The Evolution of a Home Grown Product, Capper Publications

HOMER E. SOCOLOFSKY

The recent purchase of Capper Publications by Stauffer Publications reveals again the size of the enterprise to which Arthur Capper devoted his business career.1 This transfer of ownership involved buildings and business equipment, two daily newspapers, a monthly home magazine, a weekly newspaper, a printing company, an engraving company, a farm monthly, five state farm papers, two radio stations and a television station.2

Arthur Capper, the son of Herbert and Isabella McGrew Capper, was born in Garnett on July 14, 1885.3 Except for a brief sojourn in Elk county, Capper’s youth was spent in Garnett where he began selling and delivering the Kansas City (Mo.) Times at ten years of age.4 At 13 he began his first real newspaper work as “devil” on the Garnett Journal. For a while he edited a young folks department in the newspaper and he had letters published in American Young Folks, a monthly periodical in Topeka.5 The serious and intent interest of the young Capper in a career in journalism is shown in these letters. During his high-school years Capper continued his work at the Journal and learned the printing trade. Upon graduating in 1884 he set out to look for work which he hoped to find in one of the larger towns of the Kansas river valley or farther upstream at Salina. After stopping at Lawrence, and finding no opening for a young printer, he went on to Topeka.6 There he was befriended by Will Scott, foreman in the composing room of the Capital, who put him to work on May 16, 1884.7 As

Dr. Homer E. Socolofsky is an assistant professor of history in the department of history, government and philosophy at Kansas State College, Manhattan.

1. Capper had no other business interests and owned no other real estate than that related to his multimillion dollar business and his home.

2. Radio station KCKN of Kansas City, Kan., was sold by Stauffer before the final transfer was completed.

3. Letter from Earl L. Knuss of the Garnett Review, n. d., to Clif Stratton, in the “Capper Collection” in the Kansas State Historical Society, tells that Mary, another sister, was born in 1883 and died the next year, so Arthur was considered the oldest child. The births and deaths of the other members of the family were: Herbert Capper, 1883-1897; Mrs. Herbert Capper, 1841-1903; Mary May Capper, 1896-1939; Resuld Capper Myers, 1878-1909; Benjamin Herbert Capper, 1874-1887; Edith Capper Eustice, 1879-1953. Herbert Capper was one of the founders of Garnett.

4. Copy of letter from Capper to J. Howard Rusco, July 27, 1948.—“Capper Collection.”

5. American Young Folks, Topeka, July and December, 1878.

6. Zula Bennington Greene, “As Peggy of the Flint Hills Sees It,” Topeka Daily Capital, July 14, 1944; Bonsville (Mo.) Weekly Advertiser, November 3, 1911; interview with F. D. Farrell, July 10, 1952. Dr. Farrell, the former president of Kansas State College, heard the story from Capper on at least three occasions.

7. Topeka Daily Capital, February 28, 1909. This friendly act was important in contributing to Capper’s later feeling that he, too, should help young people.

(151)
a printer, Capper continued to learn his trade and when he heard a newly elected official declare in a speech that he would enforce the law against the Topeka "jointists," he wrote up the story and followed through to see that it was printed in the next morning's paper. As a result, publisher J. K. Hudson encouraged Capper to accept a job as reporter even though it meant a reduction in weekly salary. After working a short time as a cub reporter Capper became city editor of the Capital on June 9, 1885, a job which required that he gather news from business and governmental establishments and report the meetings of the legislature when it was in session.8

In the early summer of 1887 Capper visited Hugoton, in southwest Kansas, with every intention of buying the Hugoton Hermes. Stevens county was just being settled and State Representative John L. Pancost wanted a newspaper to compete with "Colonel" Sam Wood's paper in nearby Woodsdale. Wood suspected Capper's mission and tried to point out the difficulties and disadvantages of settling in Hugoton. Capper's brief encounter with the boisterous, raw frontier soon ended his intention of becoming a western Kansas editor.9

Back home on the Capital, Capper's fortunes continued to rise. In a reorganization of the newspaper company, he became a director, but his ambitions extended beyond the Capital alone.10 He took a leave of absence from the Topeka paper and went to New York, where he obtained a reporting job on the Tribune, under the editor, Whitelaw Reid. After a time in New York he moved to the Mail and Express, and then on to Washington in 1892 where he reported the activities of the Kansas delegation for the Capital.11

8. Ibid., February 28, 1909; Jewell County Record, Mankato, December 27, 1951.
10. Reprint from Brown County World, Hiawatha, in "Biographical Scrapbook C."
11. Kansas State Historical Society; stock certificates in the vault of the Capper building show that one share of stock, apparently the qualifying share as director, in the Topeka Capital Company was made out to Arthur Capper on July 1, 1890. Four other stock certificates were assigned to him on July 2, 1890, for a total transfer of ownership of 19 shares from J. K. Hudson. Attached to the last ten shares is a promissory note for $3,000 "payable in one year from July 2nd 1890 hearing 8 per cent interest." This amount was paid June 1, 1892. Far value of a single share was $500. Another stock certificate of 22 shares in the company was transferred to Capper on March 23, 1894. This was some six months after Capper had purchased the Mail. By that time he had a total of 42 shares or about eight per cent ownership in the Topeka Capital Company. The presence of these stock certificates in the vault of the Capper building is a mystery to Capper's associates for they had never heard him mention them. The Topeka Capital Company went bankrupt in 1895 and Capper, no doubt, lost money in this investment. "Corporation Charters (official copybooks from office of secretary of state, now in Archives division, Kansas State Historical Society)."
10. Leah Hard, "Printer's Devil to Fame," New York Herald Tribune, May 20, 1928. Other of the stories were also used by the Tribune; the Topeka Daily Capital of January 29, 1892, is a typical issue in promoting Capper's efforts in Washington. The Kansas delegation in the House had been enlarged as a result of the 1880 census, and such men as "Sockless" Jerry Simpson and Sen. William A. Peffer were now in Washington. The Capital, as a Republican paper, was probably more concerned with reporting every activity of the Populists in hopes of discrediting them.
After congress adjourned, Capper returned to Topeka to his job on the Capital. He was married to Florence Crawford, the only daughter of the third governor of Kansas, Samuel J. Crawford, on December 1, 1892. After a wedding trip he began to look for a newspaper and in 1893 the North Topeka Mail looked like a good buy at $2,500. Capper was able to borrow $1,000 from the Citizen's Bank of North Topeka, which together with his own $1,000 savings in building and loan stock, enabled him to complete the transaction. In buying a newspaper he did not have to depend upon the plentiful financial resources of his father-in-law at this time nor in the future.

Capper had very little help when he began the operation of the Mail. He spruced up the first page of his paper and actively sought advertising among Topeka merchants. He was soon receiving pleasant notices of his new venture in the state press. New features, including articles written by distinguished Kansans, were used to promote circulation. He continued to study trade journals to see what was new in journalism and who was doing it, but he seemingly had no definite long-term policy other than to get out a good paper. Unsuccessful competitors apparently offered to sell out to him so that they could escape the burden of refunding subscription money. Capper maintained years later that he had been asked to buy all his papers except one; that exception was presumably the Mail.

In 1895 Thomas A. McNeal approached Capper with an offer to sell his paper—a proposition which resulted in the consolidation on September 5 of the Topeka Mail and the Kansas Breeze. McNeal’s publication is said to have cost Capper $2,500 and the consolidated paper, under McNeal as editor, had the largest circulation of any weekly newspaper in Kansas.

The Mail and Breeze moved gradually in the direction of agricultural journalism during the next decade. In the meantime new features were introduced in the paper to attract new subscribers.

12. A photostat of the three-page contract in Capper’s handwriting on the Topeka Mail stationery is in the “Capper Collection.” Payment of $200 sealed the bargain and $1,600 was to be paid to Frank Root, the owner, on the date of transfer, September 21, 1893. Of the remainder, $500 was to be paid in 90 days and $200 worth of advertising was due Root. Root retained his railroad pass and visited the Chicago World’s Fair and his mother in Pennsylvania.


15. Interview with F. D. Farrell, July 10, 1951.

16. Reprint from Brown County World, Hiawatha, in “Biographical Scrapbook C,” v. 1, Kansas State Historical Society. McNeal and F. C. Montgomery were the owners of the Breeze and they presumably were not aggressive in gaining advertising support.
One of the first of these was the series of political cartoons by Albert T. Reid, then a young man from Clyde, Kan.17

The growth of his paper caused Capper to obtain new quarters at 501-503 Jackson street, nearer the principal business district in Topeka. New printing equipment was added and the Mail Printing House was established early in 1897.18

In April, 1900, with the purchase of the Missouri Valley Farmer, Capper stepped into the field of agricultural journalism.19 Changes were immediately made to departmentalize the journal and a wider circulation was obtained.

In the meantime the Topeka Daily Capital, with its weekly paper the Kansas Weekly Capital, was having serious financial difficulties. John R. and David W. Mulvane, Topeka bankers, became owners in 1895 and operated the newspaper until 1899 when a newly organized Capital Publishing Company took over. It was during ownership by this company that Charles M. Sheldon, of In His Steps fame, engaged in his famous experiment as editor of the Capital. But financially the Capital was still in poor shape, so the Bank of Topeka sought a new buyer for the publishing firm. On March 23 and May 10, 1901, contracts were made for the sale of the Capital Publishing Company stock for $56,529 of which $5,000 was a down payment. The new owners were Arthur Capper with majority control, his wife, Florence, Harold T. Chase, R. L. Thomas, and W. B. Robey.21 Capper took over complete control of the company by December 30, 1904.22 In his quiet way Capper led his papers into the fight, along with other Kansas newspapers, against railroad domination of state government. He lost railroad advertising and eventually his own railroad pass because of his campaign but he did not permit this to disrupt his personal friendship with many Topeka railroad officials.

Although he was greatly interested in politics Capper's growing

18. Topeka Daily Capital, July 16, 1939. A three-way partnership of Capper, Mary May, his sister, and George H. Crawford, his brother-in-law, made up the organizers of the new business. It was not Capper's practice to bring relatives into his business but this may have been his way of providing extra income for his closest relatives.
19. No figures on the cost of the Missouri Valley Farmer have been discovered. There is a general feeling among many Capper employees that this monthly magazine, with a circulation of about 16,000 was run-down at the time of the sale.
21. The contract for the purchase of the Capital is in the vault of the Capper building. This purchase set no precedent for future Capper newspaper purchases as each transaction was an individual matter. Chase, Thomas, and Robey were all employees of the Capital.
22. Notes in the "Capper Collection" indicates that Thomas' shares were purchased August 10, 1904, and those of Chase and Robey on December 30, 1904. Mrs. Capper retained ownership of a single share.
publishing business required a considerable amount of his time.\textsuperscript{23} One of his acquisitions was a little publication, named \textit{Push}, which Tom McNeal and Albert T. Reid began as a non-partisan, literary, fun-and-art magazine, in September, 1902. They were interested in presenting material of the nature of the defunct \textit{Kansas Magazine} or of \textit{Agora} but were unable to obtain sufficient advertising and circulation to sustain their publication. So they sold out to Capper in 1903.\textsuperscript{24} In February, 1904, \textit{Household}, successor to \textit{Push}, made its appearance with the volume number of the preceding journal. Circulation was expanded and “Arthur Capper, Publisher,” along with a stated advertising policy appeared for the first time in \textit{Household} in the issue of April, 1906.

The oldest Capper paper, the \textit{Mail and Breeze}, continued its noticeable evolution in the direction of a strictly agricultural publication after the purchase of the \textit{Capital} and the \textit{Kansas Weekly Capital}. Capper then had two weekly newspapers which caused advertisers to consider carefully before using both of them. While Capper maintained that his papers “don’t compete” he made changes in the \textit{Mail and Breeze} to make the differences more evident.\textsuperscript{25}

By October 1, 1904, the \textit{Mail and Breeze} had a subtitle of “An Agricultural and Family Journal for the People of the Great West,” but the change in character to a farm paper was not generally known to national advertisers.\textsuperscript{26} So a new name, \textit{Farmers Mail and Breeze}, appeared on the paper with the issue of February 17, 1906.

By 1906 Capper was solidly established as a Kansas publisher with his publications, except for \textit{Household} and the \textit{Missouri Valley Farmer}, still confined primarily to Kansas.\textsuperscript{27} In anticipation of future growth of his business and to bring his widespread organization under one roof, the publisher ordered the construction of the Capper building at the southeast corner of the intersection of Eighth and Jackson streets in downtown Topeka. Construction began in 1907 and the five story, fireproof, stone, terra cotta, and

\textsuperscript{23} Capper was frequently mentioned as a choice for state printer, then an appointive position made by the legislature.

\textsuperscript{24} The transfer of ownership probably came with v. 1, No. 8 (April, 1903), the first issue which did not have a Reid cartoon on the cover and a named editor on the masthead. The cost, presumably low, has not been determined.

\textsuperscript{25} Interview with Marco Morrow, August 1, 1952.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, Morrow, then in the agricultural advertising business in Chicago, did not know of the change until 1905, when he made a business trip to Salina.

\textsuperscript{27} N. W. Ayer and Son’s \textit{American Newspaper Annual} (N. W. Ayer and Son, Inc., Philadelphia, 1907), 1907, pp. 1186, 1187. Total circulation amounted to almost one half million. Of political importance was the fact that Capper published Topeka’s largest daily and it was one of the largest dailies in the state.
reinforced-concrete building was completed and occupied by December 10, 1908. The first new executives from outside the organization, Marco Morrow in the advertising department and Frank Ball in the circulation department, were also added in 1908.

The next new Capper publication, in April, 1908, was Poultry Culture, the official organ of the Kansas State Poultry Association. This journal was published in the interests of the specialized poultry raiser and as such was different from the usual Capper paper which attempted to satisfy wider and more general interests. Probably because of these characteristics, Poultry Culture was sold on February 1, 1916, to Victor O. Hobbs of Trenton, Mo.28

The expansion of Capper's publishing business had been limited to journals that had a large Kansas circulation until August, 1908, when he bought the Nebraska Farm Journal from W. T. Laing of Omaha.29 The Capper policy toward this Nebraska paper was to stress the interests of Nebraska agriculture and to identify the paper closely with the state by maintaining editorial and business offices in Omaha. But the paper was printed in Topeka.

In 1910 Capper bought The Ruralist of Sedalia, Mo., from W. E. Hurlbut. The initiative for this purchase was probably taken by Col. Ed R. Dorsey of Topeka because he received a letter from Hurlbut early in June, enclosing a complete inventory and an offer to sell the paper and its assets for $10,000.30 Since Capper purchased the paper before the end of June and renamed it Missouri Ruralist, this letter presumably played a part in the negotiations.31 The formula for close identification with the local area, as used in Nebraska, was applied in Missouri. Department editors and editorial contributors, mostly Missourians, were obtained and a circulation drive netted many new subscribers. Part of the increase in circulation was due to the purchase of the Breeder's Special, of Kansas City, on August 16, 1910, and its consolidation with the Missouri Ruralist on December 10, 1910.32 The editorial office was moved to Kansas City at that time, and in 1914 to St.

28. Winifred Gregory, editor. Union List of Serials in Libraries of the United States and Canada, 2d ed. (The H. W. Wilson Company, N. Y., 1943), pp. 2246, 2848. This journal was subsequently known as Useful Poultry Journal; see, also, "First Things," a manuscript copy of changes around Capper Publications, in the "Capper Collection."
29. Ayer, op cit., 1909, next to p. 1233; interview with Marco Morrow, April 7, 1953. Laing had been struggling to keep his paper going so he sold it to Capper and got a job with Capper Publications.
31. Missouri Ruralist, Sedalia, Mo., August 20, 1910. Capper's name does not appear in the paper until this issue, but letters congratulating him for purchasing the paper were dated as early as June 23, 1910.
32. Ayer, op cit., 1911, p. 501. There were no reports on the circulation of Breeder's Special, which was presumably very small.
Louis, where John F. Case, for years identified with the Missouri Ruralist, became its editor.

The Capper invasion of Oklahoma was announced in the April 1, 1912, issue of the Oklahoma Farmer, of Guthrie. In this sale the Farmer Publishing Company sold the paper to M. L. Crowther, a former Osage City, Kan., newspaperman, for $1,000 in cash and $2,000 in notes. Crowther then transferred the Oklahoma paper to Capper.33 In Oklahoma, as in Missouri, Capper set about to gain circulation, to consolidate with other papers and to employ local editors for the special departments. A consolidation was made with the Oklahoma State Farmer on May 1, 1912, and with the Oklahoma Farm Journal on December 25, 1915.34

Meanwhile the name of the Kansas Weekly Capital was changed on September 6, 1913, to Capper’s Weekly.35 The change in name, which came after Capper’s narrow defeat in 1912 as a candidate for governor of Kansas may have been politically inspired by a desire for greater recognition, but the justification for the new name was that

The Kansas Weekly Capital has outgrown the title given it years ago in its infancy. . . . Its growth was so rapid that the realization that it had so far outstripped its name came as a surprise. The word “Kansas” didn’t cover the field at all. . . . “Capper’s Weekly” seemed better suited than any other name proposed and was adopted.36

Prolonged negotiations with Charles W. Bryan of Lincoln, Neb., in 1915 resulted in Capper’s purchase of The American Homestead, a monthly farm magazine.37 Capper agreed to send his own publications to each subscriber turned in by Bryan, at no extra cost, until the number of subscriptions at a low pre-determined rate (12½¢ per year for the Missouri Valley Farmer) would amount to $10,000.

Other developments in the composition of Capper’s papers came after his first election to the United States senate in 1918. The Missouri Valley Farmer became Capper’s Farmer on April 21, 1919, and the first issue under the new title was in June. The change, which could have been politically motivated in a desire for more

33. The contract and bill of sale transferring Oklahoma Farmer to Crowther and the acceptance by Capper are in the vault at the Capper building.
34. Oklahoma Farmer, Guthrie, Okla., May 1, 1912, and December 25, 1915. The price of the State Farmer has not been determined, but Capper paid $84,000 for the Farm Journal, a price that included some equipment.
35. Capper’s Weekly, September 6, 1913.
36. Ibid.; Capper’s first public office was membership on the board of regents of Kansas State Agricultural College in 1909.—See Topeka State Journal, March 4 and 6, 1909.
37. Letters from Charles W. Bryan to Capper, October 26, and November 1, 1915.—“Capper Collection.” The major source of income for farm papers was through advertising and as far as Capper was concerned, subscription departments never made money on the first subscription.
widespread recognition of the Capper name, was warranted by the same reason for renaming the Kansas Weekly Capital.38 Announcement was made that the circulation of Missouri Valley Farmer has not been confined to the valley of the Missouri River nor has the paper editorially limited itself to the peculiar farm problems of the Missouri Valley; hence it is apparent that we should not retain a name local in character. In selecting a new name we are happy in being permitted to identify the paper with the owner and publisher, a man who is a champion of the rights of common people in general and the farmers in particular. . . .

We shall not handle any subject, agricultural, economical or political, with gloved hands or in a hesitating manner. . . . Capper's Farmer will always endeavor to recognize the light ahead that will brighten and make more perfect a life on the farm, realizing in full measure that here is the foundation of all true prosperity and national existence.39

Another change in 1919 resulted in the purchase of the Kansas Farmer and its consolidation with the Farmers Mail and Breeze as the Kansas Farmer and Mail and Breeze.40 The sale of the Kansas Farmer, according to its last independent issue, December 6, 1919, was reputed to have resulted from a “deplorable scarcity” of print paper. There was a paper shortage, but due to agreements within the agricultural press, 16-page papers such as the Kansas Farmer were not reduced in size by governmental restrictions which were placed on farm publishers as a group. Most publishers had presses with a minimum press capacity of 16 pages.41 A glance at the issues of Kansas Farmer during 1919 show a deplorable lack of revenue-producing advertising matter.42 Circulation had reached a high point of 63,071 in 1913 but declined to 20,728 by 1919.43 The entire Kansas Farmer staff was offered employment with Capper Publications. Thus, through purchase and consolidation Capper cleared the field of competition for his old Mail and Breeze.44

Long hours and intensive labor helped Capper become the head of a large business early in the 20th century. His employees considered him a prodigious worker.45 The usual routine, before the construction of the Capper building, would find Capper at the of-

38. See above.
40. Ever since the formation of the Farmer's Mail and Breeze, the Capper paper had circulated two to three times as many papers each week than did the Kansas Farmer.
41. Interview with Marco Morrow, November 28, 1953. The purchase price has not been determined.
42. Kansas Farmer, January 4 to December 6, 1919.
44. There was a national trend for a slight increase in the number of agricultural publications from 1910 to 1920 with a sharp drop in the next few years. Competition still existed with such papers as the Weekly Kansas City Star, now the Weekly Star Farmer, but there was no state farm competition.
45. Interviews with Marco Morrow and Leland Schenck, April 7, 1953.
office of the Daily Capital on East Eighth street during the mornings. Afternoons were spent five blocks away in the office of the Mail and Breeze at 501-505 Jackson street. After dinner, almost every evening, including Sunday, he would again be at the office of the daily, thus working six full days and Sunday evening each week.

On the surface, Capper seemed to have few rules to guide him. In some matters he was inclined to go into great detail. After obtaining heads for the advertising and circulation departments in 1908, Capper stopped looking at mail relating to those fields, except that he had a policy to read all pro-and-con comment about his papers. After becoming governor of Kansas he requested that none of his employees come to the governor's office to talk business. As a rule, he stopped at his own business office in the Capper building, after five o'clock to take care of business matters. When he left Topeka for Washington after his election to the senate, he found it necessary to turn over more control of his business to employees. His publications by 1919 were Capper's Farmer, Topeka Daily Capital, Capper's Weekly, Household, Kansas Farmer, Missouri Ruralist, Oklahoma Farmer, and Nebraska Farm Journal.46

The pent-up demand of the war years caused expectations for widespread sale of American farm products in 1919 and 1920. Plans were formulated at Capper Publications to make use of the newly enlarged Topeka plant, to increase circulation and to improve the reading matter and format of various papers.47 To facilitate this expansion Capper made use of the good will and prestige of his name and papers among his subscribers. In July, 1920, subscribers were offered "Capper Certificates" in denominations of $100 and $500 with seven percent interest payable semiannually. These were a kind of promissory note backed by Capper's personal pledge. Interest rates were later lowered and by 1937 the aggregate amount of these unsecured demand notes was $3,952,400.48

Almost immediately after the first sale of the certificates, Capper purchased Field and Farm, a Denver, Colo., farm journal.49 The general Capper formula for operation of the new journal was made to direct its appeal to the diversified farming interests of Colorado.

46. A four story, 75-foot addition, at a cost of $300,000 for the building and equipment, was constructed east of the original structure in 1919. Other publications, used mostly for advertising publicity, were published irregularly under such titles as the Capper Bulletin and Rural Trade.
47. Copy of a letter from Capper to Ralph W. Mitchell, January 3, 1919.—"Capper Collection."
48. From the prospectus of Capper Publications, Inc., which was sent to the Securities and Exchange Commission, 1919, p. 8. There was no particular objection to other sources of capital but Capper felt he had more freedom in this financing method.
49. Field and Farm, Denver, Colo., September 25, 1920.
Wyoming, Utah, and New Mexico. Prices of agricultural commodities took such a precipitous decline during the last quarter of 1920 that Capper became alarmed over possible injury to his business. A cutback in costs was almost immediately achieved in December, 1920, by having the subscription list of Field and Farm absorbed by the Kansas Farmer.

Retrenchment in Missouri resulted in Capper's purchase of the Missouri Agricultural Publishing Company, and its paper, the Journal of Agriculture, from John M. Branham for $86,500. Thus, Capper cleared away all Missouri competition through consolidation in the same way that he had done earlier in Kansas. However, the mechanical work, as well as the editorial, advertising, and circulation offices were located in the building of the Missouri Agricultural Publishing Company in St. Louis. To save expenses the printing of Missouri Ruralist was transferred to Topeka on January 1, 1933.

Capper's empire expanded greatly in 1922 with the surprise purchase of the Lawrence Publishing Company, the owner of the Ohio Farmer, Michigan Farmer, and Pennsylvania Farmer. Capper paid $594,550 for most of the stock of this company. The sale was culminated on January 12, 1922, and the Lawrence farm journals announced the change in ownership in their January 28, 1922, issues. Newspaper wire services picked up the story under a January 31 date line. Editorial employees of Lawrence Publishing Company had fully expected to have a chance to "buy in" to the company when their publisher was ready to sell his stock. Some of them were minor stockholders and Capper offered to buy their shares then or in the future at the current price.

Thus far, purchases of newspapers and magazines had been accomplished in spite of no over-all Capper plan for increasing his holdings. After buying the Lawrence papers considerable time was spent investigating the Indiana Farmer's Guide, the Rural New Yorker, the Florida Farmer, and perhaps other journals.

56. Letter from Marco Morrow to agencies and advertisers, October 22, 1920.—
51. Interviews with Marco Morrow, June 16, August 1, 1952, and April 7, 1953. The last issue of the Field and Farm was December 5, 1920.
52. Missouri Ruralist, St. Louis, February 1 and 15, 1921; "First Things."
53. "First Things." The St. Louis building was sold for $40,000 on October 5, 1944.
55. "First Things"; Topeka State Journal, January 31, 1922; additional material about this sale is found in Topeka Daily Capital, July 16, 1939, and in the prospectus of Capper Publications, Inc., which was sent to the SEC.
56. Interview with Marco Morrow, June 16, 1952.
57. Interviews with Marco Morrow, April 7, 1953, Leland Schenck, April 7, 1953, and Rod Runyan, April 7, 1953.
TO TRADERS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL OR DEPARTMENT, HAVING AN ATTENDANCE OF 50 SCHOLARS.

Honesty, perseverance, and sobriety are the best means of improvement in business. The following, in the course of a letter, is a true representation of the condition of one of our pupils.

AMERICAN YOUNG FOLKS

A Journal for the Amusement and Instruction of the Boys and Girls of America.

Hudson & Wing, Editors and Proprietors. Topeka, Kansas, December 1, 1878.

Aunt Mary: I have not written to the Young Folks for a long while. I have been working in the office of the Garnett Ledger, for over two months. I like the printer's trade very well, and I am getting along slowly. I set up a column to-day. We were very busy printing tickets before election, and we have a great variety of tickets. Democratic tickets with Greenwood men on them, and Republican tickets with Democrats and Republicans, and we have been printing tickets for both parties. I have been printing tickets for almost every kind of a young man, a printer, and a printer.

Garnett, Kansas,

Arthur Capper.

Yours truly,

Aunt Mary was surprised at the price that the printers were charging for the tickets. She was told that the price was about $250 each. She was not used to living in a town like Garnett, Kansas, and she was not used to the money that printers were making. She was not used to the high price of cigars and tobacco, which she had been buying at the store. She was not used to the fact that many printers were living in poverty, making only a few dollars a week, and that they were not able to buy enough tobacco and cigars to smoke. She was not used to the fact that the printers were spending money on clothes and tobacco, which they could not afford. She was not used to the fact that the printers were not able to save enough money to buy a new printing press, which was necessary to keep up with the competition.

Arthur Capper was not used to the high price of tobacco and cigars. He was not used to the fact that printers were spending money on clothes and tobacco, which they could not afford. He was not used to the fact that the printers were not able to save enough money to buy a new printing press, which was necessary to keep up with the competition. He was not used to the fact that the printers were not able to save enough money to buy a new printing press, which was necessary to keep up with the competition.

Excerpts from the American Young Folks, Topeka, December, 1878, when 13-year-old Arthur Capper of Garnett early broke into print.
Arthur Capper
(1865-1951)
Famed Kansas Publisher, Governor
and U. S. Senator.

Erected in 1908 at Eighth and Jackson in Topeka, this building was long the main office of Capper Publications, and is now headquarters for the Stauffer Publications.
tempted, Capper never again went into a new state to buy a newspaper. Instead he seemed inclined to withdraw. On May 21, 1924, he sold the Oklahoma Farmer to the publishers of the Oklahoma Farmer-Stockman. The following month the Nebraska Farm Journal was purchased by Samuel R. McKelvie, owner of the Nebraska Farmer.

In keeping with the trend towards consolidation of state farm papers throughout the country, the two leading state farm journals in each of the states of Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania were consolidated in September, 1928. The names of his Eastern farm papers were retained and Capper owned 60 per cent of the stock of the new company, Capper-Harman-Slocum, Inc.

In the nonagricultural part of Capper Publications there was considerable change just as there had been with the farm journals. Beginning on January 31, 1921, the Kansas City Kansan, a daily, was published in Kansas City, Kan., under Capper’s auspices. The Kansas city had found it difficult to support a daily because of the local strength of the Star and Times. Kansas City, Kan., had the dubious distinction of being the largest city in the United States without a daily newspaper. Previous publishers had failed to develop a paper which would do much more than carry the legal advertising of the city. In hopes of promoting more community spirit the Chamber of Commerce sent representatives to Capper to persuade him to sponsor a Kansas City paper. In spite of his efforts to retrench elsewhere, Capper agreed to take over the name and good will of the old Kansan, if the Chamber would guarantee 15,000 subscribers and obtain pledges of $200,000 in advertising for the first year. The Kansan failed to show a profit during its first three years of operation. Nevertheless, it obtained a position of influence, for the Kansas City Star Company shifted its policy to carry news about Kansas City, Kan., rather than about the “West end,” and special editions were delivered to the Kansas City, Kan., reader.

Another expansion of the Capper papers was the extensive pro-

58. The handwritten contract of the sale on stationery of the New Willard Hotel, Washington, D.C., is on file in the vault at the Capper building. The price was $85,000. The last issue of Oklahoma Farmer was May 25, 1924.

59. Interview with Marco Morrow, June 16, 1952. The last issue of Nebraska Farm Journal was June 15, 1924.

60. Ohio Farmer, Cleveland, September 22, 1928.


62. “First Things.”


64. Ibid., interview with Marco Morrow, June 16, 1952. Capper invested $350,000 in the Kansan in getting started and he arranged the business so that he expected a six per cent profit. He was cautious in his Kansas City venture so that he would offer no serious competition to the Star and Times.
motion of several journals designed for readers in the Eastern United States. Capper's Weekly began operation of an Eastern edition, published from Washington, D. C., on January 6, 1923. It was identified as a political publication and was organized for the purpose of enhancing Capper's political career by making his name more widely known in the East. The circulation of all editions of Capper's Weekly increased rapidly, but financial losses were great and the Eastern edition ceased publication with the issue of June 6, 1925. In its place, Capper's Magazine, a monthly, made its first appearance the following month with no greater monetary success, and it suspended operations on January 1, 1927.

Still interested in offering a journal that would appeal to the businessmen and businesswomen who wanted to keep informed on public matters, Capper took over the publication of Public Affairs in January, 1929. This was a short-article magazine, which presented the news in a factual, readable manner, and was printed in Topeka. In September, 1929, the journal's name was changed to Capper's Magazine and it ceased publication after continued losses, in October, 1931.

The radio activities of Capper Publications were closely related to the publishing media of the company. Capper obtained a license for WJAP, one of the nation's pioneer stations, in 1922, only to have it leave the air in 1924. In 1927 he sponsored the move of WIBW, originally intended for Loganport, Ind., to Topeka. By September, 1928, he had controlling interest in the station and in 1934 the studios and business offices were housed in the Capper residence at 1035 Topeka boulevard. WIBW-FM operated as a sister station for a short time after World War II. KCKN of Kansas City, Kan., was acquired on November 13, 1935, and operated in close harmony with the Kansas City Kansas.

Although plans for incorporation of Capper Publications were begun in 1935, the business did not begin operations as a corporation of the state of Kansas until October 9, 1937. All but 114 of the
100,000 shares, which were issued to 114 individuals, were retained by Capper.74

The Capper Printing Company, Inc., was chartered at the same time. Capper, his sister, Mary, and his sister-in-law, Mrs. George M. Crawford, held all but two of the 10,000 shares.75

When Oscar S. Stauffer purchased the Topeka State Journal early in 1939 an opportunity to make changes in the Topeka newspaper field seemed to present itself. Negotiations between Stauffer and the management of the Topeka Daily Capital were begun almost a year later to determine the advisability of some sort of consolidation.76 Much study was made of the possible methods of consolidating.77 There was a general consensus that Topeka could not support two papers such as the Journal and Capital except in above average times. A schedule of prospective savings to the Capital of such a merger was developed. In general, discussion seemed to bog down on the division of ownership of the new consolidation. Stauffer seemed willing to give Capper Publications 60 percent ownership while Capper seemed to feel that a more equitable division would give two thirds ownership to Capper Publications.78 One of the big questions was the political consequence of such a move. Capper received advice that the two papers should be autonomous; that they should be as independent of each other editorially as they could be, without having the public say, “Capper is straddling the fence. He blows hot and he blows cold.”79

Finally after prolonged study, the business, advertising, circulation, and mechanical departments of the Topeka Daily Capital and the Topeka State Journal were combined to form the Topeka Newspaper Printing Company, Incorporated, on July 31, 1941.80 The new joint publishing operation was patterned after the plan of development of the Nashville Printing Company in Tennessee.81 The Journal moved its offices into the Capper building. Both papers maintained separate editorial expressions and independent news policies.82 Capper Publications held two thirds of the stock in the new com-

74. “Amendments and Miscellaneous Charters (official copybooks from office of secretary of state, now in the archives division of the Kansas State Historical Society),” v. A-44, pp. 452-436.
75. Ibid., pp. 456, 437. The Capper Engraving Company that was located in Wichita was sold on April 16, 1937, for $25,000.
76. Letter from H. S. Blake to Capper, January 17, 1940.—“Capper Collection.”
77. Letters from H. S. Blake to Capper, February 8, 1940, and from Marco Morrow to Capper, March 22, 1940.—Ibid.
78. Letter from Marco Morrow to Capper, March 22, 1940.
79. Ibid.
80. “First Things”; Topeka Daily Capital, August 1, 1941.
81. Editor and Publisher, New York, August 2, 1941, p. 18.
82. Printers’ Ink, New York, August 8, 1941, p. 65.
pany and was responsible for two thirds of the members of the new board of directors.\textsuperscript{83} Profits or losses were to be divided on the basis of ownership.

Expansion of business activities after 1920 made it impossible to accommodate the entire staff and necessary equipment in the Capper building. Especially after World War II, Capper Publications employees worked in buildings which were often some distance from the Capper building. Changes in magazine publishing also made greater use of color so that much of the mechanical work for \textit{Household} and eventually \textit{Capper’s Farmer} was shifted to Louisville, Ky., where it was printed and mailed by Dearing Company.\textsuperscript{84}

In 1949 Capper returned to Topeka, after 34 years in public service. Though actively interested in his business, his long immersion in politics had seen control of business decisions pass to other hands.\textsuperscript{85} He enjoyed coming to his office each day to be among his employees. And he greatly appreciated the recognition received from many organizations, for it gave him an additional opportunity to be among friendly people.\textsuperscript{86}

Capper died December 19, 1951, at the age of 86 years.\textsuperscript{87} President Harry S. Truman wired that “it may almost be said that an era in the history of the old Midwest came to a close with the passing of Senator Capper.”\textsuperscript{88} Capper was honored while he lived, and he was honored and remembered at his death.

Capper’s ten-year-old will was filed in the Shawnee county probate court on December 27, 1951.\textsuperscript{89} The major bequest was $250,000 for the Capper Foundation for Crippled Children. Thirteen Topeka charities were named to receive $1,000 each and $10,800 in cash was bequeathed to relatives.

Provision was made for the perpetuation of Capper Publications, Inc., under the same managers who had operated the company for many years. Mrs. Edith Capper Eustice, Capper’s surviving sister, and 29 employees, on condition that they were living at the time of his death and in his employ or that of Capper Publications were to receive stock in the company.\textsuperscript{90} About half of the named employees were able to qualify for their bequests.

\textsuperscript{83} Topeka \textit{Daily Capital}, August 1, 1941.
\textsuperscript{84} Letter from H. S. Blake to Capper, March 21, 1947.—“Capper Collection”; \textit{Capper’s Farmer}, February, 1953.
\textsuperscript{85} Interview with Arthur Capper, April 7, 1950.
\textsuperscript{86} Interview with Julia Mc Kee, Capper’s private secretary, April 7, 1950.
\textsuperscript{87} Topeka \textit{Daily Capital}, December 20, 1951.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Capper’s Weekly}, December 29, 1951.
\textsuperscript{89} Kansas City \textit{Times}, December 28, 1951; Topeka \textit{Daily Capital}, December 28, 1951. The will was executed March 19, 1941, and the witnesses were Frank Carlson, Clifford E. Hope, Thomas D. Winter, and W. P. Lamberton, who were all members of the Kansas delegation to congress.
\textsuperscript{90} Topeka \textit{Daily Capital}, December 28, 1951.
Capper's plan for his company was probably influenced by the development of the Kansas City Star Company but the manner in which his ownership was transferred was more like developments in the Milwaukee Journal. There was no provision requiring the new owners of Capper Publications, Inc., stock to dispose of their ownership upon retirement from the business, but the new owners made private arrangements for maintenance of ownership by active stockholders.91 Henry S. Blake, long a vice-president in the company, was named executor to serve without bond. Blake also became president of Capper Publications.

In June, 1953, a construction permit was obtained by Capper Publications for the erection of facilities for WIBW-TV.92 A Columbia Broadcasting System hookup was obtained and the main studio was housed in the old school building on the grounds of the Security Benefit Association, located just west of Topeka. Operations on a daily schedule began in November, 1953.93

91. Ibid., April 24, 1956.
92. Ibid., June 7, 1953.
93. Ibid., November 11, 1953.
Final settlement of the Capper estate was not completed before the death, in March, 1956, of Blake.94 Under Blake’s tenure as executor the Shawnee county probate court agreed to use 25,000 shares of stock in Capper Publications to satisfy the bequest for the Capper Foundation for Crippled Children.95 But after Blake’s death a new petition was filed with the court asking that the earlier ruling be set aside and the Capper Foundation bequest be handled with cash rather than stock. The petitioners held that the trustees of Blake’s estate, who were also directors of the Capper Foundation, were in a position whereby they could control the majority of the publishing company’s stock. Litigation over the disposition of Capper Publications’ stock continued through the summer of 1956 only to cease with the announcement in mid-September that Stauffer Publications, Inc., had purchased all stock in the company.96 The formal transfer of ownership, delayed because of required Federal Communications Commission approval over the radio and television properties, took place February 1, 1957.97 Stauffer Publications paid $2,498,675 for the stock in Capper Publications.98 In addition, the purchaser assumed obligations amounting to four and one half million dollars making the total transaction in excess of seven million dollars.99

New press facilities, to greatly enlarge the printing capacity of the Topeka plant, were purchased for the joint Stauffer-Capper companies. Personnel changes were made gradually. Phil Zach, for a short time the Capper Publications president, announced that Oscar S. Stauffer, the president of Stauffer Publications, Inc., was a "logical and worthy successor to Arthur Capper as the owner of this business."100 Stauffer in his statement said,

Capper Publications, through its many years under the leadership of the late Senator Capper and his associates, has a heritage of which Kansans can be proud.

It shall be the aim of the new owners, insofar as possible, to live up to these traditions, ideals and standards.101

The Capper enterprise showed an extensive growth by almost any measure. At least 20 publications were purchased or consolidated by 1930. The staff had increased greatly. The number of com-

94. Ibid., March 10, 1956.
95. Ibid., April 24, 1956. March, 1953, was the time of the court ruling.
96. Ibid., September 16, 1956.
97. Ibid., February 2, 1957.
98. Ibid., December 21, 1956.
100. Ibid., September 22, 1956, p. 9; Topeka Daily Capital, September 16, 1956.
munication media had grown. Circulation had increased from 1,600 for the *Mail* in 1893 to more than 5,000,000 for ten varied publications in 1956.\(^{102}\) These were *Household, Capper's Farmer*, Topeka *Daily Capital*, *Capper's Weekly*, Kansas City *Kansan*, *Kansas Farmer*, *Missouri Ruralist*, *Ohio Farmer*, *Michigan Farmer*, and *Pennsylvania Farmer*. In addition, the radio stations, WIBW in Topeka, and KCKN in Kansas City, and WIBW-TV in Topeka claimed an extensive although unnumbered audience.

\(^{102}\) See the chart for circulation of the Capper periodicals, p. 165.