

Mason City Globe-Gazette

The Mason City *Globe-Gazette*, which formally entered the family of Lee newspapers in April, 1925, is the lineal descendant of no less than a score of newspapers, both weeklies and dailies, printed in that north Iowa center of trade and industry. It was the fifth and last of the Iowa dailies to join the Lee group.

First of its antecedents was the *Cerro Gordo Press*, founded in June, 1858, and printed on a hand press carted to Mason City from nearby Osage by one Datus Coon. Coon remained there only two years, then moved on to greener pastures.

In the period between the Civil War and the turn of the century, Mason City's newspapers reached almost epidemic proportions. At one time during the 1880's, the community was served by no less than five different publications, one of them the *Daily Globe*. Best-known of these early day Mason City editors was Leo Chapman of the *Republican*. While he pursued his journalistic calling, his bride served as superintendent of schools. Chapman died when thirty; his widow became one of history's best-known women, a leader in the woman's suffrage cause, Carrie Chapman Catt.

It was to this highly competitive field that a pair of promising young journalists from Ottumwa came in 1898. One of these was William Foster Muse, the other David M. Conroy. With their limited capital, they had purchased the recently merged daily *Globe* and weekly *Gazette*.

Muse, widely known as a bass singer, became editor, and Conroy served as business manager of the new property. While maintaining a stout Republican policy editorially, Muse proceeded on the theory that ultimate success would depend on a superior news service, particularly in local coverage. This proved a sound premise, for one by one the rival newspapers began to fall by the wayside. In 1918 the last competitor, the *Daily Times*, was purchased and merged with the *Globe-Gazette*.

Up to 1918 the *Globe-Gazette* had been designed for a Mason City readership; thereafter it strove for regional patronage in the dozen rich agricultural counties in north-central Iowa. Such expansion involved acquiring a leased wire from the Associated Press to supplant the previous "pony" telephone service; a second daily edition for outlying towns; and an accelerated subscription effort throughout the area.

The *Globe-Gazette's* entry into the Lee group of newspapers in 1925, following Conroy's death in 1923, was in the nature of a marriage long-deferred. It came about on the motion of William F. Muse, who had been associated with A. W.

Lee at Ottumwa in the 1890's. E. P. Adler, too, had been his lifelong friend. This step brought to Mason City as guiding hand for the *Globe-Gazette* Lee P. Loomis, nephew of A. W. Lee and former publisher of the *Muscatine Journal*.

Loomis found what was conceded to be a good newspaper; his task was to make it better. There were additions to the wire and feature services, an expansion of the staff of local reporters and area correspondents, a remodeling of the physical plant, a new high-speed Goss octuple press, and an accent on pictures and art, with an ample photographic department, wirephoto facilities, and a modern engraving department. Accompanying all of this was an enlarged force of salesmen and a third daily edition of the paper designed especially for rural subscribers. The result was a circulation unsurpassed by any city of like size in America.

On the death of William F. Muse in 1931, W. Earl Hall, managing editor since 1920, assumed the *Globe-Gazette's* editorial policy. A graduate of the State University of Iowa, Hall has, along with his journalistic duties, found time for public service on the local, state, and national scene, as well as a considerable amount of world travel.

Largely because of Hall's interest in safety (he served as vice-president of the National Safety Council from 1943 to 1947) the *Globe-Gazette* has the unique distinction of having presented at least one editorial on the safety subject in every

issue for the past nineteen years. In 1937 and again in 1941 the paper was awarded top honors nationally for its espousal of highway safety.

In 1937 the *Globe-Gazette* entered a new sector of the communications field by launching a radio enterprise, KGLO — a CBS affiliate. From 100 watts, the station's power assignment in the dozen years since then has been stepped up to 5,000 watts, with a corresponding improvement of plant, equipment, and program.

For the past several years KGLO and a sister station acquired in 1944, WTAD of Quincy, Illinois, have had their own corporate identities — Lee Radio, Inc., of Mason City and Lee Broadcasting, Inc., of Quincy, both headed by Lee Loomis. There continues, however, a common bond and a close cooperation between radio and newspaper. For both there is the same ideal of success through service. The seventy-three hours of leased wire coverage from AP and UP received in the *Globe-Gazette* newsroom daily is a measure of the news service provided for north Iowans through newspaper and radio.

The *Globe-Gazette* performs its finest service in the support and encouragement of all such community events as the North Iowa Band Festival, which is believed to be the oldest and largest of its kind in America.

W. EARL HALL