCracken in 1962, John S. McCracken assumed management of the newspaper, and ran it until the *Messenger* was sold to Smythe Newsome of Wilkes Publishing Company in May 1974.

Homer Drinkard, owner of Drinkard Printing Company of Greenwood, started *The McCormick Times* in May 1973. Patsy S. Bladon served as reporter for the *Times*. When Newsome bought the *Messenger* and *The Times*, Bladon joined *The Messenger* as social news editor.

Charles C. Morgan III became associate editor of the *McCormick Messenger* in 1976, and shortly thereafter was named editor.

In 1980, the newspaper was sold to Stephen Jackson, who sold it to the controversial Ken Fortenberry, author of the book, *Kill the Messenger*, in 1985.

Two years later, it was sold again to Ted Leach, a publisher in New Hampshire.

In December of 1991, the *Messenger* was sold to a group of local investors, known collectively as McCormick Media, Inc. Vicki McCracken Dorn, daughter of John S. McCracken, and a fourth generation McCracken, is editor. Vicki M. Dorn joined the *Messenger* staff in 1976. Bob Edmonds is president of McCormick Media, Inc.

The *Messenger* office has been located in several places since it was established. It was upstairs in the Price Building before it moved downstairs on Augusta Street.

In May 1974, after Newsome bought the *Times* and the *Messenger*, the newspapers were combined and moved to a location on Pine Street. In 1977, with the renovation of the old Farmers Bank building, the *Messenger* moved to Main Street. The building with its unusual architectural design is on the National Register of Historic Places.

From *The Making of McCormick County*.



Early Newspaper Mastheads: *The McCormick Advance*, November 18, 1886

The McCormick News, March 29, 1888

McCormick Messenger, September 29, 1904

Across the Savannah

The best drink of water

By Tom Poland
A Southern Writer

Seems to me, as the old folks would say, an aluminum dipper delivered the best drink of water. You'd sink that dipper into a wooden bucket. And that wooden bucket had just been winched up from a hand-dug well. And when you drank well water it chilled the body and soul.



I rarely see dippers like the one pictured here. Oh, I've seen a few in kettles of simmering hash, and I've seen some hanging on the wall of an old smokehouse. They're out of use. Who drinks straight from a well? It'd be a tad awkward using an aluminum dipper with the kitchen faucet. Probably spill half the water on the way up. Just use a glass.

You can call it a ladle or a dipper and you can call it out of fashion. Times were many a kid and adult used a dipper to drink water so cold it made their teeth ache. My Maytag refrigerator's water dispenser isn't that cold. I seldom use it, but when I do, I just push the glass into place and out comes water. Not much effort in that, not like winching up a heavy bucket of water.

My dipper belonged to my parents. I found it several years after Mom passed. I brought it home. It's a relic but not just any relic. If I could trace its history, its provenance, might I find that it was the dipper in Granddad Walker's wooden bucket? I like to think so, but I'm sure it isn't.

Reach way back with me now. Remember when gourds served as dippers? A drinking gourd, they called it. You'd take a long-stemmed gourd and cut and hollow it to make it into a ladle. I see gourds on poles offering mosquito-eating purple martins homes. I read, too, that you can buy plastic gourds and use them instead of the real deal. No thanks. That's sad. Give me vintage goods, like old aluminum dippers.

I never hear anyone mention dippers. Vintage dippers are a good example of out of sight, out of mind. Show folks a photo of one, however, and the memories well up like water from a well. An old friend from back home saw the photo and had this to say. "I remember looking at the water and the shiny inside of the dipper while I was gulping it down."

A lady over near the coast saw my photo and it stirred loose a memory. "My paternal grandfather kept his by the kitchen sink when he no longer had to use it at the well. It was all he ever used. No cup or glass unless he was sitting at the table or visiting someone else's home. All the grandkids considered ourselves 'special' if we ever got to drink out of it."

A lady who once lived back home made an observation. "Everybody drank out of the same dipper." That's a fact. They thought nothing about it.

Do you miss the taste of well water? Can you? You can't miss what you never had but you can find new uses for old things. Come summer my dipper's perfect for adding water to the ant traps in my hummingbird feeders. Each time I use it my mind goes back to Lincoln County, Georgia, and an old well with a wooden housing supporting a winch and stout rope the color of dried cornshucks. I'd work the handle and the coldest, best drink of water was on the way. It didn't require electricity or a pump. All that was needed was thirst, a strong arm, a bucket and dipper. And a deep cold well.



Tom Poland photo

Kitty's Korner

By Kitty Craig - Jackson

I can never express how grateful I am to friends who have made allowances for my lapses, great and small. I've sometimes been amazed at the way that friends will be so forgiving when I've been expecting them to be anything but forgiving. But what I've learned is that this is a quality of true friends. This is just something that friends do. And one of the reasons that it's important to me to know what friends do is so that I can be a friend to others, because that's not something that ever was taught to me when I was young.

If I know how friends are supposed to treat each other for the friendship to be strong and true, then I can give to my friendships what I need to give to it. It's great to do fun things with friends. It's great to share good times and to enjoy each other's company. But if I don't want to be just a fair-weather friend, then I really do need to make sure that I'm fair, and that I don't refuse to allow my friends to make their mistakes, to have their lapses, without facing judgment and condemnation from me. If I see a friend do something wrong, I can tell them that without judgment, and without rejecting their friendship in the future.

Huge lapses that hurt other people may be a different story, obviously, but the minor lapses are something that we all make. Friendship sometimes takes effort, and one of the things that we can put a lot of effort into is allowing them to make their mistakes without worrying about ruining the friendship. If I want to be a real friend, I have to let my friends be the people they are, little lapses and all.

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