

In the year 1816, on the 3d day of August, Major Frederick S. Heiskell and Hu. Brown began the publication of the Knoxville Register, which continued to be published for a longer term of years than any other paper yet published in the city. It suspended publication upon the arrival of General Burnside with the Union army, about the first of September, 1863. Its life was within a few days of forty-seven years, and in the main it was a distinctly honorable career. In this connection a brief sketch of its distinguished founders will be proper and of interest. Major Heiskell remained one of the proprietors of The Register for about twenty-one years, devoting his whole time, energy and ability to its success. He was born in Hagerstown, Maryland, but when yet a child his parents removed to Shenandoah county, Virginia. He learned the printer's trade in the office of his brother, John Heiskell, in Winchester, Virginia, and came to Knoxville in December, 1814. After working as a journeyman printer something less than two years, he, in conjunction with Hu. Brown, whose sister he afterwards married, founded The Knoxville Register, a weekly paper. In 1829 Hu. Brown retired from the paper and Major Heiskell continued its publication until in 1837, when, on account of impaired health. he retired to a farm ten miles west of Knoxville, having sold his interest in The Register to W. B. A. Ramsey and Robert Craighead. While publishing The Register, Major Heiskell was intimately acquainted with Hugh Lawson White, John Bell, Ephraim H. Foster, James K. Polk and other famous men of his time. For years he was a trusted friend of Andrew Jackson, and fought his earlier political battles with characteristic vigor. He also knew Henry Clay well and was one of his earnest, sincere supporters. In 1847 he was elected to the state senate, the only office he ever held, and distinguished himself as an able, conscientious and zealous representative of the people's interests. He was always a gentleman in his habits and deportment, and universally recognized as thoroughly incorruptible. He was a public-spirited man and took a deep interest in the cause of education. He was one of the trustees of the East Tennessee Female Institute and for years up to the date of his death was also one of the trustees of the East Tennessee University, now University of Tennessee. While conducting The Register his counsel and influence was eagerly sought by men in public life and his advice was always received with consideration. His life was long, strenuous and useful. He died in the 94th year of his age at Rogersville. Tennessee, in November, 1882. He remained an omnivorous newspaper reader to the last, and at the time of his death left twenty large scrap-books made up of clippings which he considered of value. His partner and brother-in-law, Hu. Brown, was also a superior man. He retired from The Register in 1829, to accept a professorship in the University of Tennessee. Under their management the power and influence of The Register was second to no paper in the state. It was a credit to its publishers and to the section of the country in which it circulated. Its proprietors took an active part in the politics of the period and made themselves felt by friends and by foes. In 1836, contrary to the will and wishes of Andrew Jackson, who had been the most influential man in Tennessee politics, and who had decreed that Martin Van Buren should be his successor in the Presidential chair, The Knoxville Register supported Hugh Lawson White for that office. He carried the state, his majority, in spite of

Jackson's opposition, being a little more than nine thousand in a total vote of 61,000. In the Eastern division of the state Hugh Lawson White carried every county with the exception of Greene, Sullivan and Washington, most of them by overwhelming majorities. Four years previous to that, in 1832, Andrew Jackson had carried every one of the counties in East Tennessee. This year, against the influence exerted by the Knoxville Register, he could influence but three counties to vote for Martin Van Buren. This is mentioned as showing the influence of The Register in those days. Some of the men who were at times connected with The Knoxville Register office afterwards became prominent in the state. Gen. Felix K. Zollicoffer worked as a printer in the office. He afterwards became, as editor of the Nashville Republican Banner, one of the best-known journalists in the South, was elected state comptroller, served in the lower house of congress, and was killed at Mill Springs, Kentucky, in February, 1862, while gallantly leading a brigade of Confederate soldiers of which he was the commander.

From John E. Helms, one of the oldest newspaper men in the state, it is learned that Major Heiskell, the founder of The Register, was the president of the first meeting of the Tennessee Press Association. It was held in the old Mansion House, an excellent hotel in its day. It stood on the grounds upon which the county court-house now stands. The meeting was held about the year 1838.

Source: Standard History of Knoxville, Tennessee edited by William Rule. Chicago, Lewis Publishing, 1900:314-316.