

The Pilot Point Post-Signal:

105 Years of Service

By

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The Pilot Point Post-Signal is the successor to The Pilot Point Post, established August 31, 1878, by David Jesse Moffitt (Sept. 25, 1848-May 26, 1917) and James Taliaferro Jones (June 15, 1845-Jan. 28, 1915).¹

David Jesse Moffitt was born in Chillicothe, Ill., and farmed and taught school in Illinois before coming to Texas.² The exact year he arrived in Texas is not known, but he is known to have lived in Pilot Point, Texas, as early as November, 1875.³

James Taliaferro Jones was born in Wilkinson County, Ga., and came to Grimes County, Texas, following the Civil War. He had been a drummer boy in Captain Ashley Hamilton's Company for six months until he was old enough to join Captain Thigpen's Company, 2nd Florida Calvary. He came to Denton County, Texas, in 1873 and soon became known as a civic leader in Pilot Point.⁴

Moffitt and Jones entered upon their partnership in 1878 and published the first edition of The Pilot Point Post on August 31, 1878.⁵ The Herald, The Citizen, and The Democrat had all failed in Pilot Point, so the two new publishers were entering a field that was precarious at best.⁶

The Post's slogan was, "Upon honest and economical legislation and purity of the ballot box depends our national prosperity."⁷ An advertisement in Vol. 1-No. 2 of The Post describes the newspaper as "a live paper,

Democratic in politics and devoted to the commercial, intellectual, moral and religious interests of Pilot Point and vicinity."

In its early days, Pilot Point was known as a rowdy town, and the editors always stood against the lawless element. Moffitt and Jones boosted the commerce of their town as well, encouraging the local folk to trade at home to make Pilot Point "one of the best trading points in North Texas."

In 1887, Moffitt and Jones moved with their families to Denton, where they continued to publish their paper under the name of The Denton County Post. A year later, the two severed their partnership, and Jones remained in Denton and entered the photography business. Moffitt returned to Pilot Point to publish The Post.

After returning to Pilot Point, Moffitt entered into a partnership with H.D. Caldwell, publisher of The Pilot Point Mirror, founded in 1886. The two editors merged their newspapers, forming The Post-Mirror, which was first published on Feb. 11, 1888.

In about 1890, Caldwell's name was dropped as co-publisher of The Post-Mirror, leaving Moffitt as the sole owner and editor. In November, 1898, Moffitt merged The Post-Mirror with The Pilot Point Signal, which was founded in 1897 and owned by J.L. Harper. The newspaper has continued under the name of The Pilot Point Post-Signal since that time.

In 1900, Moffitt became partners with W.W. Thomas when Thomas bought out Harper's interest in the newspaper. A year later, Thomas left, and in 1901, the publishers of The Post-Signal were listed as "D.J. Moffitt & Sons." Later, Moffitt was in partnership with his son, Jesse D. Moffitt.

Because no copies of The Post-Signal from 1909 until the early 1950s exist, and because family records are incomplete, it has been impossible

to determine exactly when D.J. and Jesse D. Moffitt gave up ownership of The Post-Signal. It is known that Jesse D. Moffitt served as the City of Pilot Point's first city secretary from April 13, 1906,¹⁹ until his resignation on Feb. 7, 1913.²⁰ Jesse D. Moffitt is known to have left Pilot Point,²¹ but whether or not D.J. Moffitt continued as publisher is unknown.

It is known that A.D. Wilkinson was publisher of The Post-Signal in September, 1914,²² but there is no record of when he purchased or sold the newspaper. In June, 1916, G. Fisk is known to have served as the newspaper's publisher,²³ but similarly, there are no known records of when he purchased or sold The Post-Signal.

William J. Miller, a native of Collinsville, Tex., in Grayson County, purchased The Post-Signal in 1919,²⁴ but there is no known record of from whom he purchased it. He installed the first linotype typesetter before selling the newspaper in 1926.²⁵

Fred Gunstead purchased The Post-Signal from Miller in 1926 and operated it through the depths of the Great Depression to the twilight of World War II. He owned the paper until August, 1945, when he sold it and purchased the El Dorado (Tex.) Success, which he operated for 32 years.²⁶

W.B. and Ethel Crossley purchased the paper in 1945 from Gunstead and sold it in 1948. After leaving Pilot Point, he purchased The Madisonville (Tex.) Meteor, which he operated until 1973. While at Madisonville,²⁷ Crossley also became president of the Texas Press Association.

Morris and Rose Usry bought the paper from Crossley in 1948 and operated it until 1957. They also published The Tioga Herald and The Roanoke Community Standard.²⁸

Dan and Helen Feather bought The Post-Signal from the Usrys and operated it from 1957-64. They also published The Whitesboro News-

Record before leaving the North Texas area.

Alton Kite purchased the paper from the Feathers and published it for five years. He also owned the Frisco Enterprise and Sanger Courier during this time. Kite installed the first typesetting equipment that allowed his papers to be composed for the new offset method of printing. During those years, The Post-Signal was composed in Kite's Sanger plant.

Ralph and Judy Cole purchased The Post-Signal and The Sanger Courier on Oct. 1, 1969. The Post-Signal continued to be composed in the Sanger plant until its next sale in 1974.

David and Pam Lewis purchased The Post-Signal on Sept. 1, 1974, and are its current publishers. They reestablished Pilot Point as the location of the paper's typesetting operation and in 1976 moved the paper into its first permanent home in many years.

During its 105-year history, The Post-Signal has been in five different locations. When first founded, it was located in a frame building on Jefferson Street. Not many years afterwards, the paper was moved to a brick building on the southwest corner of the town square, and it stayed there until the mid-1960s. Between 1964 and 1969, the paper moved twice, first to an old clinic building on South Washington Street and then to another building nearer the downtown at 108 North Washington. In 1976, the paper moved into a remodeled building on Main Street east of the town square.

Since 1878, The Post-Signal has played a significant role in the community it serves. In its early years, the newspaper served as a link with the outside world, giving the North Texas pioneers news and information they could get from few other sources. As the nature of the local weekly newspaper changed, The Post-Signal changed, evolving

into a journal that primarily disseminated community news of both major and minor importance.

As Denton County's oldest continuing newspaper and one of two newspapers in the county founded before the turn of the century,³³ The Post-Signal has established itself as an important institution in both Pilot Point and Denton County. One of the oldest newspapers in Texas,³⁴ it also has a place in the state's history.

Today, the publishers of The Pilot Point Post-Signal are continuing a tradition that began when D.J. Moffitt and J.T. Jones set up the first type for their fledgling paper--a tradition of service that has been a key element in the progress of Pilot Point, Texas, and Northeast Denton County.

Respectfully submitted,



David L. Lewis
August 26, 1983

FOOTNOTES

1. Vol. 1-No. 2 of The Pilot Point Post is owned by David L. Lewis of Pilot Point, Texas. This issue is dated Friday, September 7, 1878. Vol. 1-No. 1 would have been published Friday, August 31, 1878.
2. "Moffitt Influence for 39 Years," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1878), 4B. This information was recalled by David Jesse Moffitt's great-granddaughter, Joan Moffitt Mickle of Dallas.
3. Ibid. An heirloom owned by Moffitt's descendants is a note he wrote to a Miss Suzie Jones, asking for her company at a social dance at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. C.J. Cooper of Pilot Point the evening of Nov. 1, 1875.
4. Information taken from obituary on Mr. Jones' death, published in February, 1915, by The Denton Record & Chronicle.
5. Vol. 1-No. 2 of The Pilot Point Post owned by David L. Lewis of Pilot Point, Texas, confirms starting date of The Post.
6. "Birth of Newspaper an Exciting Day in 1878," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1878), 2B.
7. Quote taken from Page One of Vol. 1-No. 2 of Pilot Point Post.
8. The opinion of the writer of Mr. Jones' obituary, published in February, 1915, by The Denton Record & Chronicle.
9. Quote taken from front-page article, Vol. 1-No. 2 of Pilot Point Post.
10. Jones obituary, published February, 1915, Denton Record & Chronicle.
11. "Jones Showed Vision in Early Post Writings" by Eunice Gray, Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 5B.
12. Jones obituary, published February, 1915, in Denton Record & Chronicle.
13. "Birth of Newspaper an Exciting Day in 1878," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 2B.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid. 16. Ibid. 17. Ibid. 18. Ibid.
19. Book A, Page 10, City of Pilot Point council minutes, dated April 13, 1906.

20. Book A, Page 162, City of Pilot Point council minutes, dated Feb. 7, 1913.
21. "Birth of Newspaper an Exciting Day in 1878," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 2B.
22. City of Pilot Point Original Ordinance Book, Page 320. An affidavit on publication of a legal notice in The Post-Signal lists A.D. Wilkinson as publisher. The affidavit states the notice was published on September 11, 1914.
23. City of Pilot Point Original Ordinance Book, Pages 384 and 389. Affidavits on publication of legal notices in The Post-Signal list G. Fisk as publisher. The affidavits state the notices were published on June 9, 1916, and August 17, 1916.
24. "Miller Buys Paper after WWI Hitch," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 6B. This information was provided by Mr. Miller's widow.
25. Ibid.
26. Bill Gunstead, "Gunstead Guided Paper Through Hard Times," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 7 B.
27. W.B. Crossley, "Crossleys Busy in Post-War Years," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 8B.
28. Morris Usry, "Business Good for Usrys in Late '40s, Early '50s," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 8B.
29. Mrs. Dan Feather, "Feathers Recall Town's Warmth in '50s, '60s," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 14B.
30. Alton Kite, "Kite Published Three Newspapers," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 16B.
31. Ralph Cole, "Cole Left Political Beat for Weeklies," Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 18B.
32. "Birth of Newspaper an Exciting Day in 1878", Pilot Point Post-Signal (August 31, 1978), 2B.
33. Denton County's second oldest newspaper, The Sanger Courier, was founded in 1898. "Texas Newspapers Listed as to Founding Dates," Texas Press Messenger (June, 1980), 277.
34. Ibid, Page 276.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"A Century of Service, 1878-1978," Pilot Point Post-Signal, published August 31, 1878, David Lewis, editor.

City of Pilot Point, Texas, Original Minutes Book and Book A, Council Minutes Book.

TPA Messenger, Centennial Edition, published June, 1980.