



“Just Enough of Everything”: The St. Louis *Argus*—An African American Newspaper and Publishing Company in Its First Decade

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Analyses of the black press in the mid-twentieth century often ignored the role of black newspapers as businesses and concentrated instead on the press's special mission to enlighten and inform the African American community. The attitude that black newspapers should not receive the same analysis as other business enterprises has obscured the fact that black newspapers struggled with the same economic issues, such as a shortage of capital and maintaining a customer base, that affected all businesses. In 1917, the editors of the St. Louis *Argus* promised its readers that it would be moderate, fair, and fearless in its journalistic efforts and “endeavor to publish the news; just enough of everything; not too much of anything.” In this paper, I highlight the growth of the St. Louis *Argus* newspaper and publishing company during its formative years, 1915 to 1929, when the newspaper and company were able to stay in business despite vigorous competition and a changing political climate. One important ingredient in its success was its leadership, which included publisher and managing editor Joseph Everett Mitchell and his brother William, as well as the staff they brought together.

The African American press is one of the oldest black business enterprises in America. Its founding dates to the first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, launched in 1827 by John Russwurm and Samuel E. Cornish and dedicated to the eradication of slavery. Although published for only a brief period, *Freedom's Journal* established a legacy of African Americans using the written word and publishing to call for their civil rights, and to promote causes that would lead to their improved status in the United States. After the Civil War, the African American press turned its attention to racial enlightenment and uplift, and by the turn of the twentieth century, African American newspapers were business enterprises that expected to be financially successful with the help of the communities they informed. In early analyses of black business

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enterprises, the black press was held apart from business development because of its special mission. Early scholars of black history and culture claimed that black newspapers did not belong in texts about black business, except insofar as newspaper publishers were often printers as well.¹

The attitude that black newspapers should not receive the same analysis as other business enterprises has obscured the fact that, like other business enterprises, black newspaper publishers struggled with various economic issues, including the shortage of capital and the difficulty in attracting and maintaining customers that affects all businesses. The brilliance of any business is its ability to stay in business. The longevity of black businesses at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, particularly of black-owned newspapers, was often short. Between 1876 and 1920, there were at least fifty-four black-owned newspapers published in Missouri. By 1950, there were thirty-three black-owned newspapers published in St. Louis alone. The survival of the St. Louis *Argus* newspaper, therefore, is a testament to the business acumen of the men who founded it. Joseph Everett (J. E.) and William Mitchell, the founders and major stockholders of the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company, were able to keep the business going by exploiting the misfortunes of their competitors and the political climate of St. Louis, and by cultivating a sense of family and belonging in their newspaper operation.²

Joseph Everett Mitchell was a Spanish-American War veteran from Coosa County, Alabama. He and his first wife, Mattie, came to St. Louis in 1904 during the World's Fair. He finished his education by taking night school classes and landed a job at the Western Union Relief Association, a beneficial insurance company. He encouraged his brother William and his new bride, Nannie, to come to St. Louis as well.³

The St. Louis *Argus* began as a newsletter for the Western Union Relief Association. With the amendment of the association's Articles of Agreement in January 1905, J. E. Mitchell was listed as the general manager. In 1912, with the next amendment of the association's

¹ Vishu V. Oak, *Negro Entrepreneurs: The Negro Newspaper*, 2^d ed. (Westport, Conn., 1970) 21; Charlotte G. O'Kelly, "Black Newspapers and the Black Protest Movement: Their Historical Relationship, 1927-1945," *Phylon* 43 (March 1982): 1-14; James H. Harmon, Arnett G. Lindsay, and Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro as a Business Man* (Washington, D.C., 1929), 27.

² Armistead S. Pride, "A Register and History of the Negro Newspapers in the U.S., 1827-1950" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1950), 114.

³ "Mitchell Story, American Saga: Grows from Rural Farm Boy to Man Who Walks with Presidents," *St. Louis Argus*, 4 July 1952; L. Albert Scipio, *Last of the Black Regulars: A History of the 24th Infantry Regiment, 1869-1951* (Silver Springs, Md., 1983), 33; "Mrs. Mitchell Laid to Rest," *St. Louis Argus*, 3 June 1938; "Mrs. Nannie Mitchell Passes," *St. Louis Argus*, 30 Jan. 1975.

agreement, credit went to Mitchell, still among the relief association managers, for starting the newsletter. Dr. Thomas A. Curtis, another manager, offered the name “Argus” after the mythological Greek giant with one hundred eyes, none of which were closed at the same time, possibly an indication that the insurance company, and later the newspaper, would be ever vigilant.⁴

When the Western Union Relief Association failed, J. E. and William Mitchell continued the newsletter as the St. Louis *Argus*, a five-column tabloid-size newspaper, and registered it as second-class mail with the U.S. Post Office in St. Louis on April 5, 1912. Christopher K. Robinson, a printer and former partner in the Western Union Relief Association, was contracted to print the paper at \$35 per week. On March 27, 1916, J. E. and William Mitchell, Benjamin W. James, and Lewis E. Hawkins incorporated the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company. The company’s capital stock included \$20,000 divided into one thousand \$20.00 shares. At the time of incorporation, cash and property held by the directors paid for 11/20 of the stock. The itemized description of the property and cash included \$1,000 cash, \$9,000 in subscriptions, printing machinery and equipment, and real estate at 2341 Market Street valued at \$1,000. J. E. Mitchell held the majority of the stock with 410 shares (\$8,200). William Mitchell had 110 shares (\$2,200) and Benjamin James and Lewis Hawkins held 15 shares each (\$300).⁵

Under the terms of the Articles of Incorporation, the business was to continue for fifty years and was established to print and publish a newspaper or newspapers, to do general printing and stationery business, and all other business incidental to the publishing business. Until their deaths, the Mitchells were the principal owners and stockholders of the company. During the Great Depression, they became the sole owners. J. E. was an adherent of Booker T. Washington’s philosophy of self-help and business development among African Americans. He actively encouraged the formation of a branch of the National Negro Business League in St. Louis. As chair of the National Negro Press Association’s executive committee, a position he held from 1923 until 1940, Mitchell reported on the activities of the black press at the Negro Business League’s annual meetings. Mitchell also served on the executive committee of the National Negro Business League for a time.⁶

At least three newspapers serving the African American community were operating in St. Louis when the *Argus* went into publication in 1912: the St. Louis *Palladium*, the *Central Afro-American*, and the Missouri-

⁴ “Amendments to Articles of Agreement of the Western Union Relief Association” (Jan. 1905, March 1906, April 1906), Missouri Office of the Secretary of State, Corporations; Edwina W. Mitchell, *The Crusading Black Journalist: Joseph Everett Mitchell* (Philadelphia, 1972), 5.

⁵ St. Louis Recorder of Deeds, Corporation Book 55, 1916.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Illinois *Advance Citizen*. The *Palladium*, founded in 1884 and edited by John W. Wheeler from 1897 to 1911, ceased doing business during 1912. When the *Central Afro-American* went out of business in 1915, the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company took over its subscription list and inherited the newspaper's advertisers and readers. As a result, the St. Louis *Argus* editors claimed, it had a circulation "equal to any similar publication in the West."⁷

Part of the St. Louis *Argus*' marketing strategy was to sell the newspaper at several locations throughout the city including drug stores, a grocery, a newsstand, and a shoeshine parlor. The newspaper was also sold by "newsboys" on street corners and through home delivery and by adult agents in small towns throughout Missouri and nearby states. The St. Louis *Argus*, like most black-owned newspapers, relied more on circulation than did larger white-owned papers because of their lack of major advertising. To attract more readers, the *Argus* introduced a pictorial section into the paper in late 1915, "for the benefit of our subscribers, to show the many phases of Negro life and progress along social, business, and commercial lines."⁸ Henry W. Sexton, a local photographer, received a contract to provide photographic services in exchange for selling reprints to people who wanted the pictures that had appeared in the newspaper.

In 1916, World War I began to have a decidedly negative effect on the newspaper industry when the federal government placed paper mills on the essential resources list and required newspapers to comply with several defined regulations issued by the War Industries Board in order to continue publication. The price of paper stock more than doubled during the year. The St. Louis *Argus* passed the costs on to subscribers with a 50-percent annual subscription rate increase and required advance payment of all subscriptions. Despite increased costs, the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company purchased the Osborne Publishing Company printing plant (reportedly the best-equipped print shop in St. Louis) at 2316 Market Street, across the street from the *Argus* Publishing Company building at 2341 Market Street. The purchase allowed the company to begin printing its own newspaper and to expand into the job printing business with the additional equipment and experienced work force.

At the end of World War I, the company was able to purchase a new Duplex press at a cost of \$10,000, which could print 5,500 copies an hour

⁷ "Circulation Merger Benefits Advertisers: *Argus* Takes Over the *Central Afro-American*, Increasing Already Large Circulation, Offers Greater Trade Advantage at Same Rate," St. Louis *Argus*, 1 Jan. 1915; Arnold Parks, "The Negro Newspaper in Saint Louis: A Media for Expressing the Negro's Socio-Cultural Objectives as Exemplified by Its Editorial Content" (M.A. thesis, St. Louis University, 1964); "Where to Find the *Argus*," St. Louis *Argus*, 19 Feb. 1915.

⁸ Ibid.; Lawrence Hogan, *A Black National News Service: The Associated Press and Claude Barnett, 1919-1945* (Rutherford, N.J., 1984).

from roll paper. The new press would have allowed the *Argus* to print its weekly edition in one day rather than the three-day capacity of their old equipment. The shortage of newsprint forced the *Argus* Publishing Company to limit the paper to eight pages and meant that the press went unused for several years. In addition to job printing, the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company contracted with the William B. Ziff Company of Chicago to secure national advertising. The Ziff Company secured national advertising accounts for nearly all the major African American weeklies during the 1920s, including the *Chicago Defender*, the *Amsterdam News*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Although Ziff charged a commission of 35 to 50 percent of the fees paid by the advertisers, the company guaranteed payment to its clients. At the same time, J. E. Mitchell and other publishers who were members of the Associated Negro Press, led by Claude A. Barnet, attempted to develop a plan to obtain “foreign” advertising on their own by meeting with the manager of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World, New York.⁹

During its eleventh year of operation, the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company purchased additional property at 2312 and 2314 Market Street, to add to the 2316 property bought previously. After almost a year of renovations, the *Argus* building had an estimated value of \$30,000 and housed the newspaper operations, provided office space for St. Louis black professionals, leased space to a local church, had a meeting hall and a ballroom available for rent to local clubs and fraternal organizations for dances.

Between 1915 and 1929, the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company witnessed the founding of seven competing newspapers, including the *Independent Clarion*, *Independent News*, *Tribune*, *Standard News*, *Inquirer*, and *American*. The *Independent News* originated in May 1919 with Walter Lowe, editor, Lewie R. May, associate editor; W. Silas Terrance, sporting editor; and William L. Micheaux, advertising manager. In June 1922, the *Tribune*, published by the Pushkin Publishing Company, was back in business after a nine-month lapse. The *Inquirer*, described as a race publication of six pages and seven columns with a stated platform of “opening up all unions to all mankind—that all races of people may be allowed to exercise their constitutional rights,” began publication in October 1924. Its office was located at 101 Compton Avenue and its staff consisted of a managing and associate editor, a manager, an advertising manager, and a circulation manager. The *Standard News* began publishing in June 1926. Its managing editor, Edgar G. Brown, a well-known writer and advertising man; and the editor J. A. G. LuValle was a nationally known newspaper man and former editor of the *Washington*

⁹ “No *Argus* Last Week,” *St. Louis Argus*, 5 Jan. 1917; “The *Argus* Buys Osborne Plant,” *ibid.*, 6 Dec. 1918; “Paper Shortage Hits Us Hard,” *ibid.*, 7 May 1920; “Ten Thousand Dollar Duplex Press New Being Installed for the *Argus*,” *ibid.*, 5 March 1920.

Tribune.¹⁰ All stressed that they were independent of political party support and influence. The St. Louis *Argus*, however, from its founding, frequently declared that it was a Republican newspaper, and benefited from the central committee's advertising patronage during the primary and general elections.

Christopher K. Robinson, the first president of the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company and the printer of the St. Louis *Argus* newspaper when it began, started the *Independent Clarion* in 1914 only two years after the *Argus* began. Mitchell claimed that Robinson had taken offense when the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company had gone into the print business. The *Argus* editors criticized Robinson saying:

C. K. Robinson thinks that no others of the race have any right to enter the printing business; if they do, they are his enemies. We suppose that is why he has devoted so much of his time in trying to persuade the *Argus* employees to come to him; not on the promise of higher salaries but on the promise of a donation of a third interest in his business.¹¹

Robinson, of course, had lost the *Argus* as a client and was now competing for print business against them. Robinson published his newspaper for 5 years before personal and legal problems forced him to sell. Robinson's wife sued for divorce and he faced a libel suit. In addition, one of his partners sued to have a receiver appointed over the business. A group of St. Louis businesspeople, who formed a stock company with \$10,000 capital, bought the *Independent Clarion*, renamed it the St. Louis *Clarion*, and published its first issue in June 1923. Before its sale, the *Clarion* had been a tough competitor for the *Argus*. The major stockholder, not a resident of Missouri, soon withdrew from the paper and in 1925, the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company purchased the Robinson printing plant, claiming that the addition made the *Argus* printing plant the largest of its kind in the country. The Robinson property located at 2304-2308 Market Street joined the *Argus* property at 2312-2316 and 2341 Market Street.¹²

The most significant competitors of the St. Louis *Argus* competitors debuted on March 17, 1928: the St. Louis *American* owned by a group of six to eight men, including Charles Turpin, the first African American elected to political office in the state of Missouri, and Homer G. Phillips, an attorney. Both were former friends and business associates of J. E. Mitchell. Mitchell had helped organized a political action group, the Citizen's Liberty League, which had gotten Turpin elected to the office of constable in 1910 and again in 1914 (although election fraud kept Turpin

¹⁰ St. Louis *Argus*, May 1919; June 1922; Oct. 1924; June 1926.

¹¹ "What Is the Matter with C. K. Robinson?" St. Louis *Argus*, 23 Jan. 1920.

¹² "The Revival of the *Clarion*," St. Louis *Argus*, 6 July 1923; "Simmons Buys St. Louis *Clarion*," *ibid.*, 13 Aug. 1920.

out of office after the second election). By 1928, both Turpin and Phillips were members of the Democratic Party, and Phillips was at political loggerheads with Mitchell over party ideology and personal ethics. In 1926, when Homer G. Phillips and George Vaughn both ran for the Republican nomination for Congress, the *Argus* editors insisted that Phillips should have dropped out of the race to give Vaughn a clear field.

The St. Louis *American* was founded as an alternative to the St. Louis *Argus* and its pro-Republican political point of view. Nathan B. Young, Jr., the lawyer for the corporation, recalled in a 1970 interview that the St. Louis *American* stockholders believed there was a need for another Negro newspaper in St. Louis and pooled their funds to publish one. In 1928, the *American* was described as an eight-column regular size paper of general news and independent in politics. The staff included A. N. Johnson, managing editor, Nathan B. Young, Jr., city editor, Ruth M. Harris, Women's Page, R .P. Walters, associate editor, F. C. Alston, art editor, and D. R. Clarke, treasurer. By September, Johnson had given up his position with the *American* to join the *Argus* advertising department. Before coming to St. Louis, Johnson had worked for the Pittsburgh *Courier* and the Baltimore *Afro-American*. The defection of Johnson to the *Argus* opened the door for Nathaniel A. Sweets to join the staff of the St. Louis *American*. Sweets went on to become the owner-publisher of the *American*.¹³

Edwina Mitchell, J. E. Mitchell's second wife, claimed in her biography of her husband that supporting the Republican Party was the primary reason for starting the newspaper. Considering that the St. Louis *Palladium*, a black-owned Republican newspaper ceased operation the same year the St. Louis *Argus* began publication, Edwina Mitchell's claim might be true. Although critical of the Republican Central Committee's policies, the St. Louis *Argus* during its first decade was extremely supportive of the party and its candidates. Moreover, the newspaper was the benefactor of the Central Committee's political advertising during the primary and general elections.

In a March 31, 1916, editorial "Don't Leave the Old Ship," the editors, using the words of Frederick Douglass, claimed that "the Negro cannot afford to desert the Republican Party" because it was a symbiotic relationship: "out of its [Republican] legislation sprang our citizenship, and out of our citizenship sprang their political supremacy. We must not leave the old ship for all outside is nothing but sea."¹⁴ Despite the paper's reliance on Party advertising, J. E. Mitchell, managing editor and publisher, used the *Argus* to challenge Republican Party politics. One of

¹³ St. Louis Black Community Leaders Oral History Project, 1970-1981, Western Historical Manuscript Joint Collection, University of Missouri-St. Louis; "A.N. Johnson Joins St. Louis *Argus* Force," St. Louis *Argus*, 21 Sept. 1928; *ibid.*, 23 March 1928.

¹⁴ "Don't Leave the Old Ship," St. Louis *Argus*, 31 March 1916.

the biggest political disappointments for the African American community was the 1916 electoral approval of two residential segregation ordinances in St. Louis, even after the election of an all-Republican Board of Aldermen to support a Republican mayor. During the campaign to defeat the residential segregation ordinances, the *Argus* told its readers that African Americans could not afford to desert the Republican Party. This call for continued support of the Republican Party was not a call for “blind” support. Mitchell and a number of his associates, including Christopher K. Robinson and attorneys George L. Vaughn and Homer G. Phillips, founded the Citizens’ Liberty League to get black men elected to office on the Republican ticket. In 1918, Charles Turpin and Homer Phillips ran for Constable and Justice of the Peace, respectively; and in 1920, attorney George Vaughn ran for the 12th District Congressional seat on the Republican ticket. He lost in the primary. Mitchell and his associates also pushed for black representation on the Republican Central Committee and delegates to the state and national Republican conventions.

The St. Louis *Argus* stopped claiming a Republican allegiance by 1925, when after years of support and struggle, the Central Committee refused to appoint African Americans to positions on the committee or to support their election to ward leadership or the Board of Aldermen. That year the *Argus* endorsed the Democratic candidate for mayor. Although the newspaper never again claimed a political affiliation, Democratic campaign advertising began replacing Republican campaign ads in the paper. Mitchell’s personal politics did not move to the Democratic Party until well into Franklin D. Roosevelt’s second administration, and even then, he complained that black Democrats were not pushing the Party hard enough for full citizenship rights and protection.

Because of the staff’s longevity, the St. Louis *Argus* newspaper established an atmosphere of family and belonging among its employees. The publishing company began a tradition in its early years of featuring the lives and activities of its employees in an anniversary edition, thereby making them local celebrities. The *Argus* featured photographs of employee marriages, resignations, family visits, and other events in their daily lives. In May 1916, the St. Louis *Argus* spotlighted its staff with a front-page photograph that featured 37 staff members, 24 of whom were “newsboys” who had been handling the paper less than three months. Other employees pictured included Earl Tibbs, collector; Miss Ollie Meadows, chief collector; Miss M. B. Berry, collector; Miss Willie Bar, bookkeeper; Herbert T. Meadows, city editor and advertising manager; William Mitchell, printer; W. H. Barbour, compositor; and William H. Brown, foreman.¹⁵

The long tenure of the *Argus* editors allowed for continuity and consistency in the newspaper. In 1912, Herbert T. Meadows became the

¹⁵ “Members of the *Argus* Force,” St. Louis *Argus*, 19 May 1916.

city editor and remained in that position until his sudden death in August 1948. Meadows had come to St. Louis in 1892, and for a time had been employed by the city government. He later started a haberdashery and a restaurant, but joined the *Argus* shortly after it began publishing. He served the *Argus* for more than 35 years and was one of the stockholders of the company until the 1930s.¹⁶

In 1915, associate editors Phillip H. Murray and William Harold King replaced F. F. Martyn, whose name disappeared from the staff box in November. Murray came to the *Argus* with more than thirty-four years of newspaper experience. A native of Reading, Pennsylvania, he taught school in West Virginia and Missouri and served as a recruiting officer in the Union Army. After the Civil War, Murray established a newspaper in Washington, D.C., and became the first president of the first Negro press association, the American Press Association, later renamed the National Colored Press Association. He had come to St. Louis in 1876 where he taught and later worked for the Post Office. He accepted a position on the staff of the *Truth*, a black-owned newspaper, which he later bought and renamed the Missouri-Illinois *Advance-Citizen* in 1881. Murray worked for the *Argus* until shortly before his death in February 1917. He had retired from the St. Louis *Argus* newspaper in January with plans to visit his daughters back East.¹⁷

W. Harold King was active in fraternal life as well as with the newspaper. In December 1916, the *Argus* announced that the Mound City Lodge No. 4 of the Knights of Pythias had elected King Chancellor Commander. King appears to have taken a leave of absence between May and November 1917. When he returned to the paper in November, a short notice announced that King was “back on the job” and was “now at the service of those who need special business or professional write ups.” King’s leave may have been related to the series of short stories he was writing based on the business and professional activities of black St. Louis.¹⁸

The St. Louis *Argus* employee announcements indicated that work and home responsibilities for female employees often clashed and required the woman to make a choice that left the newspaper the loser. Mrs. Mary Harmon-Ferguson, a four-year desk “editress,” had married in 1920, but continued to work until the pressure of “the responsibilities of her home claimed her.” In the same issue that announced Harmon-Ferguson’s retirement to home responsibilities, Miss Minnie Ross, a single woman, was announced as her replacement. Miss Ross had worked for the C. K.

¹⁶ “Herbert T. Meadows, *Argus* Associate Editor, to be Given Last Rites Friday,” *St. Louis Argus*, 20 Aug. 1948.

¹⁷ “P.H. Murray Passes Away,” *St. Louis Argus*, 2 Feb. 1917.

¹⁸ “W. Harold King, *Argus* Associate Editor, Chancellor Commander Elect of Mound City Lodge No. 4 Knights of Pythias,” *St. Louis Argus*, 8 Dec. 1916; “W. Harold King Associate Editor of the *Argus* Back on Job,” *ibid.*, 9 Nov. 1917.

Robinson Printing Company and the *Clarion* newspaper as a cashier. The resignation of Miss Willie C. Barr, bookkeeper for the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company was announced when she left to visit her mother in Tennessee. Although she gave no reason for resigning, it was understood that she was about to announce her impending marriage. Miss L. Laurence Mitchell had worked as bookkeeper for five years before her marriage to Reverend Charles E. Boission, pastor of Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church, Bonne Terre, Missouri. Although marriage did not separate her from her job with the *Argus* immediately, home responsibilities came first.¹⁹

The St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company was extremely proud of its employees and took pride in highlighting their accomplishments. An Associated Negro Press article featured Samuel Benjamin Wilkins, a linotypist at the *Argus*, for his ability to set 20,000 lines of type per day; at age 16 he was the youngest “colored” linotype operator in the country. Wilkins had begun work at 11 at the C. K. Robinson Printing Company. At 14, he took a course in linotype operation at Shorter College in Little Rock, Arkansas. Wilkins began working for the *Argus* in July 1921. In April 1923, a month after the Wilkins article, the *Argus* reported hiring Miss Gladys Beasley, one of the fastest linotype operators in the country.²⁰ The St. Louis *Argus* newspaper could therefore claim that it employed two of the best linotypists in black printing and journalism.

Because the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company and its work force were relatively young, marriages and professional accomplishments appeared more often than death notices. One of the first death announcements during the 1920s was that of J. E. and William Mitchell’s brother Henry, who had worked as foreman and machinist in the linotype department. Henry was one of many Mitchell family members who migrated to St. Louis and worked for the newspaper.²¹

From humble beginnings as an insurance company trade paper, the St. Louis *Argus* was built into a professional newspaper by J. E. Mitchell and his partners. They increased their readership and circulation by purchasing the subscriber and advertising contracts of one of their competitors. They increased their ability to serve their readers by purchasing their own printing equipment and two printing companies. As they outgrew their rented office space, they purchased and renovated a large building that bore the *Argus* name and invited the city to come see their accomplishments and celebrate their success. The St. Louis *Argus* newspaper and the St. Louis *Argus* Publishing Company made great strides during the formative years between 1912 and 1929. The St. Louis community perceived the newspaper as reliable and its publishers and editors as leaders. J. E. Mitchell, especially, was a recognized leader in the

¹⁹ St. Louis *Argus*, 1 Sept. 1916; Sept. 1921; 29 Feb. 1924.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 30 March 1923; 27 April 1923.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1 Feb. 1921.

field of black journalism and in the city of St. Louis. However specialized the mission of the black press was, financial success enabled newspaper publishers to have influence within their communities and the nation.