

Thesis.

Growth and Development of Journalism in
the United States.

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Journalism in the United States.

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Journalism in the United States.

On this production, the writer will endeavor to trace the growth and development of journalism in the United States, from the time of its beginning up to the present century; and to make brief mention of some of the men who have held places of prominence in this profession. The importance of the press, and the high position it holds today, together with the prominence to which many men have risen in the journalistic field, are my reasons for choosing this subject. The newspaper today is the power of the world; it moulds public opinion, and its influence cannot be over-estimated. The one great mission of the press is to elevate humanity. With growth in power, the press has been accompanied by an increase of responsibilities.

This production has been written after a research and study of some of the most noted writers on the subject of journalism. The opinions of different journalists have been taken in part, and presented here in a condensed form, together with the ideas held by the writer. The broadness of the subject makes it almost impossible for one to do justice to it.

The Initial Papers.

The distinction of establishing the first newspaper in this country belongs to George Harris, an English printer. He was the publisher of Publick Occurrences, which paper appeared in Boston, in 1690. The government suspended the paper after the first issue. It was a small sheet, consisting of three pages, seven by eleven inches, with two columns of reading matter on each page.

Six years after this, Wm. Bradford of New York issued a copy of the London Gazette, which contained an account of the close of the French war. This paper was also short-lived.

Although these publications were soon suppressed by the government, their appearance was of great consequence. The people soon came to realize the necessity of newspapers.

The Permanent Journals.

The first publication to live any length of time was the Boston News-Letter, which was established in 1704, by John Campbell, who was at the

time postmaster. This paper lived seventy-two years. The sheet contained no advertisements; marriages were never mentioned, and rarely were deaths noticed by it. With this paper, the profession of the reporter had its origin. A complete file of the News-Letter may be found in the rooms of the New York Historical Society. John Campbell, the publisher of this first permanent journal, is considered the "father of the American press."

Newspaper men were not without their troubles in those days. Campbell lost his position as postmaster in 1711, and his successor, Wm. Brooker, soon after entering upon his official duties, began to issue the Boston Gazette. As one would naturally conclude, Campbell and Brooker were not the best of friends, and as a result, the newspaper war found its beginning, and was continued ever since.

In the year 1719, a third newspaper appeared, the American Weekly Mercury, published in Philadelphia, by Andrew Bradford. Benjamin Franklin was a frequent contributor to this paper.

All these papers had much trouble with the government authorities; but in spite of this fact, the papers gradually grew stronger; and it is from this start that the profession of journalism has developed.

At this period, the Franklin entered the news-

paper field and won fame. In 1721, James Franklin established the New England Courant, in Boston. Franklin initiated a new era in journalism; and though he suffered financially, the press gained in freedom and independence. He was very outspoken, and as a result, was imprisoned and forbidden to print anything. His brother, Benjamin Franklin, then assumed control, and carried out the same policy, although he was violently opposed by the government and the clergy, two of the most bitter enemies of the press at that time.

The first paper in New York appeared in 1725, and was published by Wm. Bradford, the "fourth printer in America". He was an ardent champion of the freedom of the press. Newspapers now began to increase in the colonies, in spite of the fact that they had much trouble with the government and the church. The first libel suit ever brought against a publisher was in 1735, and resulted in a decision in favor of the editor, which marked another victory for the advocates of the freedom and liberty of the press.

The newspaper made its appearance in the south in 1731, the date on which Thomas Whitehead began the publication of the South Carolina Gazette.

The Importance of the Early Papers.

The places at which the newspapers were printed, which numbered about eight, became the revolutionary centers of America. The fearlessness of the writers and the desire for independence in journalism were the cause of this. The first revolutionary paper was published in 1748 by Samuel Adams, and bore the appropriate name of the Independent Advertiser. Others sprang up rapidly. Many attempts made to resist the press were of no avail. Thought and speech became more free. The Boston Gazette and Country Gentleman, one of the most fearless and outspoken papers published at this time, became a powerful organ of the Whigs. Another very radical sheet, and one which favored constitutional freedom, was the Massachusetts Spy. Its influence was keenly felt by its opponents.

By 1775, newspapers had become an important institution in the colonies, and they rapidly increased in number. Between the years 1690 and 1783, sixty-seven newspapers had been established, and out of this number forty-three were still alive in 1783.

The Early Political Press.

This is a later phase of journalism, and one with which many of us are more familiar. Soon after the close of the American Revolution, two great parties simultaneously sprang up, and each one had its newspaper supporters. Journalism had not, at this early stage, become a profession; it was a power, and was managed by political chiefs. The pen became "mightier than the sword."

The first Democratic organ in the country was the New York Journal and Patriotic Register, founded by Thomas Greenleaf. It was very violent in its political struggles.

The daily newspaper made its appearance in 1784, the initial paper being the American Observer, published in Philadelphia, by Benjamin F. Boche. A very prominent figure in the journalistic field about this time was Philip Freneau, the editor of the New York Daily Advertiser. He possessed great ability as a writer, and wrote very bitter articles about his opponents. His writings were both earnest and brilliant. The papers were nearly filled with political discussions during this period.

We now come to another important personage in journalism, a man whose name is familiar to every one - Noah Webster. It was in 1793 that he first embarked in the newspaper business, at which time he began the publication of a daily paper in New York, the Minerva. Mr. Webster announced that his paper would be the "Friend of Government, of Virtue, of Freedom, and every Species of Improvement."

The Newspapers of the West.

Newspapers did not appear very fast in the new settlements of America. Material was scarce, and subscribers were hard to find. The first paper to be established north of the Ohio river was published at Cincinnati, in 1793, by Wm. Maxwell, to whom evidently belongs the title of "father of the press of the northwest." The appearance of railroads and the increase in population, which were great instruments in promoting the diffusion of reading matter, were the cause of many papers springing up in that section.

One of the most prominent papers of what was then called the west, is the St. Louis Republican.

This paper, when established, in 1804, was a sheet eight by thirteen inches in size. Now it is valued at over \$250,000. The growth made by the St. Louis Globe-Democrat has been quite as great. These illustrations show the rapid progress that has taken place in the newspaper business in a few years.

Special Journalism.

This profession, in common with all others, has various branches, and each branch has been specialized more or less. Among the various kinds of newspapers now existing, we may mention the religious, the medical, the scientific, the agricultural, the sporting, the commercial, the navy, and the Sunday papers.

There has been much dispute as to the founder of the religious press, several persons claiming this distinction. The first religious paper was the Boston Recorder, published in 1816. From this beginning, the number has rapidly increased, and in 1872, about 350 were issued. It is estimated that their combined circulation reached about one hundred million copies.

The agricultural press dates from 1818, at

which time John S. Skinner published the American Farmer, at Baltimore. The number of papers in the United States now that are devoted to agricultural interests probably exceed one hundred. These papers have been a factor of inestimable value in educating the vast number of people engaged in agricultural pursuits.

The commercial newspapers have been of no small value and importance. They have been very prominent factors in promoting the commercial interests of our country. In the early part of the century, some papers gave a little space to market reports, but that did not supply the demand. As a result, strictly commercial papers sprang up, and now they are so valuable in the business world that they are considered almost indispensable.

Sunday newspapers were unknown prior to 1825. At that time, the Sunday Courier appeared in New York, with Joseph C. Melcher as publisher. The Sunday paper is now very common, and almost all the dailies issue them. There is a strong sentiment against the Sunday paper among some of our people, but with the diffusion of education this sentiment seems to be dying out.

The sporting press made its debut in New York, in 1831. The first representative of this class was the

Spirit of the Times, published by Wm. L. Porter. This class of papers is made up of articles on almost all kinds of spots, and undoubtedly has value. Their circulation is necessarily limited, but they give much information on spots of various kinds.

The Transition Period of Journalism.

The size of the newspapers had been increased from eight by twelve inches in 1704 to thirty-five by fifty-eight inches in 1853. On these larger sheets space was no object; it was sold to advertisers at almost any price. Much of the reading matter would appear several times just to fill space. Such work had a deteriorating effect upon newspapers. It was evident that such a condition should be changed toward smaller sheets. In 1833-34, the "penny press" was on a sound footing, though it had passed through a hard struggle. The first penny paper of any kind and importance published in the United States was the Morning Post. This paper soon died, but the seed for the "penny press" had been sown, and it soon developed into a recognized institution.

The Independent Press.

The managers of the early newspapers in this country were not writers, but they were printers who entered the newspaper business expecting to fill their sheets with advertisements, news and free contributions from politicians and public writers. They were controlled by the chief politicians of the day.

Nathan Hall, editor of the Boston Daily Advertiser, was among the first persons to make regular editorial articles a feature of journalism. This he did in 1814. In the same year, an independent paper appeared - the American Telegraph, by Judge John Bower of Pennsylvania. It had for its motto: "Justice, Law, Liberty." But it was too early for an independent press, so this paper was "conducted on the principles of pure democracy."

The pioneer independent paper is the New York Herald, which was started with \$500 cash capital. But the brains of the founder was the real capital. Journalism had become a second nature with him. The first number of the Herald appeared in 1835, with James Gordon Bennett & Co. publishers. At this time, very few papers had a circulation of 6000 copies daily, and the circulation of many was as low as 500. But previous

to this, papers had to depend on stage coaches for their distribution. Now, regular trains were run, though they were few. Thus we see independent journalism coming into existence with the steamboat and railroad.

The first issue of the New York Herald was neatly printed on sheets ten by fourteen inches in size, and contained twelve columns of reading matter and four columns of advertisements. This paper introduced a new feature in American journalism - the "Money Articles", which consisted of a discussion of the financial question. These articles were considered very valuable, and until 1834, were written by Mr. Bennett himself. The circulation of the paper was greatly increased by these articles. The Herald plant was destroyed by fire in 1835, but after a lapse of nineteen days the journal reappeared. Mr. Bennett also introduced the "cash system" in the publication of newspapers. The Herald was constantly improving in quality and increasing in size, and grew stronger with every issue. The independent paper was bound to succeed. The politicians could not control or influence Mr. Bennett, no matter how many efforts they made. The Herald is now considered one of the richest establishments of its kind in the United States.

But this great paper had its enemies; and finding they could not destroy it by attacking it through other papers, a torpedo was sent to Mr. Bennett; and he had a very close and miraculous escape from death. Nor was the Herald free from libel suits. These increased as the editor grew rich.

Mr. Bennett, the founder of the Herald, died in 1872, at the age of seventy-seven years. He was surpassed in his profession by no one, nor was any journalist abused and praised more during his public career than he. The Herald passed into the hands of James Gordon Bennett, Jr., and continued to be a "one-man" paper.

This sketch of the New York Herald gives us a history of the rise of the independent press in our country.

The New York Tribune.

The New York Tribune is a paper no less remarkable than the New York Herald. With the Tribune, we always connect the name of Horace Greeley. This paper entered the field of journalism in 1841, with that noted journalist - Horace Greeley - at the helm. It started as a moral paper, and

advocated the principles of the whigs in politics. It had a hard struggle for existence at first, but it gradually grew strong enough to overcome opposition. It at once became an advocate of Fourierism, and the editor seemed to champion anything that was new. Its national principles were "a high protective tariff, and the abolition of slavery." Excepting the Herald, no paper has been more individualistic than the Tribune. The weekly edition won for it its national reputation. Its circulation ran up to 200,000 in 1872, which was considered extremely large at that time. The Tribune and the Herald often had great races as to which paper would get the latest foreign news. The Tribune at first was a violent party paper, but afterwards became an independent party paper, not controlled by politicians or bosses.

Several new principles were introduced in journalism by Mr. Greeley, among which was association in newspaper work. The Tribune, had a business manager, an editor-in-chief, and several managing editors. The force of managing editors consisted of Chas. A. Dana, Sidney Howard Gay, John Russell Young, and Whitelaw Reid. Another new feature in journalism was interviews with noted individuals. The Tribune is now one of the leading papers of our country. It has been made what it is chiefly by the efforts of one man - its founder.

The Telegraph as Related to the Press.

The telegraph has done as much or more than any other one force in developing newspapers. Its value cannot be overestimated. Let us imagine our telegraph system abolished; where would our newspapers be? Before the telegraph came into operation, messages were sent by means of carrier pigeons. But the telegraph and, too, belongs to the Associated Press. This association is known the world over. The associated press has existed since 1840, but not until the discovery of the telegraph did it come to be such an essential characteristic of the daily papers.

The Newspaper Reporter.

The reporter is a very necessary personage in the newspaper force of today. The early reporters knew nothing of stenography. Many attempts were made at first to have the reporters suppressed. Clergy-men, as a rule, opposed having their sermons reported. Reporters were first introduced on the daily press in 1840, and their work has become so important that now they are indispensable.

Schools of Journalism.

A journalist of course should be well educated. Quickness of thought and action are quite necessary. Many of the old journalists say a man cannot become proficient in that line by simply attending a school of journalism. Experience on good journals is very essential. One should also possess impartiality, should be able to lay aside his prejudices, and should have coolness of purpose and honest judgment to be a successful journalist.

The Future of Journalism.

The development of journalism in the United States has been traced from its beginning in 1690 up to its condition in the present century. But growth is not to stop here. The course of journalism has been ever onward and upward and so will continue to advance with civilization and industry. I will give in a condensed form some of the features which noted writers on the subject say will mark the future of journalism in the United States. The future press will contain less individuality; the

coming journalist is bound to be more broad and liberal in his views. The purpose of the journalist will be to enlighten, to represent public opinion, to restrain abuses, rather than to attack enemies and flatter friends - or in a word, the future journalist must give the news. Journalism will be more peaceful, more responsible and more dignified. There will be greater independence than ever from partisanship. The press is the leader in politics, backed by public opinion. There is a tendency toward a higher culture in all its departments. At present men of limited knowledge perform too much of the important work on our journals; but signs of a change are in evidence, and with such a change, journalism will still advance to a higher level.

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