

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Gering Courier Building  
Other names/site number SF01-017

2. Location

Street & number 1428 10<sup>th</sup> Street Not for publication   
City or town Gering Vicinity   
State Nebraska Code NE County Scotts Bluff Code 157 Zip code 69341

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Laura S. Sumner* \_\_\_\_\_ Date 6/17/04  
Signature of certifying official  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 see continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 see continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Sandra McClelland* \_\_\_\_\_ Date 10/15/04  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**Gering Courier Building**

Name of Property

**Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska**

County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE professional

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE professional

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:

Neoclassical Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Brick

Walls Brick

Roof Tar

Other Terra Cotta

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** Removed from its original location.
- C** A birthplace or a grave.
- D** A cemetery.
- E** A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** A commemorative property.
- G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMUNICATIONS, SOCIAL HISTORY

**Period of Significance**

1915 - 1954

**Significant Dates**

1915

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Asa Butler Wood & Warren C. Wood

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Jens C. Pederson

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- Previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- Designated a National Historic Landmark
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location for additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local Government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: North Platte Valley Museum

Gering Courier Building

Name of Property

Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property Less than one

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

Table with 7 columns: Zone, Easting, Northing, Zone, Easting, Northing. Includes entries for 1, 2, 3, 4 and a note to see continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gretchen Deter, Nancy Haney & others (see continuation sheet)

organization Scotts Bluff Questers # 1346 date March 4, 2004

street & number 1565 K Street telephone 308-436-5224

city or town Gering state NE zip code 69341

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Bob VanVleet

street & number P. O. Box 193, 405 12th Avenue telephone 308-254-6318

city or town Sidney state NE zip code 69162

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Gering Courier Building

Name of Property

Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska

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The Gering Courier Building is located in Gering, Nebraska (2000 census pop. 7,750) the county seat of Scotts Bluff County. Gering sits just south of the North Platte River in the eastern shadow of the historic Scotts Bluff National Monument and is approximately 400 miles west of Lincoln, Nebraska, the state's capital and 200 miles northeast of Denver, Colorado.

**Description**

The Gering Courier building, constructed in 1915, was the third building to house the publishing business of pioneer newspaperman, A. B. Wood. The two-story 28' X 60' brick structure is located prominently in the center of downtown Gering, Nebraska. It exhibits characteristics of the Colonial Revival/Neo-Classical style with symmetrical pedimented entrances flanked by pilasters and a parapeted roofline with a large classical cornice. The Gering Courier building is located in the central business district of downtown Gering between N and O streets on the east side of the 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Gering's main street. In the "Original Town," the bank, post office, drug store, hotel, and fraternity building were within the same block as the Courier. The building, designed by architect Jens C. Pedersen, is still in use by the *Gering Courier* newspaper.

The building "... is finished with Denver tapestry brick of a deep red variegated color manufactured by [Severin Sorensen's] Gering Brick Co."<sup>1</sup> (Severin Sorenson House NRHP 1983). Situated next to the alley, the exposed north facade of the building has the Denver tapestry brick as well. The building sits over a full basement that in the early years housed the pressroom and storage.

The 28' X 60' Gering Courier Building exemplifies the Neo-Classical Revival style. The parapeted roofline has an open brickwork balustrade capped with a course of concrete. The word "Courier" is emblazoned on the bricks in the front middle of the balustrade. A classical pressed metal cornice with large modillions stretches across the front and extends along one-third of the north side. Decorative herringbone brickwork is seen over the two large symmetrical tripartite double hung windows on the second story. These windows are surrounded by terra cotta and there is an identical window on the building's north side. A course of cream painted metal belting, supported by evenly spaced stepped brick, runs directly under the windows and around the north side.

The ground floor has two symmetrical entrance doors on either side of a large window that is surrounded by terra cotta. The entrance doors have brick pilasters on either side with pressed metal bases and capitals attached to the ornamental pediments. All of pressed metal ornamentation is painted a cream color to match the terra cotta window surrounds. Two concrete steps ascend from the sidewalk to the doors. The original wood doors and divided transoms have been replaced with aluminum framed glass doors. The north door enters the main offices of the Courier and the south door accesses stairs to the second floor. The ground floor window, that once had true divided diamond shaped transoms over double hung windows, has been replaced with a single picture window, but the scale of the window is the same and the terra cotta window surrounds remain. The basketweave-patterned brickwork above the window is the background for the stained glass clock that hangs perpendicular to the building. The clock, a fixture of downtown Gering, was originally located directly across the street on Gering National Bank building and was moved to the Courier building in 1960.

The north façade faces what was a service alley but is now a mini park and walkway. Because the entire north facade of the building was exposed, the architect continued the neo-classical features a third of the way to the back of the building. The balustrade, cornice, and belting run that distance with a window at the upper level identical to the two on the upper front facade. A north window on the lower level is also identical to the front window, now with a single picture window replacing the original double hung window. The back two-thirds of the north facade features three double hung windows on the second story and five double hung windows on the ground level. The windows are trimmed with concrete lintels and aprons colored to match the terra cotta window surrounds on the front windows.

The back of the building faces east with a low one story extension added in the 1950's to accommodate expansion of the pressroom. The addition, made of concrete block painted the same color as the main building's brick, is modest and unobtrusive. The south side of the building adjoining a vernacular one story commercial building has a single double hung window on the second story common brick wall. With the exception of changes to the front doors and to the two first- story front windows, the physical integrity of the Courier building is good.

<sup>1</sup>*Gering Courier*, April 30, 1915, 2.

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Name of Property

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The interior of the building retains its original spaces. On first floor are the reception office and mechanical workrooms for the Courier. The front office has been restored to the 1915 interior including the tin ceiling, the fireproof vault, and much of the woodwork. The back workrooms contain some of the machinery that A.B. Wood used while publishing the newspaper. The now vacant upper floor is divided into professional office rooms that have been occupied over the years by doctors, dentists, and at one time the Home Service of the Red Cross.

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The Gering Courier building is eligible at the state level under Criteria A and B. It is significant under Criterion A for its association with the publishing business and the importance of the newspaper in the development of western Nebraska communities by communications with the public. The *Gering Courier* was established and the first paper was published within days of the incorporation of the town of Gering in 1887. The *Courier* grew up with the town and the surrounding area. It is still being published today. The period of significance for this property begins in 1915 with the construction of the building and ends in 1954, 50 years prior to today.

The Gering Courier building is eligible under Criterion B for its association with A.B. Wood and with his son Warren C. Wood. The history of the building is interwoven with the lives of the first owner, editor and printer, A.B. Wood and his son Warren C. Both important Nebraskans, A. B. Wood was twenty-one years old when he arrived in Gering to set up the newspaper, and he grew up with the town. He helped establish new counties in western Nebraska, and over the years he recorded all the news, events, and activities of the new settlement. He served as postmaster and was very active in community organizations. A.B. was politically active and was elected to the Nebraska State Senate. Warren C. Wood succeeded his father as owner, editor and publisher of the *Courier*, promoting the town and western Nebraska as a whole. He became Major General of the Nebraska-Iowa National Guard and was highly decorated for his military service in World War II.

**Establishment of Gering and of the *Gering Courier***

The first main street of Gering (now M Street) was the famous Oregon Trail, the route California and Oregon-bound immigrants used in the 1840-1860's on their westward migration. The pioneers found respite near the North Platte River enjoying the spectacular view of the bluffs and buttes surrounding the valley, which after irrigation arrived was often referred to as the "Valley of the Nile." With prairie land so flat and treeless it is possible to see Chimney Rock to the east and, on a clear day, as far west as Laramie Peak in Wyoming from the top of Scotts Bluff National Monument.

Gering was founded in 1887 by pioneer, Oscar W. Gardner. Gardner homesteaded and made final proof on the land where the future townsite was located. Gardner then organized the Gering Joint Stock Company consisting of eight men from Broken Bow, Nebraska. One of these men, Martin Gering, made a significant financial contribution to the building of the new town, so it was named in his honor. Gering is and always has been a rural community that relies on farming and ranching to support its economy. The prairies surrounding it are the home of hundreds of farmers and ranchers who are an integral part of life in Gering.

Gering's main street is only nine blocks long filled with many structures having similar architectural features dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though some of the early buildings have been razed and new structures built, there are many that have retained their original appearance. Among these is the Gering Courier Building, constructed to house the first publishing business in the North Platte Valley. A. B. Wood, who had come to Gering from Broken Bow, Nebraska, had established the *Gering Courier* in 1887. This was the third building to be occupied by the *Courier*, the other two were of frame construction that the *Courier* had outgrown. The building is located in the central business district of downtown Gering between N and O streets on the east side of the 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Gering's main street. In the "Original Town," the bank, post office, drug store, hotel, and fraternity building were within the same block as the *Courier*.

**Newspapers in Nebraska**

Tracing the history of newspapers in Nebraska begins with the very early 1822 weekly military journal published at Ft. Atkinson. Like the fort, it did not survive long. Newspaper publishing began in earnest thirty years later with the opening of the Nebraska Territory. The *Nebraska Palladium* of Bellevue was the first to appear, and its July 15, 1854 issue, declared, "This paper will be strenuously devoted to the support of the great interests involved in the early settlement of this rich, beautiful, and desirable county. It will be an earnest advocate of the immediate establishment of those industrial, social, political, and religious institutions which can avail a permanence to society."<sup>2</sup> As settlement moved westward to the interior of the state, newspapers found their way west as well. Each paper had something to say about the issues of the day and "many were organs of town companies with a vested interest in seeing Nebraska settled."<sup>3</sup> In 1859 Robert W. Furnas founded the *Nebraska Farmer*, the first agricultural paper in the Territory. It is still published although not as a newspaper but rather as a monthly magazine.

Few of the Territorial newspapers were able to survive for long and only two currently being published, the *Nebraska City News* and the *Falls City Journal*, have lasted from that period.

<sup>2</sup> "Nebraska Newspapers: A Brief History." UNL Libraries [www.unl.edu/nebnews/newshis.html](http://www.unl.edu/nebnews/newshis.html) , visited 1-26-04

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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*After 1867—the year in which Nebraska was made a State—came a period of broad journalistic development; newspapers appeared in nearly every county.... This was the period of personal journalism, of editorial grudges and fights...Foreign-language papers—Swedish, Danish, Bohemian, and German—did much to encourage immigrants to settle in the State. There were several farm papers and numerous publications devoted to single causes.<sup>4</sup>*

As one historian summarized, "We are glad to believe that every paper in Nebraska has a place in its history, and that no other agency—not even the governing men and statesmen who have labored to give Nebraska position, influence and fame—has wielded a greater influence for the prosperity and importance of the state, than the cloud of newsprint which every week settles down among its busy population."<sup>5</sup>

By their very nature, newspapers helped to boost and develop new regions. They were the primary promoters for the area and had a major role in the development of a region. According to Julie Stabile in a paper presented about early Toronto newspapers,

*Newspapers published commercial information which influenced the daily transactions of businessmen and entrepreneurs. Newspapers did not just provide news, current information and advertisements...they fostered print culture through their regular feature articles, which covered a wide variety of topics. Features included sophisticated essays explaining new scientific discoveries or innovative technologies, historical and socio-cultural treatises and biographies. They provided information of a practical nature such as new agricultural techniques, useful recipes, and interesting travel programs...newspapers fostered a readership by providing information which people needed in a format they could afford.<sup>6</sup>*

The town of Gering, Nebraska was officially established in the spring of 1887. Located along the Oregon Trail, Gering is situated at the foot of Scotts Bluff National Monument and is located just 20 miles west of the famous landmark, Chimney Rock a National Historic site. In western Nebraska during the late 1800's, ranches and vast plains surrounded small towns like Gering. Homesteaders seeking land came with Euroamerican settlement. Many communities began to take root during this early settlement period, each vying to become the regional trade center. Known collectively as the "Panhandle," the far western counties of Nebraska were one of the last regions to be developed.

It was in the Panhandle that young A. B. Wood, established a newspaper he named the *Gering Courier*. In this largely rural setting, the printed word was the primary means of formal communication. The newspaper disseminated social, business, and political news of the town and of the surrounding area and also gave readers access to national and international news. Newspapers helped foster a sense of community. New arrivals to the region relied on newspapers to find services and make connections. Across the state, newspapers provided a link to the larger world and their importance cannot be overstated.

Soon after Gering was established in 1887, a dozen buildings appeared, making it the trade center for early ranchers and settlers. Less than a week after A. B. Wood set up shop in Gering and printed his first paper, another newspaper called the *Minatare Trumpet* appeared. This newspaper was published in the not so distant community of Minatare east of Gering. The rapid growth of the region encouraged the residents to envision greater things. During the fall of that year, a movement began to divide the existing Cheyenne County (13,962 sq. mi.) into several smaller counties. The ultimate goal was to declare Gering as the county seat of a newly formed Scotts Bluff County. The *Gering Courier* played an instrumental role in educating and even influencing the public regarding this issue. Ultimately requiring four or five separate elections, all of the proposals to divide Cheyenne County were printed in the *Gering Courier*.

The Mitchell valley community, just to the west of Gering, became involved in the naming of the county seat as well. Wishing of course, that Mitchell gain the county seat prize. "They imported a young man...E. B. Peck, who...began issuing a paper called the '*Mitchell Quirt*'—the *Courier* affectionately referred to it during the two or three months of hostilities as the "sQuirt." Mr. Peck...in one single issue had 35 separate articles or items berating A. B. Wood."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The Federal Writers' Project, *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939),134.

<sup>5</sup> "Nebraska Newspapers: A Brief History."

<sup>6</sup> Stabile, Julie, "Early Newspapers: Instruments in the Spread of Print Culture. A Case Study of Toronto 1800-1845", History of the Book in Canada, [www.hbic.library.utoronto.ca/ca/vol1stabile\\_en.htm](http://www.hbic.library.utoronto.ca/ca/vol1stabile_en.htm) , visited 1-26-04.

<sup>7</sup> Wood, A. B., *Fifty Years of Yesterdays* (Gering, Nebraska, Courier Press, 1945) 78.



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The *Chimney Rock Transcript* also entered the fray. Located at Bayard on the Scotts Bluff-Morrill county line, the *Chimney Rock Transcript* came out in favor of the now nonexistent community of Millstown. This bitter fight must have sold a large quantity of newspapers. Eventually however, the *Mitchell Quirt* disappeared and the *Gering Courier* eventually absorbed the *Minatare Trumpet*. The *Minatare Trumpet* existed about two years, "or until shortly after Gering became the county seat."<sup>8</sup>

After much debate, the issue was decided and Gering was named county seat of the newly formed Scotts Bluff County. Newspaper communication helped promote and aided in the success of this action. The establishment of the *Gering Courier* insured that the governmental actions of Gering would be reported in the local newspaper rather than having to depend on newspapers printed 75 miles away in the county seat of Cheyenne County, Sidney.

One of the sources of income for the early newspapers was the printing of required legal and public notices such as homesteader "final proof", an announcement that the homesteader had fulfilled the requirement for land ownership. A homesteader often chose the newspaper located in the town where they did business or perhaps one that was closest to their homestead. Since Gering was the county seat and the trade center, advertising, of a sort, was assured for the *Gering Courier*.

Very often homesteaders owned a small herd of cattle, and their stock would run on the open range; on prairie land not yet homesteaded. These cattle were branded with their owner's brands, and A.B. Wood recognized this as a way to help build up his printing business. According to A.B. Wood,

*...my own paper [was not] established with any large vision of the later greatness of the North Platte valley. For my own part, the fact that the country was being settled by homesteaders and that they would in due time need to spend money for publishing notices for final proof was the impelling motive. Indeed, this source of revenue was all which enabled my embryo business to survive through a period of years until real development began to take place.*<sup>9</sup>

He charged the ranchers \$2 per year to advertise their brands and the ranges of the cattle. Wood charged 50 cents extra for printing an additional brand. At one time there were five to six columns of brands printed in the *Courier*. By 1900 the *Courier* printed a vest pocket brand book at no cost to the rancher. However, as stated in the brand book "in order to avoid unnecessary expense in printing books for the class who want something for nothing, we have a fixed price of 15 cents each upon the edition."<sup>10</sup> Ranch related businesses placed advertisements in the pocket brand book and later editions contained full-page ads from the livestock commission agents at the Omaha Stockyards. The "Courier Brand Book" was published each year from 1900-1906. The *Courier* published the Nebraska Stock-Growers Association members' brand book during those same years. In 1907 the *Courier* printed the first hardback Nebraska brand book.

As time passed, other newspapers were established in the region. The *Independent Union*, which espoused the cause of the populist Farmer's Alliance Movement, lasted from April 1891 to February 1892. The *Nebraska Homestead*, representing the democratic view, came to Gering in fall of 1893. It changed ownership three times, and was at one time sold to a former *Courier* employee, Ernest F. Moon. The publisher of the *Nebraska Homestead* George E. Mark moved it to nearby Mitchell when the Burlington Railroad built a line west along the north side of the North Platte River. Mark changed its name to the *Mitchell Index*. Beyond Mitchell to the west, the town of Morrill took shape with its newspaper, the *Morrill Mail*, founded by R. Bruce Hill. Minatare had a couple of papers, the *Minatare Sentinel* that eventually consolidated with the *Minatare Free Press*.

The Burlington railroad had a big impact on the North Platte Valley since their land company platted new towns nearly every seven miles along the track. As a result of the Burlington Northern expansion, Scottsbluff was platted across the river directly north of Gering in 1900. Two new newspapers were established in Scottsbluff, including the *Scottsbluff Republican*, founded by E. T. Westervelt, and the *Scottsbluff Herald*, founded by Ernest Moon. In Gering three more papers provided brief, but direct competition to the *Gering Courier*. The *Twin City Times* and the *Gering Wasp*, were discontinued after only a short time, while the *Gering Midwest* was published from October 1918 through May 1925.

<sup>8</sup> Wood, A. B., *Pioneer Tales of Nebraska Panhandle* (Gering, Nebraska, Courier Press, 1938) 99.

<sup>9</sup> Wood, A. B., "Scotts Bluff County Journalism" in *History of Western Nebraska*, Grant L. Shumway, editor. (Lincoln, Nebraska: Western Publishing & Engraving Company, 1921) 464-465.

<sup>10</sup> Wood & Wisner, *Courier Brand Book* (Gering, Nebraska, Wood & Wisner, 1900) 2.

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Will M. Maupin, founder and editor of the *Gering Midwest*, had a good background in the newspaper business. His name is connected to some of the leading newspapers in the state, working first at Falls City and then at Omaha, Lincoln and York. For nine years he was at the *Omaha World-Herald* and then went to William Jennings Bryan's *The Commoner* at Lincoln where he stayed for ten years. After spending three years at the newspaper in York, Nebraska, Maupin came to Gering in 1918 when business and building was booming, and he soon had a circulation of "900 paying subscribers, with the list constantly increasing."<sup>11</sup> For the *Gering Courier, Half Century Anniversary Edition* published April 30, 1937 Maupin wrote, "While editing and publishing the *Midwest* I never looked upon A. B. Wood of the *Courier* as a 'competitor,' but as a good friend engaged in the same line of business. We disagreed in politics, but disagreed with enmity."<sup>12</sup> Maupin was only at the helm of the *Midwest* for three years leaving to accept a position with the *Omaha Bee*; however he leaves a far larger legacy...he along with A. B. Wood and Harry Wisner led the charge to have Scotts Bluff made a National Monument. A Presidential proclamation on December 12, 1919 created Scotts Bluff National Monument and "on April 10, 1920, Mr. Maupin received the appointment as Custodian at a salary of \$12 per year."<sup>13</sup> The *Midwest* was eventually absorbed in May 1925 by the *Lyman Enterprise* and the *Courier* absorbed that paper in 1927. No other newspaper other than the *Courier* has been in Gering since.

The growth of the newspaper business in western Nebraska came with the growth in population. The U.S. census reports for Scotts Bluff County show:

Year	Population	Population Increase	%
1890	1,888		
1900	2,552	35%	
1910	8,355	227%	
1920	20,710	148%	
1930	28,644	38%	

This county's rapid growth had much to do with the coming of the railroads to the area. The Burlington Railroad was constructed along the north side of the North Platte River and reaching Scottsbluff in 1900, and the Union Pacific Railroad ran along the south side of the river and reached Gering in 1911. Irrigation also came to the North Platte Valley and with it more prosperous farming of irrigated crops like sugar beets, which in turn demanded sugar beet processing factories. Because the Burlington Northern was installed along the north side of the river over ten years before the Union Pacific reached Gering, the population of Scottsbluff surpassed that of Gering. Previous mention of the *Scottsbluff Republican* and the *Scottsbluff Herald* newspapers has been made, but yet another paper came to the new town during this period. The *Mitchell Star*, established in May 1906, became the *Scottsbluff Star* when it was moved from Mitchell to Scottsbluff in 1907. In 1912 A.B. Wood and his former employee, Harry Wisner, purchased the *Herald* and the *Star* and consolidated them into the *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*. Wisner was the son of Ray Wisner and grandson of F. O. Wisner. They were editors for almost sixty years combined of the *Bayard Transcript*. Harry worked for A. B. Wood while attending high school in Gering. He held the position of editor of the *Star-Herald* for forty years before being succeeded by his son, Floyd. Under Wisner's his leadership the *Star-Herald* became a daily with a large circulation in western Nebraska and eastern Wyoming. A. B. Wood and his son Warren retained half ownership of the *Star-Herald* until 1966. The *Scottsbluff Republican* also had father-son editors. Eugene T. Westervelt founded the paper in 1900 and his son Jim later became editor. The only other newspaper to be published in Scottsbluff was the *Senator*, a product produced by Terry Carpenter. The *Business Farmer* was a weekly agricultural newspaper written in Scottsbluff, but the 4200 copies per issue were printed at the *Gering Courier*.

The *Courier* printed other papers as well including the *Banner County News* and two Civilian Conservation Corps papers called the *Adobe Echo* and the *Wild Cat Tales*. These were from two CCC camps, one located at Scotts Bluff National Monument and the other located at the Wild Cat Hills State Game Reserve and Recreation Grounds, the latter made possible by a bill sponsored by A. B. Wood during one of his terms as a senator in Nebraska.

**Asa Butler Wood**

Asa Butler Wood, founder of the *Gering Courier*, was born in Ashland, Iowa August 26, 1865. While in high school "A. B." as he was known, worked at a printing office and printed the school paper during his last two years of school. Upon graduation from high school,

<sup>11</sup> Shumway, Grant, *History of Western Nebraska and Its People*, (Lincoln Nebraska: The Western Publishing & Engraving Co., 1921) Vol. III. 357.

<sup>12</sup> *The Gering Courier, Half Century Anniversary Edition*, April 30, 1937, Section 4, Page 5.

<sup>13</sup> Moomaw, Leon A., *Pioneering in the Shadow of Chimney Rock*, (Gering Nebraska: Courier Press, 1966) 184.

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he moved six miles to Ottumwa, Iowa, the county seat of Wapello County, where worked as an apprentice printer at the town's newspaper, the *Courier*.

In 1886 he moved to Broken Bow, Nebraska to take a job as printer at the *Custer Leader* newspaper. There he became acquainted with some businessmen who saw profit in moving west to the North Platte Valley area of Nebraska's panhandle. In the winter of 1886-87 these men, Oscar W. Gardner and Martin Gering, formed the Gering Joint Stock Company for a new town eventually named Gering. The Union Pacific Railroad was rumored to be building a new line along the North Platte River and Gardner and Gering wanted to be in on the development of the area that would surely follow. They knew that they would need a newspaper in the town so they encouraged A.B. Wood to move to western Nebraska.

Wood's terms of agreement to move to Gering included that he "should install a plant and publish a paper here, in return for which the townsite company would erect a frame building 14 X 20 feet in size and sell it to me at cost, which would be (and was) repaid by me wholly in advertising. In addition to the building, the lot upon which it was located was to be deeded to me."<sup>14</sup> On April 24, 1887, the 21-year old Wood arrived in Gering on a spring board wagon with the typical printing equipment aboard. Just three days later the first issue of the *Gering Courier* appeared. About 200 papers were printed for this initial issue. O. W. Gardner had collected subscriptions (\$1.50 per year) in advance and turned over about two-dozen names to Wood. Gardner, who had been appointed the first postmaster of the new town, also helped send sample papers to all he could think of in the entire region. This was the beginning of the *Gering Courier* and of A.B. Wood's career as owner, publisher and editor.

The *Courier* was not the only paper in the region, just the first. The *Minatare Trumpet* appeared less than a week after the *Courier*. A. B. printed several of the other papers for smaller surrounding towns and over the years absorbed many of them. When Scottsbluff was founded in 1900, two more newspapers began publication, the *Scottsbluff Republican* and the *Scottsbluff Herald*. In 1907 A. B. established the *Torrington (Wyoming) Telegram*, and the *Star* moved to Scottsbluff that same year. In 1912 A. B. Wood and H. J. Wisner purchased the *Scottsbluff Herald* and the *Star* and consolidated these two newspapers into the still published *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*.

A.B. Wood was a very active pioneer leader and this leadership became evident immediately after his move to the area. The townsite of Gering was located in Cheyenne County with Sidney as the county seat. Cheyenne County encompassed the entire southern half of the panhandle of Nebraska. Gering was 75 miles from Sidney and a trip to do legal business required several nights camping out along the trail. This caused much hardship on early settlers. Wood championed the idea of dividing up Cheyenne County in his newspaper, and he was one of a delegation of three who represented Gering in May of 1887 at the first conference held in Sidney to devise a plan for county division. In 1888 the western third of Cheyenne County was divided into three smaller counties: Scotts Bluff, Banner and Kimball. Gering became the county seat of Scotts Bluff County and offered a much more accessible county government entity.

Soon after his arrival, Wood along with other young businessmen discovered that Cheyenne County had no county fair, but that money was available to county agricultural societies from the State of Nebraska to provide a fair. In July 1887, these young men organized themselves and were recognized by the state as the Cheyenne County Fair Association, much to the chagrin of the citizens of Sidney. After county division, the Scotts Bluff County Fair Association came into being with A. B. Wood serving as secretary and manager for fifteen years.

The life of a pioneer was difficult, but also rewarding. A.B. married Maggie Claypoole, in Cozad, Nebraska on October 11, 1888. Mrs. Wood was born in Malta Bend, Missouri, on September 3, 1867, the only daughter of William and Sarah Claypoole. In the summer of 1887, Maggie Claypoole came to the new town of Gering to visit a friend, Adda Gering. Both girls were encouraged to file on homesteads at the foot of Scotts Bluff and they both built houses as required by the Homestead Act. Maggie's was half-dugout and half-sod and stood next to her friend Adda's flimsy board affair. Maggie returned to her parents home the following summer to prepare for her wedding to A. B. Wood, and during her absence a small frame house was built near the old dugout. There the couple would begin their married life. After unsuccessful attempts to find water, the frame house was moved into Gering. A.B. and Maggie had six children, Marie, Dorothy, Warren, Lynette, Bess and Marjorie. The Woods, like other pioneer families, had to create their own entertainment. A.B. was the manager of the Gering baseball team and encouraged social gatherings of all kinds. He participated in plays, sang in a quartet performing for special occasions and helped establish the local band playing the baritone horn for more than 35 years.

<sup>14</sup> Wood, A. B., *Fifty Years of Yesterdays*, (Gering, Nebraska: Courier Press, 1945), 33.

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A.B. Wood had energy and perseverance and was interested in all facets of development of the new town of Gering and of Scotts Bluff County. In January of 1889 he was elected chairman of the county's Republican central committee and was a staunch member of the Republican Party his entire life. He was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1892 and 1916. In 1890 he was one of the first census takers traveling over the south half of the county and the *Courier* claimed Gering's population to be 160. This led to Gering's becoming an incorporated village. A. B. helped organize and was director of the Gering Building & Loan Association that financed many of the early buildings in Gering. Also in 1890 he helped organize the Christian Church in Gering and later headed two building campaigns for the church.

The title of Gering postmaster came to A. B. Wood on August 19, 1899 after the Republicans ousted President Grover Cleveland. The post office was housed in the same building as the *Courier*, where A. B. held the postmaster's position for almost sixteen years, longer than any other incumbent. When a new federal law requiring the postmaster to put in eight hours a day on the job became effective, A. B. resigned. His resignation coincided with the opening of the new Courier Building and an expansion of the printing business in 1915.

Designed by architect, J.C. Pedersen, the Courier is one of the buildings that best represents the architectural character of Gering's early 20<sup>th</sup> century style. Jens C. Pederson was born in Denmark and completed his studies in the Aalborg School of Design in Aalborg, Denmark. Pedersen immigrated to the United States in 1901, joining a sister who lived in Wapello, Iowa, A. B. Wood's birthplace. He came to Gering in 1913 at a time when the population increase of Scotts Bluff County was the fastest of any county in the U. S., and new substantial buildings were replacing the first generation frame ones in the commercial district. The *Gering Courier* announced, "The contract for the erection of the projected Courier building was awarded Wednesday to J. C. Pedersen, who was the low man in the field of three bidders."<sup>15</sup> In his book, History of Western Nebraska and Its People published in 1921, Grant Shumway writes, "Building operation at Gering have been extensive during the past six years, and that much of the work has been notably satisfactory, both in design and substantial character, may, in all justice, be attributed to Jens C. Pederson, architect and a practical builder and contractor. Mr. Pedersen is city engineer at Gering."<sup>16</sup> Pedersen's work was much in demand and he designed many prominent buildings, churches, homes and schools in western Nebraska.

The \$8000 Courier building was just being completed in January, 1915 and Wood proclaimed that the building, "is the most complete newspaper building in the state outside of the big cities,"<sup>17</sup> and "the new \$4,000 Mergenthaler Linotype machine is the best in the state."<sup>18</sup> The building "... is finished with Denver tapestry brick of a deep red variegated color manufactured by [Severin Sorensen's] Gering Brick Co."<sup>19</sup> (Severin Sorensen House NRHP 1983). Situated next to the alley, the exposed north facade of the building has the Denver tapestry brick as well. The building sits over a full basement that in the beginning housed the pressroom and storage.

Two months before the formal opening of the new Courier Building, the *Courier* announced that the Odd Fellows and the Masons had "plans in progress for a fraternal building...Tentative plans for the proposed structure have been drawn by Architect J. C. Pedersen showing a building 56 X 80 feet..."<sup>20</sup> A. B. Wood was a charter member of both organizations and had a hand in organizing the association that in 1917 built the Fraternity Building located directly north of the Courier building. He managed that association for five years. He was the secretary of the Gering Investment Company, which erected the Gering Hotel located three doors south of the Courier building.

In 1919 the old courthouse in Gering which had been erected about 1891 became the center of controversy over the question of county seat location; the town of Scottsbluff now larger than Gering wanted to move the county seat north across the river and erect a new courthouse there. A. B. chaired the Gering committee to retain the seat, and when that was so decided, he chaired the courthouse bond committee resulting in the funding for the construction of the Scotts Bluff County Courthouse in Gering (NRHP 1990).

As Gering grew many of the town's organizations used the *Courier* as a means of disseminating information about their activities. This helped Wood's printing business flourish. There was a mutual benefit between Wood's business and the associations that he supported.

<sup>15</sup> *Gering Courier*, August 21, 1914.

<sup>16</sup> Shumway, Grant L., History of Western Nebraska and Its People, (Lincoln, Nebraska: Western Publishing & Engraving Co., 1921) 543.

<sup>17</sup> *Gering Courier*, January 1, 1915.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, April 30, 1915

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>20</sup> *Gering Courier*, February 26, 1915.

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Gering's most popular celebration is Oregon Trail Days, one of the largest annual events held in western Nebraska. The first celebration was held on August 28, 1923, but later the date was set as close to July 17<sup>th</sup> as possible because that date was when the first white men were known to have traveled past Scott Bluff.<sup>21</sup> A.B. Wood helped organize the celebration and in 1928 the Old Settlers division was formed to honor the pioneer settlers that stayed in the valley. "A fair collection of old time photographs, document and newspapers was gotten together chiefly from material in the collection of the Courier editor, who was placed in charge of that division with entire authority to lay out plans."<sup>22</sup> This collection, added to over the years, is still displayed at the event and is of great interest every year. The *Courier* offered a great medium to promote this celebration and each year adds more to the history by publishing articles about old timers of the area.

A. B. wielded a large influence on the development and building of the western part of Nebraska, both in leadership and supportive roles. Robert G. Simmons, Chief Justice of the Nebraska Supreme Court wrote in his introduction to Wood's book, *Fifty Years of Yesterdays*, "[m]any who grew up to manhood in this valley are deeply and lastingly indebted to 'A.B.' for help, advice and inspiration."<sup>23</sup>

At the state level, A. B. Wood was just as active and influential. A longtime member of the Nebraska Press Association he was elected president in 1911, and remained on the executive committee of the Press Association for many years. It was quite amazing that a small town newspaper publisher 400 miles away from the state capitol and the major metropolitan areas of Nebraska (Lincoln and Omaha) would be considered worthy of the presidency of the state organization. A.B. Wood had to frequently travel the long ten-hour trip to Lincoln by railroad. Fortunately he had a free pass for rail travel. His long involvement with the Nebraska Press Association made him one of the most revered publishers in the entire state of Nebraska. In 1915 when the new Courier Building opening was announced, an article was published stating that the 1916 convention of the Nebraska Press Association would be held in The North Platte Valley, the invitation being extended by the editor of the *Courier*. Also connected to that article:

*Omaha, April 21. – The newspaper convention closed tonight, with a final session and banquet at South Omaha. Today's big event so far as home interest is concerned was the announcement that the Gering Courier was the winner of the \$100 silver loving cup awarded for the best setting of the Brodegard jewelry ad. Not content with this achievement, the Courier also wins the capital prize in the similar ad-setting contest financed by the South Omaha stockyards interests, and also in competition with the newspapers of the entire state. Advertising experts of the Bee, World Herald, and News judged the work, and I feel pretty well, thanks, that the Courier and its office force is recognized in so distinguished a manner. A.B.W.<sup>24</sup>*

When A. B. Wood was president of the Nebraska State Press Association, he served as an ex officio member of the board of trustees of the Nebraska State Historical Society. He was elected to serve on the historical society board and served as president between 1936 and 1938. He brought the history of western Nebraska to the eastern part of the state narrowing the knowledge gap between eastern and western Nebraska through the articles in the *Courier*. Wood's appreciation for history was a quality that further elevated his stature in the State of Nebraska.

Water has always been an important issue for the North Platte Valley of Nebraska. In 1887, a group of farmers living near the Nebraska–Wyoming line organized the Farmers Canal Company. On September 16 of that year, the Farmers Canal Company posted a notice of an appropriation of a water right on the North Platte River. The modern era of irrigated farming in western Nebraska began in March of 1888 when work commenced on an irrigation canal. In support of irrigation, *The Courier* published a 16 page booklet entitled "Irrigation is Wealth" and used it to promote settlement.

The Nebraska State Irrigation Association was formed in 1893 and A. B. Wood served on the executive committee. He was elected president of that organization in 1922. When the first issue of the *Nebraska Irrigation Annual* was published in 1896, Wood's advertisement boasted, "The *Courier* was the first paper in Nebraska to take up irrigation, and has been pounding away for nearly ten years. Prints more irrigation matter than any other paper in the State, keeping up with all the news, court decisions, farming methods, etc. Send \$1.50 for a trial trip to A. B. Wood, Publisher, Gering, Neb."<sup>25</sup> A.B. Wood had a vested interest in irrigation since the arid

<sup>21</sup> Wood, A. B., *Pioneer Tales of Nebraska Panhandle*, (Gering, Nebraska: Courier Press, 1938), 110.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

<sup>23</sup> Wood, A. B., *Fifty Years of Yesterdays*, (Gering, Nebraska: Courier Press, 1945), 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Gering Courier*, April 23, 1915.

<sup>25</sup> Nebraska State Irrigation Association, *The Nebraska Irrigation Annual*, (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1896) 233.

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prairies of western Nebraska showed great economic potential if irrigation were used to improve crops production. A prosperous agricultural valley would improve the prosperity of the town and likewise the *Courier's* newspaper business.

A. B. was also interested in Nebraska's political system. He was elected state senator in 1924 and served in that capacity for six years. Always a visionary, Senator Wood sponsored a number of laws that were of substantial benefit to the remote, rural regions of Nebraska such as Gering. These measures included six irrigation laws, a driver's license law, a state wild game preserve law, and a junior college law. It is a credit to Wood that he had the foresight to use his political associations to help his community prosper. He used his influence and his newspaper to keep western Nebraska linked with the rest of the state.

Charles E. Mann, a former employee of the *Courier* who later became a publisher of a Kansas paper and a Kansas State Senator, contributed an article for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition of the *Gering Courier*. He wrote, "it is or should be a matter of great pride to Asa Wood that he has been steadfast and true to the North Platte valley for fifty years, and has built up an institution that will forever be a monument to him."<sup>26</sup>

In 1938 following the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his arrival in western Nebraska and the founding of the *Courier*, A. B. Wood published Pioneer Tales of the North Platte Valley and Nebraska Panhandle. His friend and famous Nebraska author Mari Sandoz wrote the forward for the book. In a letter found in the A. B. Wood files, (North Platte Valley Museum, Gering, Nebraska) dated, March 1, 1937 she wrote:

Dear A. B.:

*It's a little startling, but very gratifying to discover that for one half of a century you and your Courier have looked out from your window on the North Platte upon the life of our beloved Panhandle.*

*What changes you have seen, what vicissitudes you have watched and withstood in man's struggle to gain a living from the earth's surface. You saw the young optimism of the Eighties, the drouth, hard times and political rebellion of the Nineties, the somewhat less trying but also much duller years of the Twentieth century.*

*You saw the rains come and go, heard snow water roar in the gullies or looked upon the bare, dry hills of mid-winter with doubt for the coming summer. And finally you saw the water come to the Valley and with it sugar to take the place of the dusty beef herds. Before your eyes children grew up, married and died; many of those who spoke your language departed or speak it no more.*

*And through it all your interest in the records of man's past, the welfare of his future has shown no faltering. Somehow you and the Courier have remained alive and tough and tenuous as baling wire.*

*And may the next fifty years go as well.*

Sincerely,

(signed) Mari Sandoz"

In March of 1945 A.B. Wood wrote his final weekly column. The *Gering Courier* chronicled the life and times of Gering and the North Platte Valley and until his death, A.B. Wood recorded their story.

**Warren Claypool Wood**

Upon the death of his father, A.B. Wood, Warren Claypool Wood became the editor and publisher of the *Gering Courier*. The story of Warren's life is just as integral to Gering and the *Courier* as was his father's. Warren was A.B.'s only son, offering him the opportunity to inherit his father's business. He continued his father's legacy for thirty years and maintained continuity and integrity in the region's anchor newspaper.

<sup>26</sup> *Gering Courier*, April 30, 1937, Section 3, pg.10.

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Warren C. Wood was born on June 28, 1908 in Gering, Nebraska to Asa Butler and Maggie Claypool Wood. He graduated from Gering High School and attended Scotts Bluff Junior College where he was the first student body president. With the exception of his military career, he resided in Gering. He married Della Reeder, daughter of a well-known Gering building contractor. Warren and Della had two children, Carol Ann and Warren Clay Wood.

The *Gering Courier* was always a part of Warren's life. He began designing mastheads for Oregon Trail Day at the age of fifteen, demonstrating his love for commercial art. He painted signs for Gering businesses and designed the masthead of the *Gering Courier* still in use today. His career began at the *Courier* in advertising. At that time his father, A.B. Wood, was founding editor and publisher of the *Courier*. The father and son worked together at the *Courier* for many years. In 1937 one of their cooperative publishing accomplishments was the assemblage of the 50<sup>th</sup> year edition of the *Gering Courier*.<sup>27</sup>

In 1924 at the age of fifteen Warren enlisted as a private in Gering's Second Battalion's Headquarters Company, 134<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the Nebraska National Guard. This company was changed to a Howitzer Company in April 1925 when the Mitchell, Nebraska Howitzer Company was abandoned.<sup>28</sup> Warren was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in the Howitzer Company in 1932. In 1935 he participated in two state emergency relief operations (Republican River Flood and the Omaha streetcar strike). In 1944 his National Guard unit was activated and went to Europe as part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the 134<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the United States Army. He was promoted to commander of the battalion in France during World War II and had a sparkling combat record. "The principal test for a good executive officer probably was not in his ability to perform the duties normally pertaining to that position, but in his ability to step in at a moment's notice and assume command of the battalion. Now, with Col. Wood being evacuated through the aid station [due to wounds received in action], the major was meeting that test."<sup>29</sup> He was wounded twice and received the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster. During his 264 days of combat, he led such attacks as the one up Sugarloaf Hill. "As he (Col. Wood) made his way forward, he could have followed the route of the Battalion by the dead-- both its own and the enemy's-- left in its wake. He could have seen the crimson blood of the lately wounded mingling with the whiteness of the snow, and snow blackened and ugly from the burst of shells and the tramping of fee. Rougemont had indeed become Red Hill-speckled with blood drops on the snow."<sup>30</sup>

He was granted three weeks leave from Europe to attend the funeral of his father. "Lt. Col. Warren C. Wood, who had taken command of the Battalion during the race across France, had been wounded on 'Blue Monday' and then had rejoined the Battalion during the 'Battle of the Bulge,' was returning to the United States on leave."<sup>31</sup> Sadly, he arrived home two days after his father's burial. He petitioned and was granted a leave from the military to take over the newspaper. Honors bestowed on General Wood for his WWII service were the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Presidential Unit Citation with Oak Leaf Cluster, and European-African, Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with five stars. By 1955 he had been promoted to Major General of the Iowa-Nebraska "Red Bull" division. He retired as commander from the Army National Guard in 1963 after 38 years of military service.<sup>32</sup>

Warren inherited a pioneering spirit and an ability to be a leader from his father. These qualities helped him become a major contributor to the growth of his community. He wanted the town to succeed and his loyalty to Gering's growth and economic prosperity was exceptional. In writing his first personal column, "Splinters", he commented,

*We'll answer one question now... YES! The Courier will go forward as long as providence, public and pay permits. It is not anticipated that any major policies will be changed. It's good to be home... where everyone calls you by your first name and salutes are few and far between... where folks express their sympathies quietly and kindly and in hundreds of ways. Drop in the office anytime and we'll do our best to answer questions, settle all major issues of war and peace and the best cure for the ills of the world.*<sup>33</sup>

During Warren's tenure as editor and publisher of the *Gering Courier*, he was involved in a myriad of community and business activities. As did his father, Warren Wood believed that a community business leader must also be a community contributor. Like his father, he was very involved in the affairs of the State of Nebraska. He was elected president of the Nebraska Press Association in April 1949 and

<sup>27</sup> *Gering Courier*, April 30, 1987

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Biography of a Battalion*, page 129.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, page 129.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, page 261.

<sup>32</sup> Gering Centennial Committee ed., *History of Gering, Nebraska: The First 100 Years*, (Dallas: Curtis Media, 1989).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

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he served as president of the Nebraska State Historical Society. He was president of the *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, a local daily newspaper that his father had invested in many years before. He was on the Board of Directors of the Gering National Bank and a long time member of the Gering Chamber of Commerce.

Warren's community activities included: organizing the first orchestra at the Central Church of Christ; organizing the first Scotts Bluff County Spelling Contest that is on going today; and directing the City of Gering's municipal band. He was a volunteer for the Gering Fire Department, an active member of the North Platte Valley Museum, Panhandle Shrine, Lions Club, Odd Fellows, VFW, and the York Rite Masonic Bodies of Gering. One might wonder why a busy newspaper publisher would be interested in so many facets of life in his community. A newspaperman by nature should be interested in news. The steady stream of news printed in the *Courier* came from activities and events in the community and Wood knew his community because he was such an integral part of the community.

Warren's father helped organize the Oregon Trail Days celebration when Warren was a teenager and this celebration was one of Warren's favorite activities. Warren contributed 50 years of his time and efforts to ensure the event remained successful. In 1978 Warren received the first "Trail Blazer" award presented by the Oregon Trail Days Association. He was chairman of the Old Settler's Committee. The *Gering Courier*, along with community support, helped build Oregon Trail Days into one of the largest celebrations in the state of Nebraska.

Along with Wood's local contributions, he was involved in many statewide events. In 1946 he was appointed to the Army Advisory Board in charge of reconstituting the state's National Guard. He was a strong advocate of the idea that the National Guard should be used to assist in state and local emergencies and did much to promote a very active National Guard presence in the state of Nebraska. He became Commanding General of the Iowa-Nebraska National Guard and the State Commander of the American Legion. This association with the National Guard led Wood to be appointed state chairman of "Operation Snowbound" in 1949. "Operation Snowbound" was an effort to save people and livestock after an almost continuous series of blizzards hit the state. These blizzards, which began in November of 1948 and continued until April 1949 combined to become what some historians believe is the worst winter in Nebraska history. People were snowbound for weeks. Roads and railroads were impassable and many Nebraskans received supplies that were dropped by airplane.

Warren C. Wood also served as chairman of the Flood Relief Operation on the Missouri River in 1952. The Iowa-Nebraska National Guard has honored General Wood by creating an exhibit of his accomplishments in the National Guard Museum in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Warren C. Wood was a true citizen and a soldier. He was an exceptional community leader, a state leader, and a national hero. Warren was quoted as saying: My first love is the military and my second love is the *Gering Courier*. Under his watch, Warren Claypool Wood was the eyes, ears and voice of the North Platte Valley. He spent the last day of his life at his desk at the *Courier*. "Fittingly, when the time to write '30' a newspaper term for the end of a story, he was still at his desk when Jack [son-in-law] picked him up at 5:30 to give him a ride home for the last time on the eve of his death."<sup>34</sup>

Warren Wood died on November 25, 1978 and was buried at West Lawn Cemetery in Gering with full military honors. Many military and political dignitaries honored Wood on the day of his burial.

After Warren Wood's death, his daughter Carol Ann Lewis became the editorial publisher of the *Gering Courier* and ran the news staff while her husband, Jack Lewis, ran the general operations of the paper. Jack contributed editorials including the weekly column called "Timberjack." He was cognizant of the contributions the Wood family made to the community and took great pains to preserve the history of the family and the *Gering Courier*. On April 15, 1999 newspaper was sold and the 112-year history of the Wood's family connection with the paper ended. However, the *Gering Courier* is still operating under the same name and is still a very active contributor to Gering and the North Platte Valley.

The importance of the *Gering Courier* cannot be overstated, for its history runs parallel to the growth and development of the town of Gering, Nebraska, to Scotts Bluff County and indeed, to all of western Nebraska. When Warren Wood took on the job as owner, editor, and publisher of the *Courier* after the death of his father, he had big shoes to fill, but he "had inherited a pioneer spirit which made him a natural leader in the community where he was born and raised."<sup>35</sup> Warren had been working at the *Courier* since 1929 when he

<sup>34</sup> *Gering Courier*, April 30, 1987

<sup>35</sup> Gering Centennial Committee, *History of Gering Nebraska*, (Curtis Media Corporation, 1989), 553.



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returned from the University of Nebraska School of Journalism. He and his father put together the *Gering Courier Half Century Anniversary Edition* that "won the National Editorial Association contest for Better Newspapers for the 'best special edition, 1937.'"<sup>36</sup> Warren succeeded his father as editor and publisher in 1945 and four years later became president of the Nebraska Press Association. A special article about him and the *Courier* was printed in their April 1949 magazine.<sup>37</sup>

In 1950 the Courier Press published a book written by military historian, James A. Huston, entitled, Biography of a Battalion: The Life and Times of an Infantry Battalion in Europe in World War II. This book chronicled much of Warren Wood's leadership of the 134<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the Nebraska National Guard, so it was only fitting that the *Courier* was the publisher. Warren's son-in-law, Jack Lewis joined the Courier staff in 1956 with no training in the newspaper business--his only qualification was marrying the boss's daughter. Jack received excellent lessons at the elbow of Warren eventually taking over the family business before Warren's death in 1978. In March 2000 the Gering Courier newspaper and building was sold to Bob VanVleet of Sidney who subsequently sold the newspaper to its current publisher, the Omaha World-Herald, but retained ownership of the building. The weekly paper is still serving the Gering community from the Gering Courier Building.

The Gering Courier building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for the significant role the newspaper it housed, the *Gering Courier* played in the development of the western region of the state. Throughout its long life the *Gering Courier* has helped shape the past, present and future of its readership. In a world before radio and television, the *Gering Courier* was an important source of news. The presence of the *Gering Courier*, with its focus on the community and its growth impacted life in the Panhandle in ways too numerous to measure. The *Courier* was an important venue for homesteaders to publish proof of their homestead; it gave farmers and ranchers a convenient way to keep track of their livestock; and taught early farmers about the benefits of irrigated crops. The significance of this newspaper in the growth and development of the western region of the state cannot be overemphasized.

The Gering Courier building is also eligible at the state level under Criterion B for its association with Asa Butler Wood and his son, Warren Claypool Wood. The history of this building is interwoven with the lives of the first owner, editor and printer, A.B. Wood and his son Warren. Each of these men played significant roles in their community, the region and in their state. Each man understood the influence of the *Gering Courier* and each took their involvement in their community very seriously. On numerous occasions, both father and son expanded their community beyond the local community to include the entire state of Nebraska. Through statewide appointments and elections, A.B. Wood and Warren C. Wood helped shaped their world, always striving to make life more prosperous for all Nebraskans. There is no other building in the state of Nebraska that better represents the contributions of A.B. Wood and his son Warren and their importance to the newspaper publishing business in the state of Nebraska.

<sup>36</sup> Dorn, Harold, *Nebraska Newspaper*, Volume One, Number 4, April 1949, 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 3-5

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### Verbal Boundary Description

North 28 feet of Lots Seven (7) and Eight (8); the North 56 feet of Lot Nine (9), and the West 8 feet of the North 56 feet of Lot (10), Block Two (2), ORIGINAL TOWN to the City of Gering, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska.

### Boundary Justification

These boundaries are the legal boundaries of the current building housing the Gering Courier Publishing Company.

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**Scotts Bluff Questers # 1346 – Membership list**

Donna Butcher	Gretchen Deeter
Mona Downey	Lois Grassmick
Nancy Haney	Karon Harvey
Jan Johnson	Donna Lindgren
Shirley Mead	Marilyn Reno
Becky Simpson	Margo Synder
Helen Theiely	Bobbi Thompson
Audrey Towater	LaRita VanBoskirk
Jan VanNewkirk	Kathryn Winchell
Deanna Zweifel	Nancy Kepler

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Photographs

The following information pertains to the first 5 photographs:

Gering Courier Building  
Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska  
Photographer: Bill Callahan, NeSHPO  
November 2003  
Negatives in the collection of the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office

Photograph	Description of Photograph	View
1 of 5	View of the Gering Courier Building	E
2 of 5	View of the Gering Courier Building	E
3 of 5	Gering Courier Building, interior view	E
4 of 5	Gering Courier Building, interior view	W
5 of 5	Gering Courier Building, interior view detail of pendent light fixture	

Supplemental Photos

Photograph	Description of Photograph	View
1 of 3	A.B. Wood	
2 of 3	Warren C. Wood	
3 of 3	Historic view of Gering Courier Building	