



LEWISTOWN NEWS-ARGUS

In March of 1914, Lewistown had grown enough that a new post office was needed. After some debate and opposition, the 500 block of West Main Street was chosen. The lots were purchased and Architects Wasmandorff and Eastman drew up plans and construction began under federal supervision. The Fergus County Realty Company then won a five-year lease for the unused part of the new building.

While the post office occupied part of the storefront, businessman A.H. Smurr and attorney W.R. Kirk leased the remaining spaces. Smurr and Kirk's enterprises included the Arro confectionery/ice cream parlor, a factory for the manufacture of the parlor's candies and sweets and a combination billiard room and bowling alley. The Post office remained in the building until the construction of a new federal building in 1931 located at 204 3rd Avenue North.

When the post office moved, several partners (Tom Stout, Harry Lay, Earl McGinnis, Lloyd Raw and Jack Hanley) purchased the building sometime in the 1930s and published the Lewistown Democrat News now including a publishing business and office supplies. At the end of World War II the building and business again sold to George and Russell Bennett. After two short years the Bennett's sold the Democrat News, printing and office supply business.

Although there may have been some short-term lease of this building over the years one long-term tenant (mid 1930s through the mid 1950s) was the Montgomery Wards Store and mail order catalogue company.

Ken Byerly bought the newspaper, publishing company and office supplies and building in 1947. He moved the newspaper into the building in 1957. Byerly renamed the paper the Lewistown Daily News and published five days a week. Byerly sold to Ed Fike. Fike was unsuccessful as a newspaper man and after only a few years Byerly bought back the paper and building at a sheriff's sale. He ran the business as a weekly all local newspaper until 1972 when it became a twice weekly paper, re-branding it "Lewistown News-Argus."

The office supply was discontinued but the printing department continued. In 1977 Byerly's son Dave joined the business and in 1993 he was named publisher.

After 53 years in the Byerly family the News-Argus sold in 2000 to the Yellowstone Newspaper Group. And again in 2022 the newspaper, publishing business and property sold to Adams Publishing Group.

To learn more about the owners, publishers, editors, business managers and history of the newspaper, and publishing company you may obtain a brochure at the newspaper's main desk. You can also ask for a tour of this carefully restored historic building.

LEWISTOWN HISTORIC RESOURCES COMMISSION

