

The Hampton County Guardian

Hampton County's Foremost Newspaper Since 1879

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The Guardian is 100 Today

By MARTHA BEE ANDERSON
Editor

For 100 years The Hampton County Guardian has been publishing tomorrow's county history every Wednesday. Standing as a sentry of sorts over Hampton County, it has reported events in the growth and progress of Hampton County, serving the public, boosting business, aiding and abetting worthy causes, protecting the public interest within its capacity to do so.

The Guardian and Hampton County have grown up together.

It was Hampton County's turn last year to celebrate its 100th birthday.

On this day, The Guardian marks its 100th year of continuous publication, dating from the first press run in Hampton on August 22, 1879.

The Founder

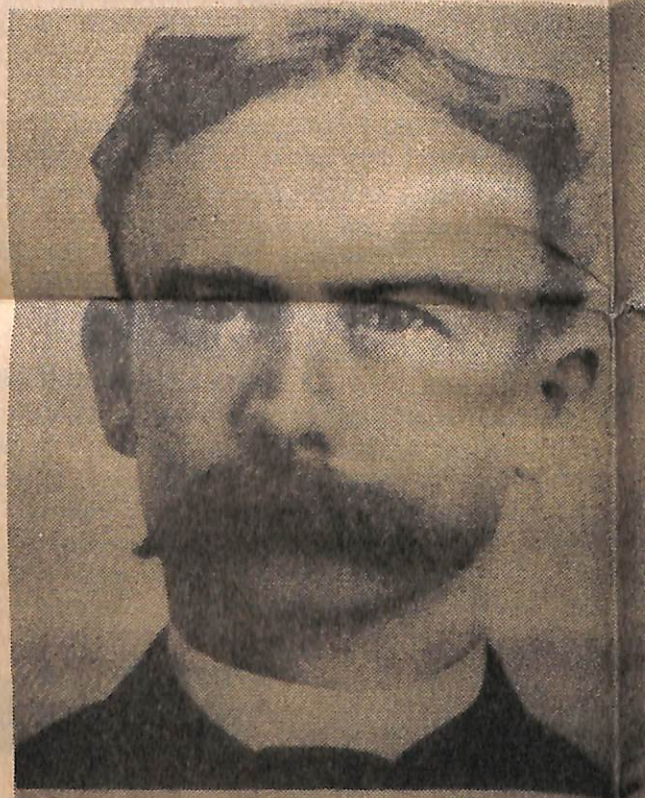
Founded by Miles B. McSweeney, a young printer who mixed newspapering and politics successfully to become lieutenant governor and later governor of South Carolina, The Guardian came to town and made its first appearance within the first year in which Hampton County became the state's 33rd county. This was a full four months before the Town of Hampton was incorporated as the new county seat of the state's newest county (December 23, 1879).

At age 24, Miles McSweeney left Ninety-six in the Upstate where he had been publishing The Ninety-six Guardian, to move to this new county. He chose the same name Guardian for his Hampton County weekly.

The story is told that McSweeney got newspaper blood in his system at the early age of 10, when he was selling newspapers in the streets of Charleston. His father had died and to help his widowed mother, he became a paper boy, thus starting his long and valuable career in newspapering in South Carolina.

McSweeney became the first governor (and only one since) from Hampton County in the year 1899.

Opens on Lee



THE GOVERNOR
MILES B. McSWEENEY
1899 - 1903

Our Founder Miles McSweeney August 22, 1879

— Reconstruction. These bitter years and hard

in 1899, McSweeney was catapulted to the state's highest office.

Elected Governor: 1900

In 1900, he was elected by the people of the state to a full term, which at the time was for only two years, not four as now structured in state government. The Hampton editor served until 1903.

In the meantime his printing and newspaper business had grown and was thriving as the county and county seat developed.

New Home: Guardian Building

An outstanding new home for The Guardian and print shop was built for the McSweeneys but unfortunately it was not completed until 1910, after his death in 1909. Architect was B. Lloyd Preacher and building contractor, H.B. Patillo, according to the cornerstone visible today on the three-story brick building on Lee Avenue, at Maple Street, East. The former "Guardian Building" was the Hampton's first would-be-skyscraper. It once housed the Hampton Post Office (first floor), and in 1945, became Parker Brothers Department store.

Parker Brothers Store

In 1967-68, after purchase of the building from Mrs. Josephine McGowan, former Owner, Parker Brothers completely modernized the three floors, the renovation including installation of the only story elevator in Hampton County. Parker's occupies all three floors. For a number of years the name, "Guardian" was preserved atop the facade at the third level rooftop. It was demolished in a storm and not replaced.

Historical Marker

Governor McSweeney, his wife and their children lived in a picturesque Victorian home opposite Hampton County Courthouse on First Street, East, at the corner of Jackson Street. (Present site of First Federal Savings and Loan).

McSweeney died in 1909, and was buried in Hampton Cemetery. The State of South Carolina erected a monument at his grave site, as a former

Wet or Dry?

State political history records that when McSweeney entered the race for a full term as governor in 1900, he became embroiled in a hot campaign made more intense by the state dispensary (liquor) system. Opposition to that system had been generated by public sentiment state-wide. McSweeney ran on a platform favoring state-operated dispensaries.

Prohibitionists put up their own candidate, Colonel James A. Hoyt, of Greenville, a respected Confederate veteran, who happened also to be a publisher. The Greenville Mountaineer was his paper. Hence the governor's race that election year was between two editors, both Democrats, and it was a close one. McSweeney's victory at the polls was by a very slim margin.

Gleaned from The News and Courier files on coverage of pre-election events and the governor's race of 1900, McSweeney, The Guardian editor, was labeled the "wet" candidate although he lived in a predominately "dry" voting county. As "dispensary candidate" supported by Ben Tillman, he was up against it, since prohibitionists were said to have the lead.

Because of Tillman's strong backing mostly, political observers then were reporting that McSweeney managed to win by a narrow margin, despite the powerful bid put up the "drys" of the state.

Lost Friends, Advertisers?

This created quite a conflict in Hampton County, the article went on to explain, because some of McSweeney's best personal and business friends in Hampton County were strong prohibitionists. Candidacy of their friend The Guardian editor put many of them on a hot-spot that election year, losing for McSweeney some advertising and printing accounts in the process, it can be speculated after the fact.

A June 20, 1900, News and Courier reported on a "Ladies Day in Hampton," a big showing rallying to support prohibitionists. They gave a big welcome and applause to McSweeney's top op-

The place where The Guardian first saw the light of day was a small wooden building on Lee Avenue in downtown Hampton, across the street from where the newspaper office now is housed at 118 Lee Avenue in the former J.H. Rivers and Sons Store building. According to members of the McSweeney family, the newspaper and printing shop actually opened up in Hampton in February before the first run of the Guardian in August (1879).

Hampton County had been carved out of old Beaufort District. The act of the General Assembly was signed into law February 18, 1878, by then Governor Wade Hampton, for whom the new county was named.

To County Seat

A county seat was built up around the new Courthouse under leadership of a group of citizens then living at "Hoover's Station," crossing of the old Charleston and Western Carolina Railroad. (Now Seaboard Coastline, near the Westinghouse Micarta Plant, along U.S. Highway 601, North).

Grew Up Together

And so it is Hampton, the county and Hampton, county seat, and The Hampton County Guardian grew up together, the county being now 101, the newspaper today becoming 100 and the town soon to join the ranks of centenarians.

Week-By Week History

A history of Hampton County, chronicling week by week county growth and development and governmental affairs, ups and downs of the people is on tap as a resource for all who search it in bound volumes of the past issues owned by the county and stored in Hampton County Library.

Copies Microfilmed at Library

Just in the past two years this priceless reference resource has been in the process of preservation, as Hampton County Library Board and the regional librarian arranged for micro-filming of all the old issues bound and shelved here — reflecting this community's heritgae. A copy of micro-filmed Guardians has been placed for permanent keeping in South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina.

Guardian From 1914

The earliest bound volume of weekly issues preserved here is for the year 1914; unfortunately a collection of the older issues was not kept by the newspaper as it changed hands through the years. No surviving members of the McSweeney family asked by this staff had knowledge of any file of earlier issues in the possession of any of the McSweeneys at this time.

In Beginning...

The genesis of both the county and The Guardian was a troubled time in South Carolina history

times for defeated Southern forces returning from the Civil War to rebuild their homes, their lives, their churches, businesses and farms and everything else.

The Guardian played a key role in trying to help shape a new county government and build a new life for the people here on ruins of an old one.

It was a new era in which a young county and a young editor began to go places together. McSweeney built a solid reputation for himself and his newspaper on service and constructive action for the betterment of the community.

Eventually his good name and effectiveness as a leader and successful printer and newspaperman led to the political arena — A natural in those days.

Democrat in House

Miles Benjamin McSweeney started right at home, being elected first by the citizens of Hampton County in 1894, to become their representative in the S.C. House of Representatives. He held the chairmanship of the Hampton County Democratic Party at the time also.

In 1896, the editor from Hampton won statewide support at the polls, to wind up a victorious campaign for lieutenant governor of South Carolina.

Upon death of Governor W.H. Ellerbe in office

governor. It is one of the largest and most impressive markers in this histori cemetery.

Hampton County Historical Society was responsible for erecting a South Carolina Historical marker at the McSweeney home site, placing it there during the state's Tricentennial. They also restored an old photograph of the former governor and editor to hang in the front corridor of Hampton County Courthouse.

Governor-Charleston-Born

Governor -Editor McSweeney was born in Charleston, April 18, 1855. His father died of yellow fever when he was four years of age. At age 10, as noted earlier in this account, he was out selling News and Couriers in the streets of Charleston, helping his widowed mother. He clerked in a book store and went to night school, serving an apprenticeship as a job printer. He worked on newspapers in Charleston and later Columbia.

Earning a scholarship to Washington and Lee University, he was said to be unable to afford the expense of living and remaining there for study. Apparently he left because of lack of funds, returned and moved in 1877 to Ninety-six in Abbeville County. There he published The Ninety-six Guardian until 1879, when he moved to Hampton to establish The Hampton County Guardian and his printing business.

ponent in the race, Colonel James Hoyt, Greenville, in the editor-publisher's own hometown.

Reporters congratulated ladies on their turn out, but reminded them their fathers, husbands, sons did the voting and they all were solidly for McSweeney.

Drys Rally Against Editor

A "stump gathering" of prohibitionists ir Hampton County at Stafford's Crossroad was said more in support of prohibition than in opposition to McSweeney, a friend of most of those present. The rally for the dry candidate was led by the Reverend W. H. Dowling, the Reverend E. W. Peeples, Capt. R. T. Causey, William O'Neal and Major J. C. Richardsons. With such solid support for these highly respected clergymen and others, it was not surprising McSweeney's lead at the polls was only 892 to 484, for Hoyt, the "other editor" from Upstate who was running on a "dry" ticket.

Inaugural Gown

A section of News and Courier coverage of the governor's race of 1900, in which McSweeney was the winner described the First Lady's inaugural outfit. (This was re-printed in The Guardian of October 13, 1976):

"Governor and Mrs. McSweeney were special guests at the South Carolina Ball in Columbia at the close of the State Fair. Mrs. McSweeney wore an 'elegant robe of black spangled net over a foundation of white satin. The skirt was finished with narrow pleatings of Brussels net, while French rosettes of pink panne velvet completed the bodice and gave the needed color.."

Perishes in Fire

The McSweeney family was touched by tragedy in the end. McSweeney's widow, Mattie Porcher, perished after being burned severely when her clothing ignited as she stood in front of an open fireplace in the odd Binnicker Hotel at the corner of Lee and Magnolia Street in downtown Hampton.

Her tomb is beside that of her husband in Hampton Cemetery, the date of her death being November 24, 1924.

Also buried in the family plot in this cemetery are the second and third editors of The Guardian, Miles Bonham McSweeney, who died in 1938, and his widow, Florence Humphries McSweeney, who died in 1959.

2nd Editor: Eugene McSweeney

After death of the founder, The Guardian remained in the family ownership and was edited and published by his son, Eugene McSweeney.

The Allendale County Citizen was added by Eugene McSweeney, who moved the newspaper

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THE WAY IT WAS — This is an old postcard-photo of Lee Avenue, Hampton, around the turn of the century when Hampton County, the County Seat of Hampton and The Hampton County Guardian were very young and growing up together. The Guardian's first home was near this scene of the avenue of live oaks which graced Downtown Hampton.

Many Happy Wednesday Returns!



Guardian 100

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operation from Hampton to Allendale around 1919.

Widow is 3rd Editor

From 1936, after death of Eugene, his widow, Florence Humphries McSweeney, continued as editor and publisher of The Citizen and The Guardian.

Selling to Caldwell-Maner Publishing Company in 1944, Mrs. McSweeney retired, ending the long family ownership of the newspapers.

Caldwell-Maner: 1944

The new owners were William Lawton Maner, of Allendale, and Erskine Caldwell and his father, R. Sylvester Caldwell. Caldwell was the noted Augusta author and playwright who wrote the controversial "Tobacco Road." Maner served as editor. In 1947, The Jasper Record was added by the company.

Tom O'Connor: 1947

The three papers were purchased in 1947, by a group of newspapermen who had been connected with The Augusta Chronicle in Augusta, Georgia. They incorporated as Weeklies Publisher and the late gifted and illustrious Tom O'Connor became editor and publisher. After his death in 1969, his wife, Martha Young O'Connor, continued publication of The Citizen and The Guardian in Allendale, having dropped publication of the Jasper weekly.

Banner: 1974

Banner Publishers, Inc., of Camden, bought the newspapers from Mrs. O'Connor in January, 1974, separating them and once more bringing The Guardian back home to downtown Hampton.

Pat Tyler Editor in 1974

Patrick Tyler, former University of South Carolina Gamecock editor, now on the Metropolitan news staff of The Washington Post, became editor of both papers. Mrs. O'Connor remained on staff as director for a couple of years, and after retirement was designated "Editor Emeritus" of The Citizen.

At time of purchase. Banner was owned by a corporation in which former S. C. Governor John Carl West, of Camden, was principal stockholder, thus repeating a bit of the history of a governor at the helm of the newspaper for a period.

David Cowan, of Statesville, N. C., served a short time as editor of the two newspapers early in 1975, and interim editor also for a brief period was Wayne Zurenda, of Hampton, now director of Hampton TEC.

Anderson Editor: 1975

Martha Bee Anderson, reporter and columnist for The Guardian from 1946, became editor in April, 1975.

Morris Newspapers: 1977

Morris Newspapers of South Carolina purchased controlling stock in Banner in June of 1977, the company then owning 13 community newspapers in S. C. Charles H. Morris, Savannah, is president of Morris Newspapers. Until December, 1978, Colonel (Ret.) Shelton J. West, Camden, brother of the ex-governor who now is ambassador to Saudi Arabia, served as president of Banner.

James DeRoy was named president of Banner and assumed management of the now 10-paper chain early in 1979.

In this period The Guardian has grown from a weekly averaging eight pages each Wednesday to issues averaging 14 and 16 pages. Special editions have swelled to more than 40 pages for such occasions as the Hampton County Watermelon Festival, for Hampton County's Centennial and the (U.S.) Bicentennial festival year editions.

Circulation has climbed and the average press run is at 3,500 at time of this report.

Production continues in the Camden plant, with mailing from Hampton Post office.

100th Edition: September

A 100th Anniversary edition of The Guardian is in the making, planned for publication in late September. More about it soon will be published in the newspaper.



Eugene B. McSweeney Florence H. McSweeney

2nd Editor

3rd Editor

