

# 1820s news: Bad roads, runaway

*You can read all about 'em in the Pioneer and Yorkville*

*Weekly Advertiser*

The first known newspaper in our tri-county area was the Pioneer and Yorkville Weekly Advertiser, established Aug. 16, 1823, by Patrick Carey. Only about five weeks' worth of the paper survive and have been microfilmed by the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina.

Carey came to Yorkville from Tennessee, initially hired by the Rev. William Cummins Davis to establish a printing office to publish eight volumes of Davis' sermons.

Davis was a controversial figure. Twelve years earlier, Davis was tried for heresy by the Presbyterian Church. Davis reacted by establishing the Independent Presbyterian Church. Davis was an anti-slavery advocate. He preached that slave-holding was sinful and for masters to fail to give religious instruction was the "unforgivable sin."

Carey printed Davis' sermons, and on the side began his newspaper, the Pioneer and Yorkville Weekly Advertiser, which two months later dropped the word "Weekly" from the title. The last known issue came out Feb. 21, 1824.

The paper was typical of its day. It copied stories from other

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newspapers, printed letters from subscribers and had several columns of commercial and legal advertisements.

In the first issue, the sheriff of York district, William D. Henry, advertised an auction in front of the courthouse on the first Monday of September: "One negro man called Sam, one negro woman called Jenny, and her child, all taken as the property of John Powell, at the suit of Samuel and Edward Feemster. Also a bay horse, levied on as the property of Hilleriah Cook, at the suit of the state." This leaves one with the question: How did a sheriff advertise such auctions before there was a newspaper in the district?

Another announcement came

from Benjamin Chambers. He stated that he was reopening the Yorkville Female Academy and that "Every scholar will be required to board in the Academy except those whose parents or guardians reside in Yorkville."

On Oct. 4, 1823, the Rev. Eleazer Harris announced that the Ebenezer Academy was opening for its third year. He had had 40 students in the two previous years and hoped to have as many in 1823. Tuition for the languages Latin, Greek and Hebrew would be \$24 a year. The same price would be charged for those who wished instruction in the sciences. Board was \$70.

In those days, public roads were in the hands of men appointed by the grand jury as

overseers who lived along the road. Supposedly, people who felt the road was not being kept up properly would complain to the court. But it is quickly evident that letters to the editor might be effective, maybe more so than the previous means.

For example, H. Harrison wrote a letter to the paper complaining that the stage road that stretched from Mason's Ferry (present Buster Boyd Bridge) to Unionville, S.C., was in very bad condition. A stage coach route was the interstate of that day.

Michael Keenan, a tanner and currier (preparer of the tanned animal hide), announced that his 17-year-old apprentice, Isaac Michael McCall, had run away and offered 25 cents for information on his location.

A story in the July 31, 1824, issue was headed: "Beat this and take the Corn," a report in which the paper boasted: "Near Howell's ferry on Broad River on the York side, stands a sycamore tree, which, for its great size and capacity surpasses perhaps any one in the United States. It is 72 feet in circumference - with 16 feet of a hollow in diameter - has held within that space seven men on horseback. Tradition reports that it gave shelter and afforded protection to many families during the lowering days of the American Revolution. No mistake."

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