

Davis, William Henry ^[1]

Davis, William Henry

by James W. Wall, 1986

22 July 1880–26 May 1960

William Henry Davis, editor and publisher of a partisan newspaper, *The Hornet* ^[2], was born at Fork, Davie County ^[3], the son of Daniel V. Davis and Sarah Hodges. He was married to Maude Williams. After graduating from Hodges Business College, a private academy near Fork, he taught school and toured as a lecturer on contemporary topics.

In 1902, at his home in Fork, Davis began publishing *The Hornet*, according to its editor the "Hottest Democratic Paper in the United States." Considering "fire-eating politics at the national level," he competed with the Republican ^[4] *Yellow Jacket*, published at Moravian Falls, N.C. To launch the paper, Davis sent out sample copies and ran an advertisement in *The Commoner*, published by William Jennings Bryan. *The Hornet* quickly attracted national attention, received help from the national headquarters of the Democratic party ^[5], and by 1914 attained a circulation of some 25,000, much of which was in California, New York, West Virginia, and Kentucky. The large circulation required Davis to build an office near his home and to stop printing the paper on his own cylinder press. In 1913, following the election of Woodrow Wilson, the post office at Fork was reestablished to facilitate the mailing of the paper; Davis was postmaster.

Initially, *The Hornet* appeared only before the November elections. From 1912 until World War II, however, it was published monthly except from 1930 to 1932. After Pearl Harbor and the United States entry into the war, the paper was suspended in an effort to discourage partisanship. When *The Hornet* was discontinued as a Democratic party newspaper, Davis continued to publish it as an organ for the Free-Thinkers of America until about 1955. Its circulation was about 10,000.

Davis was buried in the Fork Baptist Church cemetery.

HOTTEST DEMOCRATIC PAPER IN ALL AMERICA

The Hornet

Vol. II, No. 26. BIXBY, N. C., Sept. 30, 1908. Bi-Weekly, 35c. per year

SPLENDID PRAISE

All these long days we have been making THE HORNET hot as fire, setting bristles of old fogy rusty-necked Radicals and tame them to their eternal fate; we have been assuming THE HORNET to be a National affair, exposing Republican wrongs and stinging the perpetrators. We have been doing all these things and nothing, save the rattle of thousands of quarters and 50c.'s have we received to tell us that our doctrine is meeting with approval anywhere. But it has come at last, and it has rolled in from the sweltering pertumes of the stingingest Republican quarters in the whole political cow lot—Pennsylvania. It is the best piece of home-made praise and poetical juice we have seen or heard of since we started our political ear-fight five years ago. It is the honey: it

W. HENRY DAVIS
EDITOR
THE HORNET

He that blabth the truth, with lying lips, and he that telleth untruths all the days of his life is a Republican politician.

A protective tariff law is an abomination to a Democrat, but a chance to make it higher is the delight of a New England Republican.

"Keep the ballot box pure and in the hands of the people," says a Republican editor; but he's forgotten how long dead Radicals vote in Pennsylvania.

CURE FOR REPUBLICANISM

Take the cancer of the principle "Equal rights to all," one part of dislike for the darn trusts, ounces of the powder of "political purity," a handful of hatred, high tariff, a spoonful of jalap of Jeffersonian principles and a sprig of the present panic.

Set these over the wild fire Republican wrongs, sweeten with sugar of "Special privileges—none."

Put it into the empty ear above your "Adam's apple," cop up with the cork of common sense and let it remain forever.

This done, you will find instant relief, and will never more be the "moss-back" Radical that are.

AS A SICK REPUBLICAN SEES THINGS.

Oh, why does our party
Force us to stoop
And take down our goozles

The front page of the September 30, 1908 edition of *The Hornet*. Image from the N.C. Government & Heritage Library.

References:

Davie County Enterprise-Record, 2 June 1960.

Martin Collection, Davie County Library, Mocksville.

J. W. Wall, *History of Davie County* (1960).

Additional Resources:

"Religious Belief, His Defense." *Editor & Publisher* 51, no. 14 (September 14, 1918). 15. <http://books.google.com/books?id=ippCAQAAIAAJ&pg=RA13-PA15#v=onepage&q&f=false> ^[6] (accessed February 11, 2014).

"The Press: The Hottest." *Time* magazine. July 02, 1923. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,716005,00.html> ^[7] (accessed February 11, 2014).

McKown, Harry. "The Case of the Missing Hornet." *North Carolina Miscellany* (blog). North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. July 31, 2009. <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/ncm/index.php/2009/07/31/the-case-of-the-missing-hornet/> ^[8] (accessed February 11, 2014).

Johnson, Ellen. "Atheism in history.(The Hornet, atheist newspaper founded in 1901)." *American Atheist Magazine*. March 22, 2004.

Image Credits:

[Front page]. *The Hornet*. September 30, 1908. North Carolina Government & Heritage Library.

Subjects:

Biographies ^[9]

Writers, journalists, and editors ^[10]

Authors:

Wall, James W. ^[11]

Origin - location:

Davie County ^[12]

From:

Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press. ^[13]

1 January 1986 | Wall, James W.

Source URL: <https://ncpedia.org/biography/davis-william-henry>

Links

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/davis-william-henry> [2] <https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/22351299> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/davie> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/republican-party> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/democratic-party> [6] <http://books.google.com/books?id=ippCAQAAIAAJ&pg=RA13-PA15#v=onepage&q&f=false> [7] <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,716005,00.html> [8] <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/ncm/index.php/2009/07/31/the-case-of-the-missing-hornet/> [9] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [10] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/writer> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/wall-james-w> [12] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-12> [13] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>