

EDITORIAL

Vote for your local newspaper

As election day approaches, one of the questions appearing on the ballot

will ask voters to designate an official county newspaper. For many, it can sound like little more than a procedural vote. A legal requirement. A line item on an agenda. Something routine.

But the truth is, that decision matters far more than many people realize.

Choosing an official county newspaper is really about choosing how a community preserves its history, protects transparency, and keeps citizens informed long after social media posts disappear and websites change.

Local newspapers serve as the watchdogs of government. That phrase gets repeated often, but it carries real meaning. Newspapers sit through the meetings that many residents cannot attend. We publish the motions, the votes, the debates, and the public notices that directly impact taxpayers. We ask questions when answers are unclear, and we provide context that helps readers understand not just what happened, but why it matters.

In rural communities especially, that role becomes even more important.

Small towns run on trust, but trust should never replace transparency. Public notices and official publications exist for a reason. Citizens deserve access to information involving taxes, budgets, road projects, zoning changes, elections, and legal notices. Those records should not be hidden behind algorithms, buried in a social media feed, or dependent on whether a website is updated properly.

Digital information can be useful. It can also be fragile.

Websites crash. Links break. Files disappear. Online records can be altered, overwritten, or deleted entirely, sometimes accidentally and sometimes intentionally. Technology changes quickly, and platforms that seem permanent today may not even exist a decade from now.

Printed newspapers, however, create a permanent record.

Once something is printed in ink and distributed to the public, it becomes part of the historical record of a community. Libraries archive newspapers. Families save clippings. Researchers, attorneys, historians, and future generations can look

back decades later and see exactly what was published and when it was published.

That permanence matters.

In an era where misinformation spreads rapidly and facts are often questioned, there is value in having a tangible,

verifiable public record. Newspapers provide timestamps for history. They document milestones and controversies alike. They preserve the first draft of a community's story.

Local newspapers also do something else that cannot be measured on a spreadsheet.

We celebrate communities.

We cover school concerts, sporting events, graduations, weddings, retirements, rodeos, fundraisers, and county fairs. We tell the stories of veterans, volunteers, farmers, business owners, teachers, and students. We recognize the people who quietly hold rural communities together every single day.

An official newspaper should not simply be a place where legal notices are printed. It should be a publication that actively invests in the community it serves.

Strong local journalism strengthens local democracy. When citizens are informed, communities function better. When government actions are visible, accountability improves. When history is preserved, future generations understand where they came from.

The designation of an official county newspaper is not just about ink on paper. It is about transparency, accountability, and preserving the public record for years to come.

As Morton County voters make their decision on the designation of the county's official newspaper, we humbly ask you to consider the commitment and dedication of the Morton County News Journal. While we may be new, our mission is not. We are committed to providing fair, accurate, and consistent coverage to the citizens of Morton County while preserving the stories, records, and history that matter to our communities. We believe local journalism still has an important role to play, and we are ready to continue doing the work of informing the public, documenting local government, and serving as a trusted voice for the people of Morton County for years to come.



Jill M. Friesz



NORTH DAKOTA NARRATIVES

Final mystery solved

I've written about my family tree in the past, and this will most likely be the last time I do write about it, but some exciting news happened on Tuesday that I feel I have to share with readers.

My great-great grandparents have been found. This is going to upset the apple cart a bit because several other family members had wrong locations and dates of death while most of us didn't know who these people were or where they were.

The names were Michael and Mary Baker. They were immigrants from Germany who settled in a small town southwest of Chicago called Bath. Ten years later they moved to Lincoln, Illinois, made famous by Route 66 and Abraham Lincoln. Then, they moved to Mount Pulaski, Illinois.

This information was found using census records. The problem, however, is nobody knew where they were buried. Genealogy sites didn't have information other than "Michael Becker," which was the German spelling of the surname.

One cousin, who I'm a bit upset with, insisted they moved to Wayne, Nebraska where they passed away. In March, I was in Wayne. They weren't in any cemetery there nor did the town historian ever hear of them. He was aware of plenty of Bakers who settled in that area, near Sioux City, Iowa, but he didn't know about Michael and Mary.

On Tuesday afternoon, that mystery got solved. No more rumors, no more assumptions.

My great-great grandparents are buried in a

cemetery called Old Union in West Lincoln, Illinois. I was there and took photographs to prove it.

This would have never happened without assistance from Bill Donath, the president of the Logan

County Genealogical and Historical Society. He told me he spent an hour researching these people no-body in our immediate family knew about.

First, and most importantly, the graves are unmarked, which is why there isn't any information on genealogy sites. That said, Mr. Donath produced a map of the cemetery showing all the plots. Michael and Mary Baker's names are there with death dates that match what I have, but there was a third grave with a "Baker" in it.

On Tuesday, Bill and I put our heads together and discovered the third grave belongs to a daughter Louise Baker who died in 1900. Here again, none of us knew Louise existed, let alone know a location where she is buried.

After Mary passed away, her probate was handled by a district judge in Lincoln. Most often probate goes to a family member. But through records filed in the Logan County courthouse, it became clear that Louise didn't have the mental faculties to carry out a probate, thus the judge was appointed.

Back to Michael for a second; my cousin James

said he lived to be an old man and died in Wayne, Nebraska. A document I found from the Greenwood Cemetery Association in Wayne, said he died when he was 34 years old. Neither was correct.

On Tuesday we found a newspaper article from January 1867 telling the story of how Michael Baker was found dead near town one morning with his wagon rolled over on top of him.

What had happened was his team of horses got spooked and ran out of control for an unknown reason, tipping the wagon and killing him. He was 47 years old, according to the Lincoln Herald newspaper.

I had been looking

for this information close to two years. Something didn't add up. He wasn't in Nebraska and two of his children were born after he died. That being the case, I set out to get the correct information and Bill Donath and I did. Unfortunately, I also learned that Michael must not have been a very good money manager because twice in his adult life, he was subjected to sheriff sales.

If you have a mystery such as this in your family, keep digging, it's there somewhere. It's like Bill told me, "newspapers are my history books."

But now, learning what I did on Tuesday, my brother and I are considering purchasing gravestones for all three of the "unknown" Bakers in West Lincoln, Illinois. I want them to rest in peace with dignity dignity dignity.



Marvin Baker

Question of the Week

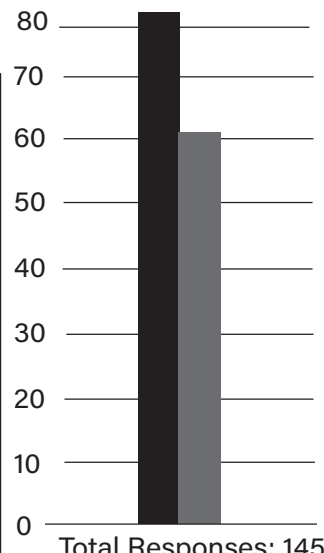
Do you prefer reading a book or binge watching a series?

- A Reading - 83
- Binge Watching - 62

Next week's question...

What is your go-to karaoke song?

- A. Survivor
- B. Rhapsody
- C. Let It Go



Submit answer to:

jill@gspublishing.net or answer on our Facebook page. This is a weekly feature seeking public opinion. It is not a scientific poll.