

Vashon Island Newspapers

By Bruce Haulman and Terry Donnelly

Vashon has a rich history of newspapers, beginning with Oliver Van Olinda's first newspaper, *Island Home*, a monthly publication that began in 1892 and only published for a little over one year.

The first weekly newspaper, *The Vashon Island Press* was published from 1895 to 1897 by owner-editor Oliver Van Olinda. When Van Olinda moved to Stanwood, Washington in 1897 he took the paper with him and renamed it the *Stanwood Press*. In 1900 he moved to Coupeville, on Whidby Island, and edited *The Island County Times* until he returned to Vashon in 1910. But upon his return to Vashon he never again worked in the newspaper business, but did publish the first history of Vashon-Maury Island in 1935. He continued to live on vashon until his death in 1954.

Between 1897 and 1907, the record of newspapers on the Island is unclear, but there are copies of the *Vashon Island News*, which offered its first issue in May 1907, published by John and Phillip Harmeling and edited by S.J. Harmeling. Thomas and A.J. Reed were editors in 1908 and John H. Reid was editor in 1910.

The Vashon Island News continued publishing on Vashon until 1914, when Ira Case, owner of the Marjesira Inn at Magnolia, purchased it because he felt the south end of the Island was not receiving the coverage it deserved. He moved the publication to the Hatch Building in Burton, where the 1915 photo of printing presses was likely taken.



Vashon Island News Plant, Burton @ 1915 – Vashon-Maury island Heritage Museum

With what many on the north end of the island felt was the loss of the *News* to Burton, Robert M. Jones began publishing *The Vashon Island Record* in Vashon Town in 1916, and for a time two papers served the Island.

In 1919, Jones purchased the *News* from Case and combined the two papers into *The Vashon Island News-Record*, and hired P. Monroe Smock as editor. P. Monroe, served as editor until his death and then his wife Agnes, edited the *News-Record* until she retired in 1942.

For the next ten years, Phillip and Florence Garber edited the newspaper. When they retired in 1953 there were three editors temporary editors in 1953 and 1954, until W.H. "Hap" Salyer became editor from 1954 to 1958.

On March 7, 1957, two young budding newsmen, Carl Nelson and John VanDevanter, founded a new newspaper, *The Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber*. Vashon again had two newspapers after nearly 38 years of being a single newspaper island. The *Beachcomber* and the *News-Record* competed for a year until Nelson and VanDeventer purchased the *News-Record*, which published its last issue on May 28, 1958, ending nearly 40 years of publication.

The Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber has been the primary newspaper on the Island since 1958. Editors have included Nelson Phillips, Jay Becker, Allison Arthur and the current editor Leslie Brown. A second newspaper, *The Ticket*, now *The Vashon Loop*, began publication in 2004 and Vashon again has two competing newspapers. Hamish Todd, Mary Litchfield Tuel, Ed Swan, and Marie Browne have served as editors, and the current editor of *The Loop* is Steve Allen.

The newspaper business has changed dramatically over the 120 years since the first newspaper started on Vashon. *The Beachcomber* is no longer printed on-Island, but at a press facility in Everett, along with other area papers owned by Sound Publishing.

Both the *Beachcomber* and *The Loop* now have websites, and readers can follow *The Beachcomber* on Facebook and Twitter as well.



Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber Office 2010 – Terry Donnelly

The changes are well represented by these two photographs. The photograph of *The Vashon Island News*, taken in about 1915, shows the printers surrounded by their presses in the Hatch Building at Burton. The current photograph shows the editorial staff of *The Beachcomber* in 2010, surrounded by their computers.