

BANTA, ALFRED FRANKLIN (Charles Alfred Franklin ) born in Warrick County, Indiana, December 16, 1843; son of John Fulton and Fidelia Ann (Fuguay) Banta (1828-60), his father was a native of Kentucky, the descendant of an ancestor who came from the Frisian Islands, off the coast of Holland, to New Amsterdam in February, 1659; married, \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ 18\_\_\_\_\_ who taught school in Yavapai County; children, Bernice (Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ ) who was living in Durango, Colorado, at the time of his death.

Moved to Missouri with his parents when he was a child, raised in log cabin on the frontier, had a few months in school before he was 12 years of age and no other opportunities for education; stated that he "learned to set type little in Missouri before coming West. What I do know, which of course is not much, has been gathered from observation and voracious appetite for reading anything and everything obtainable".

Lived for a time in Kansas and then went to New Mexico where he "set type on and had charge of the Rio Abajo Press, published in what is now known as "old Albuquerque' during most of the year 1863"; left there late in October, 1863 as a "bullwhacker" with ox teams in a military expedition to the new gold discoveries in northern Arizona which consisted of 3 Companies of California Volunteers commanded by Major E. B. Willis; arrived in Little Chino Valley, A.T., December 21, 1863, where Fort Whipple was first established; he assisted Tisdale A. Hand, the editor, to set up the type and "work-off" the first edition of the Arizona Miner at that place on March 9, 1864; listed as Charles A. Franklin in the Territorial Census taken in April of that year, occupation -Printer, age 21, resident in Arizona 5 months.

When Fort Whipple was relocated on Granite Creek in April he moved to that vicinity where he herded stock for R. E. Farrington; during the summer he was employed by John Wesley (Poker) Johnson, who had a hay camp below the "rocks" to "scout about the camp and look out for Apaches at \$75 per month. The hay was out with hoes, and at that sort of work the men could not keep an eye out for the reds"; the quartermaster's records show that he was employed as a Teamster at Fort Whipple, A.T., at \$70 per month from October 23 to December 7, 1864; during the remainder of the winter he was a "general factotum" at the

Prescott house on Granite Street. "When the first mail came in from La Pas, brought in by James Grant, who left the same at the 'hotel', I put the few letters behind the bar and handed them out to anyone calling for them".

In April, 1865, he with C. W. Beach and George Cooler accompanied the escort of U.S. Paymaster, Samuel C. Staples from Prescott to Santa Fe. Banta said that he also "carried U.S. mail between Prescott and Albuquerque in 1865", probably for Aaron Barnett and Solomon Barth who then had a weekly mail contract over that route; from September 1 to October 31, 1865, he served as Teamster and Assistant Wagon Master at \$42 per month enroute from Santa Fe to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; he returned to New Mexico and states that in 1866 he lived among the Zuni Indians becoming an adopted member of that tribe; there is a record of his service as an Army Express rider out of Santa Fe at \$35 per month from March 19 to July 26, 1868; he left Zuni on July 12, 1869, with C. E. Cooley and Henry Wood Dodd to seek for the lost Doctor Thorn gold mine, but trouble with the Apaches caused them to go on to Camp Reno in August and from there to the Salt River Valley where Banta stopped at the ranch of his friend, Jack Swilling; went to Wickenburg where he acted as Constable.

Listed, U.S. Census, 1870, at Prescott, A.T., age 27, occupation - 7.3. Guide and there is a record of his employment in that capacity at \$100 per month at Fort Whipple until October 4, 1870; the following statements are abstracts from his writings:

The first issue of the Arizona Citizen came out on October 15, 1870. The sticking type on that paper in Tucson on January 12, 1870, and continued to do so until employed by A.P.K. Safford, and other capitalists Of San Francisco, to investigate the alleged "Diamond Fields" in the Navajo country. Left Tucson, July 15, 1871, and was gone one month and 17 days. My report was "Fake".

In 1872, I served as Inspector of U. S. Customs at Tucson under the Collector, John W. Hopkins. My services being needed at the Indian Agency at old Camp Grant, I left the Customs Service to take a position there. I carried U.S. and military mail between Camp Apache and Fort Wingate in 1873 and was Guide that year for Lieutenant George M. Wheeler of the Engineers, "Explorations West of the 100th Meridian" (May 29 to June 30 at 4150 per month). I reported the discovery of the meteor crater to Lieutenant Wheeler who called it "Franklin's Hole" by which name it was known for many years.

During the winter of '73 and '74 I had charge of the Arizona

*Sentinel*, then owned and published by Judge W.J. Berry at Yuma. Again late in the fall of '74 and the spring of '75, I set type per thousand ems on the Citizen at Tucson.

The *Yuma Arizona Sentinel* published the following references to him the first which was a reprint:

November 14, 1874 - - C. A. Franklin, a worthy disciple of the "art preservative" left San Diego yesterday for his old home in Arizona. Franklin is a good type-setter and a good fellow. We wish him prosperity wherever he may be. --San Diego Union.

January 29, 1876 - - We have received from C. A. Franklin, of Camp Goodwin, a copy of a petition, asking our delegate in Congress, Hon. H. S. Stevens, to use his influence to have a postal route established from Camp Goodwin, Arizona, via Camp Apache and the Rio Colorado Chiquito to Fort Wingate, New Mexico.

The Yavapai County records show that he was appointed Constable of the St. Johns precinct on February 17, 1876; his statement is that "at the general election in 1876 two Justices of the Peace were elected for the new precinct of Springerville, Con Bunch and myself". "I did not qualify, but went to Tucson to be present at the session of the Legislature which removed the Capitol back to Prescott"; that he remained in Tucson is indicated by an item printed in the *Arizona Star*:

On the 31st of October last our townsmen J. B. Hart and C. A. Franklin, started out from Tucson for the purpose of a prospecting tour in the Santa Catalina Mountains, that portion of them that had not before been prospected. They returned home on Monday last loaded down with specimen ores, croppings, from different localities.

The following quotations are compiled from three different versions of "a synopsis of personal events", the last two of which he made up from memory in 1921 and 1923, all designed to show that "I have held more positions by election or appointment under our Territorial regime than any other person.

As Deputy Sheriff of Pima County under-C.A.-. Shibell, in 1878, I made an extended trip into Sonora with extradition papers issued by Governor A.P.K. Safford. I rode horseback about 800 miles chasing my criminals down into Sonora, and finally back to Arizona. Had a horse shot under me; thrown into jail for "insulting the Government of Mexico". Jail door purposely left open so that I could have walked out. Rurales posted with orders to shoot me if I attempted to escape, an old trick of the Mexicans.

I returned to Springerville in the fall of 1878 and was elected Justice of the Peace but resigned in 1879. Appointed as the first Postmaster at Springerville. (office established October 29, 1879, and he served under the name of Charles A. Franklin until July 26, 1880). I appointed Julius Becker as my assistant. When I resigned I recommended his appointment to the postmastership and the, Beckers have held that office from that day to the present day (1921).

As a member of the "third house" I secured the passage by the Legislature of the-bill creating the County of Apache. Had a hard fight as the whole Yavapai delegation was against it -- I won out. The Act creating the new County provided for a special election for County officers on the first Monday in June, 1879. I was elected District Attorney for the County to serve the balance of 1879 and 1880.

I was appointed by Major C. P. Deke, the Census Marshal for Arizona, as Enumerator for Apache County, 10th U.S. Census, 1880. Also appointed by the Governor that year as Notary Public for Apache County; held that 'lucrative office for 12 years. Elected Probate Judge and ex-officio County School Superintendent. Took office the first day of December, 1880 and served until December 31st, 1882, - two years and one month. At the general election in 1882 I was elected a member of the 12th Legislative Assembly for the County of Apache. Elected in 1888 for the second time, District Attorney of Apache County.

In 1891 I helped to organize Company K, National Guard of Arizona, at St. Johns and was

elected 1st. Lieutenant. George Estes was elected Captain but soon afterwards resigned and left the Territory. I gave a bond to Governor Oakes Murphy for the care of the arms and equipment and commanded the Company until 1894. Resigned as it was useless to try to make soldiers out of such material. In 1897, I was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of Cavalry on the staff of Governor Myron E. McCord.

Newspapers established: The *Arizona Pioneer* at St. Johns, July, 1882.

The *Holbrook Argus*, 1895.

Purchased the *Arizona Populist* in November, 1895; moved the plant to Prescott, named it *Pick and Drill*; burnt out in the big fire of 1900,

Established the *Weekly Douglas Dispatch*, 1902. Established the *Observer* at St. John, 1910.

The following references to his connection with newspapers appeared in other Arizona publications\*

The *Yuma Arizona Sentinel*, August 26, 1882 - -The *Arizona Pioneer*, published by Hon. C. A. Franklin, at St. Johns, Apache county, is the name of absolutely the latest Arizona newspaper strike. The sample received at the *Sentinel* office assays high in brightness and general makeup. There is no doubt but it will improve as it is better developed and become, as we hope, a good dividend paying concern.

The *Prescott Courier*. August 3, 1896 - A. F. Banta, a good man and true has sold his paper, *The Argus*, to J. E. De Roseai, a free silver Democrat.

Again in the *Courier* of February 8, 1897 - - The *Pick and Drill*, Albert F. Banta, editor and proprietor, made its first appearance in Prescott last Sunday morning. Mr. Banta is a practical printer and a life-long newspaper man. His paper is typographically neat, and equal to any of its class in the mining regions. Mr. Banta's salaam is short. He says: We do not care to nauseate our readers with a long winded string of "hog wash," but simply say to them the *Pick and Drill* means business, is here for business, and solicits your business. We ask our friends, our enemies too--if any we have--and the general public, to bear with all our short-comings for yet a little while, for surely, "All is well that ends well."

The *Prescott Journal-Miner*, March 20, 1902 - - The initial number of the *Douglas Dispatch*, A.F. Banta, editor and proprietor, two dollars per year," dated March 15, has been received at this office. The salutation

is very Bantaistic, being as follows: "The undersigned is again harnessed to the journalistic car. Respectfully yours, A. F. Banta." The paper is a four page one of six columns to the page, and the initial number it, a very respectable sheet.

Mention of him was made many times in the Territorial newspapers among which were the following,

The *Yuma Arizona Sentinel*, November 26, 1881 - -The Sentinel office has received with the compliments of Mr. Chas. A. Franklin, Superintendent of Public Schools for Apache county, a copy of an article on the discipline of the schools,

The *Phoenix Herald*, January 16, 1884 - - According to the *St. Johns Orion Era*, C. A. Franklin and brother will petition to have their name, which is an assumed one, changed to the original name, whatever that was.

The *Prescott Courier*, September 26, 1884 - - Not many days ago, as C. A. Franklin (or Banta) was sitting in front of a hotel at St. Johns, Apache County, Sol Barth, it is said, attempted to wipe out an old grudge by choking Charley, who straight-way set to carving Sol with a pen-knife, inflicting cuts upon Sol's face and ear.

Nathan Barth, brother of 'Sol,, then took a hand, with a pistol. Result, • bullet hole in Franklin's neck and a shortened thumb on his brother Sol. People who saw the fracas say that Franklin pulled his gun and but for the interference of bystanders would have killed the Barth..

The Courier is sorry to have to chronicle such outrageous proceedings on the part of old timers, who, until a short, time ago, were the best of friends.

The *Yuma Arizona Sentinel*, December 14, 1880 --Hon. Chas Banta, District Attorney, an old "typo" formerly connected with the *Sentinel* and a pioneer Arizonan was in town yesterday and met with a hearty welcome from his many friends.

The *Florence Tribune*, December 15, 1900 - - A. F. Banta, the old-time newspaper man, announces that he will in the future, make his home at St. Johns, Apache County.

The *Yuma Arizona Sentinel*, February 14, 1901 - -Mr. A.F. Banta well known to old settlers as Charles Franklin, came down from Phoenix this morning to take a position as guard at the Territorial prison. He goes on duty tomorrow night.

The *Prescott Courier* June 17, 1901 - - Chas. Banta has resigned

his position as guard at the prison and left for Phoenix on Monday night's train.

The *Prescott Courier*, January 29, 1916 - - Alfred F. Banta pioneer of the early 60s, editor, printer, miner, has become a welcome guest at the Pioneer Home. Few men have so persistently endeavored to advance the interests of Arizona, whose history in no small degree he helped to make, and few are so deserving of recognition by the people of the State. Like most newspaper men he pointed out the way to riches to others, but was more interested in the development of the riches of the Territory than of his own.

Admitted from Apache County to the Arizona Pioneers' Home, Prescott, January 19, 1916, where he died June 21, 1924, aged 80; buried, Pioneers' Cemetery, Prescott; in a review of his life the *Prescott Courier* stated,

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Banta easily was the oldest printer in Arizona, and recognized by all as the dean of newspaper men of the State. He followed prospecting and newspaper work, and even was interested in politics, being a staunch Democrat.

Frequently he wrote for various newspapers articles relating to the early history of the State, his memory of pioneer days being unusually clear.



A.F. Banta



Nathan Barth

Courtesy Apache county Museum  
St. Johns, Arizona