

The Bradley Advocate finds its way back home

by Aimee White
Herald reporter



Submitted photo
The Bradley Historical Society was recently given an archival book of The Bradley Advocate, a weekly newspaper published in Bradley during the early 1900s. With the book are Bradley Historical officers Shirley Manley (l. to r.), Don LeBran, Marcia Stang and Nelda Ravens. Nancy Reisner of Des Plaines found the book while reading through archived copies of The Dieterich Gazette that her uncle had saved from being destroyed.

There are times that how we come to be in possession of something is just as interesting as the items themselves. Uncovering the unexpected can take a person into the past and allow him or her to share that history with others.

The Bradley Historical Society knows that feeling. They were recently the recipient of something unexpected — a year archive of the Bradley Advocate, a weekly paper from the early 1900s. If you aren't fond of reading your news in print format, touching a paper that is nearly 100 years old may change your mind. Flipping each page opens a new door into the history of our community.

"It's very exciting. I thought it was great that I could see my grandfather's name in the paper," said Shirley Manley, president of the Bradley Historical Society, as she talked about reading through the published tax registers.

The Bradley Advocate was offered to readers for \$1.50 a year and also supported by local advertisements. Operating as a weekly for five years under publisher/editor Herman Workman, the paper was dedicated to the local interests of Bradley but also included national and international news, as well as essays and short stories. "When you look through the paper, each edition has directories listed," Manley noted as she pointed to a specific directory. "It's neat to see that some of these organizations are still active today."

Directories included local village councils, boards of education, organizations and churches.

Also interesting is the fact that very little has changed in print media. Ads look similar, layouts are similar and information is similar. What has changed are prices of items and services that are advertised. "I love the ad for a motor, 'high-speed' washer for only \$12.75," said Manley. Other unique ads were for health remedies, fashion, alcohol and banking.

Residents could go to the theater for 10 cents and, although it wasn't the movies, performances at the Gaily Theater were diverse, including plays such as Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Events were held to benefit organizations like the American Red Cross. Patriotic parades and their routes were publicized and covered. Everyone was encouraged to do a little to help the war effort as World War I was underway, even things as simple as changing what types of food were purchased.

Reading the history on the pages of The Bradley Advocate will have everyone from area historians to school children consumed with information. But, the story of how the Bradley Advocate found its way back home is as interesting as the words printed on the paper's pages.

Tracing the road back to Bradley, the paper found itself in two seemingly odd places, Dieterich and Des Plaines. Nancy Reisner, who resides in Des Plaines, found two books of The Bradley Advocate nestled away in a stack of other bound newspapers from the early 1900s to the 1960s, The Dieterich Gazette. "I had gotten to the year 1917 and a family member had written a story in the edition. Part two of that story was published in 1918 so I was excited to read the next edition," said Reisner. "When I opened up the next book, it was the Bradley Advocate. It wasn't what I expected. I was kind of sad but I knew I didn't want to throw the paper out."

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Reisner had been given a portion of collected newspapers that her uncle, Elmer Fritsches, had collected and archived while he was the mayor of Dieterich for 20 years.

"He had saved the papers from being destroyed while he was in office," said Reisner. "After he passed away in 1966, the family cleaned out his office and found all these papers."

How The Bradley Advocate found its way to Dieterich in the first place is still unknown. Maybe someone in Dieterich subscribed to the paper as a way to know what events were going on around the state or maybe someone from the Bradley area relocated and took the paper with him or her.

"I have not a clue as to how these papers got mixed in with The Dieterich Gazette but they are too valuable to have just gotten rid of," Reisner said.

Valuing the history and information provided in The Bradley Advocate, Reisner contacted the Kankakee Public Library to see if the genealogical department would like the books (1917-1918) for research.

"For some people, this could be the year they need to find a maiden name of a great-grand-parent that will lead them further into their genealogy," added Reisner.

As she dropped the two books off at the library, she was asked to leave her name and number as she was walking out the door. Had it not been for that, the story of how The Bradley Advocate found its way back to Kankakee County might have been lost.

The library then contacted the Bradley Historical Society, who now has the 1917 book available for residents to look through, and Manley contacted Reisner to hear the story of travels for The Bradley Advocate.

"I still wonder how these books made it down there (Dieterich)," said Manley. That question may remain a great unknown but that is okay too. Manley also hopes she will be able to find the other three years of published papers for The Bradley Advocate.

The 1917 book of The Bradley Advocate can be seen at The Bradley Historical Society. The Society meets on the third Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the Bradley Library. For more information on the historical society, call the Bradley Village hall at 1-815-936-5149. Also you can email us at [**bradleyhist@gmail.com**](mailto:bradleyhist@gmail.com).