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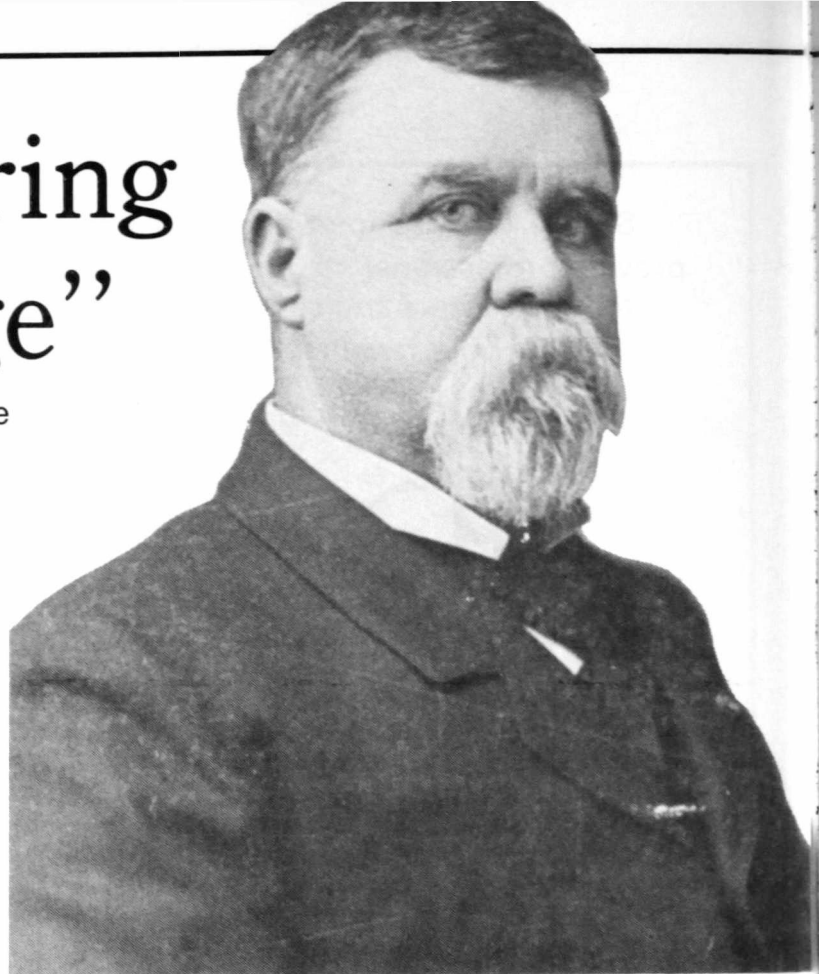
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Remembering "Old Sage"

By Glen V. McIntyre



In the days before movies, radio and television, the local newspaper was one of the primary sources of news, gossip, entertainment and information. The standards set by a newspaper influenced the entire town and these standards were set by the editor who was often-times the owner as well. Such a man was Jacob Veatch (J. V.) Admire, owner and editor of the KINGFISHER FREE PRESS from 1891 until 1906. His editorials spread his influence not only throughout the community of Kingfisher but throughout Western Oklahoma.

J. V. Admire had already led a full life when he came to Kingfisher on April 21, 1899 to take up his duties as first receiver of monies for the land office at Kingfisher.

Admire had been born in 1842 in Indiana. In 1862 he volunteered as a private in Company E, Sixty-Fifth Indiana Infantry. He rose to the rank of Captain and was a part of the march to the sea.

After the war he quickly left Indiana, moving to Kansas with his wife, Emma Lewis, whom he had married in 1867. In Kansas he bought a farm near Topeka, the first of a long line of unsuccessful attempts at farming. From 1872 to 1878 he was postmaster of North Topeka, Kansas. He also ran the NORTH TOPEKA TIMES.

The entire generation was restless. In 1878 he moved to Osage City, Kansas where he purchased the newspaper OSAGE FREE PRESS. During his stay at Osage City he continued his pattern of involvement with public affairs by serving as Postmaster for four and a half years. He was elected to the state legislature in 1887 and 1888 as a Republican.

Then, suddenly, his life took an unexpected turn. He had been attempting to secure another political post in Kansas when he learned that he had been appointed receiver of monies at the land office in the as yet nonexistent town of Kingfisher.

President Benjamin Harrison declared that the Unassigned lands would be opened to white settlement by a land run at high noon, April 22, 1889. The settlers who attempted to lay a claim would have to process their claims, and this paperwork involved fees which Admire would collect and send on to the Federal Government.

So it was with some reluctance that Admire rode over from Guthrie to Kingfisher to find the town consisting of one stage station and one newly erected land office, all guarded by a troop of soldiers sent to keep the peace.

On April 22, 1889 Kingfisher went from this tiny beginning to a city of over two thousand people in a single afternoon. Soon the town was prospering and contending with Guthrie for the title of Territorial capital.

Admire was soon back to his old love, politics. The majority of settlers in the Unassigned Lands, or Old Oklahoma as it came to be called, were from Kansas and tended to be Republicans. Admire had achieved considerable success in Kansas in party politics, and at first it looked as if he would go on to even greater accomplishments in that field in Oklahoma as in January of 1890 the first territorial Republican convention met and selected Admire as the

man they wanted president Harrison to select as the first Territorial Governor. Unfortunately, Harrison chose an Indiana man, George W. Steele, as Territorial Governor. Steele remained as Governor a little over a year before he returned home. When Harrison chose again, again it would go to another man — A. J. Seay. J. V. Admire would never come that close again to becoming Governor.

His greatest success and most lasting influence upon Kingfisher would come in another old love, the newspaper business.

Kingfisher's first newspaper, THE NEW WORLD, had started publication in Wichita, Kansas long before April 22, 1889. After a couple of years Admire purchased the paper and combined it with another pioneer publication, THE JOURNAL, and gave the paper the name THE KINGFISHER FREE PRESS.

For the next fifteen years Admire managed to run both his newspapers, a farm some five miles west of town, and be receiver of monies at the land office. There was a brief period, from 1893 to 1897, when a Democratic administration was in office and the receiver of monies was a Democrat.

Admire soon established himself as

an authentic voice in the editorial columns. His editorials became famous both because of his honesty and also because of his wisdom.

He came firmly down on the Progressive side of the Republicanism of the day, attacking monopolies, trusts and big business with a sometimes vitriolic pen. He supported the cause of the farmers against that of the manufacturers and was often complaining that no real prosperity could come when farm prices were as low as they were and manufactured prices as high as they were.

The Black citizens of Kingfisher liked and respected him. They declared "Admire has shown himself a good friend of the colored people of Kingfisher Community. No colored man ever sought his counsel and was turned away unadvised."

One of the most precious legacies left by Admire was a day-by-day diary of the year 1900. In it he discloses a private face not so different from the public one. It is full of concern for his three children — James L., Eli L., and Mina —, who by 1900 had grown and matured and started lives of their own. His son Eli was a Second Lieutenant in the Phillipines during the Phillipine

insurrection led by Aguinaldo. The diary is full of concern over his son's safety in a situation which has uncanny echoes of the later conflict in Vietnam.

Also in his diary his public interest in Republican policies is echoed with references to McKinley as "an unscrupulous, not very honest politician" and McKinley's close associate Mark Hanna as a "dictator."

In another entry he described the mayor as "ignorant, bigoted, a tool of the worst element," and the "so-called city government about the weakest, most trifling body I ever met."

Many of these concerns were echoed in his editorials. He attacked hypocrisy, dishonesty, and graft in words that seem extreme in this supposedly less civilized age.

In 1906 he sold the newspaper and moved to Enid, though keeping up some duties at the land office until it was dissolved in 1908.

However, the desire to be involved in the newspaper business had not left his blood, and he bought half interest in the ENID DAILY EAGLE which he edited for about a year and a half when he had to retire because of his health.

He died on March 3, 1911, in Enid and was brought to Kingfisher for

burial. The service was held in the home of Pat Nagle, the Socialist, who had been a good friend of his.

Newspapers across Western Oklahoma editorialized on the death of "Old Sage" as they called him, commenting on his influence on the development of early-day Oklahoma.

The KINGFISHER FREE PRESS survives to this day in Kingfisher, though now combined with its arch-enemy THE KINGFISHER TIMES as the KINGFISHER TIMES AND FREE PRESS. It is a proper monument to Old Sage, pioneer publisher and one of the prime movers of early-day Oklahoma Territory. ■

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