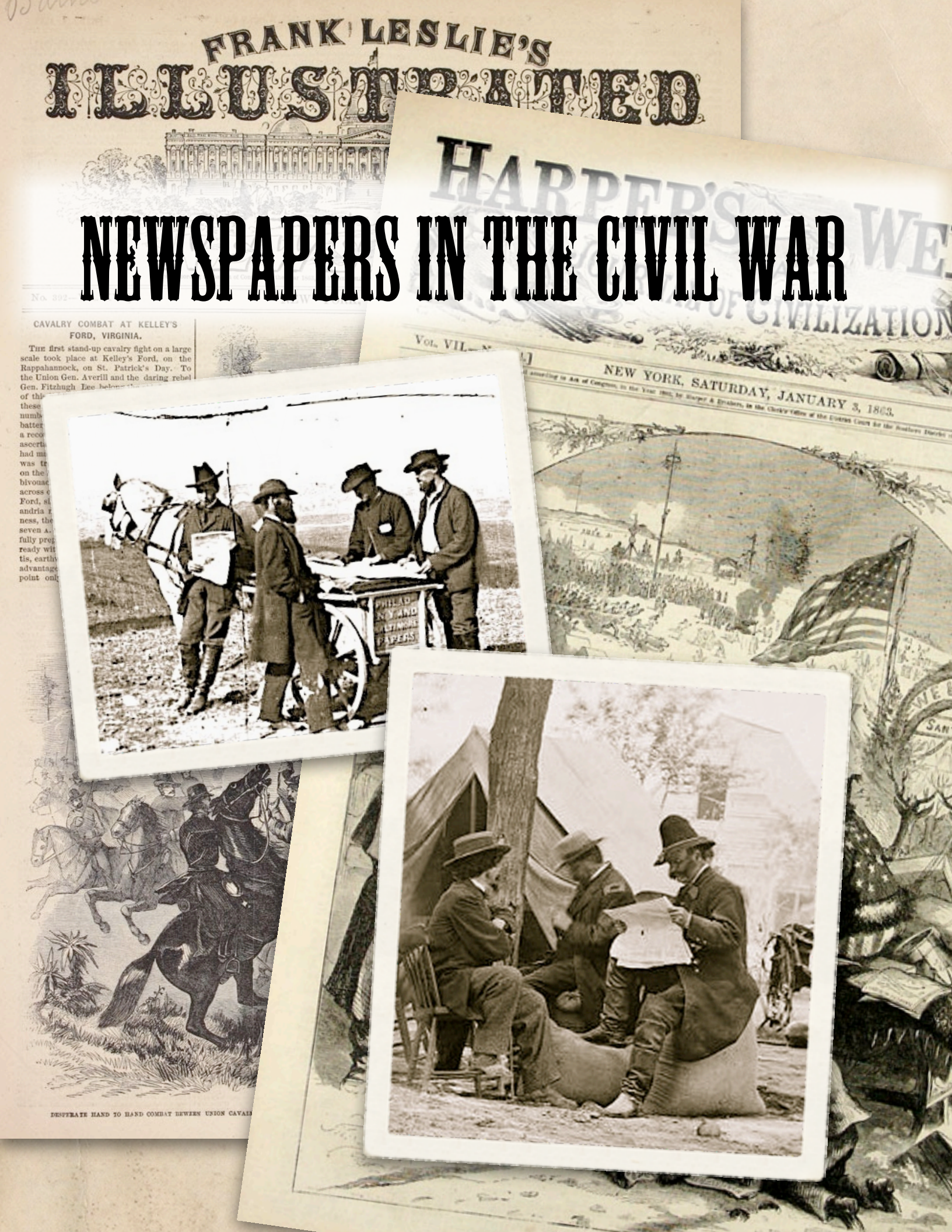
NEWSPAPERS IN THE CIVIL WAR



NEWSPAPERS IN THE CIVIL WAR: AN ESSAY

By Brayton Harris

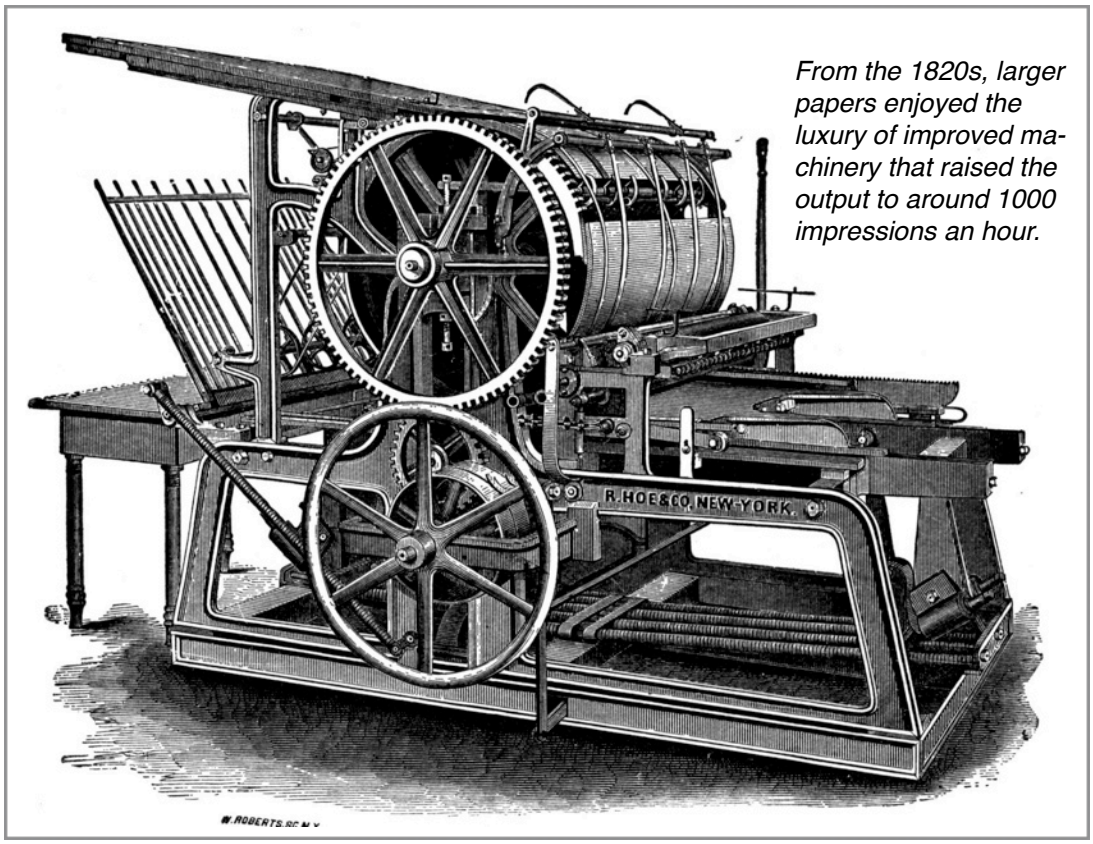
PART I: THE PUBLIC PRESS

Let me set the stage. Speaking to a group of employees, some one hundred years after the Civil War, *Washington Post* publisher Phil Graham famously called journalism, "The first rough draft of history." He was right, to a point, but journalists quite often make history and whatever is published often becomes history without much tinkering. This is certainly true of the Civil War, where much of our knowledge and understanding today comes from three primary sources: the Official Records, correspondence and memoirs of participants, and the record left by the journalists. The first two focus on battles, strategies, personalities, and excuses. The third—journalism—gives us a time capsule, preserving the look and feel of life in America. A history, North and South, at times full of errors, mistakes, bombast, and brilliance that—at times, at the same time—has given the professional historian a rich field in which to play for the last 150 years.

Should you venture into the newspaper archives you will find descriptions of battles fought and political victories, obtained. But you could also learn the price of gold in New York, of slaves in Charleston, and of cotton, ladies' shoes and whiskey ($40 a gallon) in Richmond. Your knowledge of general military history from the Punic Wars to the Crimea will be challenged, as will your familiarity with the common literary currency of Civil War-era readers, from the Bible to Shakespeare.

You will run into archaic usage: "the cars" is short for the "train of cars," which we now call a "train;" reporters called their news dispatches "letters," northern writers called Southerners "the chivalry," Southerners tagged Northerners "abolitionists," and "Bohemian Brigade" was a self-inflicted nickname for war correspondents. You will be treated to verbatim transcriptions of public speeches, thanks to Isaac Pittman's method of rapid, or "short-hand," writing—recently introduced, much to the delight of reporters and to the exasperation of politicians, who preferred to leave written, corrected, improved copies of speeches, which may or may not actually have been delivered, with favored newspapers.

You will be invited to believe virulent propaganda—dark tales of native Americans in Confederate service scalping Union soldiers, of Rebel prisoners of war exposed to smallpox by "the Yankees" and of "flagrant outrages committed . . . on the persons of females, the particulars of which are of too beastly a character to be recorded" (*Richmond Dispatch*, August 16, 1862 and June 18, 1864). You can probably discount most, but will encounter real atrocities, overt racism and veiled anti-Semitism, which you cannot ignore. Exempting racial and ethnic slurs—we've come a long way—what you read, in general, while more florid of style, is not much different from what is found today in your own morning newspaper. Fully to appre-



From the 1820s, larger papers enjoyed the luxury of improved machinery that raised the output to around 1000 impressions an hour.

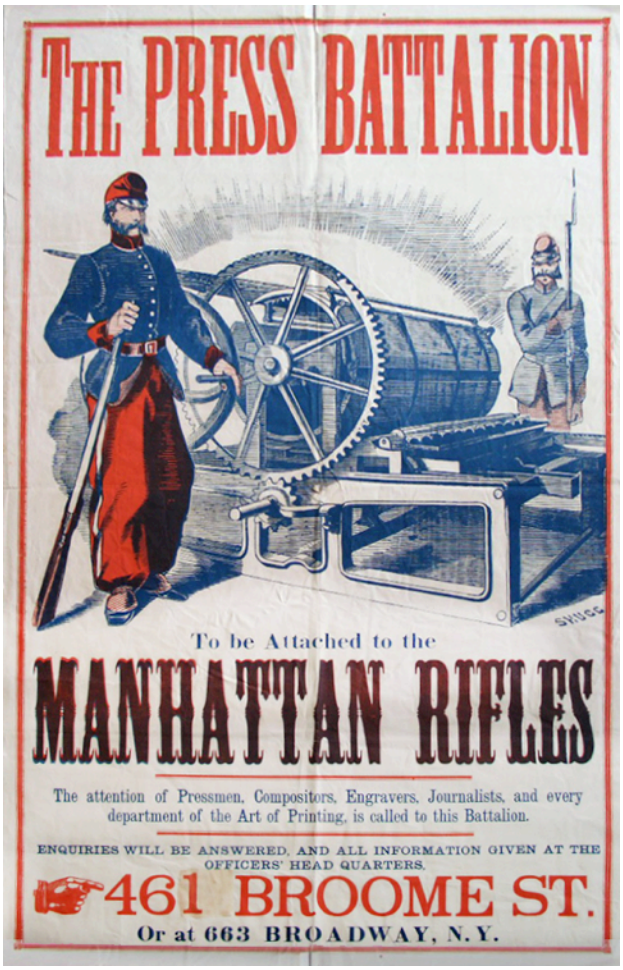
ciate that fact, you should know that by 1860, the American newspaper had just come through nothing short of a journalistic revolution.

Through the first third of the 19th Century, American newspapers did not contain much actual "news." They were journals of opinion, political cheerleaders, vehicles for cultured discourse and cultural pretension. Much of what they published about the world outside the door came in the mail: letters from subscribers and copies of other newspapers in an informal system of exchange—encouraged by free postage—from which interesting items could freely be appropriated, if given credit to the source.

There were few professional reporters and "war correspondents" were men who sent letters home from the army. At the smaller weeklies, printing was done on presses little changed from Ben Franklin's day, which might produce 250 impressions an hour as long as the pressman and his assistants could endure the pace. From the 1820s, larger papers enjoyed the luxury of improved machinery that raised the output to around 1000 impressions an hour. However, as a practical matter, the size of a newspaper was limited to four pages (two sides of a single folded sheet) and the high-cost of production limited distribution to the upper classes.

Then, within twenty-five years, thanks to advancing technology and journalistic enterprise, the newspaper came of age. The enterprise came first. In 1835, Scottish immigrant James Gordon Bennett sensed a market for a more interesting and affordable sort of newspaper and founded the *New York Herald*. He reported on crime and scandal, initiated the Wall Street report, forced the Congress to admit non-Washington-based journalists into the press galleries, and invented the personal interview (the first, with the proprietor of a house of ill repute in which one of the residents had been murdered). In truth, Bennett invented the modern newspaper—and sold it for a penny a copy. His immediate success launched a gaggle of imitators and the day of the "professional" journalist soon arrived.

The technology was not far behind. The railroad, born about the same time as the *Herald*, soon allowed theretofore un-dreamt of movement of people, goods and services. From the 1850s, steam-powered monster printing presses could spit forth as many as 20,000 impressions an hour and permit the wealthier newspapers to issue eight- and even twelve-page editions. The telegraph—invented in 1844 and a 50,000-mile network by 1860—allowed reports of an afternoon event in Chicago to be off the press in New York by midnight and, thanks to convenient rail service, be on the president's desk in the morning. (Three New York papers offered same-day home delivery in Washington.) However, the high cost of telegraphy—the Washington-to-New York tariff for a typical 2000-word newspaper column was about $100; from New Orleans to New York perhaps $450—had, early on, induced six otherwise competitive New York newspapers to form a cost-sharing cooperative, the Associated Press. This became a major business all by itself, with some fifty staffers stationed around the nation to cull local newspapers for interesting material. Other papers could use AP material, for a fee. As the war intruded, a Southern Associated Press stepped in to fill the gap, but midway through the war, when editors complained of high prices and poor service, a rival Press Association of the Confederate States of America was established, with headquarters in Atlanta and about twenty correspondents in the field.



This broadside recruiting poster is calling for pressmen, compositors, engravers, journalists, and "every department of the Art of Printing" to join the newly formed "Press Batallion." Graphic Arts Collection GC179 Broadsides Collection, Princeton University LIbrary.

One technical limitation continued: daily newspapers could not print illustrations any more complex than crude maps. Yes, print makers such as Currier & Ives were able to turn out full-color lithographs, but at a rate of not more than 300 a day, and while photography—just then coming into wide-spread use—provided reference images for artists, no method had yet been devised for directly converting a photograph into a printing plate. The interim solution was the wood engraving, which, at the basic level, was pretty much like the carved linoleum-block greeting cards you made in the fifth grade. Given time and talent, the concept was taken well beyond the basic. A drawing—at times, made by combat illustrators Winslow Homer or Thomas Nast—was transferred to the surface of four by five-inch blocks of hard-grained wood, and transformed into a relief printing surface under the hands of skilled craftsmen. Perhaps a dozen blocks might be used for a large illustration, the image coordinated by a master engraver who would lay out the plan, and then pass the blocks along to the men with sharp tools. When finished, the blocks were mounted in the printing frame along with the type or—as technology continued to advance—the whole would be converted into an electrotype shell to be used on a high-speed rotary press.

The preparation was slow, expensive, not feasible for the average deadline-driven daily newspaper but well-suited to a special breed, the "illustrated weekly." The first such in America was launched in 1854, bankrolled in part by the showman P. T. Barnum. It was a failure, barely making expenses, and soon abandoned. However, Barnum's head engraver went off on his own in 1855 with the eponymous *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. Leslie found the right balance of artistic style and newsworthy content, and by 1860 was selling an average 100,000 copies per issue. In 1857, the Harper Brothers, who ran a book publishing house and knew a good thing when they saw it, began a competing weekly which they grandly named *Harper's Weekly Journal of Civilization*. For the Confederates . . . in an inaugural issue, September 1862, the editors of the *Southern Illustrated News* promised truthful engravings of battles, not scenes made up by the artists, and accurate battlefield maps. The paper struggled along for twenty-five months; it printed not a single battlefield scene, and only one map.

In the year Bennett founded the *Herald*, there were

HARPER'S WEEKLY.
A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION.

VOL. V.—No. 227.] NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MAY 4, 1861. SINGLE COPIES SIX CENTS. $3 50 PER YEAR IN ADVANCE.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the Year 1861, by Harper & Brothers, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York

THE HOSETOPS IN CHARLESTON DURING THE BOMBARDMENT OF SUMPTER

The cover of Harper's Weekly *with coverage of the bombing of Ft. Sumpter in Charlston Harbor signaling the beginning of the Civil War.*

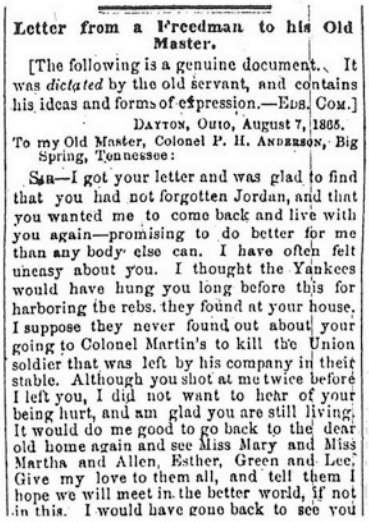
perhaps 900 newspapers in the nation; by 1860, there were more than 2,500, of which at least 373 were published daily (80 of those, in the less-populous South). New York alone supported seventeen daily newspapers; Washington, three, and Richmond four. By 1861, the larger papers in New York, Chicago, and Boston were publishing Sunday editions. Some began publishing both morning and evening editions (a running joke: they issued those evening editions to contradict the lies that they told in the morning.) Despite the technological and philosophical advances, newspapers continued to be unabashedly partisan; the 1860 U. S. Census categorized 80 percent of them as "political in nature." (Preliminary Report, 103). Many of the smaller weeklies were supported by local government printing contracts, offered in exchange for well-positioned coverage of a favored office-holder. Newspapers in the North can be parceled—roughly—into one of four po-

litical categories:

- Radical Republicans, for whom the only cause that justified going to war was the abolition of slavery. Chief among them: the *Tribunes* of New York and Chicago; the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.
- Moderate Republicans, who supported abolition but saw the war as a struggle to preserve the Union: *New York Times, Cincinnati Commercial, Boston Journal*.
- Independents, against (or neutral on) abolition but which, for the most part, supported the government: *New York Herald* (although, to most Republican editors, the *Herald* was far from "Independent" and more likely "Democrat").
- Democrats, who knew that the Party could not regain political power in a heavily-Republican North unless re-united with the more populous Southern Democrats. Democrats, North and South, saw the war as a "Black Republican" plot to overthrow civil liberties and the rule of law (read: take lawful property away from slave holders) and force full racial equality on the nation. The Democrat war aim was settlement, not conquest; ending slavery was not a goal, but an impediment; the path to peace was seen as enlightened discourse, not battlefield victory. *Cincinnati Enquirer, New York World*. A subset called the "Peace Democrats" were militant, openly pro-Southern, and tagged by the Radicals with the pejorative label "Copperhead," for the venomous snake of the same name. At some point in the first year or so of the war, Peace Democrats began wearing copper Indian head pennies as a badge of defiance. *Chicago Times.*

The allegiance of some papers was clearly indicated by the name on the masthead, although the *Missouri Democrat* was a Republican paper and the *Missouri Republican*, an organ of the Democrats. The quintessential Radical paper was the *New York Tribune*, founded in 1841 by Horace Greeley, with the announced intention "to advance the interests of the people, and to promote their Moral, Political and Social well-being." Greeley promised that "the immoral and degrading Police Reports, Advertisements, and other matter which have been allowed to disgrace the columns of our leading Penny Papers [read: *New York Herald*] will be carefully excluded from this, and no exertion will be spared to render it worthy of the virtuous and refined, and a welcome visitant at the family fireside" (Hale, 66-67). Early on, the *Tribune* grabbed the abolitionist cause and never let go, earning the undying enmity of the Southern part of the nation. The leading moderate was the *New York Times*, occupying the ground between *Herald* and *Tribune*. It opened for business (as the *Daily Times*) on September 18, 1851. In his first edition, publisher Henry J. Raymond (whose day job was speaker of the New York State Legislature) offered his own capsule philosophy: "We shall be Conservative, in all cases where we think Conservatism essential to the public good;—and we shall be Radical in everything which may seem to us to require radical treatment and radical reform. We do not believe that everything in Society is either exactly right or exactly wrong;—what is good we desire to preserve and improve;—what is evil, to exterminate, or reform."

Most Southern papers were Democrat, although a few were Whig—the philosophical predecessor of the Republican Party which had largely ceased to exist in the North and was barely noticed in the South. Southern papers, of whatever persuasion, quickly fell in line. Or went out of business. (A fair number of papers—North and South—were forcibly



Letter from a Freedman to his Old Master.

[The following is a genuine document. It was *dictated* by the old servant, and contains his ideas and forms of expression.—EDS. COM.]

DAYTON, OHIO, August 7, 1865.

To my Old Master, Colonel P. H. ANDERSON, Big Spring, Tennessee:

SIR—I got your letter and was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jordan, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again—promising to do better for me than any body else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this for harboring the rebs. they found at your house. I suppose they never found out about your going to Colonel Martin's to kill the Union soldier that was left by his company in their stable. Although you shot at me twice before I left you, I did not want to hear of your being hurt, and am glad you are still living. It would do me good to go back to the dear old home again and see Miss Mary and Miss Martha and Allen, Esther, Green and Lee. Give my love to them all, and tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. I would have gone back to see you

This is an undated image of Jordon Anderson and the beginning of a letter dated Aug. 7, 1865, that he wrote to his former master, Patrick H. Anderson, published in the Cincinnati Commercial *newspaper. Anderson was a former slave who was freed from a Tennessee plantation by Union troops in 1864 and spent his remaining 40 years in Ohio. The letter is commonly viewed as an excellent piece of satire directed a the slaveholding society. Photo by Associated Press /*Chattanooga Times Free Press.

put out of business, either by government edict or mob action.) Arguably, the most important of Southern papers was the *Richmond Dispatch*, whose circulation exceeded that of all other Richmond papers, combined. This four-page, tabloid-size paper was founded in 1850, to bring New York-style journalism to the South. One of the editors was employed as a part-time clerk for the Confederate War Department, which gave the *Dispatch* an insider's edge. Unlike chief rivals in Richmond—the Enquirer (which was strongly pro-administration) and Examiner (which consistently criticized everybody)—the *Dispatch* supported the war but stayed above politics in keeping with a long-stated editorial policy: "Devoted to the interest of the city and free and independent in its political views" (Andrews, *South Reports*, 32).

DAILY DISPATCH.

VOL. XXV. RICHMOND, VA., WEDNESDAY MORNING, JULY 20, 1864. NO. 25.

Arguably, the most important of Southern papers was the Richmond Dispatch*, whose circulation exceeded that of all other Richmond papers, combined.*

Few of the 2500 papers, North and South, could afford to have reporters in the wartime field although, from time to time, an editor might venture forth and interview a general or two. Or be overtaken by events when armies passed through town (or, came to stay). Nor could many papers afford the AP charges and almost all relied on official dispatches, letters from home-town men serving in the field, and the exchange system. But as war approached, the more affluent expanded their rosters with "special correspondents" (usually called, simply, "specials"), sent forth to cover the action.

Technically, they were not the first to serve as civilian war correspondents: five American newspapers had pooled their interests in the Mexican War of 1848 and sent a small team to the front. However, those efforts, while seminal, are largely invisible in any histories of that war. Or of journalism. A few years later, two British newspapers and the *New York Evening Post* assigned a total of four reporters to cover the war in the Crimea (1854-56) with shocking result: the work of *London Times* reporter William Howard Russell exposed corruption, bone-headed generalship, woefully inadequate treatment of the wounded, and brought down the British government. He established universal truth: an unfettered journalist is a burden to the military, anathema to the government, but vital to a democratic society. Sort of set the tone for military-media relations ever since. As the Union dissolved and editors drifted into bombast, reporters rushed to prove their skill by uncovering details of military preparations for any coming battle. April 27, 1861 *Richmond Enquirer*: "The rebel army stationed at Richmond numbers three thousand and seventy-two men." May 5, *Charleston Mercury*: "Raleigh, North Carolina, is alive with soldiers. . . . Sixteen companies, comprising twelve hundred men, rank and file, are encamped at the Fair Grounds . . ." The May 23 edition of the *New York Tribune* (left) did its part to warn the Confederates: "A regiment left New York for Fortress Monroe; 350 men left New York to join the 69th Regiment at Washington; two regiments of Ohio volunteers, numbering altogether eighteen hundred men, reach Washington." The *New York Times* re-

New-York Daily Tribune.

VOL. XXIV.....No. 7,368. NEW-YORK, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1864. PRICE FOUR CENTS.

FROM WASHINGTON.

TWO DAYS LATER FROM EUROPE

ported (May 25) the movement of 13,000 men into Virginia, "each man having sixty rounds of ball cartridge." Governments North and South, which likely had never heard of William Howard Russell, began to understand that, Constitutional issues aside, wartime freedom of the press could be a distinct liability.

The Confederates passed a "Censorship" law which got the attention of the journalists, most of whom supported the cause and usually were careful to do no harm. The Union—where journalistic support was mixed to being with and intense competition among the newspapers often trumped common sense—established a series of ineffective controls. Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler told the *Cincinnati Commercial* (June 20, 1861) that "the Government would not accomplish much until it had hanged . . . half a dozen spies, and at least one newspaper reporter." At first, General-in-Chief Winfield Scott decreed that all dispatches must be approved by "the commanding general." When he realized that he couldn't control a war and the news at the same time, he appointed the Washington agent for the AP as official censor. Inexperience will often make for strange, if not totally stupid, regulation. The censorship was applied only to telegraphic reports being sent from Washington. Material sent in the mail, carried away in person, or—strangest of all—published in the local Washington papers, was not subject to review. A clever reporter for a New York paper could arrange to have a touchy item planted in a Washington paper, which would then be borrowed with impunity. This ploy may have avoided the censor's scissors, but did little to bolster relationships with the War Department; the loophole finally was plugged.

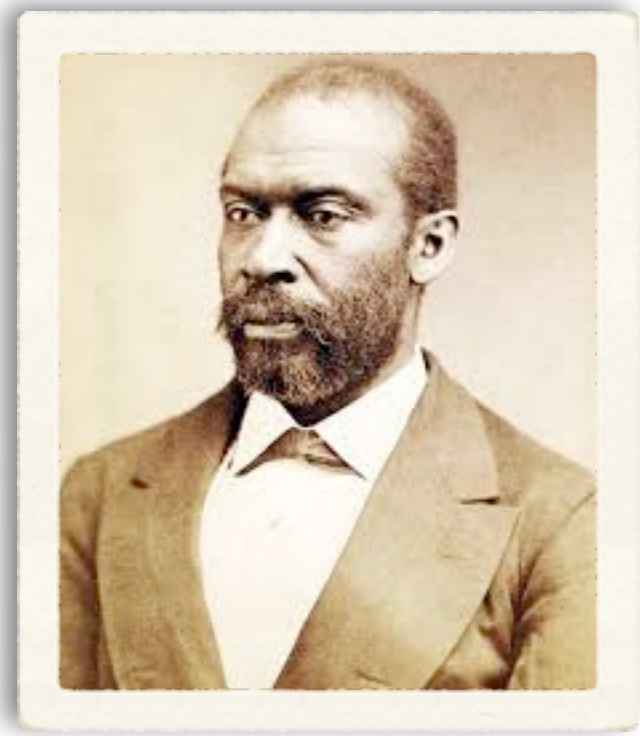
Union general Benjamin Butler had a very low opinion of journalists, comparing them to Confederate spies.

Both governments held meetings with journalists and editors to work out cooperative agreements, but soon learned that the most effective censorship was simply to keep journalists away from the troops. When he was appointed general-in-chief of the Union army, July 23, 1862, Gen. Henry Wager Halleck—-who earlier had blocked reporters from his command in the field, just after the Battle of Shiloh/Pittsburg Landing (April, 1962)—ordered Federal commanders to remove all newspaper reporters. Rebel commanders adopted a similar stratagem. However, given typical journalistic ingenuity, "most effective" is a relative term. Over time, as commanders banned reporters; some journalists made "arrangements" to serve as a "volunteer aide" for a sympathetic senior officer, which gave them access, not only to information, but to food and shelter (in exchange for which, they may have been expected to write something appropriately flattering about their sponsor). Some journalists merely bought or borrowed uniforms and a horse and pretended to belong. Notable was the *New York Tribune's* George W. Smalley, who, during the battle of Antietam (September 17, 1862), was pressed into service by Maj. Gen Joseph Hooker to carry orders to various officers in the field. Hooker wondered who he was,

A double-page spread in Harper's Weekly *depicting the battle of Antietam.*

Smalley admitted to being a special correspondent for the *Tribune*. Hooker didn't care, he needed help. Notable, also—an invitation to the editor of the *Mobile Register*, John Forsyth, to serve as special assistant to Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg (who banned all other journalists from his army) with the rank of colonel. It was rumored that Bragg had political ambitions. It didn't work; as the *Columbus* (Georgia) *Sun* noted, "All the silly efforts upon the part of a certain class of newspaper correspondents and 'small editors' to manufacture a great man out of General Bragg have failed" (Andrews, South Reports, 253). Over time, most of the "remove newsmen from the army" edicts fell aside, North and South, although commanders reserved the right to inspect and approve copy in the field, a task usually assigned to a subordinate. Various infractions—publishing articles that revealed battle planning or insulted senior officers—got a handful of reporters banned from the field, North and South, some by order of court martial. President Lincoln was universally hospitable and courteous to journalists; the press policy of Gen. Grant was along Constitutional lines: no prior restraint. Grant trusted the gentlemen of the press to do the right thing, unless and until someone demonstrated otherwise.

The men at the top of the Confederate government were not so comfortable with newsmen—Jefferson Davis surrounded himself with a palace guard and rarely spoke with newsmen, or in public. It made little difference, because the newsmen of the South, almost without exception, willingly supported the cause even while some of them regularly ridiculed the government, as did the *Richmond Examiner*, February 4, 1862: "In the midst of revolution," the editor wrote, "no greater calamity can befall a people, than for their affairs to pass into the control of men who could not understand it in the beginning, and are incapable of appreciating the demands of the crisis as they arise." Overall, throughout the war but not all working at the same time, there were perhaps 500 "Special" correspondents in the field, 350 for the North, 150 for the South. Of seventy-eight Northern specials for whom personal data survives, about half had attended college. Four out of five had been in newspaper work before the war began. The rest were lawyers, teachers, adventurers. There were a few women, and at least one African-American (Thomas Morris Chester of the *Philadelphia Press*). Average age: late twenties; half-a-



Thomas Morris Chester, one of the few African-American correspondents working for Northern newspapers during the Civil War.

dozen were nineteen or younger when the war started. One was sixteen.

Most of this new breed of journalistic adventurers had to break fresh trail and arrange for their own support in the field. Of course, it helped to work for a wealthy employer: in the fall of 1862, while the *Tribune* had five men (who shared one horse, one messenger, and not enough of anything else) covering the Army of the Potomac, the *Herald* fielded sixteen men with wagons, tents, boats, horses, money, and whatever supplies might be needed. By the end of the war, the *Herald* had 63 men in the field, each of whom was given firm guidance: "In no instance, and under no circumstances, must you be beaten. . . . Remember that your correspondence is seen by half a million persons daily and that the readers of the *Herald* must have the earliest news" (Starr, 233). A few of the specials were full-time military officers with newspaper experience; others in military service may have sought additional glory as "war correspondents" by responding to invitations such as that issued by the *Charleston Mercury*, April 22, 1861: "Officers of the army and navy of the Confederate States . . . will greatly oblige the proprietors . . . by furnishing sketches and incidents of the expected conflict between our gallant soldiers and their enemies. . . .When supplied exclusively, a liberal com-

pensation will be allowed" (Moore, I, Diary 39). Both *Harper's* and *Leslie's* advertised for sketch artists with the army, offering free subscriptions to anyone who would at least send in a trial drawing; by war's end, each had arrangements with about fifty army artists, but their contributions were minimal.

For the most part, men in the field shared common challenges: to deal with a military bureaucracy that often—usually—wished them to be someplace else; to write their copy under the most primitive conditions (often by candlelight with a tree stump for a desk), and then to find some way to get it to the home office. For some material, mail service was sufficient. For more timely stories, the telegraph would be the logical choice, but terminals in the field were run by the army and usually busy with official traffic and commercial terminals in near-by cities were subject to journalistic gamesmanship. Some specials had "arrangements" with friendly operators, to ensure that their copy would be moved to the head of the line; one Herald reporter, whose newspaper could afford the cost, was known at least once to have blocked waiting competitors—while he polished his own copy—by handing his pocket Bible to the operator with a simple instruction, "Start sending at Genesis" (Andrews, North Reports, 429). At times, the only practical solution was for the correspondent to entrust his copy to a messenger—or carry it himself—for a journey on foot, horseback, and train directly to his editor.

The reporter given an assignment to cover the Navy had special problems. Except for river expeditions supporting the army (not to mention the Navy's capture of New Orleans, which in the fog of newspaper history went to the Army) and a few coastal attacks on Confederate positions, there wasn't much to write about and when there was, there was no way to get the copy off the ship until it might be visited by a mail boat or put into port. And yet, in the broad scheme of things, the Union Navy perhaps rendered the more valuable service in the war, slowly choking the Confederacy with a 3,500-mile-long blockade. In the

(Above top) The crew of journalists from the New York Herald. *(Bottom) Journalists often attached themselves to officers to gain access to the battlefield, often in exchange for stories praising the officer.*

broad scheme of things, people who create that first "rough draft of history" look for interesting things about which to write. Blockades are boring. "Action" is the lifeblood of wartime journalism. A writer for the New York Herald (June 7, 1862) challenged his readers, "Those who suppose that the labor of a news gatherer upon the battle field is facile and rapid, should stroll, as I have, over the ground where the dead yet lie unburied, and the survivors expect momentarily to resume the conflict." Properly to report battles, one Trib-

une special advised, a reporter must be "so closely observant of them as to be in danger of being killed" (Starr, 148).

However, only a handful of reporters actually became victims of a combat in which they were spectators; a few were killed by accident—drowning, or trapped under a fallen horse. About fifty became prisoners of war. Most of those were released after a very short time, with two glaring exceptions: Albert Deane Richardson and Junius Henry Browne of the *New York Tribune*. They were held captive by the Confederate government under the most abysmal of conditions—and all attempts to negotiate their release failed—from May 1862 until they managed to escape in December, 1964. They were held for the sole reason that they were correspondents of the hated *Tribune*.

Danger aside, the pay was not bad. A typical reporter in the field, North or South, earned as much as a captain in the Union Army, roughly $27 a week but some superstars rated $100 a week (all, plus expenses, which in some areas—say, Washington D.C.—could run more than $35 a week for room and board). Many reporters pumped up their income, especially in the South, by contributing to multiple newspapers. The more prolific pulled down as much as $10,000 a year, at a time when the salary of Lincoln's Secretary of War was $8,000. By general policy, few reporters were allowed to write under their full names. Some were permitted the use of initials, but most articles in most papers were published unsigned or under fanciful nicknames: Whitlaw Reid of the *Cincinnati Gazette* was "Agate," Frank Wilkie of the New York Times was "Galway." One Southern reporter, George W. Bagby, sent copy to newspapers in four states as, variously, Hermes, Gamma, Malou, and Pan.

The rationale? The editor of the *Charleston Mercury* advised his Washington correspondent, shortly before hostilities erupted, "The wisdom and consequent usefulness of your letters will depend entirely on [your anonymity]. . . If you are known, it is impossible to criticize and use names as you otherwise can do, to the great benefit of the southern cause" (Andrews, South Reports, 50). An executive of the *New York Tribune* wrote, "The anonymous greatly favors freedom and boldness in newspaper correspondence. I will not allow any letter writer to attach his initials to his communications, unless he was a widely known & influential man like Greeley . . . . Besides the responsibility it fastens on a correspondent, the signature inevitably detracts from the powerful impersonality of a journal" (Andrews, North Reports, 359). In General Order 48 (April 30, 1863), Union General Joseph Hooker—frustrated over security leaks and personal attacks "by the publications of injudicious correspondents of an anonymous character"—declared that all copy must, thenceforth, be signed by the authors. Thus was invented the "by-line." Some complied (Starr, 195). For the end of our story: as the Union forces moved inexorably South, many newspapers of the Confederacy became "loyal Union" sheets or shut down. By the end of the war, there were only some 20 daily newspapers still being published in the South, fewer than in Virginia alone before

Captured Northern journalists were often held captive by the Confederate government under the most abysmal of conditions.

the war. They were barely hanging on: most news came from Yankee papers smuggled through the lines, shoe blacking substituted for ink—when there was enough paper on which to print even a greatly-attenuated edition—and the price of a subscription had jumped from five dollars a year to more than one hundred dollars. Before the war, only five percent of American paper production was in the South and the cost of paper was about five dollars a ream. Obviously, the war cut off supply from the North, the blockade made importation chancy, and near the end of the war, the price was sixty dollars. When there was paper. At various times during the war, newspapers resorted to printing on almost anything that would hold the ink, famously including, during the siege of Vicksburg, the blank reverse side of wallpaper. Should you fancy hanging a framed copy of the wallpaper version of the *Vicksburg Times* over your mantle, be advised: anyone with a letterpress print shop (fairly common well into the 1960s) and rolls of old wallpaper could have created a plausible counterfeit at any time since the war. There are probably more copies offered in roadside antique shops today than were printed then. By contrast, the newspapers of the North were flourishing. James Gordon Bennett—who had started the *Herald* with $500 borrowed money—turned down a purchase offer of $2 million.

As newspapers had an impact on the war, for good or ill, the war impacted newspapers for the greater good. Where most news coverage before the war had been limited and local, it became broad and national. A population of largely isolated groups, each knowing little of the rest of the nation, was brought together in the shared experience of the war—a war, brought to them in the newspapers. As an observer noted in 1866, "It is plain that journalist will henceforth and forever be an important and crowded profession in the United States" and that emphasis had shifted from editorials (which "do not much influence the public mind, nor change many votes") to something much broader: "The word 'newspaper' is the exact and complete description of the thing which the journalist aims to produce." (Parton 373-419).

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