



Pressing West

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A Page In History



WRITTEN BY

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Getting the hand-operated press up and running hadn't been nearly as exciting as Gabe had made it out to be, at least not in Charless' mind. The kind-faced man with the neatly trimmed sideburns was tired to the bone, and worried. How was he going to produce a weekly newspaper in the cramped conditions of a rented room?

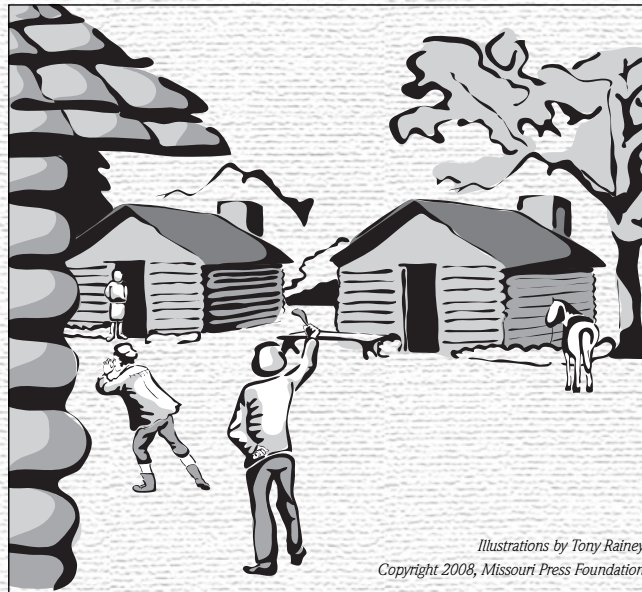
The departure of Jacob Hinkle hadn't helped his mood any. Charless hired Hinkle and brought him from Kentucky, thinking he'd be a worthy employee. But Hinkle's behavior was anything but reliable. Charless got to see the man's nasty disposition the day they arrived in St. Louis when Hinkle took Gabe to task at the riverfront.

A devious-looking man with a hooked nose and crossed eyes, Hinkle spent too much time gambling, drinking and concocting stories. He couldn't be trusted to deal with people, and drew considerable attention to himself with his crass ways.

Bothersome rumors about Hinkle had been circulating, about him signing up subscribers to newspapers in other places and then hoofing it out of town,

money in hand, leaving the gullible people without the publication they'd been promised.

Charless had a reputation to uphold and a business to launch, so he was almost relieved when Hinkle took off, even though the shifty scalawag left owing the printer money. Though Hinkle couldn't be trusted,



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he knew how to operate the press. Now Charless was short-handed, with only his stepson Robert at his side.

Hoping the boy would follow in his footsteps, he took Robert along with him to solicit subscribers, explaining how vital it was that they get a list of people who were interested in receiving the newspaper, and would commit to paying for it, before the first edi-

tion. A prospectus, it was called. After some figuring, Charless set the price of the *Gazette* at \$3 per year, or \$4 in produce.

"I've got problems enough without having to deal with Hinkle's fool-hearted behavior," Charless told Robert one afternoon, after they'd had a particularly trying day. The ink they

needed had been delayed on its way to Missouri.

Charless didn't like to use his stepson as a sounding board, but he couldn't help himself. This time Gabe got an earful too. The boy had been dropping by to see if Charless had any odd jobs. It was clear that being the family breadwinner was wearing on Gabe, as was his mother's sharp tongue.

The *Gazette* office offered the boy some fun and an

escape from his troubles. He and Robert were becoming friends, and seemed to have a lot in common. They always had something to talk and laugh about.

Gabe also was fascinated to see how the simple room in the Roubidoux House was being transformed into a printing office.

The stolen hours Gabe got to spend at the *Gazette* flew by, and the boy counted the days until he could return to see what other exciting changes had taken place.



LEARN MORE

- A subscription to Missouri's first newspaper cost \$3 per year, or \$4 in produce. This type of trading was called bartering. What type of produce might subscribers have given Charless in 1808? Why do you think Charless bartered for goods?
- Find the cost of a yearly subscription to your newspaper. Divide that cost by the number of times each year the newspaper is published to find a subscriber's cost per issue. Determine the percentage increase from 1808 to 2008 for a newspaper subscription.

GLE/SMS: G1:2, 1:9, 1:10, 3:5, 4:2, CA3, CA7, MA1, SS4, R1E, M3C