
EDITOR CLYMER BUYS A PRESS



Rolla Clymer, editor of the El Dorado Times, in the 1920s

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Continuity and Change in a Kansas Country Town, 1926–1929

by Craig Miner

On July 22, 1926, at 1:30 p.m., things were working smoothly at the offices of the *El Dorado Times*. The flatbed press was printing the first four pages of a ten-page edition, fed from a web of paper running off a continuous roll. In the language of editor Rolla Clymer, production was “cooking,” and everything looked good for getting the paper out to its readers at the usual 3:30 time. “Everything seemed lovely,” according to Clymer, “And then, the serpent entered Eden.” The paper web began to break. It broke over twenty times, even though the paper was of good quality and fresh from a new car-load of newsprint. Replacing the paper roll with a new one from the storage room seemed to help, but it was still 5:30 p.m. before the first four-page section was printed, and after 6:00 when the final six-page section was ready for delivery. It was 7:30 p.m. before the newsboys were able to throw all the papers to their customers, and by that time Clymer had received many angry calls from subscribers. It was the beginning of a series of technical problems with the eight-page Duplex press that had been in service since 1918, just at the time of Clymer’s own arrival in El Dorado. The only people who could appreciate what he had been through, Clymer wrote to a fellow printer, were “those fellows who have gone down in the dark canyon and have fought the devil in the shape of a balky Duplex press.” The staff at the *Times*, wrote Clymer in an editorial called “Our Day of Troubles,” had one more reason “to wonder why they ever embarked into such a nerve-wracking business.”¹

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1. Editorial, *El Dorado Times*, July 23, 1926; Rolla Clymer to Duplex Printing Press Company, May 27, 1919, Correspondence, 1909–December 1920, box 1, Rolla Clymer papers, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka (hereafter cited as “box 1, Clymer papers”). On the original installation of the press, see Rolla Clymer to Duplex Printing Press Company, December 16, 1926; Rolla Clymer to Charles Scott, December 20, 1926, Correspondence, October 1926–September 1927, box 4, Clymer papers (hereafter cited as “box 4, Clymer papers”).

The good news was that the customers wanted the paper and complained when it was late. Clymer himself was a major reason why this was the case. Born in Alton, Osborne County, Kansas, in 1888, Clymer graduated from the College of Emporia and did graduate work at the University of Kansas. His real education, however, was on the job. He had learned the newspaper business as a reporter for William Allen White's *Emporia Gazette*, perhaps the most famous small-town newspaper in the country. Clymer had heard people say that someone was another William Allen White, but doubted that it was possible. "I was fortunate," Clymer wrote, "to be in his employ for seven years at an impressive stage of my life. Not only did he influence me profoundly, but he gave me the kindest and most generous personal consideration. I have always looked upon him as a foster father of my own."²

White had a philosophical belief that the newspaper was the soul of a community, a big part of its identity, and consequently he was a stickler for excellent local reporting and local editorial commentary. He never talked down to his readers, and involved them in what he himself considered the privilege and adventure of living in a country town in the heartland of America. Clymer absorbed that whole. The *Gazette* reported in 1915, when Clymer was editing the *Olathe Register*, that he had returned to Emporia, attended a dance there, and in his description of it for his own paper, had used the word "denouement." Clymer had, White commented, been trying to get that word into the *Gazette* for six years without success.³

2. Rolla A. Clymer, "Thomas Benton Murdock and William Allen White," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 23 (Autumn 1957): 254; Calder Pickett, "R.A. Clymer," in *Farewells by R.A. Clymer*, ed. William Galvani (El Dorado, Kans.: Butler County Historical Society, 1986), xiii.

3. Clipping, March 6, 1915, box 1, Clymer papers. For White, see Sally Foreman Griffith, *Home Town News: William Allen White & The Emporia*



"Not only did [White] influence me profoundly," Clymer wrote, "but he gave me the kindest and most generous personal consideration. I have always looked upon him as a foster father of my own."

Clymer loved everything about White, and thought his years training with the great editor were the making of him. "What gave the newspaper its essential and outstanding distinction," Clymer wrote of the *Emporia Gazette*,

was the omnipresence of Mr. White himself. It was not alone the daily swing and sweep of his powerful editorials that lifted the *Gazette* from the ruck, but that

Gazette (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Edward Gale Agran, "Too Good A Town:" *William Allen White and the Emerging Rhetoric of Middle America* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998). A useful local history is Jessie Perry Stratford and Lawrence P. Klintworth, *The Kingdom of Butler, 1857-1970: A History of Butler County, Kansas* (El Dorado, Kansas: Butler County Historical Society, 1970). Clymer himself wrote about Bent Murdock and William Allen White's newspaper years in El Dorado in "Thomas Benton Murdock and William Allen White," 248-56.

his capable hands were busy in every nook and corner of the Gazette's being.

. . . He was a prodigious worker. None in that remote day ever heard of the 40-hour week. . . . He usually worked with blazing fury. When something hot was coming off the griddle of his nimble mind, his flying fingers beat a tattoo on his old, double keyboard Smith-Premier typewriter that was nothing short of sheer assault.

When Clymer had the offer of a job with the *Kansas City Star*, White encouraged him to go to the country town of El Dorado instead. For that Clymer was later thankful. "For he sent me into the blessed Land of the Flint Hills Blue-stem and the spreading oil fields, and a species of sturdy, resourceful, self-reliant people." White, the "amiable, roly-poly Peter Pan," taught that anyplace was magic if one could see it properly. White himself, Clymer remembered, working in small town Emporia, created a special world "spun from out his 'mighty heart.'"⁴ In 1918 White wrote Clymer at his new Flint Hills Post: "Of course the first job of the newspaper is to print the news, but on the other hand after you have piled your paper full of names, you must have a policy, and I should say that policy should be the material and spiritual improvement of El Dorado; and do not forget that spiritual improvement stands for dozens of things."⁵

White was a "booster" editor, and as such may seem a stereotyped exemplar of a common western type, cloning himself in Clymer. Yes, the type was criticized then and later for seeing the world through the bourgeois lens of a middle-class business elite. Oswald Garrison Villard wrote in 1933 of White and Clymer's *Kansas City Star* mentor, William Rockhill Nelson, that Nelson's paper saw "no deeper under the surface than its Rotary or Kiwanis Club neighbors."⁶ But the booster ethic as practiced by White and Clymer was more compli-

4. Rolla Clymer reminiscence of William Allen White, 1968 speech, in *Speeches by Rolla Clymer, 1954-1975* folder, box 50, Clymer papers.

5. Picket, *Farewells by R. A. Clymer*, xiv. Clymer served as managing editor of the *El Dorado Daily Republican* from April 1918 until it consolidated with the *Walnut Valley Times* to form the *El Dorado Times* in December 1919. He was one of two editors of the new paper and a director of the newly established Times Publishing Company, which made the consolidation happen. See *El Dorado Daily Republican*, April 27, 1918, and November 29, 1919; *El Dorado Times*, December 1, 1919.

6. Oswald Garrison Villard, *Some Newspapers and Newspapermen* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1933), 224; Jean Folkerts, "William Allen White: Editor and Businessman During the Reform Years, 1895-1916," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 7 (Summer 1984): 133, 138. Sinclair Lewis was

cated than that. As communications specialists have noted, the rhetoric of these editors was neither homogeneous nor vapid. "Personal journalism" put the specific personality of the editor at the fore, and editors of the White school put great emphasis on the grounding of an editor in specific and lengthy experience with a certain unique community. Editors did nothing less than "present a coherent picture" of their own community in a complex world—a picture which was tested in the quality of the lives of their readers. Media historian David Nord wrote that Americans have always sought community, and that "communities are built, maintained, and wrecked in communication." There was a dialogue between editor and reader in the ideal community, rooted in deep understanding and empathy, and it was that dialogue, not just the facts, that made democracy work.⁷

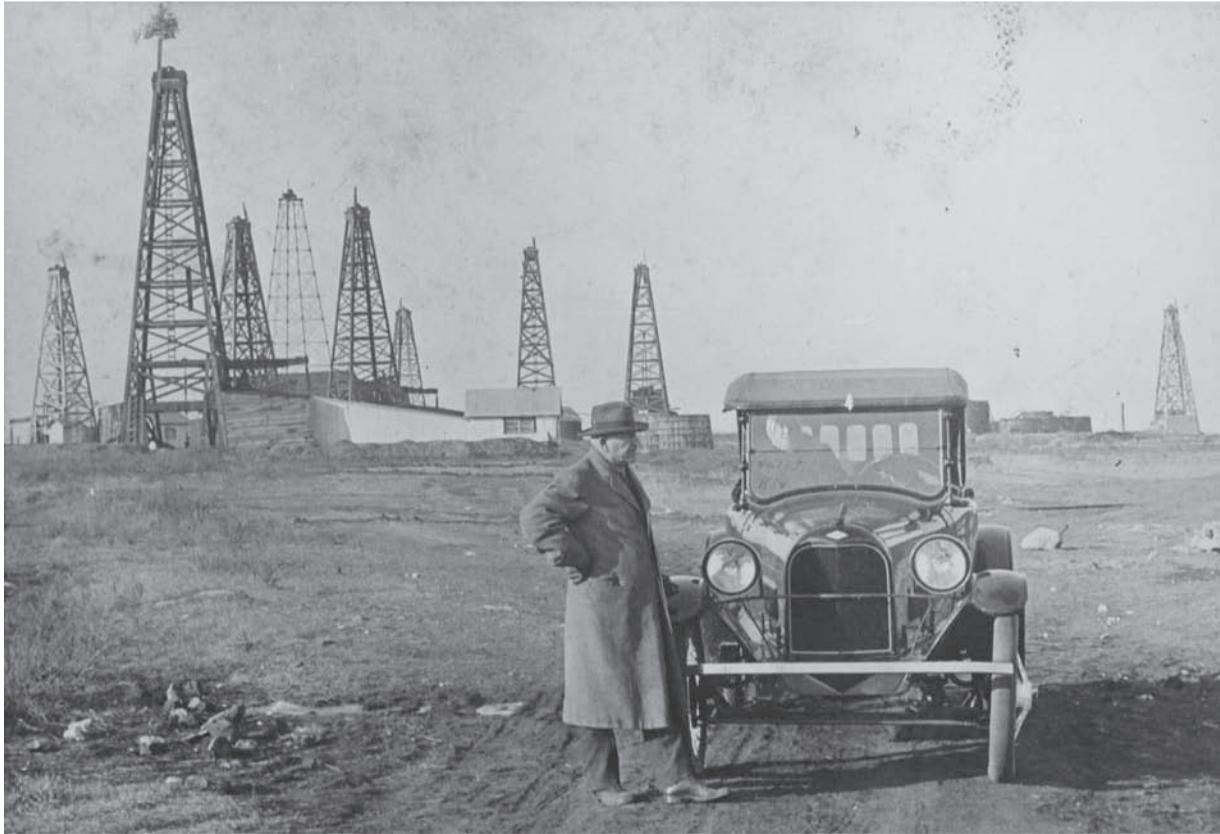
In the twenty-first century there is renewed interest in a newspaper's connection with its local community. It is difficult to reproduce in absentee corporations, however, the feeling for the relation of an individual to a community that White expressed in his famous obituary of his daughter Mary in 1921. She was Mary White, indeed, but also a part of Emporia, linked to its people and places in that famous piece in most specific, yet, as the worldwide reception of the editorial showed, also strangely universal ways. The editor, one analyst said in 1935, was nothing less than the "keeper of many destinies."⁸ Clymer, in moving to his new post, had that recent model before him.

Clymer built a reputation in El Dorado as an expert on oil and a vivid writer on the doings of the oil people that surrounded him in the major oil field thriving around his town in the 1920s. He wrote sterling obituaries, distinguished not only for their fine style, but also for the particular insight of a man who had often known the deceased for many years. His correspondents as well as his constituents recognized the talent and the style. Wrote a friend in 1925:

one of those contemporary writers who made a profession out of criticizing the likes of White and Clymer and what they represented.

7. David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 2, 246; Kenneth C. Bronson, "The Local Press and the Changing Community," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 42 (Spring 1976): 52-53. The point is made strongly in the chapter entitled "The Newspaper Sage: From Our Town to Olympus," in George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 190, 192-93. See also Julie Dagenais, "Newspaper Language as an Active Agent in the Building of a Frontier Town," *American Speech* 42, no. 2 (1967): 114-121, who analyzed the rhetoric of Marshall Murdock of the *Wichita Eagle* in the 1870s.

8. Leon Flint, *The Conscience of a Newspaper: A Case Book in the Principles and Problems of Journalism* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1935), 391. The obituary appeared in *Emporia Daily Gazette*, August 15, 1921.



Clymer built a reputation in El Dorado as an expert on oil and a vivid writer on the doings of the oil people that surrounded him in the oil field thriving around his town in the 1920s. Here Mr. and Mrs. Eliga Carter visit the Gordon Oil Fields, southwest of El Dorado.

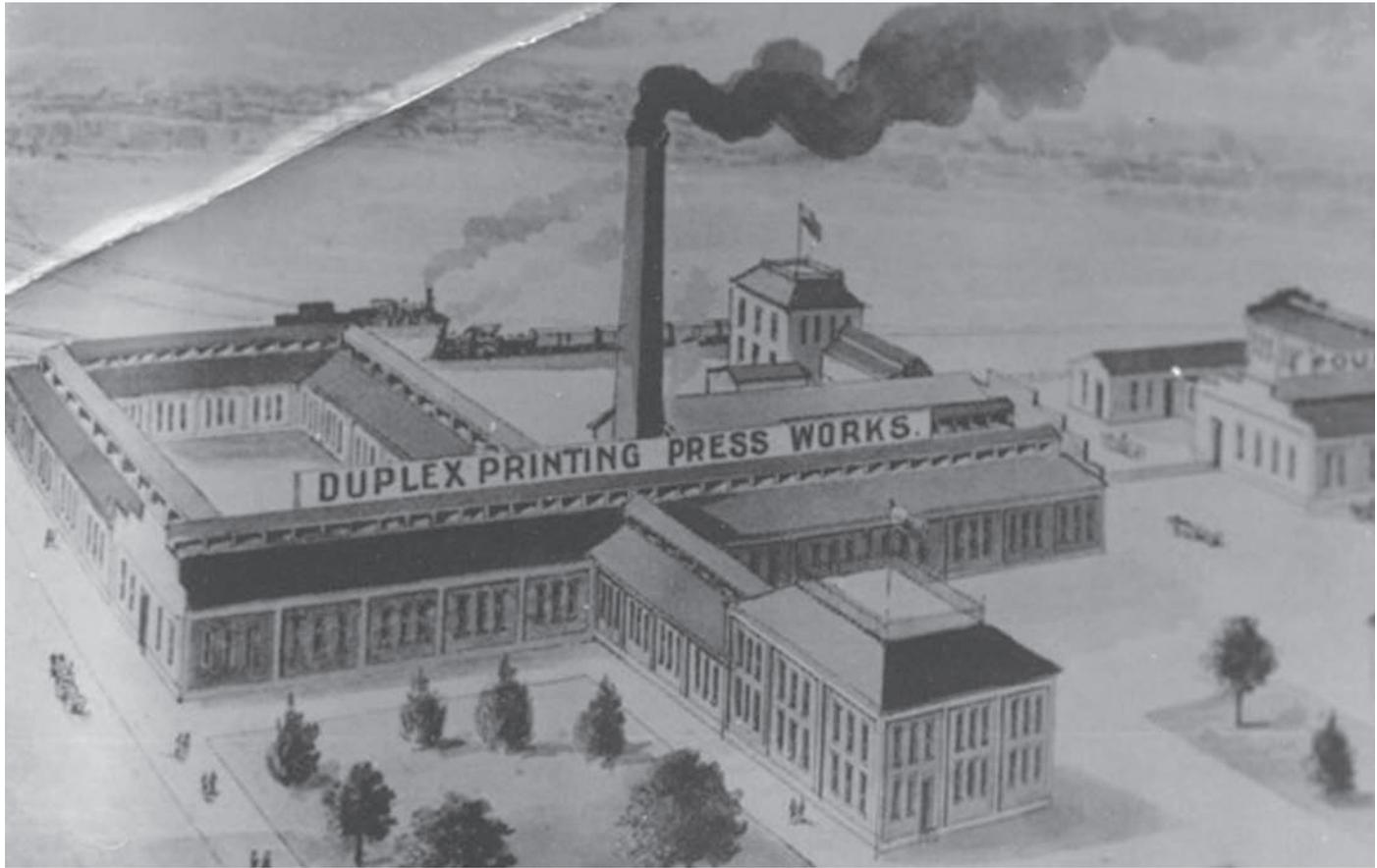
“When most editors are measuring the value of their papers entirely in terms of dollars, regardless of the literature published (if you can call it that); when people are buying ‘Short Stories’ ten to one over everything else, it is good to see on ‘Main Street’ of the old home town a paper and an editor not yet commercialized enough to forget to speak of the convictions of his faith.” The local newspaper could greatly affect American ideals, and elsewhere were doing so in a negative way in an age when “every move, no matter how well intended, is interpreted in terms of sex or of graft.”⁹

Not every small town newspaper editor took Clymer’s tack. For example, Arthur Aull, a contemporary of Clymer’s who edited the *Lamar Daily Democrat* in Lamar, Missouri,

made a career and a fortune by printing the most lurid gossip about his community, dealing with the libel suits as they came. He took pride in his version of small-town “yellow journalism.” Aull, in violation of the most basic principle of White journalism, would print display ads on page one, and was not fussy about their content, as long as they were paid for. In a statement of his philosophy, Aull wrote that he was only feeding his readers what they wanted, not trying to reform them. “Having been placed here, in a universe, where every living thing is faced with the potential necessity to fight for its right to live,” he wrote in 1921, “we could not expect these children of the cosmos slime to be otherwise than what they are.” It took “moral stamina” to act as Clymer did in El Dorado, and he had plenty.¹⁰

9. F. L. Preston to Rolla Clymer, October 24, 1925, Correspondence, October 1925–September 1926, box 3, Clymer papers (hereafter cited as “box 3, Clymer papers”). See Picket, *Farewells by R. A. Clymer*. Clymer wrote over one thousand obituaries between 1920 and 1977.

10. Chad Stebbins, *All the News is Fit to Print: Profile of a Country Editor* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 27, 37, 99, 137–38, 141; F. L. Preston to Rolla Clymer, October 24, 1925, box 3, Clymer papers.



The Duplex Printing Press Company in Battle Creek, Michigan, the premier newspaper press builder in the United States in Clymer's day. Illustration courtesy of the Willard Library, Battle Creek, Michigan.

The gathering of local news was an art form at the *Times*. When a young man named J. R. Hubbard, just out of the school of journalism at Kansas State Agricultural College, applied for a job in 1927, Clymer put him on the local beat. "I am . . . anxious that you do not overlook the smaller items. We like lots of personals and fresh, newsy 'Heard in Passing' items. These can all be picked up as you go. Moreover, we want a reporter who can meet and be interested in farm people, showing a sympathy with their affairs." He was sure the young man would like the job. "This is a good news town and we have always been able to 'develop' and create a great deal of stuff." Some feature stories would come his way, but "our chief interest, of course, is the local news and we will want you to be up to your ears in it at all times."¹¹

11. Rolla Clymer to J. R. Hubbard, December 8, 1927, Correspondence, October 1927–October 1928, box 5, Clymer papers (hereafter cited as "box 5, Clymer papers").

Clymer wrote about the relationship of a newspaper to a country town in a 1926 address to the Kansas Press Association entitled "Civic Ideals of the Kansas Press." He opened with a story. It seemed a Kansas editor died and went to heaven. The gatekeeper asked him questions about his life. The editor admitted to certain sins, including lying, stealing, and cruelty to animals. So why should he be admitted to heaven? The editor's reply was: "Well, Mr. Keeper, I haven't given the matter a great deal of thought because I have been so busy keeping my paper running. But I belonged to the Chamber of Commerce in our town for over 30 years . . . and was a member of more committees than there are steeples on heavenly towers." The editor went on to say he had boosted new industries, helped the farm bureau, agitated for better streets and a new sewer, backed the county fair, promoted music festivals, used Kansas products, and pushed the Rotary Club. "'Stop, Spirit, stop,' the Keeper of the Gate broke in during

this litany. ‘Don’t tell me any more. Pass right on through. You have had hell enough.’”¹²

The interest, the skill, and the altruistic devotion to the community beyond strictly financial interest, was widely recognized by Clymer’s peers. “Your thoughtfulness in little things,” wrote H. Lee Jones, the director of the information bureau of Kansas Public Service Companies, “your generosity in expressing kindly things, and your fairness in dealing with all things mark you as one of the real big editors of Kansas. Not so big in circulation, advertising lineage, power, position, wealth and those things, but big in the things that are enduring and significant.” Once, when rejecting the purchase of some nationally syndicated features, Clymer commented that local people grew tired of the same features. Also “our paper is so intensely local that the readers seem to demand home-produced material even though it may be inferior to that which we buy.”¹³

Clymer had troubles with his press other than the paper breakage, and wrote the Duplex Printing Press Company in Battle Creek, Michigan, the premier newspaper press builder in the United States. It was not only that his old press was acting up, but that his town and therefore his business was changing, requiring him to increase circulation, the size of his paper, and the press’s printing speed, or be confined to a kind of journalistic backwater. The 1920s was a time of watershed change, not only in the breakdown of Victorian conventions in manners and morals, and in the centralization of corporate media life in urban centers, but also in the development and application of technology. The invention of the Hoe newspaper press had, along with cheaper paper, made the penny press possible in the 1850s. That revolution in costs had, in turn, changed the audience for newspapers, and that in turn had changed the job and role of those who owned and edited them. The Duplex Press had the same effect in the 1920s. Just as the newspaper reader of the 1850s received the impression that every paper of every size was purchasing some sort of Hoe rotary press, and the reader of the 1970s was impressed with the move from linotype composition and letterpress printing to a computer/offset system, so purchasing a Duplex and

reorganizing the paper to suit that impressive machine, was a common move in the 1920s.¹⁴

The problem was that the capital cost of a Duplex was significant, involving not only the cost of the latest press, but provision of new space in which to house it, and the training and expansion of his staff for its care and feeding. The *Times* was on the small side to afford such a thing, but there seemed to be a great divide between metropolitan modernity and an antiquated rural lifestyle, which the purchase or non-purchase of such a device symbolized. For all his touting of the small town as the locus of virtue and reform, Clymer was a realistic businessman and an insightful follower of trends and developments. Some things never changed, but others certainly did. He wanted to be on the right side of the business and technology issue—the modernity issue—as well as sound on values. And he hoped those were not contradictory goals.

Weeklies served by glorified job presses, newspapers gathering all their own news with heavily local content, and newspapers with a staff of three or four were, for better or worse, on the way out, perhaps along with the tiny villages they suited. Big presses required big readership of daily papers, and many of these readers wanted national and international news, such as the latest on the discoveries at King Tutankhamun’s tomb in Egypt, or the fast-breaking details on a natural disaster. Such news came from the Associated Press (AP), suddenly available in the 1920s instantly and electronically, if laconically, by “leased wire” to those who could afford it. If the newspaper did not keep up, people would get their news through radio.¹⁵ Modernity in the newspaper world was a kind of package, take it or leave it.

The *Times* had promise. Butler County, where El Dorado is located, is physically “the largest county in Kansas,” boasted Clymer. Its good grazing land and oil business made the county prosperous, and the *Times* was its only daily newspaper. In addition to El Dorado, with a population around 10,000 wrote the editor in November 1926, the newspaper potentially could circulate to Oil Hill, a boom

12. R. A. Clymer, “Civil Ideals of the Kansas Press,” *Jayhawker Press* 3 (April 1926): 1.

13. Rolla Clymer to Roy L. Smith, December 18, 1926, box 4, Clymer papers; H. Lee Jones to Rolla Clymer, Dec. 27, 1927, box 5, Clymer papers.

14. Rolla Clymer to Duplex Printing Press Company, May 1, 1926, box 3, Clymer papers. A good place to get context is Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communication* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), especially, 233–295.

15. Oliver Gramling, *AP: The Story of News* (New York: Farrar and Rhinehart, Inc., 1940), 302–303, 313.

town of 2,500 just two miles to the northwest; to Frazier, three miles west, population 250; to Midian, seven miles west “with 1000 to 1500 inhabitants”; and to a number of “smaller oil field communities within a radius of ten to fifteen miles.” There was also Rosalia, twelve miles east, with 1,000 residents; Leon twelve miles southeast, with population over 1,000; Augusta, seventeen miles southwest, a town of 3,500, and many others including Douglas, Potwin, and Towanda.¹⁶ “This town is not slipping,” Clymer wrote in January 1927. There were \$1.5 million in improvements there in 1926, the Skelly Company was expanding its refinery, the oil pools were growing, and Rorabaugh Dry Goods Company was planning a new store in El Dorado. To his advertising agent in New York, Clymer wrote, “While we are in the small paper class and probably will remain so indefinitely, overshadowed by Wichita, our community is steadily improving and we provide an excellent territory for any advertiser who wishes to concentrate with his business.”¹⁷

In 1927 the publicity connected with the Charles Lindbergh solo flight, across the Atlantic, which Clymer covered with his own twist, improved the paper’s business further, giving it “generous” dividends and cutting its debt to a point that Clymer hoped to eliminate it within the year. The flight of the “Lone Eagle” too may have suggested that old-fashioned hard work and individual virtue could indeed co-exist with the high-tech centralized modern world of the 1920s. John William Ward, the historian who has most carefully studied the symbolism of the Lindbergh phenomenon, saw significance in Lindbergh’s own title for his book on the flight—“We.” Dependent as the Lindbergh phenomenon was not only on modern machinery, but on modern mass communications, it seemed in essence related to the true American frontier adventure of old, an ideal combination of traditional and modern, rural and urban America, a tremendously attractive combination in a time of confusing change. Clymer seemed to grasp this. “Lindbergh,” he

wrote, “was a model hero, modest, tactful and self-possessed—and his whole story is almost fictional in its perfection and color.”¹⁸

In Wichita, commercial aviation was on a boom, and Clymer sought some of the same action. He had an offer to sell to another newspaper, which he rejected, but realized that he would have to sell one day unless he could expand and improve his publication. Wichita was right next door and at the center of aviation activity, and Clymer was particularly good at reporting business news and in establishing a good relationship with businesspeople, both as advertisers and as sources of local news. Clymer also had the opportunity to move to a larger paper or to a larger city, but his temperament did not suit. “I didn’t like Chicago,” he wrote a friend there. “About all I saw was the down town district and the dirt and noise and confusion rather flabbergasted your little country cousin.”¹⁹

He more than liked El Dorado and its surrounding Flint Hills. He loved the area and became over the years one of the most quoted interpreters of its subtle beauty. A lot of our friends go to the mountains or the seashore, he wrote in the summer of 1926. But there was no reason to drive thousands of miles: “A drive of fifty miles into the Flint Hills of Eastern Butler, Western Greenwood, or Northern Chase counties will do it.” He recommended stopping the car on a hill and turning off the engine. “Get out and let the marvelous beauty of the valley below you . . . sink into your hard old carcass. There is nothing anywhere under the canopy of the sky more beautiful, more desirable or more uplifting.” There, “all the massive dignity of a well-developed oil area is . . . set down in a scene of surpassing loveliness.” The beauty could not be captured in a photo, but to the eyes there was “nothing elsewhere to beat the glory that is Kansas in the Flint Hills.”²⁰ He liked his town also. “El Dorado stacks up with any of them and better than most of them,” he commented. “Here is a town that possesses most modern conveniences, which is well

16. Rolla Clymer to H. R. Goldberg, E. Katz Special Advertising Agency, New York City, November 8, 1926, box 4, Clymer papers. For populations statistics, see also *Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture* (Topeka: Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 1926), 296; *Twenty-Sixth Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture* (Topeka: Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 1928), 262. Clymer seems to have over-estimated (or exaggerated) his population figures in many cases, based on the State Board of Agriculture’s annual enumeration.

17. Rolla Clymer to G. R. Katz, president, E. Katz Special Advertising Agency, New York City, May 16, 1927, and Rolla Clymer to J. V. Paxton, January 20, 1927, box 4, Clymer papers; *El Dorado Times*, January 19, 1927.

18. Rolla Clymer to Col. Perry Hoisington, Seattle, August 11, 1927, box 4, Clymer papers. See John William Ward, “The Meaning of Lindbergh’s Flight,” *American Quarterly* 10 (Spring 1958): 3–16.

19. Rolla Clymer to J. L. Frazier, September 22, 1927, box 4, Clymer papers.

20. *El Dorado Times*, July 30, 1926. See also, among others, William Galvani, comp., *Rolla Clymer Poet of the Flint Hills* (El Dorado, Kans.: Butler County Historical Society, 1984); Rolla A. Clymer, *Glory of the Hills* (El Dorado, Kans.: R. A. Clymer, 1960).



Clymer liked his town. "El Dorado stacks up with any of them and better than most of them," he commented. "Count your blessings every day, not the least of which is that you live in a town as good as El Dorado." Photo courtesy of the Butler County History Center, El Dorado, Kansas.

governed, whose tax rate is not too high, which has well-conducted public institutions, which has few rich and few poor, but a general average of well-to-do enterprising up-and-coming American citizens. . . . Count your blessings every day, not the least of which is that you live in a town as good as El Dorado."²¹

21. *El Dorado Times*, June 3, 1927.

In 1919 there was a change at Clymer's newspaper when the old *Walnut Valley Times* and the *El Dorado Daily Republican* merged to form the *El Dorado Times*. Now there was another step at hand. Late in 1927 the *Times* had twenty-five employees, used 125 tons of newsprint a year, and spent \$6,000 a month "to give El Dorado a paper commensurate with its size, progressivism and dignity." But standing still would not do. "The *Times* has no other gods before it but El Dorado," Clymer wrote in one of his editorials. "It has been, and will continue to be loyally de-

voted to the interests of this town. . . . Its zeal has ever been concentrated on the single purpose that El Dorado should progress in accord with its opportunities, that its citizens should dwell together in harmony and good will, and that its business and professional interests should prosper." Now the paper was considering some heavy investments for new equipment, basing its judgment "in the rock-ribbed stability of this town and the sublime faith that El Dorado will continue to progress."²²

Small town newspapers symbolized the health of small towns, no less. "No longer is the average town satisfied with a weekly newspaper," wrote Clymer, "or even a dinky, poorly printed daily." Many towns with populations under 10,000 had daily newspapers—"not metropolitan dailies, but still, papers, which more than give their communities the news of the day; dailies which give in service and devotion commensurate with the growing patronage—and a little bit more." On September 28, 1926, the *Times* printed an extra edition on storms in Florida, the first Sunday afternoon newspaper ever issued in town. The *Times* beat the Wichita papers onto the streets with this news by a full hour. "This matter is mentioned here," the columns of the *Times* crowed, "purely to emphasize and repeat what this newspaper has stated before: That The Times will take care of El Dorado in a news way; that it will issue extra editions whenever necessary, according to the time, size, and importance of the news stories in question."²³ There would be more innovation of that sort—would have to be. But there was no way to make a gradual transition in baby steps. Any step in the direction of modernization and expansion would have to be a large one.

Clymer struggled with exactly what he wanted to do about replacing his press and/or expanding his operating horizons. He worked with Oscar Stauffer on the idea of buying a newspaper, or even several newspapers elsewhere and operating them as a chain, as Stauffer himself had successfully done. But he admitted he had not Stauffer's genius for making money in unlikely situations, nor his affinity for risk.²⁴ On the contrary, he was thrifty and conservative, and even the idea of replacing his old press



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frightened him. His first instinct was to find a used press of the type and size he already had. Stauffer, however, told him this type of press "would [not] be desirable for you to put in an up-to-date office." There was a good deal of correspondence through 1926 with the Duplex Company about sending a serviceman to repair Clymer's current press.²⁵

On December 16 a Duplex serviceman, or "machinist," arrived at El Dorado. He was on an emergency call, since the *Times* had not been able to get its press operating at all. This man, F. E. Briegel, found a break in one of the paper feed rolls, which he repaired. He discovered that this roll

22. *El Dorado Times*, December 1, 1927.

23. *El Dorado Times*, September 28, 1926; September 23, 1926

24. Rolla Clymer to Oscar Stauffer, November 2, 1926; and Rolla Clymer to Clad H. Thompson, November 8, 1926, box 4, Clymer papers.

25. Oscar Stauffer to Rolla Clymer, November 1, 1926; and F. N. Tobias to Rolla Clymer, December 1, 1926, box 4, Clymer papers.

had been installed improperly when the press was set up in 1918. He ordered a new part, No. QQ 1742C, from Battle Creek, which he thought the office personnel could install on their own. Briegel mashed his thumb while working on the press, and Clymer felt the strain of the whole affair. "I feel like a veteran of the War of 1812 today." The paper was limited to makeshift editions for three days during the busy holiday season, and it "hurt like sin."²⁶

Clymer took it up with the company, asking for reimbursement for the \$500 cost of the repair at least. He had had to print the paper on a flatbed cylinder press in a neighboring job shop, and that was not satisfactory. His ad solicitors could not sell space "because there was no assurance that we could issue the paper in anything like proper form." Some customers forced the paper to rerun their ads. "We are not accustomed to asking undue favors," he wrote to Duplex, but the company was at fault. "Your presses are standard and meet a high tradition. You have the reputation of standing behind your products both as to service and to durability."²⁷ The company denied that the defective roller was the problem, but claimed rather that the operation had been improper, and that it was a wonder the shaft on the roller had lasted nine years. Eventually, the company paid the \$70 cost of the new roller, but nothing further.²⁸

That awkwardness led to further thinking about the future of the paper in general. Circulation was 4,750 in August 1927. The weekly edition, called the *Republican*, was not very popular. Clymer admitted that it was "rotten," and that he printed it partly out of nostalgia. "I am ashamed of the old *Republican* under present conditions," Clymer wrote, "—frankly ashamed—but this is not a weekly town, and we are only saving the old paper as a safeguard against any situation that might develop."²⁹ In June 1927 he was thinking of improving the weekly, issuing it as an eight-page paper circulating to maybe 1,200 customers. It was forty-four years old and had never missed an issue, and

that impressed Clymer. Surely it could survive by specializing in agricultural and cattle topics as well as oil.³⁰

On the larger question of expanding the *Times* the considerations were more complicated. It depended upon guesses about the future of journalism nationally and regionally and the current nature and future prospects of the town of El Dorado. Kansas newspapers in the 1920s labored under particular disadvantages relative to potential ad revenue. First, since 1880 Kansas had been a prohibition state, and no liquor advertising was allowed. In 1909 cigarettes and their advertising were banned too. Only cigar and plug tobacco ads were permitted until the law changed in 1927. However, in the 1920s, with the introduction of milder cigarettes and safer matches, combined with massive advertising (even in the journal of the American Medical Association) and the acquired habits of returning World War I veterans, there was enormous pressure to jettison the old restrictions in the name of "modernity."³¹

Clymer thought both the liquor and cigarette restrictions were silly. Perhaps he objected to the liquor law partly because he was a serious drinker, so serious as to need treatment for alcoholism on at least one occasion, and to have his driver's license in jeopardy more than once. Clymer's ad representative, G. R. Katz of E. Katz Special Advertising Agency, New York City, saw hypocrisy in Kansas also. Everyone bootlegged tobacco. Perhaps the goal was to keep cigarettes from minors, but Katz thought "there isn't any sanity in permitting adults to chew tobacco and smoke cigars and putting a ban on the measly little, comparatively harmless, cigarette." It kept several thousand lines of cigarette advertising out of the newspapers in Kansas to no purpose. The *Times* ran editorials advocating repeal of the cigarette law: "They are smoked by men, and to a slight extent by women of all classes."³² Certainly, the repeal of prohibition or the removal of the cigarette restriction would increase newspaper revenues, and probably finance a new

26. Rolla Clymer to V. J. Newland, December 17, 1926; Rolla Clymer to Sanford R. Rice, December 17, 1926; and Rolla Clymer to Duplex Printing Press Company, December 16, 1926, box 4, Clymer papers.

27. Rolla Clymer to Duplex Printing Company, December 23, 1926, box 4, Clymer papers.

28. G. A. Grames to Rolla Clymer, December 30, 1926; and J. K. Stone to Rolla Clymer, August 5, 1927, box 4, Clymer papers.

29. Rolla Clymer to K. T. Wiedemann, December 27, 1926; and Rolla Clymer to Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, August 5, 1927, box 4, Clymer papers.

30. Rolla Clymer to American Press Association, June 9, 1927, box 4, Clymer papers.

31. R. Alton Lee, "The 'Little White Slaver' in Kansas: A Century-Long Struggle Against Cigarettes," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 22 (Winter 1999–2000): 262–63.

32. *El Dorado Times*, December 3, 1926; G. R. Katz to Rolla Clymer, January 3, 1927, box 4, Clymer papers.

press and building for the *El Dorado Times*. But, that involved changing the values of the community, which the newspaper was supposed to lead and follow at the same time.

Clymer admitted that he and others could be “obsessive” about the liquor issue. He exaggerated his “good ‘ole country boy” repartee and no doubt agreed with the editor of the *Lyons Daily News* who confessed: “We never will be a great editor because our vision is too limited. . . . We have only a superficial knowledge of what is going on politically outside our own state. Classical music, futuristic art and the new fangled poetry are beyond our abilities of appreciation. We like to write about the things that interest the average man, close to home.” And that included liquor.³³ The National press was laughing at Kansas in the 1920s, saying it was “as wet as any other state.” Clymer approached that with his usual wit: “This newspaper does not know whether Kansas is as wet as any other state. It does not know how wet other states are. The exigencies of getting out a daily newspaper on the banks of the Walnut and keeping the . . . wolf from the door prevent any widespread gallivanting around.” But any writer who thought Kansas was “a regular ocean of illicit booze” was talking through his hat. There were no saloons. Fewer than ten percent of the population had any interest in liquor and even most of those would vote dry. “To be correct about it, Kansas is not even damp.”³⁴

Clymer in his planning did not think that would change. He wrote Katz as late as 1935, when Kansas was allowing 3.2 beer, that he thought state prohibition was there to stay, even after the 1933 repeal of the national statute. Yes, Katz had a “logical” position in saying people should have a right to drink, but he did not know Kansas. “Kansas will not go wet,” Clymer wrote, and the newspaper would not be printing liquor ads anytime soon. “The actual majorities in both houses for the drys are brutal. . . . Hard liquor is wholly taboo. Even if the condition changed today, I do not believe we papers would dare to accept that form of advertising. I don’t know much but I do know Kansas. It is dry and is going to stay that way.”³⁵

33. *El Dorado Times*, quoting *Lyons Daily News*, January 11, 1929.

34. *El Dorado Times*, January 18, 1929.

35. Rolla Clymer to G. R. Katz, June 14, 1935, Correspondence, July 1934 – June 1935, box 11, Clymer papers (hereafter cited as “box 11, Clymer papers”). For detail on Kansas prohibition history see Robert Smith Bader, *Prohibition in Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986).



The local Chrysler dealer appreciated the fancy national Chrysler ads that Clymer was able to run locally.

That aside, there were other ways to increase advertising. Clymer’s relation with a New York firm that helped him place national ads, for example, was an unusual strategy for a small-town newspaper. But he made a success of it. The relationship started in the spring of 1924. Clymer was unsure of it as, he said, he always had felt that “the special representatives are more or less order-takers, and do not fight sufficiently hard for business for you.” But his ad agency was different. The record keeping and organization was first rate, and ad revenue for the *Times* increased about \$400 a month in the first three years of the contract.³⁶

It did mean that the ad mix of the newspaper was different than before, with more of a national and “standard” feel, as was the trend everywhere. And it was a bit hard to get national ads. “Our situation is individual,” Clymer noted, “in that we are located so closely to Wichita. It is hard . . . for us to get our share of national business. So many space-buyers, looking at the state from the viewpoint of a map, think that coverage of Wichita is sufficient.”³⁷

36. Rolla Clymer to George Marble, August 6, 1927; and Rolla Clymer to G. R. Katz, May 16, 1927, box 4, Clymer papers.

37. Rolla Clymer to Roy Bailey, May 17, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

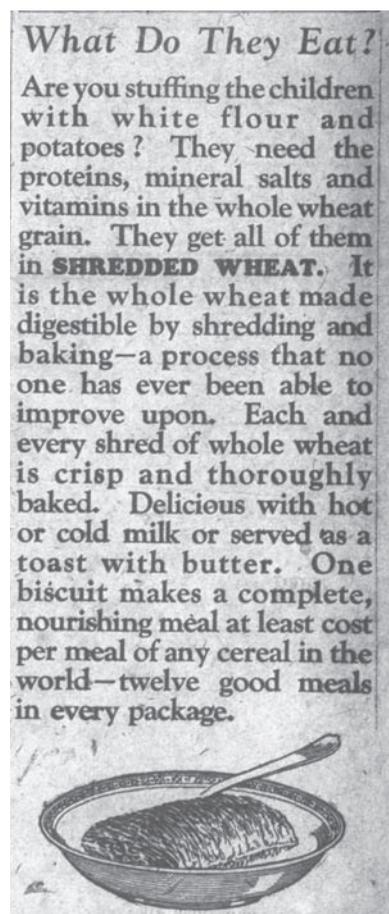
He did try, however, and his efforts worked. The local Chrysler dealer appreciated the fancy national Chrysler ads that Clymer was able to run locally. Other regional editors would write Clymer asking, for example, where he got the ad for the Western Paving Brick Manufacturer's Association, or the attractive ones for the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, or for Shredded Wheat. The *Times* was able to make deals for national advertisers to place displays in the windows of its office building. During the Christmas season of 1926 these displays included one from the Standard Oil Company of Indiana and for Kellogg cereals.³⁸ When Sunny Jim Bran Dandies did a national advertising campaign early in 1927, Clymer not only offered his window, but his job printing operation to produce letters to dealers and display broadsides. In May 1927, the editor reported he was "sitting pretty" on the Philadelphia Storage Battery account as well as Philco batteries. He had convinced both these companies, when representatives were referred to him by Katz, to make El Dorado part of their national sales campaign.³⁹ His expertise in promoting his own town to its own citizens proved useful in selling it to others as well. However, it definitely changed the look of the paper and arguably the nature of the town, absorbing both more directly (for better or for worse) into the trends, or one might say fads, of the nation.

Another new and homogenizing feature was the Associated Press. Clymer used that association, but the relationship was a bit stormy. In October 1927 Clymer received a reprimand from AP for failing to protect his fellow AP members on a story of statewide interest. The case involved a shooting in Wichita in which Clymer's local news sense for a scoop violated the official AP policy that the service was to be told first; then the story was to be distributed equitably to its member papers. Clymer apologized, saying he had been busy with the Kafir corn festival.⁴⁰ This last comment sounded like an appeal to localism against the national juggernaut, and so it was intended. It so happened, even the El Dorado Kafir corn carnival, a tradition in

38. Rolla Clymer to E. J. Rodda, November 9, 1926; C. W. Moody to Rolla Clymer, November 13, 1926; and Rolla Clymer to Stack-Goble Advertising Agency, December 13, 1926, box 4, Clymer papers.

39. Rolla Clymer to C. P. Slater, Katz agency, February 12, 1927; Clymer to G. R. Katz; and Clymer to G. H. Gunst, Katz agency, May 16, 1927, box 4, Clymer papers.

40. Ralph Heppe to Rolla Clymer, October 20, 1927; and Rolla Clymer to Ralph Heppe, October 24, 1927, box 5, Clymer papers.



Other regional editors would write Clymer asking where he got the ad for the Western Paving Brick Manufacturer's Association, or the attractive ones for the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, or for Shredded Wheat.

town since 1911, changed radically in the 1920s, incorporating many elements of other festivals, and losing much of its local flavor. But Clymer was resisting some parts of the AP world. While he promised to cooperate better in 1928, there was clearly some tension about the new regional arrangement under national rules.⁴¹

Still, with centralization and standardization seemed to come prosperity. Clymer wrote in the spring of 1928: "Things are rocking along here about as usual.

41. Rolla Clymer to Ralph Heppe, January 5, 1928, Clymer papers. Joyce Thierer, "The Queen of Kansas Prairies: Butler County's Kafir Corn Carnivals," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18 (Summer 1995): 83.

It is always a strenuous job to keep a daily newspaper on the way but I have a good staff . . . and we keep the wheels turning." His only complaint was that the duties of running the business kept him from spending as much time writing editorials as he would like. He then owned about half the newspaper as well as being its sole manager. He yearned for an assistant, but turned down offers to sell the *Times*.⁴² He would expand and improve it instead.

And so he returned to his headache of trying to buy a new press. Through most of 1927, Clymer shopped for used presses of various brands, on the grounds that "a good rebuilt press might take care of us for an indefinite period," especially if it were capable of printing sixteen pages at a time.⁴³ Two Duplex representatives visited him in El Dorado in July 1928, leaving him, as he put it, "at a standstill on the new press idea." He still hoped then that he could buy used, but the Duplex men recommended against it. Clymer wrote Lynn Bloom, a Tennessee contact who had a used press for sale, that "of course the Duplex people are trying to sell us a new press and give us little, or no, satisfaction regarding any used equipment, whatever it may be." Maybe he would visit the Tennessee office, however. "You will understand perfectly that I do not want to make a mistake when I buy."⁴⁴

A manager at Duplex pressed the issue of modernity and future expansion, matters he knew would influence the visionary Clymer. "We are up against your outlook [i.e. conservatism] all the time," Arthur Wilson wrote from Battle Creek, "and faithfully and daringly tell publishers that the Duplex Tubular Plate Rotary Press—a new one—is the practical and most fitting thing in the way of a press to meet conditions as you face them now and in the future at El Dorado. No other press can so well protect your field and the asset value of the paper." The new look and the new efficiency, Wilson said, could expand circulation and advertising more than enough to pay off the capital cost of the press quickly.⁴⁵

Meanwhile Bloom was telling Clymer that the Duplex Company was knocking the used press he had for

sale (which was also a Duplex) because the company had no used presses to sell themselves. That might have been technically true at that moment, but Duplex had offered in November 1927 to sell Clymer a used (1924 model) sixteen page Duplex Tubular Plate Rotary Press, with a speed of 30,000 papers an hour. It offered to make allowance for Clymer's old Duplex flatbed as part of the deal. However, the firm still recommended a new press. "We know from long experience in such matters that the best is the cheapest for such conditions as yours at Eldorado [sic]."⁴⁶ No doubt, too, this particular press was larger and faster than the *Times* strictly needed. In December 1927 Clymer was looking at a twenty-four page an hour tubular with a 20,000 an hour capacity. Again it was too large, as the *Times* did not intend to print more than a twelve-page edition. Duplex invited Clymer to visit the factory that same month, noting that they had many hesitant customers, and were always able to overcome every obstacle, including the forbidding initial cost. He had several offers in 1928 for used Duplex presses, including a relatively modern sixteen-page tubular plate press, capable of printing 20,000 papers an hour at a price of \$13,500.⁴⁷

On September 10, 1928, however, the consideration of alternatives ended. Clymer wrote the regional Duplex representative that he had decided to buy a new Duplex and would like to close the deal as quickly as possible.⁴⁸ It was more than two years since the first paper feed problems with the old press at the *Times*.

In November, writing to a fellow editor in Oregon considering a new press, Clymer sounded like an old hand. He had had many chances to buy a used press, he wrote, but steered clear "because while many of the presses offered apparently were in good condition and would give long service, they lack the improvements which mean time and money around newspaper offices nowadays." Clymer communicated the Duplex line exactly. "You will have to pay high for equipment," wrote the El Dorado editor, "but

42. Rolla Clymer to Mary Virginia, March 10, 1928; and Rolla Clymer to Oscar Stauffer, March 15, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

43. Rolla Clymer to Goss Printing Press Company, Chicago, Illinois, November 19, 1927, box 5, Clymer papers.

44. Rolla Clymer to Lynn W. Bloom, July 3, 1928; and Rolla Clymer to C. H. Pattison, July 5, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

45. Arthur Wilson to Rolla Clymer, July 6, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

46. Arthur Wilson to Rolla Clymer, November 26, 1927; and Lynn Bloom to Rolla Clymer, July 16, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

47. J. W. Spencer, Goss Printing Press Co., to Rolla Clymer, December 14, 1927; Rolla Clymer to J. W. Spencer, December 16, 1927; Arthur Wilson to Rolla Clymer, December 28, 1927; and N. Newman, Newman Company, New York City, to Rolla Clymer, September 5, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

48. Rolla Clymer to Paul Drake, September 10, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

they build an honest press and they stand behind it." The problem was that one would have to face spending \$25,000 to \$30,000 before the new press was up and running.⁴⁹

The proposal from Battle Creek was for a new twelve-page press to cost \$16,500, with \$3,500 allowed for the *Times'* old press. Clymer agreed providing the factory would hold the press until he could provide space to receive it. The editor was worried about that space, but felt fairly confident financially, as the newspaper had \$7,000 in the bank, \$2,800 in an emergency fund, and all bills paid. He corresponded with Charles H. Pattison in San Gabriel, California, who represented the interests in the paper held by the family of its founding editor Thomas "Bent" Murdock.⁵⁰ Murdock had trained William Allen White, and, with his brother Marshall of the *Wichita Eagle*, had made journalism from that region of Kansas nationally famous. Any move into a new age would have to take account of the tradition and the remaining family investment.

It was not so simple, Clymer wrote to another investor, "that it can be set down at once in terms of dollars and cents and approval or dissent given at long distance. It is rather a problem of general expansion of our business. I think we need a new and more modern press. But it is difficult to see such equipment installed in this building." So one change would lead to others. Clymer contacted an architect in Cleveland, who noted that production of a newspaper was an industrial operation, and therefore any new building would have to be custom designed for a newspaper's needs.⁵¹

Clymer delayed; Duplex pressured. The company was building his press, the people there said, and could not keep it forever. The minute it was placed into the hands of their sales force there would be a dozen buyers for it.⁵²

On September 22 Clymer got a message from California that the Murdock heirs had agreed that if the editor felt satisfied that this was what was needed and that the price was right, he should order the press at once and then try to hold off delivery until a building could be constructed. "Go to it old boy," wrote a family representative, "if you

feel like it." That was in the nick of time. The southwest area representative of the Duplex Company arrived in El Dorado on September 24 saying that the company could no longer hold Clymer's purchase option. Clymer paid \$250 and asked for a delay until November 15. "Our old press will have to stand the gaff in the meantime."⁵³

Clymer went into negotiations with architects in Kansas City about the space. Could the present building be expanded? Did there have to be a custom structure? "You have heard, of course, of efficiency engineers," wrote the manager of a Kansas City printing press and equipment company, on November 2, 1928. "By the way," he continued, "this word 'efficiency' is one of the most abused terms in the printer's lexicon." Too many out of town advisors could be a problem, but "we have helped quite a few of our printer friends in arranging their composing and press rooms to the best advantage."⁵⁴

In November began negotiations with a local woman for a vacant lot adjoining the present building of the *Times*. She asked \$8,000. Clymer offered a trade of some land he owned in Butler County. She declined. Clymer thought her price too high, and gave up considering it.⁵⁵ That difficulty, and the pricey ideas of the architects for an "efficient" new building, led him back to a plan for modifying his original building. That was what eventually happened, although the modifications were substantial. Moreover, replacing the old equipment with the new in the same space, while still printing the paper every day, was a logistical nightmare.

The *Times* made an announcement in its columns late in January 1929. Next month it would install a newspaper press "of the most modern and improved type." It was a "fine piece of machinery" with a "full outfit of stereotype machinery." The job department would be moved to the front part of the basement and the composing room to the middle portion of the main floor. The rear one-third of that floor would be occupied by the new press, supported by concrete piers from the basement. It would work a revolution. The publication of the *Times* had heretofore been limited to eight pages at a time. Now it could print twelve. The new machinery printed from tubular stereotyped plates instead of type forms. This would create a product of more

49. Rolla Clymer to S. S. Smith, November 26, 1928, Correspondence, November 1928 – October 1929, box 6, Clymer papers (hereafter cited as "box 6, Clymer papers").

50. Rolla Clymer to C. H. Pattison, September 17, and September 25, 1928; and Pattison to Clymer, September 22, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

51. Robert W. Dickerson to Rolla Clymer, September 19, 1928; and Rolla Clymer to Mary Alice, September 18, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

52. I. C. Squires to Rolla Clymer, September 22, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

53. Rolla Clymer to C. H. Pattison, September 25, 1928; and C. H. Pattison to Rolla Clymer, September 22, 1928, box 5, Clymer papers.

54. Fred Cornell, Barnhardt Brothers & Spindler, to Rolla Clymer, November 2, 1928, box 6, Clymer papers.

55. D. W. Replogle to Rolla Clymer, November 28, 1928; and Rolla Clymer to D. W. Replogle, November 30, 1928, box 6, Clymer papers.

March 2 1929

**Machinists and Erectors Report
THE DUPLEX PRINTING PRESS CO.**

Work done in the pressroom of Times Publishing Co., El Dorado, Kansas
Name of Paper City State

	Date	Started	Stopped	No. of Hours Worked	Nature of Work
Sunday					
Monday	4	8 A.M.	9 P.M.	11	Erecting press
Tuesday	5	8 A.M.	9 P.M.	10½	" "
Wednesday	6	8 A.M.	5 P.M.	8	" "
Thursday	7	8 A.M.	9 P.M.	11	" "
Friday	8	8 A.M.	9 P.M.	9½	" "
Saturday	9	8 A.M.	7 P.M.	10	" "

Signature of Publisher or other in authority

B. G. Donaldson
Signature of Machinist or Erector

This report to be made and signed in duplicate—one copy retained by publisher and the other mailed by erector to Battle Creek.

Above shows time spent in publishers plant, but does not include traveling time to and from job.

Clymer carefully retained the time sheets of B. G. Donaldson, the factory "erector" who helped to install the new press.

even quality than with the use of individual pieces of type, although making the plates involved a new skill. The press would run at greatly increased speed. It could produce copy at a rate of 30,000 an hour, although the *Times* would gear it back to 18,000. The entire usual edition of 5,000 copies would therefore be printed in fifteen or twenty minutes. "The *Times* will be in a much better position hereafter to catch trains and buses which leave El Dorado about 4 o'clock each afternoon, and thus should greatly facilitate the delivery of its papers to all patrons." The print should be more

clear and readable. The *Times* company invested \$25,000 in the change "in order to place its plant on a modern basis," and to express its confidence in the future of the town of El Dorado.⁵⁶

It all happened. On February 16, 1929, the last concrete for the press foundation went in, and Clymer sent a check for \$1,000 to Battle Creek, hoping the press could be delivered in about ten days. On February 21 the press was shipped from Michigan, with instructions forwarded to Clymer to wire the Duplex Company when it arrived so they could send their man to install it.⁵⁷ On February 26 an excited Clymer reported that the press should arrive by the next evening. "Then the grand march will begin. I don't know when the ball will end. . . . It has been rather hard for a newspaper chap with the glimmerings of a bright idea to get the same into print while being menaced the while by a falling brick bat or two by four." On March 1 Clymer wrote fellow editor Roy Bailey in Salina: "We are now in a mess here. Are installing a new 12-page

tubular (Duplex,) and you know what that means."⁵⁸ Indeed, it meant something. An expert from the Duplex Company told Clymer: "The change from a flat-bed

56. *El Dorado Times*, January 28, 1929.
57. F. N. Tobias to Rolla Clymer, February 21, 1929; and Rolla Clymer to Duplex Printing Press Company, February 16, 1929, box 6, Clymer papers.
58. Rolla Clymer to Roy F. Bailey, March 1, 1929; and Rolla Clymer to Alice Pattison, February 26, 1929, box 6, Clymer papers.

"I light a Lucky and stay slender -

Hope Hampton.
 Hope Hampton,
 Famous Star of the Opera,
 Stage and Screen.



"Luckies have helped me win the laurel crown of my musical career—singing in opera. Stage presence demands a slim, youthful figure. Rich foods cannot tempt me. I light a Lucky and stay slender. The toasted flavor of a Lucky soothes the craving for goodies. Then, too, a Lucky never irritates my throat. Even, after smoking many, my voice is still clear."

HOPE HAMPTON

The modern common sense way—reach for a Lucky instead of a fattening sweet. Everyone is doing it—men keep healthy and fit, women retain a trim figure. Lucky Strike, the finest tobaccos, skilfully blended, then toasted to develop a flavor which is a delightful alternative for that craving for fattening sweets.

Toasting frees Lucky Strike from impurities. 20,679 physicians recognize this when they say Luckies are less irritating than other cigarettes. That's why folks say: "It's good to smoke Luckies."

Note: Authorities attribute the enormous increase in Cigarette smoking to the improvement in the process of Cigarette manufacture by the application of heat. It is true that during 1928, Lucky Strike Cigarettes showed a greater increase than all other Cigarettes combined. This surely confirms the public's confidence in the superiority of Lucky Strike.

"It's toasted"

No Throat Irritation - No Cough.

Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet.

© 1928. The American Tobacco Co., Manufacturers

Coast to coast radio hook-up every Saturday night through the National Broadcasting Company's network: The Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra in "The Tunes that made Broadway, Broadway."

In 1929 there were slick cigarette ads in the El Dorado Times, just as though Kansas were New Jersey.

to a stereo machine is quite a radical one and it can only be expected that there will be many things for the men to learn with which they have not had any previous experience." He suggested hiring a new employee who was acquainted with the new type of equipment. The first of the specialists to arrive was B. G. Donaldson, the factory "erector." Clymer carefully retained his time sheets.⁵⁹ On March 21 he reported the new press up and operating well. We "are greatly pleased with it," wrote Clymer. "It is going to eliminate a lot of trouble in the pressroom." The *Winfield Courier* expressed a sentiment common to newspapers around the state in commenting: "Because of the investment the installation of such a press is an event not only for the El Dorado Times but for El Dorado."⁶⁰

The newspaper kept track of its own changes. "These are hectic times around this newspaper shop," its columns reported on March 16.

The new newspaper press, with all its bewildering and varied array of equipment, is being installed. Ranks of erectors, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, plasterers, tinsmiths, painters and roustabouts tramp gaily through the place, leaving litter and violent noises in their wakes. Ever and anon a loosened brick or joist drops with . . . [a] sickening thud on the head of an aspiring printer or reporter; the victim is cheerily carried to the pump, revived again, and the battle goes on. . . .

It's a gay life, this newspaper endeavor, and sometimes it's gayer than usual. But the dear public should not blame a newspaper man for sometimes scratching his bald spot and sighing with the poet:

"Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness."⁶¹

On March 18 came the first issue printed on the new press. In exactly twenty-one minutes after its start the new press turned out 5,000 folded papers to forward to the mailing room. The town was invited to visit.⁶²

A week later came the last issue of the *El Dorado Republican*, founded by Thomas Benton Murdock in 1883. Wrote Clymer laconically: "This is not a weekly town." It was sad to part with such "an old and honorable institution," but

people were too modern now for its content and the clustered group of sunflowers on its masthead. The march of time, which had changed the *El Dorado Times* had eliminated its revered predecessor altogether.⁶³

But the mood was more excited than sad. "The print, while yet short of perfection," Clymer wrote in a letter, "is a great improvement over the old flatbed. It is more uniform in every way, gets better ink distribution, is more evenly folded and brings out all of the matter in clarity. There is no comparison in speed." The daily run at the *Times* was "hardly a workout for this piece of machinery. It runs with beautiful smoothness and precision." More than that, it attracted attention, and was wonderful advertising. "People who rather are inclined to believe the town is going to the dogs are bucked up by the fact that we have invested \$25,000 in new and modern equipment looking forward to an increased business."⁶⁴

With the benefit of hindsight, 1929 was not the best year to expand the newspaper, but the *Times* survived. "Business is just fair—in and out, mostly out," wrote the editor on April 16, 1935. "We have made money through the depression, though." Clymer remained as the paper's editor until 1977. By that time he was a revered institution around the state of Kansas and certainly in El Dorado. But he and it had changed, and a good bit of that change was represented, symbolically and physically, by the replacing of that pesky old flatbed press in the late 1920s. In 1929 there were slick cigarette ads in the *Times*, just as though Kansas were New Jersey: "Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet."⁶⁵

Editor Clymer and his new press continued to pay lip service to the community ideal of service and aggressive local reporting, quoting with approval the sentiments of a fellow editor at Larned that newspapers had to continue to meet their opportunities "by returning to the community something of what the community has given them."⁶⁶ Kansas, Clymer wrote, had a unique newspaper tradition, and there was no state where editors were so influential as there. Yes, in Iowa or in North Dakota, there were towns that looked to the outward eye as though they had the same main streets, the same makes of automobiles as did

59. C. A. Grames to "Gentlemen," March 5, 1929; and Time sheets, March 9, 1929, box 6, Clymer papers.

60. *El Dorado Times* quoting *Winfield Courier*, March 7, 1929. Rolla Clymer to Charles F. Scott, March 21, 1929, box 6, Clymer papers.

61. *El Dorado Times*, March 16, 1929.

62. *El Dorado Times*, March 19, 1929.

63. *El Dorado Times*, March 29, 1929.

64. Rolla Clymer to P. M. Hoisington, March 22, 1929, box 6, Clymer papers.

65. *El Dorado Times*, June 4, 1929; Rolla Clymer to J. L. Frazier, April 16, 1935, box 11, Clymer papers.

66. *El Dorado Times*, May 15, 1929.

El Dorado. And as advertising and radio and the AP wire affected things, there was homogenization at a deeper level too, in habits, in values, in desires. But Clymer continued to think that local newspapers gave people in Kansas a sense that their place was different. Newspapers in those other places, he wrote, were not Kansas newspapers “and their editors are not like Kansas editors.”⁶⁷

Perhaps. But no Kansas town was or could be, the same as heretofore, and neither could its newspaper. Modernity, for all its advantages, contained a mix of acid too that ate away quietly at some things that it was a regret to lose. Clymer noticed that there were competing newspapers in only two Kansas towns—Wichita and Topeka—in 1929. Consolidation was efficient, and absentee ownership was the norm. And presses were not the only expensive capital required. Marcellus Murdock of the *Wichita Eagle* owned a company airplane.⁶⁸ Kansas would have to change in order not to fall behind. Statistics ruled. Since 1920, the growth of the four states surrounding Kansas had been eight to thirty-five percent; Kansas had grown only three per cent. And it had a negative image. “Eastern states and their newspapers,” Clymer wrote,



67. *El Dorado Times*, May 1, 1929.
68. *El Dorado Times*, March 28, 1929; March 30, 1929.

Rolla A. Clymer served as president of the Kansas State Historical Society in 1956–1957, when this portrait was made. He remained editor of the El Dorado Times until his death on June 4, 1977, by which time he was a revered institution around the state of Kansas and certainly in El Dorado.

like to characterize Kansas with a stroke of the brush. . . . They like to think of us as dour, cheerless folk who gain our only modicum of pleasure by driving a spike through somebody's vaunted liberties. . . . They judge us superficially, and never take the time to stop off for a few days and get acquainted when limited trains bear them through on a dash for one coast or the other. They have catalogued us rather interesting specimens in their bug collection, and look upon us with something akin to pity.⁶⁹

Kansans were real Americans, Clymer thought. They would do well to be proud of it, and the country would do well to notice it. But in their eagerness to copy and to keep up, they were losing even their heartland character. They were becoming what historian Robert Bader has called an "eclipsed civilization," where to look back was to look up. Dodge City, Clymer noted, was putting up a new City Hall

69. *El Dorado Times*, March 22, 1929.

on historic old Boot Hill, where outlaws were once buried. Dodge had no more gunfighters. It was now a town of "civilization and churches, and sewing societies, and lodges, and soda fountains, and golf courses, and jelly hats, and Clara Bow." It had outgrown Boot Hill, but maybe at the same time, and sadly, its own traditions and uniqueness as a community.⁷⁰ It was so in El Dorado also, where a twelve-page, 20,000 impression an hour Duplex press, delivered from the factory at Battle Creek right to the Flint Hills, ran through the Depression and the Dust Bowl, trying to keep the *Times* and its town up to date and unique at the same time. [KH]

70. *El Dorado Times*, May 20, 1929. An excellent account of some of the same modernization processes at the *Emporia Gazette*, including the purchase of a Duplex stereotype press, is found in Griffith, *Home Town News*, 211–239, in a chapter called "Mass Media Come to the Small Town." See also Robert Smith Bader, *Hayseeds, Moralizers and Methodists: The Twentieth Century Image of Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988).