

## NC Press Association

The shape and business of collegial gatherings of North Carolina editors was set in the earliest days of the North Carolina Press Association, formed on May 15, 1873, at a "convention" of 29 journalists gathered in the Wayne County courthouse in Goldsboro.

The convention was called for both professional and political purposes. Professionally, the new organization hoped to better regulate the flood of patent medicine and other forms of Victorian Era quack advertising that was inundating their offices, and which some editors rejected while others accepted gratefully and even offered cut-rate advertising fees. A resolution called for the new association to "examine the character and reliability of all advertising agencies seeking business with members."

The gathering also had political aims. It prepared a resolution

for the North Carolina General Assembly calling for preparation of statistics and other information on the state that could be used to further economic development and probably also to dampen the propensity of editors to make far-fetched claims for their communities.

The association was also fraternal. Editors and publishers generally liked each other's company, and there were benefits outside the state, too. The Georgia Press Association, for instance, sent a telegram to the new association saluting "the fraternity of the Old North State" and asking for a report on its activities.

The social aspects of the association quickly rose to the fore at this founding meeting, when members were invited for a free ride on the cars of the Atlantic Rail Road to the newly-developing town of Morehead City, on the sound just down the tracks from Goldsboro.

By 1875, this aspect of the NCPA was traditional. At the meeting that year in Wilmington, members partook of a "carnival atmosphere" as they rode the steamship Raleigh along the Cape Fear to Smithville, or Southport. The Wilmington Concert Cornet Band accompanied the excursionists.

The trip to Wilmington also set a pattern of NCPA conventions held around the state, roughly rotating between east and west. Asheville hosted its first convention in 1881, Morehead City in 1886. By 1900, Asheville would have another convention, Morehead two more.

Another ironclad tradition established early was to rotate the presidency each year, usually requiring the vice president to prepare the program for the coming year.

By 1900, with Asheville once again the scene of the convention, more than 130 editors and publishers, many with spouses and children, were in attendance. The NCPA itself had become a tradition for newspapers in the state.

By Roy Parker Jr.  
January 1998