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**“WE SEND OUR NEWS BY LIGHTNING . . .”: THE INFORMATION EXPLOSION OF THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY AND ADAPTATION IN THE PRESS, 1840-1892**

by

TIMOTHY L. MORAN

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2015

MAJOR: HISTORY (Early American)

Approved By:

Advisor Date

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2015

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DEDICATION

To two fiercely intelligent women,

Margaret Ann Reed Moran

and

Aimée Angèle Masquelier Moran

Whose love, support, and continuous quest for knowledge

always inspire and challenge.

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the Annual Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Freedom of Expression in Chattanooga, TN, in 2014.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

*Our Fathers gave us liberty,
 But little did they dream,
 The grand results that flow along
 This mighty age of steam;
 For our mountains, lakes and rivers,
 Are all a blaze of fire,
 And we send our news by lightning,
 On the telegraphic wire¹*

The advent of canals, postal roads, steam navigation, and steam railways changed the entire pace of American nineteenth century life, from that of a walking society to one which began to travel at speeds that exceeded a gallop on a horse. The rise of the corporation and the industrial revolution created new models for the application of speedy communication. Perhaps most important of all, the telegraph fundamentally changed communication expectations, making information transfer over distance into a near-real-time experience. Historian Daniel Walker Howe has illustrated the American adulation of new technology in his book, *What Hath God Wrought*, and writes of “The communications revolution [that] gave a new urgency to social criticism and to the slavery controversy in particular.”² Newspapers of the era form a record of the vast adjustment to possibilities and expectations that were inherent in this communications revolution. News media of the time were changed by technology in much the same way that twenty-first century media have been altered by the advent of universal Internet connections.

This project reexamines an extended period of journalism that has often been dismissed as a mere commercializing of the Press. Historians of journalism and historians of communication have focused on periodizing their fields and assigning developments to key concepts, such as the Penny Press,

¹ Jesse Hutchinson, Jr., 1850, *Roude Folk Song Index* 4556.

² Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford, 2007), p. 7.

the Party Press, the Frontier Press, or the Muckraking Press. A consensus has seemed to state that the press grew bigger but did not fundamentally change between these periods and, at a surface glance, the generally type-heavy and grey pages of Victorian-era newspapers would support that consensus. But an examination of newspapers and the people who owned them and worked for them shows that they were accomplishing new things while choosing new roles for their publications – becoming more factual and less literary, appointing themselves as arbiters of national issues, and moving the center of newsmaking authority to an indefinite location somewhere in the new web of communication that developed over the iron wires of the telegraph.³

The new technologies in transportation and communication were all implemented just as the pivotal event of the American Civil War gave impetus to the fundamental social changes being made as a result of that national conflict. Like the spark that ignites an explosion, the outbreak of war mobilized the potential of communication technology. Rapid advances made in news and newsgathering during the war did not end, however, with the conclusion of combat. Instead, over the next thirty years, a newly professionalized news industry explored the full range of possibilities inherent in robust communication technology. In the same way that scholar Benedict Anderson has described nationalism as creating an imagined community, the news process created an imagined community of readers who, themselves, had developed new expectations of what represented “the news.”⁴

This dissertation argues that the introduction of fast, networked communication, coupled with major events that demanded its rapid integration, resulted in a press that developed into a new and

³ A popular folk notion has held that copper wire was the primary material for telegraph cable and that spread of the telegraph was made possible through frontier discoveries of massive copper deposits such as those in Michigan’s Keewenaw peninsula. Morse’s demonstration line between Baltimore and Washington was made of copper, but iron wire quickly became the standard for telegraph installation. Iron wire for the 1860 Pacific Telegraph weighed 350 pounds per mile, according to Joshua D. Wolff, *Western Union and the Creation of the American Corporate Order* (New York: Cambridge, 2013), 57, while costlier copper would also have weighed twelve percent more.

⁴ The concept of imagined community is borrowed from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 2006), though the work of David Paul Nord is also important to this concept. Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

specialized organism compared to the press of the Early Republic. While it would never be confused with the later press of the twentieth century, this new press had much about it that was “modern.” Its development shows a transition made due to the exigent circumstances of the increasing pace of communication in society. The majority of newspaper historians have claimed over time that the professional press did not exist until after the 1890s, but the signs of adaptation and change seem to come much earlier, particularly during the Civil War. Rather like the early users of the United States Defense Agency computer network, ARPANET, who did not foresee the future effects of the Internet and its Worldwide Web, early newspaper users of rapid communication did not instantly create a fully rationalized system. The creation of news networks based on quick surface and electrical communication transformed an earlier, more genteel relationship between editors and “correspondents,” literal letter-writers, and replaced the latter with a professionalized corps of reporters. At least one author, Thomas Standage, has referred to this phenomenon as the advent of the “Victorian Internet.”⁵ While the label is appealing, such a characterization must be treated cautiously. Communication scholar Richard John has warned that Internet is a poor technological analogy for the emergence of the telegraph.⁶ John is right that the technical workings of the nineteenth century networks do not allow the kind of common personal access that has democratized information flow in the twenty-first century. The evidence that people of the later nineteenth century reacted to overwhelming advances in information technology in much the same way that the Internet has challenged society today, however, can be seen in adaptations made in the press; in its form, its content, and its business methods.

Much of the history of journalism written in the late twentieth century has been aimed at explaining how “modern” objective journalism rose from quaint antecedents to the height of full-news

⁵ Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-line Pioneers* (New York: Walker, 1998).

⁶ Richard R. John, *Network Nation Inventing American Telecommunications*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010), 2.

journalism. Authors in doing so have generally assumed that objective and factual reporting represented the ultimate development of journalism, and many have tried to look back for specific trails that set newspapers on the road to that perceived ideal. Yet the “modern” paper used as a reference point may have been only a fleeting phase of communication. Media historian John Nerone has noted that American fascination with “freedom of the press” was a Cold War affectation in which emergence of a corporate American press could be contrasted with the state presses of restrictive political systems. “Postwar [WWII] thinkers at once embraced freedom of the press as a safeguard against fascism,” writes Nerone, but then explains that a corporate press’ existence had to be balanced against the individual rights of the people. This was done in the seminal liberal work *Four Theories of the Press* by defining modern journalism as a balanced approach using university-trained journalists to work for large corporate entities in an industry with high barriers to entry. “We are forced to conclude from descriptions of media systems in *Four Theories* that only private capital imposes no restraint and that it is a benign organizational form,” Nerone says in revisiting the original publication. So to some extent the idea that the nineteenth century press could not be understood as professional or modern is related to the fact that it did not exist in the same political environment that defined the late twentieth century.⁷ It has taken the disruption of the past decade to show that new technology and unexpected events combine to create their own stimulus and organic change within media. The disruption has also created a faulty and artificial divide between “objective” and “professional” journalism, holding papers of record such as the New York Times as representative while dismissing the sensationalist press and the reform press as not suitable for study. Journalism analysts of the 1990s saw their industry as a mature and consolidating one facing incremental adaptation; none would have predicted that the combination of the Internet and the Great Recession together would sap print advertising revenue from a high of \$49.4 billion in 2005 to less than half of that amount by 2011. Overall newspaper revenue in 2013, including

⁷ John Nerone, ed., *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1995), p. 5-6, 14, 27.

circulation and online advertising, stood at \$37.6 billion. Those same analysts could not have predicted the massive shrinkage in newsrooms and news staffs: More than 15,000 reporters, editors, and other “front line” print news professional positions were eliminated from after 2004, according to American Society of Newspaper Editors figures.⁸ The radical shift has led to the term, “New Journalism,” for the digital and broadcast world of news dissemination that has largely replaced the old-format “Full News” model. Even the term “New Journalism” is under challenge by a combination of social media and crowdsourcing that has begun to choke off interest in long-form professionally produced publications appearing in newspaper style.⁹

I hypothesize that the same sort of cause – the effects of disruptive technology – led to the dramatic news transition that took place in the 1860s and beyond, but in the opposite direction. Print circulation grew enormously; news staffs burgeoned; and new literacy in use of networks and transportation were developed on the fly to serve impatient subscribers. Novel practices of the 1840s and 1850s, such as printing separate columns of telegraphic news became standard expectations in the post-war years. Fluency in the use of communication technology, meanwhile, gave new prominence to previously excluded voices and took control and authority away from editors who once mediated the pace of local news. Eventually, despite near-monopolistic ownership of news associations, a media elite in New York City was superseded and toppled by more robust users of network technology in what was then the West.

This dissertation analyzes the evidence of newspapers; their significant change in content, layout, and page development; their position within growing networks as democratizers of technology;

⁸ Alan D. Mutter, “Newspaper Job Cuts surged 30% in 2011,” *Confessions of a Newsosaur*, entry posted December 19, 2011, <http://newsosaur.blogspot.com/2011/12/newspaper-job-cuts-surged-30-in-2011.html> (accessed May 22, 2014); Associated Press, “Newspaper Industry Revenue Continued to Fall in 2013,” entry posted April 18, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/18/newspaper-revenue-2013-industry_n_5174725.html (accessed May 22, 2014).

⁹ Casey Newton, “Why Circa Failed,” *TheVerge.com* explains the 2015 collapse of an online edited newspaper because readers were impatient with its form and its lack of aggressive partisan bias. <http://www.theverge.com/2015/6/24/8842009/why-circa-failed> (accessed June 24, 2015).

and their increasing sophistication in business methods and acceptance as entities worthy of collegiate program development to show the significance of advances made in what otherwise might appear to be a fallow time. Its intent is to veer away from the lure of the biographical study of romantic personalities and vaunted news organizations in order to focus on the record left by the work itself. This project's scope is national, although primary emphasis is on news organizations and newspapers east of the Mississippi River, where population and business density forced the most rapid change and where media technological innovation on a mass scale was concentrated.

Historians have often dismissed journalism in the mid-to-late nineteenth century as a backwater, a period of marking time between the 1830s innovation of the Penny Press and the ultimate commercial success of the so-called "Yellow Journalism" and the battle of Hearst and Pulitzer's news empires in the late 1890s. This is partly due to a robust fascination with the press as a physical harbinger of freedom of expression, especially its role in the frontier and westward movement, a triumphalist narrative made popular during the Cold War and in American celebration of the nation's bicentennial. Pictorial books such as Robert F. Karolevitz's *Newspapering in the Old West* and a vogue for press antiquities expressed in efforts like Frank Luther Mott's *Oldtime Comments on Journalism*, emphasized eccentricities rather than examining the news business systemically. More recently, historians have examined aspects of the nineteenth century Press as interesting phenomena on their own, as can be seen in the work of writers such as William Huntzicker on the Penny Press or Menahem Blondheim on telegraphic news. That a more synthetic approach has been undertaken can be seen in the Annual Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression, held annually in Chattanooga, Tennessee and producing semi-annual volumes of collected essays.¹⁰

¹⁰ Robert F. Karolevitz, *Newspapering in the Old West: A Pictorial History of Journalism and Printing on the Frontier* (Seattle, WA: Superior Publishing Company, 1965); Frank Luther Mott, ed., *Oldtime Comments on Journalism* (Columbia, MO: The Press of the Crippled Turtle, University of Missouri, 1955), hand-pressed brochure series produced by the Linotype school.

The role of the press during the Civil War and the decades immediately following has been approached as a colorful subject within Civil War literature. While Brayton Harris states “On average, there has been one book about the Civil War published every day since the shooting ended,” he notes that only a few of those books have focused on journalism or the popular press. Within the study of journalism history, James Crouthamel states that “Press coverage of the Civil War is the most heavily researched topic in the history of American journalism.” This makes it a standout in a relatively narrow field of study. Crouthamel’s is one voice that claims the Civil War “brought no fundamental changes to the [New York] *Herald* or other metropolitan newspapers,” arguing that the conflict merely “accentuated developments already underway.”¹¹ His statement is interesting for seeing antecedents to developments brought by the war.

Of those historians who have taken an interest in this period of journalism, most have concentrated on the development of the professional war correspondent as the significant feature of the era. Charles Dickens coined the term in 1844 in the serialized novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*. His fictional editor, “Colonel Driver” of the *New York Rowdy Journal*, introduced “My War Correspondent, sir—Mr. Jefferson Brick!” to a visiting Englishman. While more than twenty actual war correspondents covered the Mexican War (1846-1848), historians broadly have credited British reporter William Howard Russell with creating the craft of war correspondence during the Crimean War (1853-1856). It was not until the American Civil War that hundreds of correspondents took to the field to report on the armies of both sides. While the war correspondent is an appealing avenue of study, the importance of the war correspondent per se is not as significant for American journalism as the sudden advent of so many reporters in the field and the subsequent increase in competitive news flow from on-the-spot

¹¹ James L. Crouthamel, *Bennett’s New York Herald and the Rise of the Popular Press* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989), 182, n. 21; *ibid*, 112.

individuals. The *New York Herald*, for example, was managing sixty-three reporters in the field during the war, up from an antebellum reporting stable of eight.¹²

Historians of the Civil War press may be divided into two camps, the narrative and the analytical. The narrative historians predominate and focus primarily on the parallel story of the development of war correspondence alongside the campaigns of the Civil War. The analytical historians, meanwhile, have attempted to tell the story of “the Press” as a larger entity affected by the war. In each case, however, the overwhelmingly colorful stories of correspondents themselves have conspired to take center stage. The lure to venture into anecdote and personification is immense in this robust time of outsized personalities such as those of Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett, or Wilbur Storey.¹³

The narrative school includes the wave of personal reminiscences of journalistic participants published immediately following the war, both as stand-alone autobiographical volumes and as articles contributed to collective works such as *The Century* magazine (later published in book form in the four-volume *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*). J. Cutler Andrews lists more than 90 such books and articles in a special bibliographic section, with an even larger number of autobiographies. These included offerings from correspondents themselves, but also from others involved in the news process, including telegraphers, editors, and political operatives. These memoirs, such as those of correspondent Sylvanus Cadwallader, were generally written in a highly informal style and with a deeply personal slant and with little attempt at balance or comprehensiveness. While they open windows onto process, methods, and

¹² Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, World’s Classics edition, ed. Margaret Cardwell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 225. Dickens had traveled to America in 1842. He was unimpressed with American newspapers: in *Chuzzlewit* he named the Rowdy’s New York competitors the *Sewer*, the *Family Spy*, the *Private Listener*, the *Peeper*, the *Plunderer*, and the *Keyhole Reporter*. Crouthamel, *Bennett*, 119. Russell’s claim to be the first civilian war correspondent is engraved at his tomb in St. Paul’s Cathedral in London; Phillip Knightly, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2004), 2. For development of American war correspondence in the 1840s, see Tom Reilly, *War with Mexico! America’s Reporters Cover the Battlefield*, ed. Manley Witten, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 2010).

¹³ More recent works such as David Bulla and Gregory Borchard’s *Journalism in the Civil War Era* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010) take a more measured approach. Another 2010 volume, illuminating development of war correspondence in the 1840s, is Tom Reilly’s posthumously published *War with Mexico! America’s Reporters Cover the Battlefield*, edited by his student Manley Witten.

personalities during the war, they must be approached with caution. Many are casuistic and sometimes argumentative narratives written years after the fact in order to reinforce a personal view of an issue in debate. As one example, two separate authors each claimed to have been the first United States military telegraphers, their accounts naming many of the same people but in bewilderingly different circumstances. In Cadwallader's case, the posthumous publication of his memoir in the 1950s showed the writer determined to claim for himself the role of mentor and sometime savior of Gen. Ulysses Grant, especially when it came to that general's rumored alcohol abuse. Cadwallader showed his manuscript to a few contemporaries, but he chose not to publish it at the time as being too controversial.¹⁴

Narrative history took a leap forward with Louis M. Starr's work dealing with correspondents and centered around the *New York Tribune*. Starr was aided in his work with the discovery of hundreds of previously unpublished letters written to Sydney Howard Gay, literally a "barn find." The letters were found in 1950 in a trunk in what had been a Staten Island stable during the Civil War when Gay served as the *Tribune's* managing editor. Starr had unique personal access to the papers of other journalistic leaders, including those of Frederic Hudson, the *New York Herald's* managing editor, and *Herald* reporter and later railroad magnate Henry Villard. Among his other contributions, Starr revealed the root of the "Bohemian" title used by reporters of the early war years who styled themselves the "Bohemian Brigade." The euphonious title captured imaginations at the time, and it has continued to fascinate authors and historians. During the Civil War, willful behavior on the part of these New York City-based war reporters antagonized military leaders at many different levels. It led to the larger press

¹⁴ J. Cutler Andrews, *The North Reports the Civil War* (1953; repr. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 764-772;

corps being characterized as reckless individualists whose loyalty and morals were dubious and whose independent ways should be suppressed.¹⁵

Perhaps the watershed contribution to the narrative genre has been J. Cutler Andrews's authoritative works on the reporting of the Civil War, a comprehensive pair of books that were produced straddling the war's centennial and that focused on the lives and work of correspondents and editors. Journalism historian Debra Redding van Tuyl calls the books the most noted scholarly works on Civil War reporting, but she states "While each of these works is packed with compelling stories of bravery and daring and sound analysis of the reporting, they lack an important element: context."¹⁶

Andrews began his work as World War II was still unfolding. He published his 648-page review of Northern reporting in 1953, having tapped private manuscript collections and memoirs that had not been generally available to the public or perhaps had been overlooked. Andrews' approach followed the lead set by Carl Becker of paying attention to history from the bottom up, and his writing style showed a flair for narrative and detail that mirrored the storytelling of a Bruce Catton or Garrett Mattingly. Like those peers, Andrews created breezy dialogue and novelistic detail to go beyond the historical record. The opening of one chapter, for example, includes an emotional and improbably detailed "conversation" between a reporter for the *Charleston Mercury* and a ship captain that reads like a screenplay: "'Aye, aye, sir, I'll take my chance,' said the *Mercury* man gleefully as he waved a greeting to the crowd on shore, for the steamer was even then casting off and he could not have remained behind had he wished to," the passage concludes. Andrews explained that: "When I write I prefer a combination of narrative and expository history to the topical, or problem-oriented, approach ... In my view, history should tell a

¹⁵ Louis M. Starr, *Bohemian Brigade: Civil War Correspondents in Action* (New York: Knopf, 1954), http://www.archive.org/stream/bohemianbrigadec027541mbp/bohemianbrigadec027541mbp_djvu.txt (accessed June 26, 2011). Many of the reporters had been frequenters of a basement beer garden named "Pfaff's Cave" in New York City, described by poet Walt Whitman as "[T]he vault ...where drinkers and laughers meet to eat and drink and carouse." It was the popular haunt of *bon vivant* Ada Clare, self-styled "Queen of Bohemia," whose theory held that Bohemians paid no attention to social rules and conventions but instead did just as they pleased.

¹⁶Debra van Tuyl in the forward to Bulla and Borchard, *Journalism in the Civil War Era*, xi.

meaningful story as well as analyze the character and behavior of its principals.” It was an approach favored in the 1950s, but one that has since been criticized by historiographers for giving too much license to historians to invent details beyond the evidence. Andrews’ work has remained relevant because his scholarly attention to documentation was impeccable. He defined his historical window narrowly, from 1861 to 1865: he admitted difficulties and shortcomings up front, e.g. describing the problem of obtaining back files of Southern newspapers, many of whose offices had been destroyed during the war. These scholarly touches created a high standard which the field has largely preserved.¹⁷

Since the 1990s, the apparent resurgence of interest in Civil War media has led to narrative works on other facets of the press during the conflict. Authors have remained fascinated by the correspondents themselves. Some books simply retell existing, repackaged information initially revealed by Andrews and others. Harris’ *Blue & Gray in Black & White* (1999) is one such example, as is James M. Perry’s *A Bohemian Brigade* (2000). While these add relatively little new interpretation and largely revisit ground already churned by Andrews, Starr, and others, specialization in some works has led to new insights. Ian F.W. Beckett chronicled the British correspondents of the *London Times*—Antonio Gallenga, J.C. Bancroft Davis, Charles Mackay, and Francis Lawley, in addition to the better-known William Howard Russell. Beckett intersperses large verbatim extracts from *Times* articles with a chronicle of its correspondents’ activities and summaries of wartime events and characters. Although the process isolates the London reports from the context of other papers’ news offerings, Beckett’s description of the failures of the *Times* and its biased reporting shows how a dominant foreign newspaper lost credibility within its own country due to a rigid editorial policy favoring the South.

Some narrative historians make novel claims, often with great breadth and a modern interpretation. One such is Standage with his “Victorian Internet” populism. “The telegraph,” he writes,

¹⁷ Andrews, *The North Reports the Civil War*; Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War* (1970; repr. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), vii-viii, 3.

“had annihilated the distance between the soldiers at the front and the readers back home ... Rather less conveniently, it had also annihilated the distance between the enemy capitals.” While focused more on British newspapers’ use of telegraphic information during the Crimean War than on American newspapers during the Civil War, Standage’s undocumented 1998 work holds that the telegraph disrupted many facets of society, not least the world of journalism. News took on “[T]he illusion of global coverage, providing a summary of all the significant events of the day, from all over the world, in a single edition.” The corollary effect, however, was to remove control and rationing of the news from the hands of local editors, who had to compete with rival and national publications in order to meet reader expectations of getting the very latest news, rather than simply the news that fit an editor’s interest. “Increasingly, news was worth money,” Standage writes. “If there were four developments to a major story during the day, newspapers could put out four editions – and some people would buy all four.”¹⁸

While the narrative school was flourishing, the scholarly study of Civil War journalism emerged as the centennial approached.¹⁹ To use one example, Robert S. Harper’s 1951 work on Lincoln and the press gave context to journalistic work of the time by matching published stories with the histories of individual editors and their relation to Lincoln and his policies. While the bulk of Harper’s writing is a simple chronicle of incidents, with corresponding snippets of press coverage and Lincoln anecdotes, his book also details the casual closeness of politicians to working editors and newspapers. Harper was a student of historian Allan Nevins, and his narrative approach closely follows the American triumphalist tone. Nevins, in his own monumental Civil War history, held that American newspapers at the dawn of the sectional conflict were “lifted ... to special importance.” Nevins noted that “Except England, no other country possessed dailies which purveyed intelligence so intelligently as the best sheets in the larger

¹⁸ Standage, *Victorian Internet*, 152-53, 156-57, 149.

¹⁹ A similar resurgence has occurred with the sesquicentennial, though public interest in the 150th anniversary has not reached the heights expressed in the 1960s for the centennial.

American cities.” His student Harper was particularly interested in the opposition press and its function during the sectional conflict; but in examining the issue, he explained a significant number of generally accepted business practices, such as political ownership of newspapers. His excerpts reveal journalism changing under pressure. “[T]he molders of the Constitution made no provision for handling a sectional and intensely partisan press in a period of civil strife. Whether the press should remain free when the safety of the nation is paramount raised a question which is still unanswered. Lincoln had no precedent. He set his own,” wrote Harper.²⁰

Similarly without precedent was the situation faced by Southerners, whose newspapers had to adjust to the fact of secession. In 1966 Donald E. Reynolds published a tightly focused analysis of southern editors’ responses to the secession crisis from January 1860, to a cutoff date of mid-May, 1861. He tracked the rapid shift of Southern editorial opinion from “...generally Unionist position in 1860 to a predominantly secessionist viewpoint a year later.” Reynolds identified a split in mental approach and openness that hobbled Southern adaptation to journalistic changes during the war almost as much as physical shortages and blockade isolation did. He reviewed more than 200 newspapers, both rural and urban publications. Among his findings, Reynolds claims that newspapers framed reality for much of the interior of the South and did so in a highly biased manner. “Editors carefully selected news that reflected their own viewpoints,” he wrote, adding that such news was “[M]aterial that had been lifted bodily and, sometimes, without acknowledgment from other journals.” Reynolds discovered uneasiness on the part of journalists at the impact of new technology, such as the telegraph, that might bring outside information to their readership in ways that competed with the editors’ views or threatened their monopoly over news distribution. He wrote that: “The isolation of the Southern press from any influences that might have restored to it a national perspective and its intensely partisan nature helped make Southern newspapers the perfect vehicles to emotionalize both real and imaginary sectional

²⁰ Allan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union* (New York: Scribner’s, 1947), vol. 1, 87; Robert S. Harper, *Lincoln and the Press*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), preface.

differences.” From Reynolds’ book, it can be concluded that the press had real power to shape an imagined community. Even remote editors in journalistic backwaters knew that they held that power, and their opposition to losing it showed they also recognized the forces of change that were reshaping the news business.²¹

Some of the analytical historians argue against conventional interpretations of the causes of journalistic progress. Michael Schudson’s *Discovering the News* concentrated primarily on the post-Civil War changes that led, first, to professionalization of newsgathering and, second, to the split between news as entertainment and news as information, a phenomenon he locates in the 1890s. In Schudson’s introduction, he challenges popularly accepted explanations of reasons for the “revolution” in journalism that accompanied the rise of the penny press and its remarkable success during the Popular Press period. Schudson attempts to rebut claims that a national increase in literacy, improvements in technology, or any form of “natural history” of evolution of the news enterprises built the new journalism of the 1840s. He argues, instead, that it was the emergence of “professional methodology” that moved newspapers to prominence and to change. Schudson warns, though, that for all the progress made in the nineteenth century, “[O]bjective reporting did not become the chief norm or practice in journalism in the late nineteenth century.” His finding may be true in a general sense, and certainly nobody would confuse a front page from the 1880s or 1890s with one from the twenty-first century on the basis of objectivity or reporting standards. His argument seems to dismiss ample contemporary evidence of a focus on technology, literacy, and other building blocks of an advanced reading culture as a public good to be sought.²²

²¹ Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970), ix, 215, 217

²² Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 5, 17; newspapers such as the *New York Tribune*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, and *Chicago Times* used masthead illustrations of the most advanced technologies, such as steam trains, steamboats, and high-speed steam presses to associate themselves with cutting-edge progress, while social commentators such as Jane Addams urged public improvement through literacy.

Writing on the origins of the Popular Press of the 1830s is a dedicated but small group of historians specializing in the area. The popular press, because of its size and investment, tended to lead in journalistic trends. This was especially due to its dominance of the New York Associated Press and its influence on setting the telegraphic news agenda. Writing on the popular press, William E. Huntzicker presented a remarkable and comprehensive survey of the genesis of the penny press of New York and of journalistic developments from 1833 to 1865. Huntzicker is a proponent of the idea that the Civil War and technological leaps brought change to journalism. While his work is focused primarily on editors such as Greeley, Henry J. Raymond, and James Gordon Bennett and their business practices, its comprehensive sweep takes in specialty publications, western newspaper “wars,” and Southern and regional journalism. Huntzicker’s final chapter, “Reflections on the Popular Press,” is especially useful. In it, he notes that the changing nature of journalism at the time of the war can be seen in the creation of specialized job descriptions such as managing editors, phonographers, paragraphers, special correspondents and special artists. However, Huntzicker—like Schudson—also warns that though the trend in leading newspapers was not necessarily divorced from political journalism. He writes, “[T]heir revolution did not immediately transform partisan journalists into objective reporters.” Instead, Huntzicker claims, the time saw the building of structure that professionalized the newspaper and harmonized the process of newsgathering and dissemination.²³

Another scholar of the popular press is James Crouthamel, mentioned earlier, whose 1989 work concentrated on a single newspaper, the *New York Herald*, and its controversial and innovative editor, James Gordon Bennett. Crouthamel’s deep focus on the *Herald* and Bennett is particularly useful on the editorial change that the Civil War brought. In a rare direct editorial discussion, Bennett is quoted as

²³ William E. Huntzicker, *The Popular Press, 1833-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 168-169. Phonographers were transcription specialists who could take down speeches verbatim; paragraphers were specialists at writing short summary items. Harper, *Lincoln and the Press*, 25-26. One of the best-known was Robert Hitt, of the *Chicago Press and Tribune*, who was responsible for recording most of Lincoln’s speeches in the Lincoln-Douglas debates. At Freeport, Lincoln delayed his speech so that a late-arriving Hitt could be lifted and passed to the platform over the heads of the standing-room-only crowd.

saying that the newly-trained corps of professional reporters who had been covering the war would not be dismissed at the end of the conflict, but they would now be “[sent] as our ambassadors to all the great capitals of the world ... Just as there is a *Herald’s* headquarters tent with every army ... so shall there be a *Herald* legion in all the chief cities from Melbourne to Spitsbergen.” While Crouthamel denies that the Civil War brought significant change, Bennett’s attitude indicates a serious change in the way newspapers viewed their correspondents. Earlier, they had been a haphazard network of letter-writers. Crouthamel’s chapter “Technology and the News,” outlines the course of news adoption from 1840 to 1860, based on the triumph of general distribution newspapers over the mercantile press. Crouthamel also introduces his work with comments that community desire and input created the organism that was the *Herald*: “The Herald, editorial columns aside, was the best newspaper of its time, and it was written in a style that identified with rather than spoke down to its readers.” The inference that identifying with the reader could dictate editorial style adds further weight that news organizations recognition of the needs of their readers as much as the whims of their editorial leaders.²⁴

Scholars who have paid attention to communication systems themselves have contributed greatly to understanding of the functioning of the media world. Richard R. John’s significant and thoughtful research on the postal system, published in 1995, provides a detailed picture of the environment that the newspaper occupied in antebellum times. His later work on the telegraph and the telephone give brilliant detail to the emergence of networked communications. Although John’s work does not directly touch on the Civil War, it explains factors that affected news distribution as well as the culture that surrounded it. According to data cited by John, by 1840, some 39 million newspapers annually were mailed in the United States, compared to fewer than 2 million in 1800. This created an “imagined community,” such as those nationalistic ones theorized by political scientist Benedict Anderson, but in this case one that was dependent on the mail, and that reinforced male domination of

²⁴ James L. Crouthamel, *Bennett’s New York Herald and the Rise of the Popular Press*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1989), x, 54, 138.

information. Women were rarely welcome (and were often victimized or heckled) at the post offices themselves. The offices were often located in stores, taverns, or “public houses,” that served as the local commons but were socially off-limits to females. In addition, John carefully delineates the pre-Jacksonian development of the American postal network as an information structure that created its own demand, independent of technology. Only the postal system had the capability to “broadcast” throughout America, establishing expectations that later news evolution had to meet. John’s definition of the effects this distribution system had is compelling: “[I]t may well be the periodical character of the information that the postal system transmitted that most sharply differentiated the information that Americans received in this way from the other kinds of information that were available to them at the time,” he wrote.²⁵

The topic of imagined communities or the distributed nature of the audience for the Press has further extended journalistic history and given a fruitful area for understanding of mass audiences. Like John’s picture of imagined community and Crouthamel’s theory that readership defined the newspaper, David Paul Nord’s scholarly essays written over the course of twenty years shed an interesting light on the idea of the American newspaper of the nineteenth century as a created community, a concept Nord attributes to Alexis de Tocqueville. For Nord, journalism has been in an ever-shifting balance between supplying facts and providing a public forum for debate and opinion. Citing Tocqueville’s 1831 *Democracy in America*, Nord quotes: “A newspaper can only survive if it gives publicity to feelings or principles common to a large number of men. A newspaper therefore always represents an association whose members are its regular readers.” Tocqueville referred to the multiplicity of U.S. newspapers as “bizarre” and explained that their existence must be due to the complex electoral politics of the country. Tocqueville wrote, “The more numerous local powers, the greater the number of people required by law

²⁵ John, *Spreading the News* pp. 7, 109-10, 138-40; in *Network Nation* he notes that male exclusivity within communication networks began to crumble when women were employed first as telegraphers and then as telephone operators in the later nineteenth century.

to exercise them and the more insistently this necessity is felt, the more newspapers abound.” He continued, “The newspaper represents the associations and one may say that it speaks to each of its readers in the name of all the others, sweeping them along all the more readily as they are individually powerless.”²⁶ Nord argues strongly that the reading community, instead, exercised control over newspapers and effectively brought varying types of news coverage into being. He writes, “American journalism has never had a golden age. Americans have always exploited the press, have always used both the information and forum function of the press to build groups and communities in their own interest and image – and to tear others down.”²⁷ In this, Civil War journalism conforms absolutely in its North-South opposition, especially in Southern insularity of opinion cited earlier. But the actual use of the newspaper as an information asset undermines the idea that such communities had firm boundaries. In fact, news boundaries overlapped. Richmond newspapers, in particular, proudly declared that they had “full files” of the most recent Northern newspapers, obtained from treaty boats, military sources, and commercial travelers, while Northern papers often reprinted stories culled from Southern newspaper pages. While Nord is more interested in journalism of the late 18th century and of the later Progressive era, his concepts of community have merit for discussion of Civil War journalism.²⁸

Technology specialists have contributed an approach based on the hardware of industrial advances and its effects on the communication structure of the nation. Several authors have concentrated on technology and the emergence of networks, primarily in the form of the telegraph, to explain the larger impact of wartime coverage on journalism and on national news expectations. The best of these, Menahem Blondheim, incorporates communications theory of Harold Adams Innis and Marshall McLuhan to argue that the overlooked area of wire news actually explains the emergence of

²⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Gerald Bevan (New York: Penguin, 2003), 601-604, as cited in Nord, *Communities of Journalism*, 7.

²⁷ Nord, *Communities of Journalism*, 9.

oligopoly in “[T]he supply and demand for information.” He illustrates his argument by tracking the emergence of the Associated Press. Blondheim’s central thesis is that an Associated Press monopoly in the late 1870s essentially nationalized the news and skewed national coverage toward Republican politics. But it was during the Civil War that the telegraph itself was temporarily taken over by the government and the New York AP was given a limited government monopoly. Blondheim’s description of the circumstances and business arrangements is detailed and useful. The work is thoroughly documented; the footnotes alone make a rich and coherent source. His carefully crafted text illuminates newspaper relationships with the U.S. Post Office, some business practices, and typical expenses; and the change over time that technology brought to the creation and the spread of news.²⁹ At least two more recent works extend knowledge of the telegraph as an information system and network; they include David Hochfelder’s *The Telegraph in America* and Richard John’s *Network Nation*. John’s 2010 work meticulously describes the postal telegraph movement and the frequent debates over whether the government, rather than private industry, should have controlled the wires. Hochfelder explores the rise of Western Union and its “hard-headed business practices,” including monopolistic use of rights-of-way in order to prevent competitors; he also examines claims that the nature of the telegraph significantly changed American prose writing styles.³⁰

Historical approaches to nineteenth century journalism continue to evolve, especially as new lines of analysis allow historians to realize new possibilities in the field. The departure from biographies of editors or episodic descriptions of the romantically characterized correspondents does not necessarily mean devolution to a bloodless, institutional form of history. More recent examples of the analytical school include the work of David B. Sachsman, S. Kitrell Rushing, Debra Van Tuyll and others. Building on

²⁹ Blondheim, *News Over the Wires*, vii-viii, 3, 6, 16.

³⁰ Richard R. John, *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010); David Hochfelder, *The Telegraph in America, 1832—1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2013); David Goodman, review of *The Telegraph in America*, by David Hochfelder, *American Historical Review* 118, no. 5 (December, 2013): 1535-1536.

The Annual Symposium on the Antebellum Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression held at the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga has led to two significant books of essays concerning Civil War journalism with a broad range of approaches. These have focused intense examination of journalism in specific states and regions, to investigation of individual journalistic incidents. One such is the “bogus proclamation” of 1864, in which telegraphic journalists made up a Presidential order calling for 400,000 additional troops, bringing down heavy censorship and leading to the arrest and imprisonment of several editors, reporters, and the entire staff of the Independent Telegraph Company. The essays have shown that controversial new thinking on Civil War journalism is not only possible, but is fruitful, and that reexamination of the primary sources on a regional and even local basis can open promising channels of historical interpretation.³¹

Too intense a focus on personalities has obscured the very real changes that came to the news under the pressure of wartime needs and demands and in the decades afterward. This dissertation seeks to add understanding of the paper as an indicator of the new thinking and the development of a complex, systems approach to an imagined community in the later nineteenth century. The signs of this transition came in changes in content and layout exhibited by many newspapers. The reactions of individuals to pressures to innovate in news media cement this evolution as an intentional reaction to an overwhelming flow of simultaneous events. The basis for rapid linked and networked communications existed before the Civil War, but it was not well understood and, in many cases, the technical capabilities were feared or disbelieved. It took the pressure of war to change the method of newsgathering and publication, and the advantages of peace to build systems that maximized the overall effect that these changes wrought.

³¹ The Chattanooga gathering has since been renamed the Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression. Van Tuyll’s most recent book is a compelling analysis of the Confederate press that demands a rethinking of the generally-accepted idea of Southern newspapers as having been late adopters of technology or modern methods. Van Tuyll, *The Confederates in the Press Crucible of the Civil War* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013).

The period of study is from 1840 to 1893, the year that the New York Associated Press was disbanded and a new, national, Associated Press was formed. The study has a concentration on the Civil War years and the effects of news demand and utilization of new technology to meet that demand. While the war seems to be the most pivotal cause, introduction of new press forms beginning in the late 1830s and of new steam-powered production processes in the 1840s and 1850s set the stage for the journalistic leap that was to come. The post-war decades show the absorption and standardization of new news practices, including the extensive use of telegraphic networks. The study closes with the 1893 takeover of the New York Associated Press by the Western Associated Press, just before the rise of Yellow Journalism, the boom in the media empires of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, and the advent of the muckraking progressive press.

With Chapter Two the study examines the transition that occurred in newspapers during the American Civil War, showing evidence that classified advertising was stricken from the front pages of many publications due to news pressure, that large-format graphics were introduced in order to explain complex news stories in ways that words couldn't, and that editors and publishers were intentional in these decisions. The work then moves in Chapter Three to an in-depth look at a major national incident, the New York City Draft Riots, in an attempt to show that the Press was responding to news events in a new way and that newspapers did not revert to earlier forms under pressure but instead hewed to their new, more-professionalized mode. News organizations were doing a particular kind of work, Media Framing, that has been extensively documented in twentieth and twenty-first century media. Analysis of the Draft Riot shows that a transition in news gathering had occurred and that the Press was continuing to grow into its new role as arbiter of fact.³²

³² Chapter One appeared first as an unpublished Master's essay, "Leading with the News," Timothy L. Moran, Wayne State University, August, 2012; a draft of Chapter Two appeared as "'Carrying the Masses to Excess': Crafting the Other in Newspaper Framing of the 1863 New York Draft Riots," paper presented at the Annual Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Freedom of Expression, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, Nov. 6-8, 2014; early work on Chapter Four was presented as "Coming to America: Immigrants in the

The fourth chapter shows development of the network that sped the news transition. Where telegraphic communications were robust and interlinked, we see rapid news change and professionalization, while where telegraphic networks were less-well-linked (e.g. the South during the Civil War) newspapers did not make the same jumps and editors often express doubt about the validity of remote news sources and the means of transmission.

Chapter Five demonstrates that effects of the Press transition, so heightened by wartime pressures, can also be seen in a longer frame. Using a quantitative, longitudinal analysis of newspaper treatment of a major issue – reaction to immigration – over the broad period of the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Newspapers moved from reactive coverage (immigrants are bad) to prescriptive coverage (you can trust some immigrants as citizens, and here’s why). We can see the newspaper changing its social role and responsibility to deliver national attitudes at an early time. The analysis also shows the nature of informational trust and borrowing of news content across an increasingly connected nation.

Chapter Six shows the eventual shift of power that a highly-connected, fast-news-cycle media could bring. At the midpoint of the nineteenth century, it would have been ludicrous to state that entrepreneurs in the pioneer city of Chicago could control the entity that would distribute national news. That role clearly belonged to an East Coast metropolis, specifically to the commercial hub of New York City. By the beginning of the 1890s, though, young leaders of the Western Associated Press were able to engineer a form of putsch to dethrone their New York competitors and create a national Associated Press. The chapter reinforces the argument that news reporting was increasingly taking place in a virtual world, that is, local papers may have run news based not on knowing of a particular

publication or reporter but simply because of trust in the newswires.³³ It also shows how early news adopters of the networked communication technology could lose their advantage by failing to follow up-to-the-minute use of that technology. New York editors had thought that their prestige, history, and location would keep them permanently in power. The race had moved from reporting the news within a locality, to moving the news to feed a national appetite.

Chapter Seven uses the correspondence of editors, particularly Whitelaw Reid of the *New York Tribune*, and records of professional organizations such as the Western Associated Press, to show the complex nature of journalism as a professionalizing business in the later nineteenth century. Minutes of meetings and collections of letters demonstrate that practitioners thought of their news trade as a profession demanding particular forms, skills, and knowledge. Academic schools of journalism would not arise until the end of the century, but the field already had begun thinking of itself as having a public image and reputation to protect, far from the hearty pioneer image of an independent printer going it alone. Chapter Eight concludes the work.

³³ “Virtualized” is defined as converting a physical process to one that is computer-generated as a simulation; I use the term here to signify a process moving from physical to electric means.
https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=virtualized+definition (accessed June 30, 2015).

CHAPTER 2 THE CHANGE BROUGHT BY WAR

On April 10, 1862, Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* took an enormous gamble with a bold change in the newspaper's format. Gone from the front page were any of the long unbroken columns of revenue-producing business advertisements that had been the standard for the newspaper's 21 years of existence. Replacing them instead were columns of news items, a big illustration, and telegraphic dispatches. The *Tribune's* editorial leadership knew their departure from the norms might not be popular, especially with advertisers accustomed to having primacy of placement within the day's usual eight-page paper, and so they listed an explanation in italic type at the head of the first column of page four's editorial.

"An imperative necessity constrains us to change henceforth the appropriation of our several pages – taking the first for Telegraphic and other freshest News of the morning, and transferring Advertisements over mainly to the sixth and seventh. For want of such an arrangement, our Editorials have often been in good part crowded out by midnight dispatches and letters containing War News. We hope to make the change palpably advantageous to both readers and advertisers," read the editorial.¹

The Civil War's overwhelming demands on government, the economy, and society created new demands in turn on journalism and pushed the communications industry to adapt speedily to a faster cycle of information than had ever been present before. At the same time, ingenious use of new technology and the growth of information networks provided a vastly higher volume and broader range of news, while a growing audience of readers seems to have become both more sophisticated in their demand for news and less elite in their literary expectations. Editors and their correspondents were presaging, rather than prescribing, the future course of the news media in America when they engaged in or confronted modernisms forced by unique circumstances. The choices they made in the new news coverage were not based on any particular plan, but were an adaptation to changes in technology,

¹ *New York Tribune*, April 10, 1862.

information formats, and availability. Their experiences—failures, as well as successes—offer a unique window into a change in the velocity of information and the reach of networks that was both demanded and enabled by massive wartime appetites for nationally-integrated news, and equally massive demand that reliability of information supplant the comfort of partisan verities. In a national conflict that was eating up hundreds of thousands of lives and huge amounts of capital, readers needed information that was factually correct, rather than just “right” based on political or national leanings. Wartime pressures clearly accelerated a process away from the dominant model of the newspaper as primarily a political vehicle (supported by advertising, as well as political subsidy) for the personal view of its editor or party owner, and toward the group enterprise that staked its reputation on delivering a brand of news coverage acceptable to a wide readership hungry for facts.²

For readers of the penny press of New York City, the newspaper changed literally overnight. Friday’s final *Tribune* edition, April 9, had carried two full pages of advertising columns on its first and second page. The grey screed included exhortations for boot blacking, liver medications, clothing, stage shows, and popular literature, including one advertisement that read: “Get it at once. Prison life in the tobacco warehouse at Richmond [Libbey Prison]. By a Ball’s Bluff Prisoner.” On Saturday morning, by comparison, the front page instead was dominated with a four-column-wide map of the Yorktown, Virginia, area as an aid to understanding Gen. George McClellan’s Peninsular Campaign. The map was flanked by emphatic headlines and news columns describing the Battle of Pittsburgh Landing (Shiloh) and reading, in part, “TWO DAYS’ FURIOUS FIGHTING./The Rebels Driven from the Field./A.S. Johnston Killed./Gen. Beauregard Wounded./Heavy Loss on Both Sides.”³

While the single-column-wide, decked headlines (in which an outline of the major parts of the news story was stacked in order of appearance) might look archaic to a modern reader, the overall

² Brayton Harris, *Blue & Gray in Black & White* (Washington: Brassey’s, 199), 15. The U.S. Census of 1860 classified 80 percent of newspapers as political.

³ *New York Tribune*, April 9, 10, 1862. The book, by Lieut. William C. Harris, described life in Richmond’s Ligon Factory prison, later used as a hospital for Libby Prison.

appearance of this new newspaper would be entirely familiar. By combining graphics, articles, bold headlines, and a layout that broke the dominant single column format, Greeley and his staff had innovated in the momentous spring of 1862. The *Tribune's* adventure demonstrated a change in the social nature of news publications that altered an old power relationship – that of the advertiser and his business coming first with the editor – to substitute a new master, the actual news itself and, by implication, the reader.⁴

The *New York Tribune* was not the only paper to experiment in the mid-War years, and that, coupled with the Greeley admission that the change was an “imperative necessity” rather than a calculated marketing ploy, shows an evolution. Journalist Murat Halstead, writing a retrospective of journalism from the 1850s onward, later remarked that “In all the cities of the nation the changes in the press have been as marked as in New York, and in some of them even more remarkable.” Halstead particularly cited the concentration on news rather than on running masses of literary and political copy. Before the war, he said, “Men who knew news at a glance were scarce. The faculty of understanding, gathering and presenting intelligence in good form for publication was a rare one.”⁵

Independent journalists were just one development in that process. Newspapers themselves and the technology they relied upon underwent significant changes during the Civil War that both professionalized and nationalized “the news.” Newspapers ended the Civil War as vastly different creatures than they had been at the time of the war’s inception. This virtual catalyzing (a change which leads to a new thing that cannot be undone) of the newspaper marks an important moment in American history, for newspapers would increasingly come to dominate public influence, frame debate over crucial issues, and validate elements of national identity for the next century or more, until the advent

⁴ Civil War era headlines generally appeared as a series of short descriptive phrases in a single column’s width, the typeface diminishing in size or varying in font as the headline continued. Such multi-layer headlines are referred to as “deck” headlines. Editors of the time typically punctuated each line with a period. I have chosen to show such headlines using a forward slash - / - to indicate the separate lines, e.g. Start of Headline./Next headline./Third headline, etc.

⁵ Murat Halstead, “The Varieties of Journalism,” *Cosmopolitan*, Dec. 1892, vol. 14, 203, 204.

of broadcast and, most recently, the Internet's World Wide Web would significantly disrupt the model again.

The foundation of newspaper networking can be traced to the Post Office Act of 1792, which Richard John has described as transformative in creating a "national community." The act created enormous privileges for newspapers. The primary privilege was the definitive decision that newspapers had a right to a place in the postal distribution system, rather than being carried as a courtesy. By dint of this decision, newspaper publishers gained an enormous distribution channel that would have been difficult (if not impossible) to fund and develop privately. But the act did more; it created a favorable postal rate for newspapers (one cent for distances up to 100 miles, one-and-a-half cents for all other distances) that made them affordable to individual subscribers. Most important for the development of newspapers, though, Congress in section 21 of the Act of 1792 created a free exchange system between newspapers themselves. This meant that a remote frontier editor could trade news at par with even the most exalted East Coast urban daily, while paying no carrying costs. The act "... created a new kind of public sphere that was soon destined to transform the boundaries of American public life. Prior to 1792, the public sphere had been largely limited to government officers and merchants living in the principal port towns along the Atlantic seaboard," writes John. As a result of the information flow established by the act, politics became an ongoing national discussion, rather than a local or regional episodic event. This had been James Madison's intent in calling on the public to favor the Post Office Act, which he theorized would reduce an ungovernably large real territory by extending popular sovereignty virtually, thus limiting the power of government. Madison may not have intended it, but the act also established a growing community of editors who "knew" one another across great distances and who borrowed text from one another freely. Plagiarism, for much of the 19th century, was a newspaper business method.⁶

⁶ John, *Spreading the News*, 56-57, 60-61; Postal Act of 1792, Sec. 21. *And be it further enacted*, That every printer of newspapers may send one paper to each and every other printer of newspapers within the United States, free

By the time of the Civil War, the exchange system and its fraternal community of newspaper editors was a fixed and accepted part of American political life, as a description of Abraham Lincoln's post-election campaign office in the Springfield, Illinois, statehouse suggests. Attributed to Lincoln's law student and later presidential secretary John G. Nicolay, writing as a special correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, the passage was initially published on November 11, 1860:

One table is covered with law books, and another is littered with newspapers enough to supply a country journalist with items for a year. Heaps and hills of newspapers, a few opened, the greater part still unfolded. If you take the wrappers from a few of these neglected sheets, you will find, within, whole columns of fervid eloquence, sonorous with big capitals and bursting with hot Republican sentiment, all carefully marked and underlined, the sooner to catch the eye of the great chief. Alas for the little ambitions of village editors. They have sent the cherished begettings of their brains to an oblivion too deep and too crowded for any chance of rescuing.⁷

Lincoln himself was owner of a newspaper through the ultimate year of his presidential campaign, the Springfield-based German-language weekly *Illinois Staats-Anzeiger*, primarily as a tool to recruit German immigrant support for Republicans, but possibly also for the exchange advantages. The Postal Act's foundation allowed for the growth of inter-newspaper networking. Initially, though, politicians used the advances of the act to create a push of news from their federal offices to local constituents and to editors who might repeat speeches and letters. John states that "Congress bombarded the public with newspaper accounts of its proceedings, pamphlets, reprinted speeches, and reports and documents of all kinds" such that by 1830, up to 30 percent of all printed material issued in the United States came from political sources. From 1845 through 1851, Congress tweaked postal laws to give even more advantages to rural local newspapers, eventually offering free postal circulation for weeklies within the paper's county of origin. The Postal Act of 1845 continued to give discounted postage to newspapers sized at 1,900 square inches or less, or roughly four 20 by 22 inch sheets. Political parties, interest

of postage, under such regulations, as the Postmaster General shall provide.

<http://home.comcast.net/~njpostalhistory/postact1792.pdf> referenced June 4, 2011.

⁷ *New York Tribune*, November 11, 1860, initially found cited in Harper, *Lincoln and the Press*, 65-66.

groups, religious, and voluntary associations mimicked newspaper structure or developed their own newspapers in order to take advantage of the exchange system, particularly anti-slavery groups in the later antebellum period. Examples include the abolitionist *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, published in New York by the American Anti-Slavery Society, the farming publication *The Cultivator*, of Albany, New York, and the Mormon *The Evening and the Morning Star*, published in Independence, Missouri. Again, the net effect was to create the kind of imagined communities coined and described late in the last century by Benedict Anderson, but based on shared news consumption rather than strictly nationalistic ideals. “People who never met face to face because of geography and primitive transports formed communities of interest by sharing information in periodicals carried through the mails,” writes Steven Vaughn.⁸

The emerging network that used newspapers and the post to bind communities together moved largely at a walking pace or a little better—certainly at a sustained speed no faster than 10 miles per hour—until 1831 when some of the mail first began to ride on the new steam railroads. Newspapers generally traveled along Post Office subsidized stage coach routes at speeds of about 4 miles per hour, or were carried slightly faster by post-riders on horseback who traveled from town to town, blowing a tin horn as they reached each stop to alert those within hearing distance that the mail had arrived. Steamboats, used to carry the post beginning in 1828, weren’t considered reliable or regular enough to make much of a dent in the speed of communications, especially since they were vulnerable to changing river conditions and navigation hazards. American introduction of the electric telegraph (as opposed to the European optical telegraph) by Samuel F.B. Morse in 1844 brought the promise of new, rapid

⁸ *The Lincoln Log* <http://www.thelincolnlog.org/view/1860/12> (accessed June 25, 2011). Lincoln acquired the paper from its editor for \$400 in Spring, 1859, and signed the contract back to the same editor on Dec. 6, 1860; William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 196, cited in John, *Spreading the News*, 57; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1991) in particular the discussion of “print-capitalism” 44-45; William E. Huntzicker, *The Popular Press, 1833-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 60, 64; Steven L. Vaughn, ed. *Encyclopedia of American Journalism* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 400.

communication of limited amounts of information, and from 1844 to 1847 the post office operated an exclusive 40-mile line between Baltimore and Washington. It was not postal innovation in these steam and electric technologies that increased the flow of information, however, but rather their rapid maturation through government-subsidized private operation. By 1828, John writes, there were more than 700 private contractors making the “transportation circuit” work to carry the government-operated mail service. But while Post Office leadership, especially under Postmaster General John McLean (1823-1829), remained committed to speed, other governmental voices cautioned that regularity of information delivery was more important for business and financial interests. Congress remained wary of federal efficiencies, such as official post roads, that might be taken as violation of states’ rights. American government in general hewed to the idea that if a service could be profitable, it should be private. Political patronage in awarding local postal jobs, too, meant that efforts to foster universal technologies (such as postal domination of the growth of telegraph trunk lines) were often derailed for party convenience. Finally, the Jacksonian distaste for programs that smacked of “internal improvements” led to stagnation in postal system improvements at just the time that new technologies in transportation and information handling were emerging strongly in North America. McLean’s complex system continued to move an amazing amount of printed matter, as well as money from business transactions, long after his term as postmaster general had ended, but its systematization would remain at stagecoach speed rather than that of the railroad or telegraph. The post office became a tool of party politics rather than an innovator on the technology frontier. “The Jacksonians transformed the American postal system from the central administrative apparatus of the American state into a wellspring of the mass party,” writes John.⁹

Newspapers in the decades leading up to the Civil War traveled at the forward edge of episodic information—some express services allowed major papers to promise information 24 hours before the

⁹ Winston, *Media Technology and Society*, refers to government refusal to run profitable operations as “suppression of radical potential,” 27-28; John, *Spreading the News*, 88-95, 206.

mail's delivery—but relatively slow travel speeds for information and general lack of interconnectedness between communities meant that local editors were largely able to set the public news agenda in their hometowns. Thus an antebellum editor receiving an Eastern exchange paper might hold on to its budget of “news” items for days, if not weeks, feeding them gradually into his own publication at his own pace. For a local audience largely disconnected from other cities or towns, this kind of news delivery might be entirely satisfactory. Stories of a deadly fire, a titillating court case, or a significant social event did not need to be timely to remain interesting. Commercial news, though, which would echo that received in business correspondence, was tactically important and received prompt printing. This largely consisted of lists of prices being paid at national entrepôts for commodities, livestock, and agricultural products; exchange rates for money issued by various state and local banks; foreign economic news, maritime arrivals and departures, freight arrivals at local warehouses from trains and wagons, and the like. Lists that the modern reader's eye would tend to skip over as uninteresting or irrelevant were the currency of the newspaper of the time. Schudson says that, of the 138 daily newspapers in circulation in the United States in 1840, most “[A]ppear to have been little more than bulletin boards for the business community.” Indeed, he writes, until 1830, newspapers had specifically allied themselves by name with commercial interests, with a majority of papers published in major cities using business-specific terms as part of their name.¹⁰

By 1860, Newspapers were in the forefront of one of the highest-growth industries in the U.S., according to the census of that year. Printing, overall, had increased by 168 percent from 1850, and its proceeds represented a dollar for each of the 31 million people in the U.S. “The increase in this branch of domestic manufactures is unprecedented in our previous history,” wrote J. M. Edmunds, commissioner in charge of the census. The field employed 20,159, including 2,333 women, and represented a capital investment of more than \$19.5 million. The print bonanza was unevenly

¹⁰ Schudson, *Discovering*, 13-17. “Advertiser,” “Commercial,” and “Mercantile” were the most often used words; cities surveyed included New York, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington, Charleston, and New Orleans.

distributed, though. Of 1,666 “printing houses” registered by the census, only 151 could be tracked to the 11 Southern states, with a net value of printing of just \$1.25 million and capital of \$1.17 million. New York and Pennsylvania were the dominant printing states, holding 60 percent of the business. “The value of the manufacture in New York alone reached the sum of \$12,617,105, which was upward of 40 per cent. of the total product of the Union,” said the census. It listed more than 51 newspapers in New York City alone, and described a lively business environment in the second ward: “One establishment issued 31,805,000 copies of newspapers, valued with advertisements at \$800,000 per annum, and consumed 78,000 reams of paper, worth \$400,000.” Others in the same ward annually published 20, 18.2, and 16.4 million copies of newspapers respectively. In the fourth ward, newspaper production represented 74 percent of the \$2.9 million of annual printing income. “the activity of the press has been at once the index and the instrument of progress in civilization and that mental activity which has contributed to the present position of the nation in its moral, social, and material interests,” the census writer enthused.¹¹

It is important for modern viewers to recognize the excitement created by the comparatively dull-looking newspaper of the mid-nineteenth century. The public was wild about newspapers; the appetite for them was such that future Supreme Court justice Stephen J. Field made his way as a young man in 1849 in California because he had prudently brought “bundles of New York newspapers, which he sold for a dollar apiece” in the goldfields. In Charleston, South Carolina, the *New York Times* correspondent “JASPER” wrote of a “crazy crowd” lined up ten feet deep at the door of the *Mercury* in late March of 1861 to read clippings from that newspaper’s exchange copy of the *New York Tribune*. The demand for papers was immense; in New York, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* was selling an average of 100,000 copies of its weekly by 1860, just five years from its founding.¹²

¹¹ Census of 1860, Introduction, cxxxii, cxxxiii. <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1860c-04.pdf> (accessed June 26, 2011).

¹² Jack Beatty, *Age of Betrayal: The Triumph of Money in America, 1865-1900* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 150; “Our Southern Correspondence,” *New York Times*, April 2, 1861; Harris, *Blue & Gray*, 11.

The typical newspaper of the antebellum period was a weekly, printed on both sides of a single large sheet of paper which was then folded to make a four-page edition. Two such sheets created an eight-page paper, but, before editors would add more pages, they would first try for a larger page format. This was partly because print technology limited the speed of the process, in which hand-fed sheets of paper were imprinted on one side and then needed to dry before receiving the second printing on their blank side. Faster printing took significant investment. When the *Chicago Times* was purchased in 1861, its new owner found himself saddled with a press that could only make 700 impressions an hour, requiring thousands of dollars in new equipment to make the operation profitable. Horace Greeley in 1850 spent more than \$12,000 to install an 8,000-page per hour steam-driven press made by R. Hoe & Company, and by 1855 had invested \$25,000 in a thirty-four foot tall room-sized press that printed with ten cylinders simultaneously, took a crew of ten men to operate, and was fed with paper sheets from multiple overhead trays. Eventually the paper would have three such presses operating simultaneously. The *Tribune*, which began running eight-page editions in the early 1850s, used an engraving of the high-tech press as its front page symbol, as did the *Chicago Press and Tribune* which further emphasized its cutting-edge technology by including a steamboat and a steam train in the graphic. Paper sizes were far from standard, and some early commercial papers were so large that they were referred to as “blanket sheets,” while later dailies were initially printed in a format scarcely larger than today’s standard letter paper. Regardless of the size, “Its front page was almost exclusively devoted to advertising, and the fourth page likewise was strictly advertising. These outside pages were like the cover of a book or magazine—one turned to the inside to find the content of the paper,” writes Schudson. There were exceptions, particularly the *New York Times* which had printed an all-news front page since the 1840s, but they were few. In the antebellum period, when a paper grew larger it was usually explained by the editors as an accommodation to advertisers. “On many occasions we have had to leave out advertisers for several days ... The enlargement of our paper, as soon as we shall be prepared to carry it into effect,

will enable us, we hope, to deal equally and liberally to all our kind advertising customers,” wrote James Gordon Bennett in December, 1835, when the *Herald* announced it would grow in size by one-third. Most papers were sold by annual subscription ranging from \$4 to \$10, though a single-issue price of six cents was typical even after the advent of the penny press.¹³

Many newspapers were an outgrowth of a printer’s job shop, rather than the free-standing business enterprise that the news would become in the twentieth century, and part of their purpose was to advertise the other print services available. An early morning fire that temporarily wiped out the *Detroit Daily Tribune* in January, 1859, left an insurance record and a news story that gives the value and operations of a typical news printing operation in a smaller city. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Tribune* establishment included a boiler and engine in the basement, two large steam presses and “some small ones” on the first floor, and a steam card press on the third floor. The presses would have been operated by belts and shafts driven by the steam engine in the basement. Presumably the type cases and composing equipment occupied the second floor. The newspaper’s assets had been insured for \$21,100, and, wrote the *Free Press*, “The insurance will undoubtedly cover the actual loss.” By comparison the building, which was rented, was valued at just \$2,500. Newspaper publishing took toughness and persistence; Henry Barns issued a half-sheet *Tribune* the next day promising subscribers the paper wouldn’t suspend operations, and the *Free Press* remarked “This is the third time he has been burned out of the publishing business, once before in this city and twice in Syracuse, N.Y.”¹⁴

Printers also had to be versatile. The *Richmond Daily Dispatch* in 1860 advertised its services for “BOOK AND JOB PRINT NG [sic] , such as pamphlets, circulars, bills of lading, checks, &c., as well as Postes, Programmes & Handbills,” with “particular attention given to fine work for Banks, Public Offices,

¹³ Robert C. Williams, *Horace Greeley: Champion of American Freedom* (New York: New York University, 2006), 166; Schudson, *Discovering*, 14; *New York Herald*, Dec. 31, 1835.

¹⁴ “Tribune Burned Out,” *Detroit Free Press*, Jan. 1, 1859. Barns was as good as his word, and the *Tribune* continued publication under his leadership until it was sold in 1862 to the *Detroit Advertiser*. However, if the *Free Press* is correct, Barns had been burned out four times, rather than three.

Insurance, Railroad, and Transportation Companies, Tobacco Factories, &c.” Valuable governmental print contracts often sustained a paper; as an example, Judge Jesse Buel, the state printer for New York, also edited and published a weekly Democratic party newspaper (later a Republican organ), the *Albany Argus*. The print shop itself formed a hotbed of political and business development; one of Buel’s printer apprentices was future New York political boss Thurlow Weed, who wrote that as a youth he regularly worked from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. and always found Buel at the office before him “at his case setting type by a yellow candle and smoking a long pipe.” Weed himself became a newspaper editor and, later, also state printer as part of consolidating Republican political power in New York. The ability to do the physical tasks of printing was as important for early editors as was their writing or creative prowess; abolitionist editor William Lloyd Garrison “could write at the composing stick while carrying on a conversation,” and such abilities were considered admirable but not unusual.¹⁵

Distribution of papers was relatively simple. Delivery of subscription newspapers was to a public accommodation, generally the post office or a retail store, or from the newspaper offices and print shops themselves—in other words, customers came to the news rather than the news coming to the customers. This was usual for the distribution networks of the time. Postal mail, for example, was “delivered” to the main post office, where recipients were required to appear in person to claim their mail (and to pay any delivery charges due on it). Following the so-called “commercial revolution” in newspapers with the rise of the penny press in the 1830s, street selling by newsboys became a common feature of urban centers, a unique Americanism that was remarked on by travelers. In 1861, William Corsan wrote of his transit through New York City’s docks that “As a matter of course, also, the ubiquitous newsboy was there with his everlasting cry of “‘Ere’s the *Erald, Tribune, Times, Express*, third

¹⁵ *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, June 20, 1860; Harry J. Carman, ed., *Jesse Buel, Agricultural Reformer: Selections from his Writings* (New York: Columbia University, 1947), introduction, xvii-xviii, http://books.google.com/books?id=gVIVlvHtppcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Jesse+Buel,+agricultural+reformer&hl=en&ei=IFACTvGKN9LAGQelyOXjDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCwQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed 6/22/11); Huntzicker, *Popular Press*, 60, 64.

edition! 'Ave a paper, sir? Three for a dime, sir! Thankee, sir! 'Ere's the '*Erald*,"etc." An 1863 description in the *Washington Chronicle* called newsboys an American "original." "He can generally read just enough to decipher the news on the bulletin board, or if he can not do that, he gets some friend to read it for him, and if no literary friend is at hand, he rushes about the street bawling out lies *ad liberatum*. Yet, if you trust this boy, he will trust you."¹⁶

By 1850 the average circulation of most papers was about 1,200, with urban dailies and some specialty publications a major exception to that number. As examples, the *New York Sun* claimed more than 30,000 subscribers, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* 44,000. Gamaliel Bailey's abolitionist *The National Era* claimed a circulation of 250,000 in 1852 while the paper was printing the serialized publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Circulation was more than just a bragging point—it also qualified the newspaper for government printing business. The regular printing of the list of letters awaiting recipients at the Post Office, which could run to several columns, was specifically reserved for the local newspaper with the largest verifiable circulation.¹⁷

Advertising rates varied, but that of the *New York Herald* published in 1835 close to the paper's inception was typical. For a "square" of 16 lines in one column, the *Herald* charged a variable rate of from fifty cents for a single day's insertion up to \$30 for a year's advertising. The commercial *Courier and Enquirer* was derided by Bennett for charging \$40 annually for ads "hid away" inside its paper. As the papers matured, ad prices increased and other methods of billing for them became the norm. By 1860, *Harper's Weekly* claimed itself to be the "cheapest advertising medium in the country. Price 50

¹⁶ The *New York Sun* is most often identified as the first American penny daily, first published Sept. 3, 1833, but it was preceded by penny dailies published in Portland, Maine, in 1829 and in Boston in 1830. Huntzicker, *Popular Press*, 13; Schudson, *Discovering*, 18; W.C. Corsan, *Two Months in the Confederate States: An Englishman's Travels Through the South*, ed. Benjamin H. Trask (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1996), 4; *Washington Chronicle*, May, 1863.

¹⁷ Huntzicker, 13-14, 65; stipulations for the printing of the list of waiting mail were published along with the lists in many papers—a typical example can be seen on the front page of the *Detroit Free Press* of Oct. 1, 1861, which also instructs that all letters advertised are "subject to an additional charge of one cent. Persons calling for them will please say that they are advertised." The *New York Herald* on July 4, 1863, used almost a full page to list letters remaining in the New York post office, even as the Battle of Gettysburg was at its height.

cents per line.” Advertisers were courted, flattered, and given enormous deference by editors like Bennett and Greeley, who were able to use the revenue from multiple ad pages to keep circulation prices low and to continue building their audience. They saw nothing incongruous in occupying the prime real estate of the paper—its outside pages—with column after column of classifieds for health nostrums, entertainment, clothing, and the like. A partial list of advertisements in the *New York Herald* included 20 for medicines, including “Oldham’s Beobstruant and Alterative Pills (for Universal Use),” “Mrs. E. Kidder’s Dysentery Cordials,” and “The Unfortunate’s Friend celebrated Medicine” (a specific for gonorrhoea). Editors were certain that readers both wanted these ads—both Greeley and Bennett wrote that ads were “a portion of the news of the day”—and would still open the paper to reach its true heart: their editorials.¹⁸

Content in most newspapers ranged widely, but relatively little of what was printed would be recognizably “news” articles to a reader of today. This relative valuation of opinion over information meant that the newspaper gave voice to issues in a way that created coteries of readership, such that a follower of a particular paper could be considered to subscribe to the editorial direction of that paper. In an 1862 description of an Ohio abolitionist leader printed in the radical Democratic *Ohio Patriot* newspaper, for instance, the editor could say “He takes the *New York Tribune* and ... generally gets everything wrong.” Followers of particular editors would fight one another over newspaper opinions, and the editors themselves brawled in public with surprising frequency. An 1831 encounter between rival editors William Cullen Bryant and William L. Stone was described by a diarist: “The former commenced the attack by striking Stone over the head with a cowskin; after a few blows the parties closed and the whip was wrested from Bryant and carried off by Stone.” In 1835, the *New York Herald* reported “We are sorry to learn that the editor of the *Transcript* received a very handsome thrashing

¹⁸ *New York Herald*, Dec. 31, 1835; *Harper’s Weekly*, March 31, 1860; *Herald* Aug. 31, 1835; Menahem Blondheim, *News over the Wires: The Telegraph and the Flow of Public Information in America, 1844-1897* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 25.

yesterday for some improper conduct of a shameless kind. It was performed by a gentleman of the bar, and in a very workmanship-like style.” During times of stress, mobs of one paper’s supporters often invaded and destroyed the offices of a rival publication—this generally involved breaking the presses, scattering the type, and defacing or burning the account books. Murder related to newspaper editorials was rare, but not unheard of; in 1862 *Dayton Empire* editor J.F. Bollmeyer, an emphatic Democrat, was shot and killed while on his way to buy groceries by a longtime friend apparently angered by Bollmeyer’s editorial support for Southern sympathizer Clement L. Vallandigham. Editorial opinions were robust, often personally insulting to public figures and private individuals, as an 1835 entry from Bennett shows: “We seldom have seen an intelligent assemblage bear so patiently such an infliction of ignorance, as they did from a certain Mr. Willis Hall. Pray who is he?” And editorializing was likely to appear almost anywhere in the paper beyond the formal columns because the editors often served as reporters as well. The pro-slavery *Detroit Free Press* in 1859 printed a nominal news article written by editor Wilbur F. Storey and headlined “A Disgusting Case – A White Girl Elopes with a Negro.” The piece concluded with an attack on the girl’s father, a “red-hot abolitionist of the whole-lot-or-nothing, nigger-as-good-as-anybody style,” saying “He has the supreme satisfaction of witnessing ... his own daughter clasped in the embrace of a greasy nigger, willing and ready, and even enthusiastically reciprocal, in the sweet game of dalliance with which lovers (!) delight to celebrate their unions.”¹⁹ Yet even Storey, notorious for his hatred for abolition and abolitionists, needed the excuse of the news aspect of the elopement to introduce his sop of race-baiting sexual innuendo to his readers.

Exchange papers provided much content, some of it apparently validated solely by the fact that it came from another newspaper, as the following example shows: “The Woodstock (CT) Standard is responsible for the statement that a hen, killed in Hartland last week, after a knife was put through her throat, and her feathers picked off, effected her escape, and ran to her nest in the barn, and laid an

¹⁹ Harper, *Lincoln and the Press*, 199, 196; Schudson, 16; *New York Herald*, Dec. 31, 1835; *ibid*, Aug. 31, 1835; *Detroit Free Press*, Jan 2, 1859.

egg!” Other exchange material was often the result of a long string of borrowing. When a May 21 tornado blew the roof off of the *Cincinnati Commercial’s* building, *Harper’s Weekly* reported on it in early June, lifting the entire story from the *Cincinnati Gazette*. The *Harper’s* story, in turn, subsequently appeared in several other newspapers.²⁰

Contributions from special correspondents—literally, letter writers—provided an often eclectic budget of items from distant cities, financial centers, and foreign countries. The qualifications to be a “special” owed less to news judgment than to placement and special interests; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, for example, were among the eighteen foreign correspondents writing in 1851 for Greeley’s *Tribune*, which wanted to appeal to the increasing German immigrant population in the U.S. In this instance, the articles, actually written by Engels, ran under the byline of Marx (the two provided some 500 articles before the *Tribune* severed the relationship in 1862). Many other specials wrote under a pseudonym, or used initials only, if a name appeared at all in connection with their letters. *New York Tribune* correspondent Sam Wilkerson, in an 1862 letter, wrote ““The anonymous greatly favors freedom and boldness in newspaper correspondence. I would not allow *any* letter writer to attach his initials to his communications, unless he was a widely known & influential man like Greeley or Bayard Taylor...Besides the responsibility it fastens on a correspondent, the signature inevitably detracts from the powerful impersonality of a journal.” Special contributions were often only vaguely documented or offered second- or third-hand impressions of events. A typical example from the *New York Times* of Oct. 1, 1861, received from Jefferson City, Missouri, began with “A gentleman who arrived here this morning from the West, states that he saw a gentleman who passed through Osceola on Wednesday last, who says that the central portion of the town has been burned by Gen. Lane.”²¹

²⁰ *Detroit Free Press*, Jan. 1, 1859; *Harper’s Weekly*, June 2, 1860.

²¹ Williams, *Horace Greeley*, 133-135; Sam Wilkerson to Sydney Howard Gay, Aug. 6, 1862, quoted in Louis Morris Starr, *Bohemian Brigade: Civil War Newsmen in Action* (New York: Knopf, 1954), 195; Gay was managing editor of the *Tribune* and Wilkerson its chief correspondent with the Army of the Potomac; *Detroit Free Press*, Oct. 1, 1851.

Not all of the newspaper's space was dedicated to advertising, editorials, or correspondence. Readers expected columns of poetry (often very bad) and installments of literary offerings, such as the new works of Wilkie Collins or Charles Dickens. The latter's *Great Expectations* began serialization in 1860 in American papers, with *Harper's Weekly* editorializing that "His peculiar powers are very different from, perhaps superior to, those required of the editor of a daily paper," and predicting that the new work "will have as many admirers as any of its predecessors, and that a new generation of readers will decide, when it is ended, that the Great Novelist has at last written his great work." Beat reporting, too, led to regular rounds made and basic information gathered from warehouses, wharves, banks, and hotels. It was common for passenger arrivals or departures and the contents of hotel registers to be published in their entirety, as well as cargo manifests from railways and the docking or clearing of ships.²²

Of increasing significance in the years leading up to the Civil War were the introduction of new technology—the telegraph—and new business methods in the form of the press association. The telegraph's successful demonstration in 1844 –Samuel F.B. Morse's second message to his assistant Alfred Vail was "Have you any news?"—and the initial use of the 40-mile line from Baltimore to Washington, D.C. to report results of the Democratic National Convention beginning on May 24 of that year were clearly understood by newspaper editors to be the opening of a new era in rapid communications. The reaction was not entirely positive. Bennett, of the *Herald*, wrote in 1845 that: "In regard to the newspaper press, it will experience to a degree, that must in a vast number of cases be fatal, the effects of the new mode of circulating intelligence. The telegraph may not affect magazine literature, nor those newspapers that have some peculiar characteristic. But the mere newspapers — the circulators of intelligence merely — must submit to destiny, and go out of existence." Bennett's

²² *Harper's Weekly*, Nov. 24, 1860; In Detroit, on an ordinary day, 14 vessels were listed as arriving or clearing under "Marine Intelligence," while 115 hotel guest names from the Michigan Exchange Hotel and 90 names from the Russell House were printed. *Free Press*, Oct. 1, 1851.

alarm was understandable, but overblown. Many newspapers were ephemeral organizations that thrived for a few years, then went bankrupt or were acquired, and others were dependent on a single charismatic editor whose departure wiped them out, but these were the normal pressures of business. So far from eliminating newspapers, the availability of telegraphic information eventually served to give smaller publications in the interior many of the advantages enjoyed by large East Coast dailies. The Mexican War of 1846-1848 had created a new urgency and enhanced public demand for newspapers whose speed of information could beat that of official political pronouncements and speeches. A scant group of journalists covering the Mexican War—perhaps the first modern war correspondents—were able to use an express service put together by the *New York Herald* and furthered by the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* that sent dispatches eastward in stages, first on horseback by fast rider, then by riverboat, and finally by some of the first installed electric telegraph lines. Though the nature of that information was often subjective and one-sided, emotionally charged, floridly written, and incomplete, it yet came to Washington and was forwarded on to New York rapidly. As such, its sheer availability and velocity gave it credence out of proportion to its inherent value. President James Buchanan was one who, early, worried about the results of this information revolution. “The public mind throughout the interior is kept in a constant state of excitement,” he wrote. “They [telegrams] are short and spicy, and can easily be inserted in the country newspapers. In the city journals they can be contradicted the next day, but the case is different throughout the country.”²³

By the early 1850s, telegraph wires led directly into the editorial offices of papers such as the *Tribune* and *Herald*, where editors like Greeley and Bennett employed staff to take news directly off the line or to correspond with agents in political centers like Washington, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Writes Standage, “The logical solution was for newspapers to form groups and cooperate, establishing

²³ Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-line Pioneers* (New York: Walker, 1998), 48; *New York Herald*, “The Electro Magnetic Telegraph – A Great Revolution Approaching,” May 12, 1845; Williams, *Horace Greeley*, 169; Standage, *Victorian Internet*, 150; Harris, *Blue & Gray*, 1-5, 8.

networks of reporters [the term was not used until significantly later] whose dispatches would be telegraphed back to a central office and then be made available to all member newspapers.”²⁴

The formation of the New York Associated Press in 1848 (following initial cooperation on Mexican War dispatches by some of its seven founding members as early as May, 1846) created the germ for a shared basic news feed, made available to remote editors at a flat rate, dealing primarily with news acquired from arriving steamships from Europe, commercial information, and retransmitted articles from local papers. Up until the time of the Civil War, however, the telegraph was considered novel enough technology that its news items were a prestigious sign of modernity and usually run in a separate column titled either “News from the Magnetic Telegraph” or “Electric Telegraph.” Harris has written that telegraph charges for individual news stories were large enough to limit the system’s use by independent correspondents and poorer news organizations: “The Washington-to-New York tariff for a typical two-thousand-word newspaper column was about \$100; from New Orleans to New York, perhaps \$450; this, at a time when the man writing the column might have earned less than \$10 for his effort.” An exasperated Charles A. Dana, receiving a florid battle report from a correspondent early in the Civil War that began “To God Almighty be the glory! Mine eyes hath seen the work of the Lord and the cause of the righteous hath triumphed,” telegraphed back “Hereafter ... please specify the number of the hymn and save telegraph expenses.” Joint news services made more economic sense, and the early entrepreneurial correspondents who, in 1845, began to supply several newspapers from a single major city, such as Baltimore, became known as “telegraphic reporters,” according to Blondheim. This was soon shortened to “reporters,” a term that eventually came to characterize most journalists, he writes.

The New York AP example was weakly imitated with press associations in other areas, but, because of development of telegraph lines as individual enterprises that terminated mainly in New York

²⁴ Standage, 149.

and, to a lesser extent, in Washington, D.C., and Chicago, other cities did not have the hub advantages that allowed for collection and rebroadcast of news. Military historian Martin Van Creveld states that, just prior to the Civil War, both the telegraph and railroads had created nascent integrated systems—and that Americans had yet to fully understand how a systems approach could outperform individual enterprise. Though it is estimated that more than 50,000 miles of telegraph wire had been installed nationally by the eve of the war, one of the vast difficulties for the South, and for Southern newspapers after secession, was the separation from New York and ancillary Northern hubs that rendered a formerly integrated web of telegraph and transport services into an assortment of disparate point-to-point connections. This hindered the effectiveness of Southern wartime press associations, though a Southern Associated Press and, later, the Atlanta-based Press Association of the Confederate States of America did their best. “In the East the American Telegraph Company was oriented toward the north-south flow of telegraphic communications. Secession wrought havoc ... pitting two antagonistic polities against each other at either end of its formerly well integrated network of lines,” writes Blondheim. The Western Union telegraph, with an east-west orientation and a major hub in Chicago, fared better.²⁵

Even in the North, the influence of New York as the true network hub of the telegraph made it impossible for Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to impose military censorship on the nation’s telegraph system. Stanton militarized the Washington, D.C., telegraph office, controlling the American Telegraph Company lines that connected to the city, but New York’s flow of news was initially unabated as reporters circumvented Washington by filing from Baltimore and other sites that bypassed Washington. Even when Stanton took over all telegraph lines in the North in February, 1862, invoking military censorship, news flow from and to the New York Associated Press continued under a hand-in-glove working arrangement between government officials and AP managers, who received a news monopoly in return for obedience to government policy on communication of sensitive information. The North

²⁵ Blondheim, *News over the Wires*, 145; Harris, *Blue & Gray*, 8; Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War: The Most Radical Reinterpretation of Armed Conflict since Clausewitz* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 84.

retained the communication centers and the flexibility to expand and extend its networks, while formerly important Southern nodes such as New Orleans, Charleston, and Richmond found themselves communicating using partial, peripheral routes.

Much the same was true of the next-fastest line of communication, the rail networks that carried information from distant battlefields and that brought printed newspapers to distribution points. The South held less than one third of the more than 31,000 miles of railway in the U.S., and most of its railroads were of point-to-point construction, discontinuous with one another, and of widely varying track gauge. In the North, on the other hand, railroads tended to operate as interconnected large businesses. While fiercely competitive with one another, they intentionally standardized gauges and created interchanges. The Northern rail network continued to build during the war, an important enabler of communication, while Southern authorities were hard-pressed to maintain the existing main lines. Corsan, the British business traveler already mentioned, wrote: "The speed of the main lines had been gradually reduced, first from twenty to fifteen, and subsequently to twelve and a half, and even ten miles per hour. At the last-named rate of speed, the belief was that the rails then down would last about two years longer. At the end of that time, it was calculated that the companies would be able entirely to relay those lines essential to their military operations, from the new rails in stock, those being made in the Confederacy, those taken from unimportant lines in the interior, and those also taken from the horse-railroads in the streets of the various cities." In both the gathering and the dissemination of information, Southern newspapers suffered from the breakdown of networks, a devolution that had lasting consequences long after the war.²⁶

While the telegraph and railways carried information, the context of communications immediacy and the nexus of interpretation remained the newspaper. While editors were aware that the

²⁶ William A. Croffut, *An American Procession 1855-1941: A Personal Chronicle of Famous Men* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931), 265; Bruce J. Evanson, "Associated Press," in Vaughn, *Encyclopedia*, 37; Harris, *Blue and Gray*, 6-7; Blondheim, *Wires*, 44-45, 55; Corsan, *Two Months in the Confederate States*, 38.

approaching war would put new demands on them, and that new technology could allow them to answer those demands in unprecedented ways, it took significant time for the imaginations of editors to realize that the war would demand new forms of content. As late as 1860 and 1861, much of the “news” was about the newspaper, itself—its place in political society, quibbles and quarrels between editors, and defense of its own practices. Greeley’s Louisiana correspondent for the *New York Tribune* in April, 1861, showed how newspapers were personified as individual characters when he mocked the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* without identifying its editor, George Wilkins Kendall:

A singular journalistic war is just now raging between two of our city papers. *The Picayune* has the largest circulation ... and is an agreeable and vivacious paper, but has no sort of backbone. On the great topic of the times—Secession—it is neither fish, flesh, nor good salt herring. At heart it is evidently opposed to the fire-eaters, and occasionally it plucks up courage enough to denounce the usurpers mildly; but then *The* [New Orleans] *Delta* bombards it as an Abolitionist sheet ... this invariably frightens *The Picayune* into the most rabid Secessionism for about a week ... Come, Mr. *Picayune*, do be either something or nothing!²⁷

The *Cincinnati Enquirer*, a nine-column publication that was emphatically Democratic, publishing in what was then the nation’s 7th largest city (pop. 161,044) provides a typical example of newspaper-centric content in 1860. Of its first two pages, more than half of the space is dedicated to advertisements. A “news” article on page one, headlined “Difficulty between an Ex-Foreign Minister and a Southern Editor,” discusses a print fight taking place in Savannah, Georgia, between William H. Stiles and J.R. Sneed. “A very indignant card from the latter gentleman denies an assertion made by Mr. Stiles, to the effect that the original Sneed was ‘a Hessian, sent here by the British government to shoot down American citizens for ninety cents a month.’ Mr. Sneed occupies a half-column of the *Republican* in clearing his escutcheon of the foul blot, and throws back the slander upon Mr. Stiles with the proper seasoning of epithets.” In a March issue, the combative attitude of editor Washington McLean and the *Enquirer* is readily seen: “We publish this morning a letter from ‘Franklin,’ our regular and excellent

²⁷ “From Louisiana,” Editorial, *New York Tribune*, April 12, 1861.

Columbus correspondent, in reply to 'More Anon.' It will repay perusal, both as a tart rejoinder and for its information." The newspaper's readership was expected to be partisan not only in politics, but on behalf of their paper, as well.²⁸

The adjustment of the *Enquirer* to new demands and new technology can begin to be seen, though, in a page two story shortly before the fall of Fort Sumter under the heading "Telegraphic" and the multiple deck headline: "Reported for the Daily Enquirer./Our Exclusive Dispatches./From Washington./The War News in Washington./Exciting Rumors./Excitement at Charleston on Receipt of New York News./Why the Administration Changed its Policy./Washington, Saturday, April 6."

To the editor of the Enquirer: "War, War is the theme of the men congregated at the hotels, the departments and the corners of the streets, and in every household the near approach of hostilities has cast a gloomy shadow. That it is already inaugurated at Sumter and Pickens we do not yet know, but there are many rumorsIt is stated that the vessels to leave New York to-morrow morning, are not for the purpose of reinforcing Fort Sumter, but for provisioning it, and it will depend upon the authorities of South Carolina whether it will be done peaceably or not. I rather think that we will have to record another *Star of the West* affair. Four [Here the line failed.—Operator]²⁹

While somewhat over-wrought, the combination of on-the-scene reporting and the unexpected cutoff of technology brought an immediacy to the news that is lacking in earlier, inwardly-focused copy. On April 13, the *Enquirer* editorialized somberly that, in attacking Sumter, the Southern army "[b]roke the *status quo* which has prevailed, and upon them rests the responsibility for the bloody strife ... They are the aggressors in first breaking the peace ... the *onus* of fault they cannot shake off." By April 15, news articles (mostly borrowed from New York papers) had even squeezed some advertising off of the front page. But, if a change in the news approach was coming, it was still easy for the *Enquirer* and McLean to fall back into vituperative habits. Fomenting scorn against its rival, the *Times*, the newspaper raved: "As a specimen of malignant cowardice, dictated by the meanest and most contemptible of all

²⁸ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Wed., March 27.

²⁹ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 7, 1861.

feelings which govern humanity, it is not a little remarkable, even in that journal, whose monomaniacal absurdities have of late been the theme of remark. The *Times* has teemed with paragraphs, for a number of days, designed to excite a mob to assault the office of the *Enquirer*.”³⁰

The *Enquirer* never was mobbed, but its defense of itself in later months reveals a change in the nature of special correspondents and the value placed on them. By the time of Bull Run, in July, the tone of “Cleveland,” its own “special” in Washington, D.C., has become workmanlike and brief. On July 21, his dispatch consists almost entirely of short sentences, e.g.: “Several members of Congress were witnesses of the conflict at Bull’s Run. They express the belief that the Federal loss in killed is not less than one hundred. No fighting to day.” At the same time, a competitor newspaper, the *Cincinnati Gazette* mounted its own attack on the *Enquirer*, claiming “It is a matter of common notoriety that the ‘Cleveland’ dispatches are made up in the *Enquirer* office, being usually a duplication of the regular dispatches, with the addition of the spirit of the *Enquirer*.” To counter the *Gazette*’s attack, editor McLean published a note from the Western Union chief operator in Cincinnati, J.F. Stevens, certifying that the telegraphed articles actually came from Washington and Baltimore. Not only was information from the field becoming more factual, but its legitimacy depended on the paper’s ability to prove that it came from a verifiable correspondent on the ground, rather than from exchanges. The imagined community of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*’s world had expanded to include a presence on the actual battlefields of the war.³¹

Like the *New York Tribune*, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*’s front page became devoted to news text instead of ads in 1862. By June, the paper’s telegraphic news column had moved from an inside page to occupy the right-hand columns of the front page; by September, telegraphic news occupied two full front-page columns of a new seven-column layout. Similarly, other papers that had begun the war with front pages that mixed advertisements and various types of news listings, such as the *Chicago Tribune*

³⁰ *Cincinnati Inquirer*, April 13, 14, 15, 1861.

³¹ *Ibid.*, July 21, 22.

and the *Detroit Free Press*, tended to increase the prominence of news. While choices could sometimes seem eclectic—the *Detroit Free Press* during the Battle of Gettysburg chose to run a three-column literary piece on its front page—they reflected a gradual change of the newspaper from a business entity to an information one. Wilbur F. Storey, mentioned above in connection with the *Detroit Free Press*, would come to be praised for having the vision to overhaul the *Chicago Times* during the war. Though the paper was deplored in much of the North for Storey’s Copperhead leanings, and was several times suppressed for what were termed its editor’s “ravings,” Storey by 1861 had decided that technology and immediacy were the hallmarks of a modern paper. He invested \$21,000 in the paper, which had never been profitable under its former owner, Cyrus McCormick. By the time of Storey’s death in 1884 the *Chicago Times* was estimated to be worth \$1.5 million. In an obituary, the *New York Times* wrote “Mr. Storey ... started on the theory, then new to Chicago, that a newspaper must contain news, at whatever cost or consequence. The *Times* soon became known for its enterprise, dreaded for its bittersweet personalities, and condemned for immorality, but it was read, and gained steadily in circulation and advertising patronage.”³²

If newspapers changed during the Civil War, so did the nature of the reporters. Prior to the war’s outbreak, only very limited efforts at independence and objectivity had existed for the press corps in their coverage. The efforts of the 1840s in covering the Mexican War were carried out on a largely partisan basis, with a combination of “letter writers” from the ranks boosting the merits of particular officers or Army units, “special correspondents” writing for a penny a line to the political bent of their newspapers, and the earliest “war correspondents” attempting to interpret tactics and strategy (often with an emphasis on the eventual electability of commanding officers in the campaign). While the penny

³² *Chicago Tribune* (1860-1872), April 13, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed June 27, 2011). While taking notice of the bombardment of Fort Sumter, the *Tribune* still ran four and one-half columns of classified ads on its nine-column front page. A year earlier, the then-*Chicago Press and Tribune* devoted two-thirds of its front page to classifieds. “A Veteran Editor Dead,” *New York Times*, October 28, 1884, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F50915FB3B5C15738DDDA10A94D8415B8484F0D3> (accessed June 30, 2011).

press had led to the development of self-described neutral or independent newspapers, it was at the midpoint of the Civil War that correspondents themselves began to see the need for personal independence and for the creation of space between themselves and their subject matter.

The problem was that the Civil War had called an entirely new kind of journalism into being, one more immediately connected to events actually in progress, requiring a new approach to the handling of what would in the later 20th century be called “breaking” news. The initial response to these challenges had been mixed, and many of the men (and a few women—at least three female Washington letter-writers forwarded news items to papers in New York and other cities) who initially responded as “specials” were unsuited for the new, emerging field of work.³³

“Candor compels the admission that as a class, the first installment of correspondents sent to the armies deserved no high rank in public or official estimation,” Sylvanus Cadwallader wrote in his autobiography. “At that time nearly all army correspondents were in bad odor at all army headquarters, and were always secretly held to be a species of nuisance that needed abating.” Early reporters often leeches off of the “mess” of a colonel or general, living comfortably in return for the favor of praising such an officer in dispatches. Others, Cadwallader noted, actually sold their services for promoting an officer’s career, literally naming a price for flattering prose that might lead to a step in pay grade for their subject. Other early correspondents were boorish social misfits, or came straight from partisan political sparring that led them to view all issues as a kind of gigantic political convention where everything was negotiable. Some even acted like spies, hiding near officers’ tents to eavesdrop or sneaking into closed military councils in order to glean information. Many war correspondents demanded (and received) appointments as special aides to politically-sensitive generals; some received

³³ Harris, preface to *Blue & Gray*, x.

army rank without the corresponding obligation to obey orders or fulfill military duties, which lowered them in the estimation of serving officers and enlisted men.³⁴

The blame for such a system can be shared as much by political officers, such as Brigadier General and onetime Pennsylvania governor John White Geary, who saw their wartime service as a launching platform for future office. Michigan's Gen. Alpheus Williams, writing from Sherman's army, said of Geary "We have had one division commander who, I judge, has kept a corner in the notes of every correspondent in the army, besides keeping his staff busy at the same work. He claims [to have done] pretty much everything."³⁵

Relationships between the press and the administration or military could be mutually beneficial, and even rise to the level of what would later come to be called public relations. The closeness between journalists and politicians in the pre-war years had left bonds that lasted. An interchange between Lincoln's secretary John Hay and *New York Herald* columnist Charles G. Halpine demonstrates that the boundaries between newspapers, the military, and the White House were very permeable. Both Halpine and Hay had worked as journalists before the war, Halpine for the *New York Times* and then as editor of a reform magazine, the *Leader*, of New York. Halpine, a rising young officer on Gen. David Hunter's staff and eventually a brigadier general, continued to write from the ranks and had attacked the administration regarding its handling of Admiral Samuel DuPont following an abortive naval campaign. His main work was a regular humor column featured "Private Miles O'Reilly," a broadly-drawn Irish caricature. On November 18, 1863, Halpine wrote to Hay that "Private Miles is about to visit Washn. And be introduced to the Prest., of whom for reelection (vide Herald passim) he is a warm and devoted

³⁴ Sylvanus Cadwallader, *Three Years with Grant*, ed. Benjamin P. Thomas (New York: Knopf, 1956), 11.

³⁵ William E. Huntzicker, "Independent or Compromised? Civil War Correspondent Sylvanus Cadwallader," in *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism*, eds. David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris, Jr. (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008) 265. For a description of several correspondents' different modes of favoritism, J. Cutler Andrews, *The North Reports the Civil War* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955), 67-70; Alpheus S. Williams cited in Bell Irvin Wiley, *A Politician Goes to War: The Civil War Letters of John White Geary*, William Alan Blair ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), xi.

supporter. Have you any anecdote [sic] you could give me of what *anybody* said about Miles? ... Any anecdote from the Presdt. if new would be worth its weight in gold ... no matter what it may be, it can be worked in. Anything like his 'plowing around the stumps that couldn't either be grubbed or burnt out,' with which I commenced my article on Jim Lane and the Kansas Missouri troubles some five or six weeks ago." Halpine promised political support for Lincoln from his character, and promised "Your note shall be destroyed five minutes after its receipt: and no living soul shall know of its receipt." Hay's response, which was not destroyed, was to say "Ever since I got your letter I have been skulking in the shadow of the Tycoon, setting all sorts of dextrous [sic] traps for a joke, telling good stories myself to draw him out and suborning Nicolay to aid in the foul conspiracy. But not a joke has flashed from the Tycoonal thundercloud ...I give you my word of honor if he says any good thing within a week to faithfully report it to you." Halpine eventually got his joke, a story about "The widow Zollicoffer's Darkey," and Miles O'Reilly endorsed Lincoln, saying "There's but one man who wears a Black Coat [as opposed to military uniform] in the United States this blessed and holy day, that can be elected to that office [President]."³⁶

Cadwallader, joining the army of Ulysses Grant to cover the campaign against Vicksburg in 1863, decided to take an innovative new approach as a correspondent. Instead of being with the army on sufferance, or sharing some general's halo and hospitality in order to earn a place with the ongoing campaign, the reporter would insulate himself from command personalities by being self-sufficient and even generous. This would also separate him from the thoroughly despised corps of correspondents whose sloppy, inaccurate, ill-considered, or favoritist reporting had made them anathema. "In view of this status of army correspondents, I resolved on an entirely new line of procedure," wrote Cadwallader. "I decided to procure my own outfit, to ride my own horses and pay my own expenses liberally rather

³⁶ Halpine to Hay, Nov. 18, 1863, cited in Michael Burlingame, *At Lincoln's Side: John Hay's Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 240, n 170; Hay to Halpine, Nov. 22, 1863, *Ibid.*, 68; Charles Halpine, *The Life and Adventures, Songs, Services, and Speeches of Private Miles O'Reilly* (New York: Carleton, 1864), 161-3, 176.

than parsimoniously. That if the exigencies of the service required me to enter a military ‘mess,’ to pay my full *pro-rata* share of all its expenses and to accept no hospitalities on any other conditions. I also decided to make all calls at Regimental, Brigade and Division, Corps & Army headquarters rather formal than otherwise at the outset; to make them brief, and never to allow them to interrupt official business.”³⁷

In adopting this approach, Cadwallader was unconsciously reaching a standard for journalism that would not become common until the later 20th century. Described by contemporaries as “cold” or “isolated,” he was instead behaving as a modern journalist might. His innovative tactics in the journalistic world of 1863 brought him significant success at the time; Cadwallader was admired by army officers and their staffs, was clued in to methods that allowed him to avoid both censorship and outright bans of correspondents within the campaign against Vicksburg, and the unbiased reporting he developed proved so reliable—and so far ahead of others—that Republican-oriented newspapers often lifted his articles, verbatim, from the pages of the Democratic *Chicago Times* despite the Copperhead tendencies of that paper’s editor, Wilbur F. Storey. Cadwallader became one of the few reporters entirely trusted by Grant, and gained special access to that general’s extended military “family” as a result.³⁸

Cadwallader set a new standard for Civil War correspondents, showing how professionalism could grow from one person’s new thinking in confronting a set of changing and unprecedented demands. Like his employer, Storey, the reporter recognized that the value of independent news reporting had come to outweigh the prior values of political loyalty or quid-pro-quo cronyism that continued to provide the operating model for much of the newspaper business.

Whether others among the estimated 350 Northern war correspondents and 150 Southern ones emulated Cadwallader’s methods or not, the nature of their news coverage changed significantly as the

³⁷ Cadwallader, *Three Years*, 11.

³⁸ Huntzicker, in *Words at War*, 261, 267.

events of the war overcame them. Coverage of the bombardment of Fort Sumter, for example, undertaken at the time as one of the most important and exciting events ever to affect the United States, seems quaint in retrospect. The *New York Times* used a nine-item columnar headline to open its story: “The First Gun Fired by Fourt Moultrie Against Fort Sumpter [sic].:/THE BOMBARDMENT CONTINUED ALL DAY./Spirited Return from Major Anderson’s Guns./The Firing from Fort Sumpter Ceased for the Night./Hostilities to Commence Again at Daylilght./The Correspondence which Preceded the Bombardment./The Demand for a Surrender and Major Anderson’s Refusal./THE RELIEF FLEET OFF THE HARBOR./How the News is Recieved [sic] in Washington.” Despite the over-wrought headline, after several lines of drama, the news story itself revealed that “Not a casualty has yet happened to any of the forces.”³⁹

That editors were becoming aware of new challenges, though, is seen in the *Richmond Enquirer’s* entry for July 19, in which it passed along the news that Northern military officials were now censoring the telegraph. The *Enquirer* listed it as a propaganda move. “The obvious meaning and intent of the order [by Gen. Winfield Scott and Secretary of War Simon Cameron] is to prevent the transmission, by telegraph, of any intelligence not favorable to the Yankee cause,” it editorialized. Yet the *Enquirer* itself lacked the connectivity to get on-the-scene reports from the vicinity of Bull Run, and would be badly behind on reporting the actual July 21 battle there, running only an official letter from Jefferson Davis on July 23 along with a general description of the Bull Run landscape (“a pellucid mountain rivulet of small size in summer”). It would not be until the July 26th edition that the *Enquirer* could describe the Confederate victory in “The severest battle that was ever fought in this country.” Without many details to go on, the Virginia paper ran a story from “an officer of our army” describing a (now known to be apocryphal) bowie-knife-only charge made by Arkansans against a Northern unit that “fairly screamed

³⁹ The First Gun Fired, *New York Times*, April 13, 1861 <http://www.nytimes.com/1861/04/13/news/first-gun-fired-fort-moultrie-against-fort-sumpter-bombardment-continued-all-day.html> (accessed April 9, 2010). The *Times* used the “Sumpter” spelling throughout.

with terror, and fled in the utmost consternation. They were nearly exterminated.” In New York, the *Tribune* showed the perils of too much confidence in quickly transmitted information. Its July 22 headlines began with “A Great Battle Fought./Splendid Union Victory./The Rebels Routed.” The next day, as the scope of the Union defeat became clear, its July 23 news headlines read: “A Terrible Blunder,” and the article that followed read in part “Whoever ordered the attack with 20,000 men, upon thrice that number, in a strongly intrenched position, protected by numerous masked batteries, after long marching, exposure, and deprivation of rations, is greatly to blame.” Other Northern newspapers, especially the *New York Times*, would blame the *Tribune’s* “on to Richmond” campaign for the failure, citing “popular clamor promoted by certain reckless journals.”⁴⁰

By the time of the great battles of 1862, the reporting and the newspaper treatment of events were much more factual and restrained. Of Antietam, for example, the *Tribune’s* correspondent conservatively wrote: “The greatest battle of the war has been fought to-day, lasting from daylight till dark, and closing without decisive result ... Two hundred thousand men have fought with the utmost determination on both sides. Neither can claim a complete victory ...”⁴¹

As the scope and complexity of the Civil War’s geographic reach began to emerge, editors realized that readers needed more than just words in order to be able to comprehend events. In 1861, the *New York Times* could publish what it referred to as “Pen-Photographs of Charleston and the Charlestonians,” text descriptions of events going on in a city that few New Yorkers had ever seen or visited. To understand campaigns such as those of the Seven Days around Richmond, or Antietam in Maryland, took more than just words. This was especially true because of the simultaneous broadening of the American experience – hundreds of thousands of soldiers, with all the ancillary travelers needed to support armies, were occupying regions they would never ordinarily have reached in their lives – and

⁴⁰ Editorial, *Richmond Enquirer*, July 19; “The Grand Battle at Bull Run,” *Richmond Enquirer*, July 23, 1861; “War Items,” *Richmond Enquirer*, July 26, 1861; “A Great Battle Fought,” *New York Tribune*, July 22, 1861; “A Terrible Blunder,” *New York Tribune*, July 23, 1862; Editorial, *New York Times*, July 24, 1861.

⁴¹ “The Great Battle of Wednesday,” *New York Tribune*, Sept. 19, 1862.

the peculiar isolation that was forced onto people both at home and at the front. While armies moved, the lives of the soldiers and officers in them were absolutely restricted. The presence of armies, meanwhile, also limited civilian experiences. In the weeks leading up to Antietam, for example, rural communities in the path of either army would suddenly and without warning find themselves subject to days of watching troops pass through, often losing their property or worse to the unexpected horde of men. As Kathleen Ernst has written, “Most people cringed” at the uncertainty of campaigns washing over or through their communities, “for by now war-weary rural residents knew exactly what any campaign might bring.” Depending on the occupying army, union loyalists or confederate sympathizers might find themselves subject to travel restrictions and impassible picket lines. The war brought a desperate need to understand the landscape. For those in the cities far from the war, visualizing a complex battle or campaign’s various stages was a near impossibility.⁴²

The appearance of large map graphics, with summarizing cutlines, was a newspaper innovation aimed at resolving these multiple needs. While illustrated weekly newspapers such as *Frank Leslie’s* had long been using engravings to add decorative art to stories, the process took significant time and, for the most part, was accomplished largely by having a predictable format for the printed pages from issue to issue, with illustrations occupying standard sizes and positions. Translating the technology to the daily paper took not just ability, but imagination; it required a new vision that stretched the news format horizontally, removing the columnar format of the daily paper and drawing new relationships between disparate items on the page. While initial efforts were relatively crude, such as a wood-block print run early in the war by the *New York Times* to explain the battle of Ball’s Bluff, later efforts showed significant sophistication. The *New York Herald* was particularly good at this.

Southern papers, largely dependent on Northern and foreign sources for the hardware and materials that made the revolution in graphic display possible, were mostly unable to follow the

⁴² Kathleen Ernst, *Too Afraid to Cry: Maryland Civilians in the Antietam Campaign* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1999), 209-211

example. Not only were they limited on technology, but the South's relatively higher demand on its manpower for army needs took a disproportionate number of printers away from newspaper employment. In Richmond, for instance, several editors complained that they had lost 80 percent of their printers to army enlistment. Though many Southern publications innovated by remaking the front page as a news section, their ability to follow other aspects of the Northern modernizing was limited. "Our newspapers have felt the martial influence as strongly as other things ... They have never had so much variety as now ...; they are of all sizes and colors, and sometimes contain four pages, and sometimes two. They are short enough for a pocket handkerchief one day, and big enough for a tablecloth another. They assume as many hues as Niagara in the sunshine, and are by turns blue, yellow, green, red, purple, grey, and common brown packing paper," wrote editors of the *Memphis Appeal* in 1862. Southern papers were also hindered both by government clampdowns on information and by social pressure to report "news" that supported Southern triumphalism. Writes Yael Sternhell, "[I]n the wartime South, what should have been a moment of triumph for modern communication turned into an extravaganza of misinformation. News transmitted over the wires was often incomprehensible; train travelers spread stories that were blatantly wrong; newspapers functioned as rumour mills; and war correspondents admitted that they had no idea what they were doing." The reporting of Gettysburg, for example, did not reach Richmond until July 8, when the *Enquirer* ran a special dispatch headlined "Gen. Meade Reported Killed—McClellan in Command" and that discussed the Rebel army holding "a large number of prisoners."⁴³

Northern papers did not make uniform advances into new forms; even the most innovative wavered between formats, retreating into older style strictly columnar formats until the next major event strained their ability to stay abreast of developments. Yet, having ventured into graphical

⁴³ *Daily Appeal*, April 11, 1862, cited in Baker, 99; Yael A. Sternhell, "Communicating War: The Culture of Information in Richmond during the American Civil War," *Past and Present* (2009), 202 (1), 175-205, <http://past.oxfordjournals.org/content/202/1/175.extract> (accessed June 30, 2011); "Gen. Meade Reported Killed," *Richmond Enquirer*, July 8, 1863.

territory, papers like the *Tribune* were ready to bring out large-scale informative maps and articles for future campaigns, running several—including one that occupied two-thirds of a page—in 1864 at the onset of Grant’s Overland Campaign with the Battle of the Wilderness. The subject was simply too difficult to explain in words alone, and forced the papers to innovate.

It was a more disciplined press that did so, as well; while there was plenty of speculation as to the Army of the Potomac’s likely moves in the weeks leading up to the final plunge across the Rapidan, news editors in the North had tacitly agreed to avoid mention of troop movements. It was an agreement they stuck to; on May 3, the *Tribune* could run an article it picked up from the *Washington Republican* saying “We feel authorized to state, since it cannot now afford information to the enemy, that the Army of the Potomac has advanced toward Richmond, and the struggle for the possession of the Rebel capital has begun.”

The importance of the newspaper, its coverage methods, and the impact of its seemingly small innovations cannot be lightly dismissed. As the public interface for a growing new electric communications network, the newspaper was the place where people came to grips with an ever-growing matrix of information. It took the virtual, such as battlefields hundreds of miles away, or camps and marches in territory no reader had ever visited, and made it real. To do so, the press often had to innovate—as with detached, independent correspondents or large-scale graphics—and some of their innovations foreshadowed a 20th century future. The papers of the time are a reflection of the shared imaginations of the communities they served, and of the changes to those communities. Their reflection gives a glimpse of a readership that both needed and wanted more serious information, a maturing news taste that may have come in part from the war itself. While some innovations were actively sought out, others were forced onto editors unable to cope with the events of the day, or a day. Perhaps no example is more poignant than that of the *Richmond Enquirer* on Sept. 23, 1862, which removed all normal material from its front page to make room for a special report. Though its editorial on page three

said “The condition of our army...is excellent, and the spirits of the troops, flushed with victory, high and warm,” and claimed that the reports in the Northern newspapers were lies, the front page was shocking. Under its usual front-page “flag” were only the words “Tuesday Morning,” and then “Casualties,” followed by column after column of names from Lee’s campaign into Maryland. The pages serve as a stark reminder that what the press of the 1860s dealt with was not a game; that for all of its quaintness, infighting, self-aggrandizing, floridness, fictions, and propagandizing, its message could—and did—alter lives.

While newspapers did not shed their character as politically partisan organs, the war itself changed the expectations of readers. By war’s end, telegraphic news reports were expected rather than exotic, and what constituted news had to be timely in order to be valued. Moreover, the readership base now included hundreds of thousands of people who had traveled to remote areas of the country, experienced regional cultures first-hand, and whose appetite for novelty was tempered with knowledge. Editors could shape an approach to presentation of the news, but the day in which they owned the information and could dispense it at their own pace had passed by. Communication historian Brian Winston argues that invention, prototyping, and introduction of a technology does not bring diffusion until a larger social need appears. Technology had been poised for a demand that had not yet materialized in the late antebellum period. War provided the social actuating force that built the demand and accelerated adoption of new ways of doing business. The growing interconnectedness of the country, including the transcontinental Pacific telegraph (1861) and the transcontinental railroad (in 1869), meant that news coverage itself had to move to a systems approach. The front pages of changed newspapers are the markers of that revolution.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Winston, *Media Technology and Society*, 20, esp. figure 8.

CHAPTER 3 MEDIA FRAMING OF A SOCIAL CRISIS

On July 25, 1863, Union Army private Chauncey H. Cooke wrote to his Wisconsin parents from the shade of a “big cypress tree on the banks of the Yazoo River.” Part of Grant’s army that had captured Vicksburg, Cooke was convalescing from malarial fever. He was only too aware that twenty three other men in the 25th Wisconsin had died of various fevers in the past month, but this sickly private in the hinterlands of Mississippi had another thing on his mind: “Of course you have heard ... of the riot of the mob in New York City and the burning of negro asylums and school houses. That mob uprising looked bad for the North. It was a Democratic crowd in sympathy with the South [he assured his mother].”¹

Cooke spoke with a chatty certainty about the events despite having no personal knowledge of them. His letter shows that the young soldier had not just been informed of news events in New York City, but also had been told how to frame the New York Draft Riots of July 13-16, 1863. The newspapers informed him of how the riots should be characterized. In this, they showed themselves to be taking on a form of work that communication scholars had envisioned as only applying to the modern press, with its experience of twentieth century factors of propaganda, commercial public relations, and corporate agenda-setting.

Framing is a postmodern theoretical term for the work that media does to characterize a story in such a way that a news consumer, like Chauncey Cooke, automatically understands the story in tropes that, themselves, convey particular prepared meanings. Communication scholar Mary S. Mander writes “For example, a film or a song may move us in ways that cannot be described in words” by playing on these pre-set meanings.² It has been considered an advanced skill and, as such, has not been widely used to analyze historical early news. This chapter focuses on the immediate news coverage of a crisis, the New York City Draft Riots of 1863, as an issue of media framing in which the same kind of modern work done today on terrorism, politics, or warfare, was done in 1863 by a growing cadre of professional

¹ Chauncey H. Cooke, *A Badger Boy in Blue* (Detroit: Wayne State, 2007), 79.

² Mary S. Mander, ed., *Framing Friction: Media and Social Conflict* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1999), 10

journalists. By framing the reporting of the draft riots in specific ways, such as events caused by outside agitators, by political enemies, or by “other” groups within the city including immigrants, New York newspapers established meaning for their readers out of the inchoate events in the city. These meanings were beyond the intent and motives of the mob itself. They also articulated the story for particular political advantages of hidden communities and individuals that sought to gain power during the uncertain years of the Civil War. The powerful identification by news leaders of a sub-human “other” being responsible for the Draft Riots, rather than ordinary New Yorkers themselves, created an important model that prevented the riots from becoming a major part of the national narrative of the Civil War. Recognition of this work allows us to say that the press was gaining in authority and in arbitrating citizenship criteria, not just sensationalizing an emergent event.

As a soldier detached from his regiment due to illness, Cooke could not have been instructed about the riots by his regular officers or those associated with the military chain of command, even if such “orders of the day” had been issued (none have been noted relative to the draft riots in order books held at the National Archives). Cooke most likely got his information from newspapers brought to the army camp or hospital. The increasing reach, power, and immediacy of the national press meant that the news arrived framed in a way so that Chauncey Cooke could reassure the folks at home within ten days of the height of the riots.

Looking at the immediate coverage of the draft and the draft riots in newspapers of the time shows how editors used reporting to set audience perception not just of the events, but of the nature of the draft riots and the agents involved. The story radiated from New York and though it was amended regionally and sectionally to fit different media approaches, the New York interpretation of the story held sway. Within New York, there were many narratives regarding the riots, narratives that agreed on key events but disagreed widely on causes and results of those events. Editors sparred over the question

of who had justice on their side at many different points in the riot. They also fought one another in print over the virtues of their different approaches to coverage of the events even as the riots unfolded.³

The riots in New York City represented a crisis during the Civil War and an enormous challenge to the Lincoln administration. The city played an outsized role in the national conflict, serving as the center for news distribution, commerce, manufacturing, and finance. It also provided tens of thousands of soldiers in service. Yet the city also was “strongly racist, hostile to the abolition of slavery and to any real freedom for black Americans,” according to scholar Edward K. Spann. That racism, he further argued, played into the hands of anti-administration Democrats, who fomented ethnic hatred between immigrants and blacks for political advantage.⁴ Repeated defeats of the Army of the Potomac at the hands of Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia had demoralized the war’s supporters. Members of the Lincoln administration had believed that the early July military victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg finally had turned the tables on Northern war doubters, who had been clamoring for an end to combat and tacit repeal of black emancipation. The draft riots set the administration back on the defensive. If the riots were a genuinely spontaneous uprising of the people, then they could be used as a tool to repudiate the legitimacy of Lincoln’s presidency. But if the riots could be blamed on Democrats and Copperhead schemers, then the administration’s power would be safeguarded.⁵

The riots involved the major New York newspapers and their personnel directly. Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*, raided by rioters, stockpiled weapons and barricaded its doors against rioters, as did the *New York Times* and the *New York Post*. Mob violence also affected the lives and

³ *New York Herald*, “The Niggerhead and Copperhead Organs on the Riots,” July 16, 1863, is an example of such news coverage criticism; *New York Tribune*, July 15, attacked the *Herald* in print, “The rioters knew that they had the sympathies of The Herald . . . if any evidence were needed, it may be found in the language of its reports, some extracts from which we print elsewhere.”

⁴ Edward K. Spann, *Gotham at War: New York City, 1860-1865* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2002), xiv.

⁵ Copperheads were Democrats who were strongly opposed to the Civil War and emancipation. Their numbers were particularly strong in the Midwest, where Republicans worried that an anti-United States conspiracy existed including secret societies such as the Knights of the Golden Circle and the Sons of Liberty. James W. Geary, *We Need Men: The Union Draft in the Civil War* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), 152.

safety of reporters and editors in the metropolis. The mere suspicion that an individual in the crowd of rioters might be a reporter could lead to a severe beating, if not worse. In several cases, newspaper articles noted that quoted speeches came from the reporter's memory, because note-taking was too dangerous. This personal involvement in a breaking news event led to emotional framing of the story, with some reporters and editors using articles to work through the fear and anger inspired by the mob violence.⁶

Framing, with agenda setting and content analysis, is a modern tool of communication theory. Communications scholar Robert M. Entman identifies frames as "information processing schemata" that, through "repetition, placement, and reinforcing associations with each other ... render one basic interpretation more readily discernable, comprehensible, and memorable than others."⁷ Others, such as media effects analyst Dietram A. Scheufele, have called framing the "social construction of reality."⁸ Such construction can lead to an easy formulaic presentation for readers, one that determines who is "good" or "bad" by the way they are characterized in print or artwork. Journalist practitioners of the 1860s who often saw themselves as partisans, would not have consciously considered framing as an important part of their work. Nevertheless, the continuing emergence of a national news structure and network during the time of the Civil War led to a new situation. Audience groups that transcended narrow local political party focus increasingly relied on journalistic framing to understand how national news events fit within their public or domestic lives. As the pace of news delivery grew speedier Americans found new relevance in news stories from beyond their local ambit because framing techniques helped them integrate the news comfortably.

⁶ *New York Post*, "A Tribune Man Attacked," cited in the *Richmond Dispatch*, July 18, 1863; William O. Stoddard, *Volcano Under the City* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1886), 47. Stoddard, later famous for his published memoirs as a White House clerk for Lincoln, served as both a "special" correspondent and as a volunteer Metropolitan police officer during the riots. *Volcano* was initially published anonymously.

⁷ Robert M. Entman, "Framing U.S. Coverage of International News: Contrasts in Narratives of the KAL and Iran Air Incidents," *Journal of Communication* 41, 4, Autumn 1991, 7.

⁸ Dietram A. Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1999, 104.

In the case of the draft riots, newspaper readers were carefully instructed that fault and responsibility lay with the “Other,” whether immigrants, laborers, abolitionists, Democrats, Republicans, or minorities. This characterization happened not only in the selection of events for the news narrative, but in the choice of language and the placement of events in stories and headlines. This language and approach helped newspapers frame the draft riots in ways that gave sense and purpose to the events while exonerating loyal readers of responsibility for the outbreak. Historian Iver Bernstein has remarked that the New York riots are one of the few American events that goes un-owned; that their negative connotation makes them unusable for heritage purposes. Neither the urban gentry, the labor movement, trade unions, political and military leaders, or the victims of the riot, could find redeeming values in the event itself, and the Northern victory in the war made New York’s intransigence an unacceptable recollection. “What gradually ensued was an instance not of what historians call collective memory but rather of collective amnesia,” writes Bernstein.⁹

As one example, the illustrated newspapers *Harper’s Weekly* and *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* differed significantly in editorial positions and coverage of the draft riots. Martin Kuhn has written that “*Harper’s* played down the riots and limited coverage to a two-page spread depicting ape-like, Irish rioters committing acts of violence. *Leslie’s* carried considerably more coverage, depicting less chaotic ‘rioters’ and used riot illustrations on its cover.”¹⁰ *Harpers*, with its background as an illustrated literary periodical, served a readership that was conservative and established; *Leslie’s*, with its origins in P.T. Barnum’s empire, was an edgier publication that reached across ethnic boundaries and had a stronger interest in its graphics than in its political voice.

⁹ Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford, 1990), 4.

¹⁰ Martin Kuhn, “Drawing Civil War Soldiers,” *Journalism History* 32, no 2 (2006), 96; David W. Bulla & Gregory A. Borchard, *Journalism in the Civil War Era* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 94-95.

The Riots in History

Historians of the draft riots have shifted focus over the years from early efforts to identify perpetrators and chronicle incidents to more recent scholarship identifying larger issues. The early history of the draft riots concentrated primarily on Irish immigrant ignorance and violence, and on the attack by the Irish on African Americans. This emphasis on despised minorities was joined by subtexts on Copperhead plots and Confederate intervention. Early writers failed to challenge the conspiracy trail left by some of the most frightened participants, who saw the riot as part of a larger plot within the North to overthrow the government.

Mid-twentieth century historians appear to have made a more structural attempt to identify the New York draft riots with the Pennsylvania campaign of Gen. Robert E. Lee. They have elevated the riots to an intentional part of Confederate strategy at the so-called “high water mark” of the war. They cite, also, popular reaction to the massive casualties suffered by the North at Gettysburg. While not rejecting the arguments that Irish immigrant minorities enacted the riots, and that race played a central role, these historians deemphasize the importance of the New York riots and spread reaction to the draft across the entire North. Hunter Dupree and Leslie Fishel, Jr., offer one such example from the 1960s in an article that admits the ferocity of the New York riots, but also explains that “Demonstrations against the Enrollment Act occurred all over the North after May 25 [1863], when enlisting officers began their work.”¹¹

Recent histories have approached the draft riots much more as an issue of labor, racial politics and policies, and reaction to the Emancipation Proclamation and Black freedom. Bernstein combines all of these in pointing out that the New York riots were the most deadly to occur in America because of the strong racial hatred they expressed over the perceived effects of the proclamation. Barnet Schecter

¹¹ A. Hunter Dupree and Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., eds., “An Eyewitness Account of the New York Draft Riots, July, 1863,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47, no. 3 (Dec. 1960): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1888878> (accessed Oct. 3, 2011).

writes that “To fulfill this promise of freedom, Union forces would not only have to win on the battlefield but take over the South and implement a social revolution.” Democrats, they argue, assured their working-class constituents would mean that free blacks would soon come North to replace them at their jobs.¹² Others, such as James W. Geary, have put the riots in perspective as part of 19th century society’s overall reaction to the draft, the first time in a century that Americans had been tapped for compulsory military service. Geary writes that “Any conscription system influences all sectors of a society; its impact is not confined solely to political and military decisions.”¹³ For many Americans the implication was a chilling imposition of federal power over state and local control. Comfortable certainties were threatened, including local autonomy.

The draft certainly affected Northern society broadly. The Enrollment Act of March 3, 1863, established the fundamental working structure for the military draft. It led at once to charges that forced civilian service was unconstitutional, and several state judicial opinions sided with public opinion against the draft. In passing the act, Congress added an exemption clause by which a man whose name was chosen for the draft could pay \$300 to be exempted. Laborers and farmers, generally low-paid, held that this unfairly favored the rich and made the on-going war into a poor man’s fight.

The Enrollment Act further created a powerful new military presence in civil centers in the form of the Provost Marshal’s office. The office sent military officers with quasi-legal authority to enforce the draft and run its mechanisms in cities and towns. In Detroit, newspaper publication of passage of the Enrollment Act led to a violent anti-negro riot that sprang from labor strikers already worried about black competition for jobs. The rioters burned the city’s black enclave, killed at least two blacks, and

¹² Bernstein, 27-30; Barnet Schechter, *The Devil’s Own Work: The Civil War Draft Riots and the Fight to Reconstruct America* (New York: Walker & Company, 2005), 5.

¹³ Geary, *We Need Men*, x.

injured many more. The riot was only put down when regular troops arrived on the night of March sixth.¹⁴

When enrollment officers began the national draft process in late May, many Northern communities rose up against the measure. “Miners in Pennsylvania, and men, women, and children in Holmes County, Ohio, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Boston, reacted violently against the legislation,” say Dupree and Fishel.¹⁵ Several enrollment officials were murdered in the course of their duties, especially in Western states such as Wisconsin. Across the northern states, anti-draft feelings ran high among skilled trades, whose special skills had previously made them exempt from call-up for state militia. Under the Militia Act of July 17, 1862, they had included miners, firefighters, and railroad workers. All had powerful associative roots and were capable of taking independent and violent action.

In New York City, the weeks leading up to the draft created grave tensions that were recognized only after the mob violence had broken out. Lee’s invasion of the North led to frantic requests from the administration in Washington to forward state troops to reinforce the Army of the Potomac. Democratic New York Governor Horatio Seymour had responded by sending as many of the city regiments as possible for three months’ service. Beginning in June, roughly 12,000 troops were sent to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, as fast as they could be armed. The combined force of state militia and returned veteran units stripped the city of its most experienced military assets. It left only the city’s roughly 1,500 Metropolitan police to maintain civil order, and a few hundred soldiers whose responsibilities were limited to guarding fortifications and federal arsenals.¹⁶

¹⁴ Schechter, *Devil’s Own Work*, 106-7.

¹⁵ Dupree and Fishel, “An Eyewitness Account of the New York Draft Riots.”

¹⁶ John G. Schumaker, “Governor Seymour drove the rebels from Pennsylvania and quelled the draft riots in New York City: Remarks of John G. Schumaker and George Opdyke, republican mayor during the riots: in the New York State Constitutional Convention, January 29, 1868 [New York], 1868, *The Making of Modern Law*, Gale, 2011, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/MOML?af+RN&ae=F102066517&srchtp=a&ste=14> (accessed Oct. 3, 2011). Military-guarded facilities included the Brooklyn Navy Yard and fortifications on Riker’s Island.

Victories by Federal armies at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in the first days of July emboldened draft officials to begin the New York City draft quickly, believing that a public mood of optimism would support the process. More than 1,200 names were drawn on Saturday, July 11, in a ceremony held with little warning at the provost marshal's offices in the Twenty-second Ward of the city's Ninth District. The *New York Herald* wrote that the people were "thunderstruck" by the draft. They had assumed the draft would bypass the city, which had already sent some 50,000 troops to the army. Not only had the citizens of New York received scant warning of the draft, but government officials including Mayor George Opdyke, a Republican, and Democratic state governor Horatio Seymour had not been kept informed of where and when the process would begin. When the Sunday papers came off the presses, most New Yorkers were unprepared for the extensive list of drafted men's names that they found there.¹⁷

The reaction among working class people unlikely to afford an exemption was severe. When demonstrations against the draft turned to violence, city officials found that they were unprepared. They had few resources to use against the disorder. Loosely organized crowds rapidly shifted from organized protest to a wave of arson, looting, and violence that lasted for days. There were especially harsh attacks on the city's black population, dozens of whom were killed in brutal ways. Order was not restored until regiments of regular soldiers arrived from the Pennsylvania battlefields. The troops ultimately resorted to shooting, bayoneting, and firing artillery into crowds in order to quell the riots. The official death toll of some 120 to 150 named individuals was disputed at the time by authorities, who estimated the count at more than 1,100;¹⁸ but the nature of the riots, the type of public information kept at the time, and the extent of the damage to the city made an accurate total almost impossible to determine. In the aftermath of the riots, New York faced a monumental task of restoring

¹⁷ The draft lottery was organized so hastily that only two New York City newspapers, the *Herald* and the *Morning Express*, were prepared enough to run full lists of the initial draftees. The long lists were printed in the order that the names were drawn, rather than alphabetically, making the tense process of finding out who had been drawn exquisitely difficult. The *Herald* in a highly fraught article titled "A Draft Breakfast—Table Chit-chat," hypothesized tears and melancholy "infection" spreading through households.

¹⁸ Spann, *Gotham at War*, 101.

blocks of burnt-out buildings. Street railway lines and Metropolitan police telegraph systems, which both had been a target of the rioters, needed to be rebuilt. The damage to the city's psyche was more profound. If the mob had taken control once, it might rise up again at any time. Such a loss of control inspired deep fear, which led to a search to place blame.

The News Framing

Newspapers in the city initially had framed the draft story as one of loyalty and patriotism among residents who may have disliked the draft, but who were willing to go along with it in support of the Union. They had no expectation of a full-blown riot. An editorial in the *New York Herald* said: "It is now understood that the draft is to be carried out immediately. Indeed, it has already commenced. See our news columns of this morning. The people of the North are evidently determined to submit quietly to the conscription, as they are anxious to aid the government."¹⁹ Reporters and editors saw their primary duty as one of explaining the workings of the draft. The *Herald* reported that a quota of men would be drawn from each city ward and that the process would be by "wheel of fortune." Names of all the draft eligible men were written on slips of paper that were tightly rolled and rubber banded. "The lot thus prepared will be placed in a revolving wheel on a high platform and drawn out by the Provost Marshal, or some person by him designated, one by one, at each revolution of the wheel," wrote the *Herald*.²⁰

Warnings that significant draft resistance might occur were countered with calm reassurance. The *Tribune* opined on Monday, July 12, that "Many stories have been circulated to the effect that bands, gangs and companies have been organized here and there with the intention of resisting the draft, and that the members are armed and drilled, hold secret meetings and so forth; but from all that we can learn no such organizations exist, and even if they did they will amount to nothing."²¹

¹⁹ *New York Herald*, July 12, 1863.

²⁰ *New York Herald*, July 11, 1863.

²¹ *New York Tribune*, July 12, 1863.

The *New York Herald*, a day ahead of the *Tribune* in its draft coverage, described the orderly process of the draft. The first name drawn in the Twenty-second Ward was that of William Jones, of Forty-ninth Street near Tenth Avenue. "The crowd at this announcement gave a suppressed murmur, which was the only display worthy of note at the time," wrote the unnamed *Herald* reporter. By 4 p.m. of the first day, 1,236 names had been drawn for the particular ward, with another 264 remaining to be filled. Articles and editorials early on Monday, July 13, congratulated the city on its patriotic response to the draft. "The good feeling that has everywhere marked the first drawings under the conscription should not be lost upon the government. A few weeks back it shrank from putting the set in force. It apprehended, and with reason, that it would be met with a determined resistance," wrote James Gordon Bennett in the anti-administration *Herald*. He warned against faint-heartedness in prosecuting the war to its end and praised the victories of Gettysburg and Vicksburg. "These two great victories inspired the first hope that the administration had waked up to its responsibilities, and that it was becoming earnest in its efforts to put an end to the war ... now [the draft] is being carried out with a degree of tranquillity [sic] and order that shows that it was not from want of patriotism, but despair of the sincerity and capacity of the administration, that it ever met with opposition."²²

Reporters initially saw the idea of draft resistance as a source for ethnic humor. One bought several rounds of drinks for what he described as "hard working Irishmen" and reported their opinions based on broad ethnic humor: "Three 'Bourbons' in" said that if the draft officials were in Cork they would have been beaten, while "Four 'Brandies' and two 'Gin Cocktails'" warned "Let them come on and I will resist the whole draft myself."²³ This reporting fell into the kind of broad dialect and ethnic expectations popularized by "humorous" writers such as Columnist Charles G. Halpine, whose adventures of "Private Miles O'Reilly" showed the Irish to be hard-drinking buffoons. The same kind of characterization had been used since 1843 with blacks as the butt of minstrel show humor, especially

²² *New York Herald*, "The Draft and its Reception," July 13, 1863.

²³ *Herald*, "The Draft/What is thought about it in New York," July 13, 1863.

the interplay between “Mr. Tambo,” “Mr. Bones,” and “Mr. Interlocutor.”²⁴ By using this broad stereotypical approach the reporter was indicating that those opposing the draft were not dangerous, serious, or powerful.

Violence broke out just as those articles framing popular reaction to the draft as a peaceful, jocular resignation reached the street. A crowd fomented in part by the “Black Joke” volunteer fire company, which had one of its formerly protected members drawn in the first day’s lottery, smashed the ninth district draft office, destroyed its paperwork, and burned the building it occupied.²⁵ From there, the growing crowds moved on to loot and then burn several private residences. They beat, maimed, and killed public officials, tore up street railways, and cut down the telegraph wires that connected city police precincts and public buildings.²⁶

Newspapers quickly re-framed the draft story. Recognizing the out-of-control violence, they sought a narrative to explain the violence in ways that remained congruent with their editorial and political positions. In nearly every case, news outlets chose to frame the outbreak as work of the “Other.” What constituted the “other” widely varied. For Democratic news outlets, the culprits were administration men, “black Republican” abolitionists, and deluded people who supported them. They were using the mob as a foil to allow Lincoln’s henchmen to impose martial law on the city. For Republican editors, especially Horace Greeley, the “Other” included Confederate plotters intent on burning New York to the ground and mobilizing ethnic groups, particularly the Irish, to do the dirty work. At both extremes, however, the cause and purpose of the riots were seen as coming from outside the social fabric of New York. Outsider framing allowed the newspapers to present their readers the story of the riots without requiring the readers to admit any responsibility for the rioters.

²⁴ “Blackface! Minstrel Shows,” *Racial and Racist Stereotypes in Media* <http://black-face.com/minstrel-shows.htm> (accessed July 29, 2015).

²⁵ Spann, *Gotham at War*, 98; Schechter, *Devil*, 122-4.

²⁶ Schechter, *Devil’s Own Work*, 131-137.

Newspapers outside of the New York metropolitan area largely relied on text lifted from copies of the city papers. Their framing of the story was achieved largely through editorial introductions or in free-standing editorials. Southern newspapers began reporting on the draft riots after July 18, when copies of the New York journals were made available to them by prisoner exchange officers and others able to travel through the battle lines. The *Richmond Dispatch* wrote hopefully that, “This grand movement in New York is but the precursor of a series of similar outbreaks.” The editors lauded the rioters as northern peace Democrats, previously despised by Confederate hotbloods, but now redeemed by raising “the red battle flag [that] now waves in New York over streets wet with the gore of Lincoln’s hated minions.” Two days later, the *Dispatch* told its readers to remain optimistic, because the draft riots proved Lincoln might soon run short of soldiers. Playing on northern personal weakness, as against southern determination, the *Dispatch* denigrated the personal commitment northerners had to the war. “The masses are violently opposed—not to the war itself—but to serving in the war themselves. They are very willing to have their neighbors shot at, but they have no fancy for having their own bodies converted into targets by an act of Congress,” the editors wrote of potential draftees.²⁷ The South had its own draft evasion problem, but southerners might be heartened if they thought the north lacked the will to continue raising manpower.

The *Richmond Enquirer*, using similar copy from New York dailies, told its readers they could expect to see more such riots in the near future. The newspaper applauded, “The temporary success of this first movement must stimulate to further efforts; and the experience thus gained will be most useful. Money can be extorted, and that in any quantity, from the frightened capitalists and property-holders. . . . But they still must organize better for the next campaign.” The *Enquirer* did not see any

²⁷ *Richmond Dispatch*, July 18, “The News from New York,” and July 20, 1863.

signs of a Confederate effort behind the riots, but its editors were ready to suggest the Confederacy provide helpful suggestions, at the least, for the next riot.²⁸

Southern journalists urged their readers to revel in the northern discomfiture caused by the riots. The war begun by the south had largely been fought on southern territory and the riots represented the first time that major property destruction had visited a northern city. The violence also took away the self-righteous superiority of the abolitionists who had claimed to speak for all of the north. Rioters served southern enmity toward their perceived northern persecutors and struck blows by proxy against enemies the south was unable to reach directly.

In Charleston, writers at the *Charleston Daily Courier* extolled the draft riots. “[W]e consider those outbreaks as the most important signs that have yet appeared on the face of the times. We derive abundant encouragement from these open and successful manifestations of hostility to the draft. They are worth as much to us as a signal victory,” the newspaper printed on its front page on July 21. Using copy borrowed from the *New York Morning Express*, the *Herald*, and the *Post*, the Charleston editors urged their readers to gloat over the Northern discomfiture. “The discord gratifies us greatly. We cannot sack their cities. They will do it themselves,” they said.²⁹

Confederate newspapers were not the only ones who relied on New York stories to cover the draft riots. News that came in over the telegraph was chiefly a dispassionate summary of arrests made, buildings burned, and fatalities suffered. The *Cincinnati Enquirer*, a strongly Democratic newspaper, found itself having to defend against charges in New York copy used by competitor papers that the Democrats had started the riots. “This riot is a reaction. We shall find its true cause when we discover

²⁸ *Richmond Enquirer*, “First Lessons in Revolution,” July 22, 1863.

²⁹ *Charleston Daily Courier*, July 21, 1863.

against what it reacts. It reacts against some sort of pressure or restraint. The only agency that could press or restrain has been the Administration and its party,” the editors explained.³⁰

The pace and terminology of draft riot coverage in the press clearly shows a difference in approach as reporters and editors sought to make the riots comprehensible. At Bennett’s *Herald*, which—while fiercely anti-black—prided itself on holding the middle ground, the word, “riot,” was not introduced until after July 15. Until that time, phrases like “serious disturbance” and “popular tumult” were used. Bennett’s reporters wrote that the disturbance was caused by “obnoxious individuals” and “insurgents,” rather than a berserk mob. Instead of rioters, the *Herald* used terms like: “The crowd,” “The great throng,” “The people,” “United bodies of men,” “Men of the crowd,” “Several bodies of men,” “Persons,” “The citizens,” and “Women (as in “A large number of women made at the police, pelting them with stones).”³¹

The *Herald* explained the crowd’s origins and initial actions as a logical progression. The gathering of the first day consisted of men moving through manufacturing districts, entering each shop or factory, and compelling owners to close up shop while recruiting the workers to join the crowd headed toward the draft office. *Herald* editorials implied that working men could be forgiven for taking out their rage at an unjust process by destroying the implements of the draft, although it was unfortunate that they were then led on to excesses, partly fueled by the consumption of liquor. The worst excesses could be pinned squarely on unwanted lower-class elements that had joined the crowd. The *Herald* sought to explain

³⁰ Telegraphic reporting for July 15, 1863, read: “The mob reign not yet ceased, although to-day will probably witness its end. There is no doubt but that vastly larger numbers engaged in it yesterday than Monday. All the large manufactories have closed. Labor at the docks and shipyards has been suspended. The object of the rioters yesterday undoubtedly was plunder. At noon yesterday the rioters turned out about five thousand strong. They attacked the Union Steam Works, corner of Twenty-second street and Second avenue. At two o’clock three hundred police arrived. . . .” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, “Telegraph News,” July 17; editorial, July 16, 1863.

³¹ *New York Herald*, various, July 13-17; for example, on July 15, the *Herald* wrote that, “[R]eason and good sense, which have always characterized the citizens of this great metropolis, even under the greatest incentive to violence will serve to restore the city to its accustomed peaceful condition,” and on the same day, “[S]ufferers are either the white people engaged in resisting the draft, or of the police and military, many of whom have been killed and wounded;” on July 16 the *Herald* reported, “the general disposition of the masses who participated in the disturbances was to repudiate all legal authority and continue their previous career. There were rumors of terrible things to come, which the excited people should accomplish to manifest their hostility to the draft.”

rioters' animus with short, personalized stories. Their scant detail most likely makes them apocryphal. In one article, a uniformed "Major Green" was accosted by a "stableman," who said he would shoot him. "What for?" asked the Major. "For bringing a black fellow from Virginia to make him equal with me," the reporter wrote.³² This unlikely dialogue spoke directly to prejudiced concerns already expressed by working class men over the emancipation proclamation.

Although it began using the term, "riot," on July 16, the *Herald* still editorialized that the draft riots were an unusual event and did not characterize actual New York City values. Masses might be carried to excess, but at root the peaceful citizens were still in control. Rioters were temporarily "Other" and did not represent any real New York concerns:

We still trust, however, that the love of order, which never failed to allay popular tumult in this city, will prevail over the sporadic excitement which, for the time, disturbs the usual peacefulness of our metropolis ... Wisdom, moderation and the voice of reason may allay a spirit nursed by a presumed sense of wrong, and fostered by success and the flood of passion, which always carries the masses to excesses which are to be, and will, no doubt, be hereafter, deplored equally by those who inflict the suffering and by those who suffer.³³

By contrast, Greeley's *Tribune* termed the events of July 1863 a riot almost at once. It had little hesitation in labeling the crowd with pejoratives. The *Tribune's* wrath can be partly explained because, as an abolitionist leader, editor Greeley was the target of personalized animosity and hatred. The *Tribune's* building was invaded, and the first floor partly demolished, by the mobs late on the first day of the draft riots. Rescued by police who had to charge several times to force back the mob, the *Tribune* staff was seriously shaken by the experience. They kept their building fortified for the remainder of the week with stockpiles of rifles, ammunition, hand grenades, bombs, and artillery. The weaponry was provided to the newspaper from sympathetic officers at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

³² *Ibid.*, July 16.

³³ *Herald*, July 16.

For the *Tribune*, rioters “loot and steal,” even taking dresses and personal property from a woman in labor; they are “perfectly frenzied with liquor” and “roam about in every direction attacking people miscellaneously,” they “clamor like demons” or yell, hoot, scream, and roar “like a crowd of human animals possessed by devils.” In describing the crowd, the *Tribune*’s often-used terms included: “Rioters,” “Assaulting party,” “Mob (and mobbed),” “Infuriated throng ready for any outrage,” “Insensate mob,” “Lawless mob,” “Howling, drunken mob,” “Yelling pirates,” “Fellow-ruffians,” “Garroters,” and “The rebels.”

Even those among the crowd who were only spectators, or who were not engaged in violence, were “Others” to Greeley’s *Tribune*. It referred to them as “a few of the less evil-disposed” or as “hundreds who were too cowardly to assist the work of demolition.”³⁴ Unlike the *Herald*, the *Tribune* offered little rationale for the mob’s actions. Instead, it published inflammatory and unverifiable short articles meant to demonstrate how barbaric the rioters were. One story about the killing of a little girl reported: “One of the brutes [looting the negro orphan asylum] threw a chair out of one of the upper windows, and killed a little white girl who was trying to save some articles of value that were strewed on the ground.” In another article, an unnamed Frenchman, robbed by rioters after he told them he was “for the Union,” was allegedly told by bystanders after the robbery that he should have said he was a “Democratic Catholic.” “He states that a number of his acquaintances whose names he gives us, have been robbed in the same way, and some have been released on giving the answer recommended.”³⁵ The idea of a reporter interviewing French people who had escaped mob violence after giving the “Democratic Catholic” answer is absurd on its face; this was a coded story meant to elicit a politico-emotional response.

³⁴ *Tribune*, various, July 12-17. For example, the headline on July 14 began with, “THE DRAFT/The Riot in the Ninth Congressional District;” on July 15 the newspaper cited, “The mob that has for two days ravaged, and burned, and slaughtered, almost at will,” and protested the “hail-fellow speeches of magistrates who have no right to be cheek by jowl with incendiaries, miscreants, robbers and assassins.”

³⁵ *Tribune*, July 14, “The Garrotter’s Question,” 17.

The *Tribune's* approach to its coverage strongly smacked of what later would be termed "propaganda." Its rhetoric was meant more to stir fear and resentment than to simply inform. While some young girls were listed among riot casualties, no other newspapers reported such a death at the Orphan Asylum. Greely's ruffled editors, working amid stands of loaded rifles and stacks of hand grenades in a building already targeted by the crowd, found the opportunity to retaliate for the sacking of their office by labeling rioters as brutes who violated all human conventions far too tempting. Other newspapers, though, were similarly unbalanced and quick to lash out. Manton Marble's *New York World*, for example, was quick to defend Copperheads by preemptively blaming the Lincoln administration. Always ready to hate the English, the *Herald* on July 19 blamed the draft riots on recent speeches made by the British parliament.³⁶

While the *Tribune* railed against Irish instigators directly, few other papers during the riot blamed a particular ethnic group for causing the disturbance. Even without specific mention, the names of reported rioters and much of the dialogue used pointed at New York's extensive Irish community as primary culprits behind the mayhem. Thirty-eight out of a list of seventy-six known casualties published by the *Herald* on July 21 were listed as Irish in origin, although these names included both rioters and defenders. Illustrations and articles published after the riots made it clear that much of the blame fell on Irish people. Germans, New York's other predominant immigrant laboring group, were mentioned as both victims and perpetrators during coverage of the riots. The *Tribune* dismissed the Germans as ineffective rioters and warned of them as riot leaders in a July 16 entry: "Within the boundaries of 14th street to Division street, East of Bowery, in 'Klein-Deutschland' the whole population was out of doors, witnessing the proceedings of a mob in whose acts they took no part except a few abused and misled Copperheads ... The connecting link between the rioters and the Teutons of this district was visible by

³⁶ *Herald*, July 19, claimed that the rapidity of the draft was not due to the "rebellion" but, instead, "It is . . . an anxiety to be prepared to meet the threats implied by the recent significant speeches in the British Parliament, the hostile tone of a portion of the English press and the indications inferred from the decision in the Alexandra case."

men on horseback, who appeared from time to time giving orders to their co-traitors by whispering into the ears of selected [it] ones what next to do.”³⁷

Little Germany was a convenient target for secondary worry about the “Other,” but Germans had not demonstrated the same disturbing demand for civic power and equality of opportunity that the Irish had done. By raising the specter of “Teutons” in league with riot leaders, though, Greely and other editors could reserve the Germans for later scapegoating. Their loyalty was a concern. German regiments had recently failed to hold positions during the first day’s fighting at Gettysburg, and politically appointed German generals had also failed to bottle up Confederate troops in the Shenandoah Valley.

Newspapers largely deplored violence leveled against blacks as they described the day-to-day events of the riots. The black population of New York City was relatively small, estimated at just over 12,500 in 1860, less than two percent of the city population of 800,000. The small African-American presence was further diffused because blacks did not cluster in any one residential area.³⁸ Apart from Irish resentment against blacks who competed for low-skilled laboring jobs, the small impact that local blacks made on the greater New York community limited direct resentment against them. This allowed newspapers to hold them up as innocent sufferers at the hands of rioters. Special impact was given to news coverage of attacks on the Negro orphanage (run by white philanthropists) and on black women. Blacks, however, were rarely identified by name and almost never by surname. They were, instead, presented as nameless victims incapable of defending or controlling themselves. Reporting of their helplessness in the face of riot violence was stereotypical of white expectations that blacks were hapless and unintelligent. They are depicted almost as vermin to be chased. According to the *New York World*,

Wherever a negro came in sight he was pursued, and if caught was beaten till the crowd was satisfied. Some managed to escape by superior speed, running about the streets in the most perfectly terrified manner, shouting ‘murder’ and ‘mercy.’ ... One of the crowd

³⁷ *New York Tribune*, July 16.

³⁸ Spann, *Gotham at War*, 121.

said "I don't know that the niggers themselves is responsible for this here trouble, but by God, there is a war about 'em, damn 'em, and we'll pound 'em. It's the abolitionists that have been pushing matters eternally, and we won't stop it. We'll pound the God damn abolitionists as well as the niggers."³⁹

The *World's* blaming the violence on unpopular abolitionists through the voice of "one in the crowd" is one more example of the "Other" defined by a reporter. In another reference, the *New York Herald* implied that blacks were unable to retain their sanity under the riot pressures. A "powerfully built colored man," who sought shelter at a facility guarded by volunteer troops, was described as: "[I]n a terrible state of excitement, in fact, perfectly crazy with fear ... and aroused the whole neighborhood with his unearthly shrieks and yells." Although the man was described as having a bleeding head wound, which in white victims usually led to sympathetic news treatment, the story instead ran under the heading, "A Negro goes Crazy."⁴⁰

The *World* and other newspapers also remarked on the presence of women among the mob both as a sign of the depravity of the rioters and as a symbol of the victimhood of the populace within the frenzy of the riots. In an article titled, "Females among the Rioters," the *World* reported: "There were also a large number of women and even young girls, who not only seemed to sympathise [sic] with the rioters, but some carried sticks, and others loaded themselves with plunder, which they carried away, cheering the mob, and inciting them to further acts of the same nature." Men reporting from the established Victorian power structure could not accept that ordinary women would join a riot. The power of making the decision to riot was beyond female capacity and did not fit expectations of women's proper role, even of women whose men might be part of a criminal element. Faced with this conundrum, journalists tried to assign proper roles to women. In some publications, debased women cheered on the mob; but in others, more conventionally representative women provided a rationale for some of the crowd's actions. The *Herald*, reporting the beating death of Col. Henry F. O'Brien, partly

³⁹ *New York World*, "Negroes Assaulted," July 14.

⁴⁰ *New York Herald*, "A Negro goes Crazy," July 17, 1863.

explained the violence by stating that O'Brien had shot his pistol at random into the crowd, killing both a woman and the baby she held to her breast. In reality, the colonel had cocked his pistol to scare the crowd, and an accidental shot from it ricocheted from the pavement and struck the woman on her knee. Earlier, however, O'Brien had ordered troops under his command to fire over the heads of the mob, and that firing killed seven spectators, two of them children. The mob "had marked him for revenge" and used the excuse of the injured woman to beat him to death.⁴¹

By framing the New York riots to make sense of them for particular groups of readers, the newspapers carried out a form of print warfare with each other to attack the positions taken by competitors. The *Herald*, in an editorial titled, "The Niggerhead and Copperhead Organs on the Riots," wrote that "The *Tribune*, *Times* and *Post* are abusing the copperheads as the cause of all this trouble, and the *World*, *News* and *Express* are equally certain that the niggerheads provoked the disturbance, and are thus the originators of the riots. There is a great deal of truth in each of these charges." The *New York Times* complained that the *Herald* had dignified the rioters by referred to them as "people" in some of its news articles. This violated an apparent consensus that the rioters had to be seen as outside the pale of humanity itself. Stung, the *Herald* swatted back at the *Times* for seeking its own advantage from the event: "These mischievous papers all scandalously attempt to make political capital out of the riots before the rioters are fairly suppressed, and accuse each other of the faults for which all of them are more or less responsible," judged the *Herald*.⁴²

The military draft that created the crisis of the New York Draft Riots quickly became a peripheral issue to the history of the war itself. Draftees proved to be some of the least reliable soldiers, and the armies spent untold time and effort simply policing their mischief without gaining combat effectiveness. New York adopted various political and social schemes, including a vast political slush fund to pay enlistment exemptions and bounties which made a mockery of the draft. Eventually, fewer than 4,000

⁴¹ Schechter, *Devil's Own Work*, 177, 189.

⁴² *Herald*, "The Niggerhead and Copperhead Organs on the Riots," July 16.

draftees from New York City served, out of more than 80,000 names identified by the draft. Historians later identified the Draft Riots as race riots, though that is not what participants at the time thought about them.⁴³

Knowing that the news of the day was framed with particular meanings and slants to encourage a group of readers, we can seek out the meanings people of the time were persuaded to attach to the draft riots and other events. We can examine what actions those meanings were meant to inspire, and interpret the justice behind various presentations of the story.

We don't know what newspaper or newspapers Chauncey Cook read near Vicksburg, but it is clear from his letter home that whichever publication it was must have been a Republican newspaper, possibly the *Tribune*, which was popular within the Union army for its pro-administration stance. Whatever the newspaper was, its framing the story as one of Democrats plotting on behalf of Confederates, in alliance with shadowy "others," made sense of an otherwise incoherent event for the soldier on a distant battlefield. Diverse interpretations must have reached other soldiers and civilians far from the city. But it is clear that newspapers had developed the power to frame significant events for a wide body of readers. Confederate publications, even as they borrowed liberal portions of New York coverage, attempted to frame the riots in a different light for their readers. They selected the parts of the story most friendly to Southern interests, but also instructing readers on how to approach the events. Northern newspapers wrestled with their own interpretations of the Draft Riots, but also with one another, taking each another to task for their coverage and framing choices.

This shows nineteenth century newspapers adapting to a world where information flew almost instantaneously to remote corners of the nation. In making this adaptation, editorialists and reporters of the day imagined a vast audience and wielded a modern tool – framing – and used it effectively to characterize protean forces. Their quick creation of an "other" population and their definition of it as a

⁴³ Spann, *Gotham at War*, 101-105.

sub-human group may be the reason for what Bernstein observed, that the Draft Riots have no modern historical heritage ownership. News coverage so successfully alienated the riots and the rioters that the event had no legs to stand on, unlike the “Lost Cause” narrative of the far more violent and destructive overall Southern rebellion. Communication scholar Mander claims that framing attempts to answer the question “What is the relationship between the media and the social order in times of social conflict?” Whether the details of their reporting were correct or not may be less important than the created meaning the newspapers imparted, a consensus about relative truth.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Mander, *Framing Friction*, 1.

CHAPTER 4 NEWS BY LIGHTNING – THE TELEGRAPH AND NETWORKING

The speed of communication networks at the beginning of the nineteenth century consisted of foot-paced transit on roads and pathways connecting communities, the horse-paced beats between distant news centers, or the courses of sailing ships between ports. In all cases the messages being carried were physical objects requiring hand-to-hand distribution and the speed they moved at was limited by natural or biological limits – a ship could sail only so fast and depended on favorable winds, a man could walk only so fast and carry so much. Overland news took fifty days to travel from East to West coasts of the U.S., while ordinary sailing ships generally took one hundred and fifty days to swing below the horn and make the long voyage past South and Central America to reach California. By the late nineteenth century a new kind of news network had been constructed in which information flowed at high speed and were little affected by natural obstacles.¹ Messages could move across mountains at the persistent speed of steam railways; they could move against winds, tides, and river currents, on steamships. After 1844 they could exist in the electrical “ether” of the telegraph until they arrived at their destination, which often was the office of the metropolitan newspaper itself. The speed and volume of news was no longer limited to narrow biological parameters, and the new networks created new concepts of time and of timeliness.² Adjusting to this network effect fundamentally changed the nature of news; it created an unseen national audience and it took away much local control of the news. The new networks destabilized what had been a comfortable and parochial approach by editors and reporters to their readers and advertisers. It made newspapers accountable to a far-flung community

¹ The word “network” grew with telegraphic introduction; the word was still hyphenated as “net-work” in 1852 when used in the United States Census to describe telegraph growth. Frederick T. Andrews, “The Heritage of Telegraphy,” *IEEE Communications Magazine* (August, 1989), p. 12–18.

² Hundreds of different local times prevailed in the U.S. for much of the century -- functional standard railway time zones were introduced at noon, Nov. 18, 1883, with four railroad time zones established across the North American continent (Congress enacted standard time zones in 1918) <http://www.timeanddate.com/time/time-zones-history.html> (accessed June 22, 2015; the Western Union Telegraph Company began signaling New York City’s noon in 1872 by dropping a black ball electromagnetically from the flagpole atop its tall headquarters building at 195 Broadway and broadcasting the signal across its national network. For an essay on separation of messages from the messenger, see James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), Chapter Eight, “Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph.”

they could only guess at, but whose individuals often demanded diligent service, and it gave new power to the classified and business advertiser over the old form of political party subsidy that once funded papers.³ The startling effect of the telegraph caused change that was unprecedented until the arrival of broadcast media and then the Internet in the twentieth century. Communication historian Richard R. John warns against characterizing the telegraph as a “Victorian Internet,” and he is right to do so. Recent research on so-called “infectious” stories of the nineteenth century being conducted at Northeastern University in Boston shows that an internet-like effect was created between newspapers which traded and reprinted hundreds of stories repeatedly.⁴ The modern Internet directly connects many to many, operates autonomously and globally, and access to it is readily available for individuals. By contrast, the telegraph required manual operation, sent one message one way at one time, was limited in distance, and was prohibitively expensive for ordinary people to use. “During its first sixty-five years it remained a specialty service for an exclusive clientele, and not until 1910 would it be recast as a mass service for the entire population,” John writes. Yet the popular image of the telegraph was one of democratization of information, national ownership of the benefits of the technology, and pride in its development as a uniquely American triumph. Even with its limitations, the telegraph created a true network effect. How did this come to be? One must look to the newspapers for the answer.⁵

The change and modernization of news was heavily influenced by development of a web of communication. Introduction of the electromagnetic telegraph in the early 1840s led to a boom in constructing telegraph lines that mirrored earlier speculative enthusiasm for canals and railroads. Communication scholar Brian Winston argues that the social purpose that led to telegraph development

³ *Chicago Daily News* publisher Victor Lawson dictated dozens of letters to subscribers outside of Illinois who questioned the merits of items they had seen in advertisements in the *Daily News*, from saws to farm plows. Victor Lawson MS, various, Newberry Library, Chicago.

⁴ Ryan Cordell, “Infectious Texts: Viral Networks in 19th-Century U.S. Newspapers,” <http://www.northeastern.edu/nulab/infectious-texts/> (accessed July 8, 2015). The Northeastern Viral Texts project has found some 650 articles, each shared more than fifty times, and has mapped newspaper connections, Britt Peterson, “Vintage Viral,” *Smithsonian* 46 (July-Aug. 2015), 4, p. 12.

⁵ Richard R. John, *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010), 2.

in Europe was to serve the railroads with operational information. In America, though, telegraph construction outstripped railroad construction and its initial social driver was distribution of business information and news.⁶ Easily built compared to the capital-intensive transportation systems, the telegraph web that developed soon began creating its own momentum. While it was emphatically not the equivalent of the Internet with its World Wide Web of today, the popular image of the telegraph as a democratic medium persisted because of the close relationship between the new network and the news. If an Illinois farmer or a New York City drayman felt ownership in the glories of the telegraph, it was because they saw its effects in the columns of telegraphic news they received through their local paper. The newspaper democratized the telegraph; only the newspapers, in association with one another, had the power to enforce discounted telegraph rates and had the money to pay those same rates in order to bring a mass of information to consumers. At the same time, the telegraph challenged the newspaper by opening its parochial boundaries and forcing reporters, editors, and publishers to respond to broad expectations regarding the form of news and its intended function. The network effect of the telegraph became a powerful force for professionalization of the news, while the telegraph itself became a symbol of newspaper modernity. The *Detroit Free Press* in 1850 shows this in a wide column headlined “BY TELEGRAPH” and carrying a sub-headline “Reported for the Detroit Daily Free Press by O’Reilly’s Line.” The article includes a list of Washington governmental action, including Senate appointments, as well as district-by-district Boston-based returns on the Maine election. Detroit readers could be as well-informed as their Boston counterparts on the same day, and the *Free Press* made availability of the latest national news a banner event. The article also listed the location of the telegraph itself, “Office just below the Michigan Exchange, Jefferson Avenue.”⁷

⁶ Brian Winston, *Media Technology and Society, A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 23.

⁷ *Detroit Daily Free Press*, Sep 11, 1850. By 1851 the newspaper was using both O’Reilly’s service and telegraphic information from “Speed’s Line,” which reported on events in Chicago, New Orleans, El Paso [sic], and St. Louis, further extending the news reach for subscribers. *Free Press*, Sep 5, 1851.

James Gordon Bennett's *New York Herald* was an early and outspoken news enthusiast for the potential of the new technology, adopting two different logos in quick succession in the 1840s that were meant to tie its news to the new electrical medium, shown as a bolt of lightning energizing a single strand of wire on poles. The first version of this logo showed the wire arcing over existing technologies, including a steamboat, a steam locomotive, and a horseman carrying express dispatches. That evidently was not forceful enough for the *Herald*, which later adjusted the artwork to show the wire prevailing over skeletons of horses and remnants of crashed railroad equipment. Other newspapers satisfied themselves with somewhat more sedate column headers or artwork, often showing a telegraph key, a line of telegraph posts, or artistic type advertising "news by telegraph." The message, that the newspaper was allied with the telegraph, which would supersede all other rapid methods of communication, promised immediacy to news that was still largely gathered, transported, and distributed by hand.⁸

The growing telegraph network created a connected national identity. Telegraph historian Robert Luther Thompson credits the telegraph, along with the railroad, with "fostering the feeling of nationality" in the post-Mexican War years. Literary essayist Peter West relies on historical newspaper evidence to say that the telegraph introduced an entirely new national way of thinking. "American commentators suddenly were able to imagine the entire nation sitting around an imaginary table, in a realm of informational purity and linguistic transparency," West writes, citing an 1845 article in the *Albany Weekly Herald* in which the editor notes that prior to the telegraph, Americans could not conceive of knowing what events were "transpiring in a distant city—40, 100, or 500 miles off." For West, the telegraph empowered new voices to be what he terms "arbiters of reality," deciding what version of the news should hold authority.⁹

⁸ *New York Herald*; for

⁹ Peter West, *Arbiters of Reality: Hawthorne, Melville, and the Rise of Mass Information Culture* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 2008), 21-22; *Albany Weekly Herald* May 31, 1845, 6, cited in West.

Nothing excited Victorian-era Americans so much as the evidence of progress, with its affirmation of their cleverness and America's national exceptionalism. This was particularly evident in invention, adoption of new technology, and the scale of technological enterprises. The telegraph as an innovation and as a fundamental change agent in society fit this progressive appetite perfectly; almost from its 1840s origin the technology became a general metaphor for advancement. Nineteenth century writers realized that development of the telegraph essentially changed society.¹⁰ The unnamed author of an 1870s essay on the telegraph wrote: "The telegraph serves to unite peoples, and thus to awaken a larger human sympathy. It is one of the reconstructive forces in society . . . as such an engine of progress, the telegraph is worthy of the profoundest consideration in its moral as well as physical influences."¹¹

This high-minded and romantic view of the telegraph ignored the often-sordid business dealings, patent fights, and investment chicanery that underlay the establishment of the nation's networks. It also dealt with the technology as something that could be adopted by society to further specific goals (reconstruction, progress, and morality) without considering that the telegraph more readily offered itself to less worthy aims, such as manipulating stock market movements through so-called "bucket shops." The telegraph would fundamentally change society itself, but it also offered new leverage for an emerging class of capitalists whose market manipulation concentrated control of the national economy in the hands of just a few hundred individuals. Historian David Hochfelder writes that "The line of technological development the telegraph sparked and the social changes it wrought proved as significant to the human experience as the invention of writing in the ancient world and the printing

¹⁰ There was a "stunning increase" in nervous disorders by the 1890s blamed on "the increased speed of communication facilitated by the telegraph and railroad." Doris Kearns Goodwin, *The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Golden Age of Journalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), p. 329. Menachem Blondheim, *News over the Wires* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1994) p. 216, note 58, "Each innovation in transportation that implied speed was received with great public enthusiasm. The extraordinary coverage of these developments by the press attest to such public fascination."

¹¹ Greeley, Horace, et. al. *The Great industries of the United States: being an historical summary of the origin, growth, and perfection of the chief industrial arts of this country* (Hartford: J.B. Burr & Hyde. 1872), p. 1112.

press revolution of early modern Europe.”¹² For Hochfelder, the telegraph shows the synthetic effect that arises when a new technology fundamentally alters the lives of its users.

The inventors and developers of the early telegraph knew that the technology would generate enormous changes. Samuel Finley Breese Morse, who gained primary patents for the telegraph’s fundamental operating technology and application, intentionally surrounded the introduction of the technology with an aura of mystery and even holiness. The famous “What hath God wrought?” message was largely staged as what would today be called a public relations event. It was a grand unveiling before legislators who had funded the \$30,000 project and editors who would promote it. Letters and notes in 1844 between Morse, in Washington, D.C., and his chief assistant, Alfred Vail, building the line toward Baltimore, show that the telegraph was repeatedly tested at nine, fourteen, and twenty-two miles from the capital. Morse noted hours of “correspondence” had been conducted over the line as it was built. Vail wrote to Morse specifying exactly how many “cups” of battery were needed to move the magnet adequately to send a signal (44 cups at 14 miles; with only 36 cups, the signal was too weak). A playful letter sent to Morse in his special telegraphic code and deciphered by Morse shows that the dot-dash communication system was already robust. Weeks before the May 24 formal demonstration, Morse had already lined up an audience including newspaper editors. “I had the pleasure this morning of seeing two of my friends (Editors of the Baltimore American) Mssrs Dobbin & Rose who are highly pleased with all they have heard of the Electro Magnetic Telegraph and will take great pleasure in being present,” wrote Henry G. Rogers to Morse on April second. This was hardly the approach of an inventor fearful that his fragile system might not function. The major worry for Morse in the project was not whether the telegraph would work, but an unexpected demand from the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad for payment for locating telegraph poles along the right-of-way, an expense which Morse hadn’t budgeted. From its earliest start, the telegraph as an innovation was clothed in mythical splendor in order to be

¹² David Hochfelder, *The Telegraph in America, 1832-1920* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 2012), 3.

viewed as a groundbreaking and powerful new medium. Its practical workings involved letters complaining about the price of the acids and metals needed to form the batteries, the tight-fistedness of officials disbursing the money Congress had reluctantly voted, and the difficulties of finding and transporting construction materials.¹³

Newspaper leaders were the earliest participants in construction of the telegraph and adoption of its innovative possibilities. Francis Ormond Jonathan Smith (known as F.O.J. and called “Fog”) was editor of the *Maine Farmer*, but went into business with Morse to supply the lead pipe for the first miles of telegraph constructed in Washington. Smith eventually controlled the telegraph network of New England. William Swain, owner of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, was one of the earliest and largest investors in building the original Magnetic Telegraph Company line connecting New York to Baltimore and Washington in 1846. Telegraph historian Robert Luther Thompson explains that Swain was “an early convert” to the telegraph, and that the publisher also expected that rapid communication would be needed to cover the increasing tensions between the United States and Mexico.¹⁴ Use by the Press, and at subsidized rates for the public service the Press provided, was as much in the minds of early network proponents as the more prosaic conveyance of commercial and business information that most thought would be its major use. The network was conceived as a democratic and egalitarian institution, as well. The articles of association of the Magnetic, the first telegraph company in America, contained language that showed understanding that the new technology required some sort of practical access rule. Former

¹³ Alfred Vail to Morse, letter of April 19, 1844; Morse notes April 27, 1844; Code letter of H.G. Rogers to Morse, April 9, 1844; Morse to McLane, March 20, 1844; Rogers to Morse, April 2, 1844; all Reel 8, Samuel Finley Breese Morse papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Morse publically styled himself “Superintendent of the Electro Magnetic Telegraph,” while to his family he was known simply as “Finley.”

¹⁴ “I Would Found an Institution”: [The Ezra Cornell Bicentennial Exhibition](http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/ezra/exhibition/telegraph/), Cornell University, <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/ezra/exhibition/telegraph/> (accessed June 18, 2015); Robert Luther Thompson, *Wiring a Continent: The History of the Telegraph Industry in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1947), 48. Swain provided \$3,500 out of a total of \$10,000 for the line, making him its second-largest investor. Ezra Cornell originally became involved in the Washington to Baltimore line as the designer of a special plow to install the lead pipe that was to carry the original lines; in April 1844 the pipe scheme was abandoned as too costly and because its soldering damaged the wires, the practice of hanging telegraph wire from poles was instituted instead, and Morse sold the lead pipe for scrap in Baltimore at about six cents a pound; Vail to Morse, letter of April 18, 1844, Reel 8, Morse papers. Cornell was later a major force in creation of the Western Union Telegraph Company.

Postmaster-General Amos Kendall, organizer and eventual president of the Magnetic company, established that the telegraph would “be opened alike to all men . . . and the first to come shall be first served,” and that except for emergencies no customer was to have more than 15 minutes’ use of the line at one time. Thompson writes, “So fundamental did its framers consider the principle of impartiality in telegraph operation that they rephrased it in two different sections of the bulky body of rules called ‘Office Regulations.’”¹⁵

While early adoption of open-access rules set a fundamental operating protocol for what would soon become a burgeoning network of telegraph lines, early adopters of the technology did not conceive of the telegraph as an open system. Their focus was on profitability on traffic across individual lines, not on a new information economy as a whole. For many of them the telegraph was simply a stock investment scheme.¹⁶ What made building of the early telegraph network into a complicated business transaction was not so much a rush to implement and improve the technology, but instead a race to secure ownership of the Morse patents in order to dominate business in regional areas. Morse had patented not only the sending concept of electrical signals transmitted over a wire, but five years later also patented the magnetic receiving apparatus used to convert the arriving signals into an accessible message. He then sold his patent rights, rather than rights to license his technology, to a hierarchy of investors who themselves became patentees who jointly split fees paid by users of the Morse patents. Almost before there was a practical linkage of any telegraph lines, there was a business structure envisioning control of any network that could be developed. These overlapping patents, each of which was later extended by special acts of Congress, gave the Morse patentees enormous control over

¹⁵ Thompson, 43.

¹⁶ Capitalization on telegraph investments vastly inflated the stock value compared to any investment in hardware or other assets; the original Magnetic Company issued \$30,000 in stock to original investors who had subscribed a total of just \$15,000 in cash, as well as issuing another \$30,000 in stock to the holders of Morse patents for technology to be used by the line. Other telegraph investments were similarly airy, and in some cases companies paid out “dividends” that were actually skimmed from new investors’ subscriptions – today such practices would be termed a Ponzi scheme, and an 1859 investor likened telegraph stock investment to a Faro card game, notorious for easy cheating by the dealer. Thompson, 43, Wolff, 26.

approval and construction of telegraph lines. Morse may not have been the most talented or diligent inventor of telegraphic equipment, but his shrewd business practices, self-promotion, and dogged investment in legal defense of his patents gave a small group control of much of the telegraph's expansion.¹⁷

The telegraph was two things at the same time; on the one hand it was an amazing demonstration of American creativity and an obvious change-agent for national life, and on the other it was an industry with stringent barriers to access from its inception. Business historian Alfred Chandler used the rise of railroads as his model for the creation of complex business management, but the creation and consolidation of the telegraph industry presaged the massive growth that led railroads to adopt divisional structures and to create functional departments – the telegraph was the first truly national big business. Historian and archivist Paul Israel writes that the telegraph also created a new world of its own: “Telegraphy also stood at the center of another major transition in American society -- the emergence of corporate capitalism and its reorganization of technology research and development.”¹⁸ Inventors flocked to create telegraph improvements while investors sought ways to bypass the restrictive Morse patents, and an entirely new class of technology workers emerged to operate the arcane system. The Press would need to navigate this new and costly world with business caution, but the sudden achievement of near-instantaneous communication demanded their immediate and intense involvement.

¹⁷ Greeley, *Great Industries*, 1112—1125. The essayist spends much of the chapter arguing against Morse's deserving any recognition as inventor or innovator of telegraph technology, instead picturing him as an opportunist whose limited technical ability made it impossible for him to have done more than conceive of a general idea that he could never have implemented on his own (hence, unpatentable). Archivist and historian Paul B. Israel, however, has pointed out that early patent procedures did not require proof that an invention was either practical or helpful, emphasizing just such conceptual thinking as Morse's for patent-worthy ideas that could be elaborated by others into workable technology while ignoring the work needed to make a concept practical to use. Israel, *From Machine Shop to Industrial Laboratory: Telegraphy and the Changing Context of American Invention, 1830-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992), 21. Morse regretted selling his actual patent;

¹⁸ Israel, p. 1.

Telegraphic Diffusion

How did the telegraph diffuse so rapidly, forming the basis for a national network within a decade of its earliest introduction? Sociologist Everett Rogers created the field in the study of how innovative concepts and technology diffuse throughout a society. In general, Rogers identified five groups of adopters and a typical bell-shaped curve that describes the progress of adoption. Innovators by themselves represent a very small portion of the diffusion; early adopters, on the other hand, typically represent a large enough sample size that their intervention makes a technology “take off,” generally twelve to twenty percent of a population becoming interested or involved with that technology or its effects. The “early majority” in Rogers’ terminology represents the greatest period of growth for an innovation, when a large swath of a population has determined that an innovative technology is useful enough that they incorporate it into their lives, and the “late majority” are those who tend to wait cautiously to see an innovation proved out before they will adopt it. “Laggards” are those who tend to resist an innovation even when the majority of the population have begun regularly using it, though the reasons for lagging may be quite diverse.¹⁹

¹⁹ Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2003) 282--284. Rogers’ theory has been used extensively to explain human trends, from public health dissemination to adoption of personal computers; his work is cited more than 50,000 times in scholarly articles. Rogers posited that use of the Internet may have spread faster than any human innovation in history because it eliminated the effect of distance between contributors. His model of diffusion can also be used to show a similar effect in introduction of the telegraph and newspaper adoption of it. Of laggards, Rogers warns that “Laggard is a bad name because most nonlaggards have a strong pro-innovation bias,” but notes that any term meant to describe late adopters carries negative context, 285.

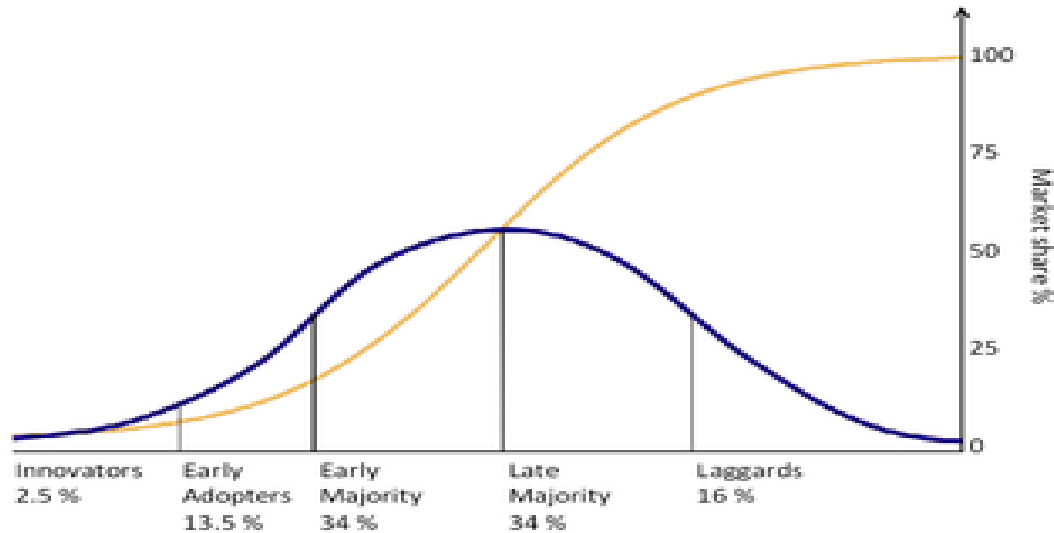


Figure 1: Diffusion of Innovation, Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Diffusionofideas.PNG>

In the case of the telegraph, Rogers' theory works for the social acceptability of the technology and its promulgation as a form of joint property, in much the same manner that the Internet of today is viewed as a social possession. The debates of 2014-15 over 'net neutrality' and universal Internet access could as easily have fired the minds of the mid-nineteenth century as they do today's so-called "netizens" who demonstrate passionate commitment to a form of public ownership of technical possibility. The telegraph as a harbinger of newness crops up repeatedly in other, more plausible, dialogues of its time. One telegraph agent recalled hiding his "key" (sending device) under a table while taking telegraph orders from clients, telling the credulous senders that they should hurry outside and watch the wire sharply in order to see their words pass by. Verifiable accounts of weddings by proxy occurring over the telegraph became a staple item of interest in the news. At the 1861 Civil War battle of Rich Mountain, Confederate prisoners being escorted back through Union lines were overheard to wonderingly say "Look, there's the telegraph!" on seeing a military field operator tapping his key. In the latter case, the telegraph assuaged some of the sting of captivity by pointing out the up-to-the-minute nature of the conflict they were serving in, and may have helped explain their defeat by an otherwise

despised foe. Within fifteen years of its first practical demonstration, then, the idea of the telegraph had “diffused” to the extent that only laggards were left doubting its national impact.

But it was neither the ability to send one message point-to-point that caused diffusion of the telegraph innovation, nor was it the efficiency of the technology itself. Wolff makes the point that the early telegraph of the 1840s and 1850s was significantly less reliable and more expensive than the improved service of the economical U.S. Post Office, and that even the speed of telegraph messages could be agonizingly slow as they were handed off between different lines for forwarding, a process that sometimes took days. Early messages were also expensive to send, with ten words costing up to \$2.50 to send if the distance was long, a cost that was unaffordable to most people.²⁰ Government pressure in favor of the telegraph was almost non-existent; unenthusiastic about spending on internal improvements, Congress also doubted the constitutionality of government involvement in anything other than Postal mail for distributing communications. This effectively limited early government investment to the \$30,000 offered to build Morse’s demonstration line between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. Subsidies for other telegraph lines were limited, and no guarantees of any volume of government message traffic were offered. A movement to create a “postal telegraph” that would operate uniformly under government control was often discussed but never implemented, as investor and business interests lobbied hard against it.

²⁰ Wolff, 24, Thompson, 243—245. A rate sheet published by the Magnetic Telegraph Co. in 1847 and reproduced in Thompson notes that “Communications destined for any place beyond the termination of this line will be faithfully written out at the last station, and delivered to other Lines; but this Company, in no case, hold themselves responsible for the correct transmission or prompt delivery of any message beyond the terminus of their Line.” Telegraph lines were often internally discontinuous, especially where major rivers intervened – the original Magnetic line between Philadelphia and New York City stopped at the Hudson River, where messages were transferred by railroad train and ferry to be re-transcribed from an office on the other side, Thompson, 45. The \$2.50 cost would represent the equivalent of \$1,090 today in terms of affordability by the average wage-earner, using nominal GDP per capita, MeasuringWorth http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/result.php?year_source=1850&amount=2.50&year_result=2010# (accessed June 19, 2014). The post office, meanwhile, charged three cents per half ounce of mail, or the affordability equivalent of less than \$15.

Why did the telegraph expand so rapidly, then? It was the vision of entrepreneurs seeking to both network and monopolize the emerging telegraph that dominated the practical diffusion of the innovation. Henry David Thoreau's remark in his book *Walden* that Maine and Texas might not have much to say to one another, though linked by telegraph, was entirely beside the point; the value of pushing the early telegraph was in developing a commanding position to profit from future communication across a national network. Only a few of the more than thirty telegraph firms in business by 1855 were making money for their owners, though millions of words were flowing over more than twenty-three thousand miles of wire by that time.²¹ Thompson has described this time of line-building as an "era of methodless enthusiasm," but former postmaster general Kendall had a clear vision of a single system controlled by the Morse patent, with New York City as the hub and "great arteries radiating to the south, to the north, and to the west."²²

The battle between builders of the early lines, fought both in the market and in the courts, was not particularly productive. Indeed, in some cases the term "battle" was literal, with line installers tearing down the wires of rival companies in order to physically enforce ownership of rights-of-way or to limit connections between areas promised exclusively to one Morse patentee or another.²³ Differing philosophies relating to the telegraph were put to both physical and legal tests; on the one hand, innovators such as Henry O'Rielly believed in broad democratic implementation of the technology and pushed for expansive public access with a wink and a nod to patent limitations. O'Rielly's "People's Line" from the Ohio country to New Orleans won public sympathy with its rapid construction, and was ready by 1848 to transmit messages at least as far south as Nashville, Tennessee. But O'Rielly's effort was stopped cold by Morse investors such as F.O.J. Smith and Amos Kendall, who saw value not in rapid construction of telegraph lines or improved operation of them, but in safeguarding monopoly rights

²¹ Wolff, 25.

²² Thompson, *Wiring a Continent*, 97, 39.

²³ Thompson, 149.

through subtle legalities. Kendall lobbied for legislation in Tennessee and Kentucky that emerged as amendments to otherwise innocuous-seeming state bills, amendments that established inviolable rights-of-way that crossed the O’Rielly line or that required any prospective telegraph operator to gain permission from new state boards governing “internal improvements.” At the same time, Morse patentees launched lawsuits claiming violation of patent rights based on the telegraphic equipment being used. O’Rielly’s reliance on the “Columbian” telegraph sender and receiver to bypass the Morse claims was overthrown when a Kentucky circuit court granted Morse patentees an injunction that stated that the Columbian was simply a close copy of existing Morse technology. Enforcement of the Morse patents led to seizure of the People’s Telegraph by Kentucky sheriffs in November, 1848 – a time when O’Rielly, having extended too much of his cash in line-building, was deeply involved in trying to escape personal bankruptcy.²⁴

The brutal business fights over telegraph construction did not stain the public image of the telegraph. To those not using it, the telegraph itself appeared to be a metaphor for American development and ingenuity. Coverage of new technological developments in communication became a mainstay of newspaper columns and scientific and social magazine articles. The telegraph appeared in popular songs, essays, speeches, and artwork depicting national values and describing moral progress long before its actual utility touched the majority of the population, much in the way that the twentieth century imagination of travel in outer space far outstripped even early twenty-first century technological capabilities. The telegraph operator himself became a new social subject, sometimes referred to as a “knight of the wire.” Operators were usually young men, often electrical or mechanical tinkerers, who had special knowledge of the mysterious “electric fluid” or “ether” that drove the arcane technology and who could communicate in the special code of the telegraph. The operator was put in a unique social position in which he encoded or decoded crucial personal information. British telegraph theorist

²⁴Thompson, 153-55.

Charles Walker wrote in 1850 that: “The letter-carrier knows not the joys or sorrows of which he is the bearer; far otherwise with the telegraph, we are taken into the confidence of the public and are made conscious of the tidings we convey.” Walker went on to note that the public vote of confidence could be seen in the burgeoning business the telegraph carried.²⁵

Others viewed the technology as purifying communication by stripping out not just time and distance, but interpretive middle-men who might mar or delay information. The wires became a connective cloud that brought citizens together. In 1852, when suggestions were made that the national capital should be moved to a more-central location, the *New York Herald* editorialized that such a move was unnecessary because of the advent of telegraphic connectivity.²⁶ Telegraphy had created a virtual central capital that could be “visited” by any connected person. Though telegraph company leaders estimated as late as 1890 that only two percent of the population ever actually used the telegraph for personal communication, its use by the media made it seem much more ubiquitous. This was in part due to the work of the New York Associated Press and ancillary press associations affiliated with it. Editors and publishers who created the press associations developed a connectivity model that centralized the gathering of remote information in particular nodes – New York City was the most important – and then used a broadcast method to send a mutually-agreed digest of “standard” news out over telegraph lines at a particular time to every corresponding member of the association. This digest of 1,000 to 3,000 words came over the “A” line of every telegraph section and its information was transcribed, forwarded, or re-sent by the most skillful operators within individual telegraph offices. Becoming such an operator led to higher pay and great social status within the industry. Much of the news was commercial and

²⁵ John Gast’s 1872 painting *American Progress* is one of the best visual examples; in it, a goddess representing Manifest Destiny unrolls a telegraph line behind her as she chases primitive Native Americans and herds of wild buffalo from the plains. Charles V. Walker, *Electric Telegraph Manipulation Being the Theory and Plain Instructions in the Art of Transmitting Signals to Distant Places, as Practiced in England, through the Combined Agency of Electricity and Magnetism*, London: George Knight and Sons, 1850 http://books.google.com/books?id=H1uoGcVc_lkC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed 7/24/14). Walker was the superintendent of telegraphs for the South Eastern Railway and the editor for the British Electrical Society.

²⁶ Thompson, *Wiring a Continent*, 253.

related to commodity prices, shipping, foreign market conditions, and political events affecting business, and so it had immediacy and precedence. Telegraph offices were generally located close to newspaper printers' offices, if not within the newspaper building itself, and in cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia the larger newspapers might connect four or more telegraph lines directly to their newsroom so that bulletins could arrive immediately.²⁷

Effects of the Civil War

Telegraph lines were already extensive and featured complex interconnection by 1860, but telegraphic news remained a special and marketable commodity until wartime pressures led to a public hunger for the latest news of any event or battle. "The civil war, from 1861 to 1865, developed the fullest resources of American newspaper enterprise. No expense was spared in the use of the telegraph, sending of special correspondents to every point, and the employment of messengers and horses in gathering details from every corner and seat of the war," wrote Horace Greeley in his "Great Industries" review of the newspaper business.²⁸ One of the most important aspects of the telegraph was creation of an extensively networked communication structure operating quickly compared to all previous technology. Like today's Internet, this networking depended on a high-bandwidth backbone for communication operating through fast acting network nodes in order to distribute information smoothly and efficiently.

The war demonstrated a major network difference between the industrial North, with its concentrated cities, and the less-populous South. Before the war, most telegraph lines serving the South

²⁷ Thomas Edison worked as a telegrapher on a lesser line in the Fort Wayne, Indiana, office of Western Union and practiced relentlessly to attempt to gain promotion to the A line, adapting equipment to make clear dot-dash noises despite Edison's compromised hearing. During the Civil War while working as an operator in Indianapolis Edison invented a telegraph repeater that recorded Morse code at its sending speed, but played it back more slowly to enable accurate recording by the operator. This work was later significant in his invention of sound devices. Edward Levant Parmalee to Thomas Alva Edison, telegram of March 14, 1891, Thomas Edison Papers, Rutgers University, <http://edison.rutgers.edu/NamesSearch/SingleDoc.php3?DocId=D9102ABB> (accessed June 18, 2015).

²⁸ Greeley, *Great Industries*, 1100.

depended from Northern metropolises, generally running on a north-south axis and concentrating along the Atlantic coast or down the major river channels, especially the Mississippi valley.

In the North, however, strong trunk lines had developed running east-west as well as north-south. This was partly due to the convenience of running telegraph wires along railroad right-of-way easements, which were far more numerous and extensive in Northern states. There was also a business drive to launch the telegraph across country before railroads were extensively constructed in the Midwest, however, using roadways or simply cutting through the wilderness in advance of rail construction. The flow of commerce and the creation of Western business centers in places such as Chicago, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, drew the telegraph. Begun with the east-west linkage of the Erie Canal in 1825, Northern connectivity was continued with further canal and especially railroad construction that linked major trade points and created a hub-to-hub commercial transfer network.

Southern commercial rail links, in the meantime, remained largely aimed at transport of agricultural produce to water shipping points and even when connecting city centers such railroads often were discontinuous due either to gauge mismatch (the width between rails was not fully standardized in the United States until the end of the nineteenth century) or lack of business harmony.²⁹ Most telegraph lines in the South used the natural easement of water routes, following the Atlantic coast, the Mississippi River, and other major rivers, few of which offered east-west connections. The antebellum telegraph installation heavily favored the North. An 1853 map of telegraph lines and stations in the U.S. and Canada shows the extensive vascularity of telegraph lines north of the Ohio, while just two trunk lines traverse the South, each headed to New Orleans by different routes. Cartographer

²⁹ George Stephenson's initial English railway was built to carry five-foot-wide wheelbases, leaving a space between the two-inch rails of four feet, eight and one-half inches. Many different gauges were initially built, and in America in 1870 more than 20 types remained in service, but the need to interchange railroad cars led to overwhelming adoption of the Stephenson gauge within the next 30 years. "Standardization of American Rail Gauge" in *The Transcontinental Railroad: A History of Railroad Technology*, Linda Hall Library. <http://railroad.lindahall.org/essays/rails-guage.html> (accessed March 11, 2015). For Southern railroad gauges and routes, Robert C. Black III, *The Railroads of the Confederacy* (1952; repr., Wilmington, NC, Broadfoot, 1987), 4-7, and chapter 2, "Of Tracks and Trains," 12-25.

Charles B. Barr noted that of 40,000 miles of telegraph in the world, 27,000 were in the United States, most operated under the Morse or the competing House telegraph patents. With secession, Southern networks became truncated point-to-point structures with limited interchange, while Northern networks tapped robust nodes that created extensive interconnection. While each telegraph office represented a break in the line and required a repeater to forward on the signal, by the 1860s operators were professional enough and discipline developed enough to allow for rapid handoff of messages. A “first class” operator was one who could send or receive at thirty-five words per minute for two to three hours at a time. The effect was not unlike an extended assembly line with each unit passed from station to station.³⁰

The major telegraph companies doing business at the outbreak of the Civil War were The American Telegraph Company, with lines along the Atlantic Coast; the Southwestern Telegraph Company, with lines from Louisville, KY, south to New Orleans; the Illinois & Mississippi Company, which operated through Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri; and Western Union, which dominated much of the telegraph business in the northeast and the states of the old Northwest Territory. These companies formed a cartel known as the “Six Nations Alliance,” each with exclusive assigned territory. After the beginning of the war, the portion of the American Telegraph Company that was cut off became the Southern Telegraph Company (alternately known as the Confederate Telegraph Company), and was operated by a major stockholder placed in charge by the company’s original Northern management with the directive to preserve as much of the telegraph business as possible during the war. The same held true for the Southwestern, whose treasurer took over as president of all the lines south of Kentucky. The two truncated Southern companies spent much of the war fighting for control of one another; the splitting of the American company weakened it significantly in its own fight to avoid consolidation with

³⁰ “Telegraph Stations in the United States, the Canadas & Nova Scotia,” compiled by Charles Barr, Pittsburgh, PA. <http://www.telegraph-history.org/map2.htm> (accessed Sept. 12, 2014); “About the Telegraph,” *Saturday Evening Post*, Oct. 1, 1881.

Western Union. Though they did brisk business, payment was in Confederate dollars and increasing operating costs as well as scarcity of hardware and materials limited the companies to maintenance of lines rather than expansion. Wartime control of the telegraph also differed within the two sections of the country. While both nationalized the telegraph system, Northern interests continued to extend the commercial telegraph, including a transcontinental line, while Southern civil overseers strongly limited the telegraph as a strategic military tool and presided over an ever-diminishing set of telegraphic offices and operators as territory was lost. By the end of the war, “the telegraphs of the Confederacy . . . for lack of funds, of help, but most of all, of material had become almost useless,” wrote nineteenth century telegraph historian Plum.³¹

The result can be seen in the timing and quality of information in news outlets North and South, with Southern newspapers generally trailing those of the North during the Civil War and printing less-timely information based on limited telegraphic input. The wartime effect would linger; by 1870 there were more than 180,000 miles of public telegraph operating in the nation, as well as several thousand miles of private telegraph, but the bandwidth remained concentrated in northern states.³²

The war itself also threw the new transcontinental telegraph into Northern hands, further bolstering the networked North, when its originally planned eastern terminus at St. Louis came under Confederate sway. A hastily improvised line across Iowa gave the Pacific Telegraph interconnection to Chicago, instead, bolstering that city’s interchange and making it a vital node for transcontinental business. The impact of being “on the network” was shown when the improvised Iowa connection

³¹ National Archives, Military Telegraph Lines of the Confederate States of America, RG 109. The registers of operators and stations in the Virginia theater of war demonstrate the constant shortening of Confederate telegraph network and the gradual loss of operating stations, while account books of private vs. military business reveal ever-diminishing private use. William R. Plum, *The Military Telegraph during the Civil War in the United States*, vol. 2 (repr. Arno Press Inc., 1972), p. 34.

³² Greeley, *Great Industries*, p. 1112.

included Des Moines in its route.³³ The editor of the Des Moines *Register* wrote that the telegraph had brought benefits similar to those of rivers and railroads.

Ever since Adam was an infant, the City of Des Moines, or the site where it is located, has been cut off from the exterior world. We have had no Railroads. We have had no telegraph. We have been excluded from the activities of commerce. Situated midway between the two great rivers of the continent, without anything but coaches and stage roads to connect us with the rest of mankind, our condition has not been the most pleasant in the world. To-day our situation is immensely improved. We have the privilege of reading the latest dispatches in our own paper. The lightning and telegraph company have at length made us even with the Mississippi cities.³⁴

Newspapers, meanwhile, found themselves scrambling to keep up with wartime news demands. "Papers which prior to the war had printed no more than two or three columns of telegraph news a day were soon printing two or three pages," Thompson wrote.³⁵ The statement is over-broad, as few newspapers at the time printed more than four or six pages in total, but the sentiment is borne out by surveying metropolitan papers which did, indeed, expand their telegraphic coverage dramatically at the same time that their page count rose to eight or more pages.

Events related to the war itself shaped telegraph ownership and business practices, effectively ending the independence of the members of the competing regional monopolies in place before the war and eventually handing business dominance to the Western Union Company. "The immediate effect of the war was to swamp all of the lines with business," wrote telegraph historian Thompson, but noted that the business glut masked the war's decisiveness in telegraph business consolidation.³⁶

The unique pattern of quasi-private federalization imposed on the telegraph during the Civil War provided an interesting and far-reaching answer to calls that had grown for government intervention in

³³ There was a vast difference between being on a trunk line of the telegraph, and being on a side-line. Operators on side-lines had to request connection to the trunk and were at the whim of the operating office to get it. When the Pacific Telegraph was initially proposed, Western interests feared that the trunk line to be used would be the American company's seacoast one that stretched to New Orleans, with a connection made to the Pacific through northern Texas. Western Union's Hiram Sibley wrote that such a system would leave the Western states "out on a switch," i.e. cut off from major telegraph traffic and only able to listen in. Thompson, 350.

³⁴ Des Moines *Register*, Jan 14, 1861. ****Check****

³⁵ Thompson, *Wiring a Continent*, 373.

³⁶ Thompson, *Wiring a Continent*, 374-379; William R. Plum, *The Military Telegraph during the Civil War in the United States*, vol. 1 (repr. Arno Press Inc., 1972),

the network business. Though Congress was grudgingly willing to promote railroad and telegraph extension to undeveloped regions of the West through land grants, attempts to create a Postal telegraph such as that of Great Britain were routinely quashed. Leaving development to private interests not only pleased investors in those interests, but was a sop to those in government who viewed internal improvements as dangerous ground. This state of affairs was rudely interrupted by secession of the Southern states: Overnight, it became clear that the Federal government had a significant security interest in regulating and even operating the telegraph. Telegraph lines between Washington, D.C., and other Northern centers remained live and connected to Southern operators who were eager to listen in on national tactics and strategy. The loyalty of operators in Maryland was suspect and the wires were used by Confederate sympathizers to attempt to disrupt Northern railway operations, especially after the April, 1861, loss of Harpers Ferry, Virginia, where railroad and telegraph networks converged between Washington, D.C., and the North. Secretary of War Simon Cameron called in business associate Tom Scott, of the Pennsylvania Railroad, to try to make sense of what to do about the telegraph. Scott, in turn, assigned Andrew Carnegie to the task of organizing a provisional military telegraph service, and Carnegie brought four young operators from the railroad to Washington, D.C., to do so. One of them, David Homer Bates, helped set up the War Department telegraph office that later became one of Abraham Lincoln's primary places to go "for news." Lincoln's reliance on the web of telegraph communications to bring him instant information of wartime events made him the first chief executive to use twenty-four hour connectivity as a part of his office. Bates, in a diary entry in 1863, noted that Lincoln's message to congress included "compliments [to] the military telegraph very highly indeed. He says none have surpassed and few equaled the diligence and faithfulness of the telegraph operators." Lincoln had a lot to listen in on through his operator proxies – Bates calculated that 3,300 telegrams per day were being sent over military wires, ranging from ten to 1,000 words. Often the information came from news reporters, as when the first reliable information about the Battle of the Wilderness came

from a *New York Tribune* correspondent who reached the telegraph at Union Mills, Virginia, on May 6, 1864.³⁷

From the start the operation was primarily one imposed upon the military by civilian operatives whose duty was owed to business. The initial actions governed only the military district around Washington, D.C., but military authority over railroads and the telegraph spread organically as the technologists took control of the overall systems with government backing.³⁸

Edwin M. Stanton, successor to Cameron as Secretary of War, formalized national control of the telegraph more solidly on February 26, 1862. Congress had granted the administration an act allowing control of the railroads and the telegraph, and the Presidential order was issued to take full military control of “all the telegraph lines in the United States,” and stipulating that any communications about military maneuvers by telegraph were forbidden without permission of the War Department or generals commanding in the field or in geographical departments. As part of the presidential order, newspapers found to be publishing unauthorized information “will be excluded thereafter from securing information by telegraph or transmitting their papers by rail-road.” The order named Edwards S. Sanford military supervisor of telegraphic messages throughout the U.S. and appointed Anson Stager as military superintendent of all telegraph lines and offices. Sanford was president of the American Telegraph Company, and used company funds to pay for the first six months of military telegraph construction and operations. Stager was co-founder and first general superintendent of Western Union; he came from a newspaper background in New York and had worked for Henry O’Rielly during the early telegraph line-building craze. Neither man had military experience (though Stager would receive brevet Brigadier

³⁷ Entries of Dec. 9, 1863; May 7, 1864, Reel 1, David Homer Bates Papers in the Alfred Whital Stern Collection of Lincolniana, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C..

³⁸ David Homer Bates, *Lincoln in the Telegraph Office*, pp. XX – XX. Carnegie remained a staunch supporter of the military telegraphers despite his immense financial success, and at one banquet finished his speech using the telegraph signoff code “30.” Bates worked for Western Union and later became president of the B&O Telegraph Company, and letters between Bates and Carnegie show the wartime relationship remained intact, with Carnegie affectionately responding to “Homer” on several occasions; Reel 1, Bates MS.

General rank later in the war), but each represented corporate network building power. The final clause of the document reveals the balance being struck: “This possession and control of the telegraph lines, is not intended to interfere in any respect with the ordinary affairs of the companies, or with private business.” Stanton, notoriously touchy about newspaper coverage of the administration and its armies, could have his cake and eat it, too – newspapers could be shut out of telegraphic communications if they misbehaved but business interests could continue to use the telegraph lines and run them for commercial activities. In the meantime, USMT support could be used to subsidize the operations of private telegraph companies at joint offices. Hochfelder notes as an example that 40 percent of the salaries, rent, and cost of supplies at Cairo, Illinois, was paid by the government, and that military lines and operators were made available gratis to handle commercial business during slack periods. “It is quite plain that the companies profited enormously during the war,” he writes.³⁹

The efforts cut across Army attempts to take control of its own telegraphy through innovations by the newly-formed Signal Corps under Maj. Albert J. Meyer. An inventive and inquisitive military surgeon, Meyer had conceived a passion for long-distance signaling while posted with remote garrisons in the far West. In August, 1861, he gained permission from Simon Cameron to create the corps from the ground up. He instituted a signaling service, devised equipment and cipher codes, and established a training camp to teach officers and enlisted men how to use wig-wag signals by flag during the day and using torches at night. His letters and reports reveal him as detail-oriented, brilliant, controlling, and intolerant of either challenge to his methods or stupidity among his assistants. “It is contemplated that every [commissioned] officer of the proposed corps should be a thorough telegraphist, practiced in the use of both aerial and electric Signals, able to avail himself of either, and competent of himself to direct the construction and to work the apparatus needed for either,” Meyer wrote. The intent to take over electric military telegraphy was clear in a helpful draft Meyer wrote as an act to be adopted by Congress

³⁹ Order in respect to military intelligence by telegraph, mail, or otherwise, February 25, 1862, Stanton MS, Reel 2, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Hochfelder, *Telegraph in America*, 25.

that detailed the organization, ranks to be held, and pay for the corps. Warrant officers in the corps were to be “skillful telegraph operators.” He suggested an appropriation of \$50,000 for “telegraphic apparatus” (by which he meant both visual and electric equipment) and proposed a field telegraph to accompany each Army division. In answer to a letter sent in June, the army’s adjutant general approved \$10,000 to buy “apparatus and equipment for moveable electric telegraph” in an endorsement to one of Meyer’s letters.⁴⁰

Meyer’s plan seems matter-of-fact to modern minds accustomed to a military that includes its own logistics department, but to the civilian telegraph industry his “flying field telegraphs” were an unpalatable challenge. First, the major chose to use a non-Morse telegraph technology, the “Beardslee” system. The Beardslee device allowed the sender to use an alphabetic dial to tap out messages that were received at the other end by an indicator that spelled them out for the recipient. The magneto-run system had technical weaknesses and was far less powerful than the battery dependent Morse electromagnetic lines, but its primary flaw was in appalling telegraphers such as Stager and Bates who saw it as invading their turf and undercutting their expertise. Second, the Signal Corps telegraphers would be members of the military and subject to the military chain of command and discipline, a feature that Meyer thought would “secure for them a thousand advantages for cooperation with officers of the army in the field.” To the administration, especially to Cameron’s successor Stanton, there were no advantages to having telegraphists under the thumb of Army officers; rather, they wanted a network of reliable operators whose responsibility was to the government rather than to generals. Finally, Meyer’s system was envisioned for temporary deployment in the field with special telegraph wagons designed to quickly lay down rubberized wire on temporary stakes and then, as the forces moved on, to pick it up again. While no direct evidence has been found showing any promises made to businessmen, leaders of

⁴⁰ Alfred J. Meyer to the Hon. Simon Cameron, letter of Aug. 1, 1861; endorsement of S. Thomas, Adjutant General, on letter of Meyer to Thomas of June 27, 1861, Record Group 111, Letters Sent U.S. Signal Corps, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Western Union and the American telegraph companies were certainly not interested in equipping the military with its own isolated communication system that would bypass their own lines and leave no infrastructure behind for connection.⁴¹

Though Meyer succeeded in creating and equipping an effective signal corps including multiple “flying telegraph” units, by early 1863 he recognized that he was in trouble and that his telegraphic efforts were in danger of being pinched off. Cameron’s ouster in early 1862 had taken away his primary administration support, and Meyer thought he saw a plot by Stanton’s supporters in the U.S. Military Telegraph, whom he referred to as “interested and designing men outside the Corps.” The organization of the Signal Corps as an entity outside the direct chain of command and promotion – as an experimental specialty unit it borrowed officers and men from other regiments, brigades, and divisions – gave him little structural clout. In November, 1863, Meyer sent a round-robin letter to commanders he had worked with, asking them to write letters defending the Signal Corps as the efficient and logical home for the military telegraph. He intended to use the letters to directly lobby Congress to preserve the telegraph. The round-robin letter read:

I have the honor to apply for an expression of your opinion in regard to the rapidity with which the temporary Field Telegraph lines of the Signal Corps have been run out when required during the operations of this Army, the success with which they have been worked, and whether they are not a valuable auxiliary to the proper equipment of the Signal Corps.⁴²

The commanders obliged with a shower of correspondence that reads like a Civil War *Who’s Who*: Generals George B. McClellan, Ambrose E. Burnside, E.D. Keyes, John Sedgwick, George G. Meade, Jonathan C. Robinson, William H. French, G. K. Warren, Alfred Pleasanton, and others responded

⁴¹ Meyer laid out his plans in numerous letters to public officials, military officers, and in correspondence with vendors and suppliers throughout 1861. See particularly Meyer to Cameron, letter of Aug. 6, 1861; Meyer to Maj. S. Williams, letter of Sept. 11, 1861; both RG 111, Letters Sent, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Hochfelder and some other telegraph historians have been dismissive of the Beardslee telegraph, saying it was experimental and not rugged enough for use in the field, and have blamed the failure of the field telegraph on Myers insubordinate personality. Hochfelder, *Telegraph in America*, 14.

⁴² L.B. Norton, letter of November 13, 1863, RG 111, Commendatory Letters.

warmly. Unfortunately for Meyer most of the letters missed the point; the generals praised the Signal Corps to the skies but failed to specify its telegraph lines and telegraph operations. It's doubtful whether even a Congress bolstered by approving letters from generals would have prevailed over Stanton's intent to control the national telegraph system, which he referred to as his "right arm," but the campaign reveals that an intelligent observer saw a sinister civilian purpose in preferring the USMT over the army's own Signal Corps. Meyer's command of the Signal Corps would end in November, 1863, when he enraged Anson Stager by publically advertising for telegraph operators to enlist in the corps. Stanton dismissed Meyer from leading the Signal Corps and ordered that all field telegraphs be turned over to the USMT, finishing the military's first attempt to challenge private network dominance.⁴³

Meyer's worries over the "interested and designing men" were borne out in the aftermath of the Civil War. The USMT built fifteen thousand miles of telegraph lines at a cost estimated at between \$2.6 and \$3.3 million between May, 1861, and June, 1865. An order from Stanton on December 1, 1865, not only restored original commercial lines to private ownership by February, 1866, but also gave USMT constructed lines to whichever Morse patent holder had control of a particular area. "This was in consideration of the relinquishment by the telegraph companies of 'all claims against the United States for the use of their patent,' for use of their lines preceding their final restoration, and for all losses sustained by said companies by the exclusion of commercial business," wrote Plum in 1882.⁴⁴

Extension of the national network under government sponsorship and the firm lodging of its control in the hands of private business were among the major effects of the Civil War, but the war also

⁴³ Letters of April and November, RG 111, Commendatory Letters Received, 1862-1865, Entry 6, Box 1, National Archives, Washington, D.C., nos. 1 – 17, 24. Meyer would later resurrect the concept of a government telegraph authority over civilian operations when, as the Army's chief signal officer in 1870, he formed the agency that became the National Weather Service; <http://www.civilwarsignals.org/1st/myer/myer.html> (accessed June 23, 2015). For Stanton's "right arm" comment, Bates, *Lincoln in the Telegraph Office*, p. 11. The functionality of Meyer's originally-conceived military telegraph is shown in letters from a USMT operator, who in 1864 wrote "The field telegraph has ben of the greatest importance in communicating orders of the utmost importance to attack or withdraw as it might be," and who noted that military telegraphers were using equipment and wire "such as formerly used by the Signal telegraph." Entries of May 18 & 31, 1864, Luther A. Rose Diary, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁴ Plum, *Military Telegraph*, citing the 1866 report of Anson Stager, 347-348.

had an immense impact on news use of the telegraph and on the content of that news. The volume of telegraphic news due to the war grew so precipitously that telegraph companies regretted the discounts they had offered to the press. Edward Sanford wrote to the Western Associated Press to complain that newspapers were abusing the business arrangement. Contracts had been made in 1861 for a daily bulletin of twenty-five hundred words of Western news sent to East Coast papers, but “After the war commenced, your messages for the East often exceeded that limit. We were assured that the Eastern papers were making no money, and therefore permitted an excess of business without making extra charge.” Now, in 1864, the demand had risen to ten thousand words per day, and newspapers insisted the telegraph offices stay open all night. Sanford despaired that the American Telegraph Company “was really incurring eight times the expense contemplated when we made the arrangement.” The telegraphers were dropping from the strain and news transmissions were jamming the wires during peak business times. “The men will give out from physical inability to do the work. Either the number of words and hours must be lessened, or we must be paid enough to enable us to give a compensation to the operators,” Sanford write, suggesting that the American would charge extra for anything more than three thousand words per day. Clearly, newspapers during the war had come to treat the telegraph as a major pipeline, one that was expected to handle almost any flow of information.⁴⁵

The network fundamentally changed the material flowing over the telegraph, as well, as telegraph historian Hochfelder explains. The relatively high cost of telegraphy empowered news associations over individual newspapers, giving the associations increased control over the form of news and how it should be presented. “The matter-of-fact style and inverted-pyramid structure of the modern news story originated with telegraphic newsgathering and reached a level of maturity during the Civil War,” he writes. Hochfelder also notes that the frequency of telegraphic service and its creation of “evolving” news stories through incremental reporting developed a new consumer expectation. “News-

⁴⁵ Printed letter of E.S. Sanford, May 16, 1864, Melville E. Stone MS, Box 8, Folder 530, Newberry Library, Chicago.

hungry crowds routinely gathered at hotels, newspaper offices, and telegraph offices to keep up with the latest on major news stories,” and a new expectation emerged that the network would bring details as they occurred rather than an analysis of the news.⁴⁶

Stanton, in his urge to control and harness transmission of the news, also managed to change reporting. In April, 1863, he authorized Gen. Joseph Hooker to issue General Order No. 48 to require correspondents “to publish their communications over their own signatures.” Prior to the order most reporting was done anonymously under pen names such as “Agate” (Whitelaw Reid) or “Invisible Green” (William G. Crippen). Allowing a reporter to sign his actual initials was reserved for notable figures of national prominence, such as Horace Greeley or Bayard Taylor. Now, by federal order, ordinary reporters became visible to their audiences through bylines. Newspaper editors were far from delighted, but the business change led to widespread recognition for the best reporters. Journalism professor David Mindich, meanwhile, has argued that Stanton also created the “inverted pyramid” reporting style. Stanton’s style in daily press releases titled “War Diary” pushed factual information to the top of his telegrams and letters, and the Secretary of War’s pronouncements were often printed verbatim. “While not always written in descending order of importance, Stanton’s daily dispatch was never chronological, and was always terse,” writes Mindich. No other reporter showed such a style during the war, but the inverted pyramid came to rule the news by the 1890s.⁴⁷

The power and authority of the telegraphic transmission of news was revealed in another incident during the war, one that led the administration to suppress at least two New York City newspapers, including the New York *World*, notorious for its editor’s “Copperhead” Southern sympathies and its anti-administration Democratic leaning. Two enterprising minor journalists recognized that presidential announcements about the military draft had moved the stock market in the

⁴⁶ Hochfelder, *Telegraph in America*, p. 82-83.

⁴⁷ Andrews, *The North Reports the Civil War*, pp. 359-360, 753, 754; David Mindich, “Edward M. Stanton, the Inverted Pyramid, and Information Control,” *The Civil War and the Press*, eds. David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing and Debra Redding van Tuyl (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2000), p. 196.

past. They fabricated a news bulletin purporting that Lincoln had called for thousands of new soldiers, made it look as though it had come to New York by telegraph, and included it in what looked like the late-night packet of telegraphic news that was carried by messenger to the various city papers. The forged bulletin was accepted by compositors who had no reason to doubt its authenticity and who quickly set it into type for early morning editions. Frantic telegrams from Washington denying the truth of the presidential order reached most papers in time to stop the presses, but Stanton sent soldiers to occupy the *World's* office and suppressed the publication for several days. The perpetrators of the fraud were quickly detected and their attempt to rig the stock market failed, but the audacious use of the symbols of the new reporting network – the telegraph, the Associated Press, and special couriers – showed that advances in speed and connectivity brought unanticipated vulnerabilities as well as benefits.⁴⁸

Postwar Network Consolidation

The Civil War years accelerated the telegraph and rail networks into early maturity. Before the war, rapid communication had seemed to be an expensive luxury, but by the end of the war telegraph use was acknowledged in the news business as a necessary (if expensive) commodity. More than two thousand telegraphers and electricians came out of the war with practical experience and dynamic ideas for new applications in communication technology. These operators and their civilian counterparts formed the nucleus of an emerging white collar business that relied on skilled technologists who were not involved in manual labor, creating what social historian Edward Gabler has referred to as a “new lower middle-class.” It was a class that had a central identity, but was composed of individuals who may have known one another only within the network of telegraph lines. For hundreds of reporters and editors the ability to send and receive up-to-the-minute dispatches had become commonplace, with

⁴⁸ Manton Marble MS. Marble initially offered a significant reward toward discovery and apprehension of the fraudsters; he was dissuaded by officials of the Associated Press, who instead sent a round-robin letter of apology to the President signed by all the major New York City editors.

many of them also claiming the title of “practical telegrapher.” Millions of readers were accustomed to receiving far-flung reports through columns delivered by telegraphic news agencies. The experience with massive military organization and involvement in the USMT, meanwhile, gave telegraph business leaders such as Stager a model to use in running a gigantic and consolidated business.⁴⁹

The news agency monopoly of the Associated Press buttressed telegraphic consolidation when Western Union swallowed the American Telegraph Company and the United States Telegraph Company in 1866, forming a \$40 million corporation that operated more than 76,000 miles of telegraph line. Contracts that kept the cost of sending news bulletins low also included non-compete clauses that prohibited AP member newspapers from using other telegraph services to send or receive news, or from creating their own network. The contracts also contained agreements against criticism of Western Union or discussion of its business practices. Business historian Joshua Wolff notes that Western Union became “the first American private corporation to monopolize a national industry,” and it did so partly by working hand in glove with the Associated Press to ensure that it controlled the flow of news. The relationship was so close that the AP main office was located within the Western Union building by the mid-1870s. Attempts in 1866 to introduce a bill to create a national postal telegraph system were rebuffed. “Western Union engaged in a deeper systematic corruption, manipulating both the press and the political system, destroying competition and resisting efforts to democratize the telegraph through regulation or the creation of a public telegraph,” Wolff writes. But with the exception of a few leading publishers, James Gordon Bennett among them, most in the news business seemed to view this dominance and corruption as a win-win situation. “Because news dispatches on the wires could be ‘dropped’ at many stations at little expense per station, the telegraph news business offered virtually unlimited economies of scale,” Wolff argues. A large number of small telegraph companies charging

⁴⁹ Edward Gabler, *The American Telegrapher: A Social History, 1860-1900* (New Brunswick, VT: Rutgers, 1988), p. 4. Telegraphers recognized one another by their “fist,” that is, their sending style and speed, and often formed working relationships with one another over hundreds of miles, 80-82.

varying rates and working at different levels of efficiency from one another would remove the benefit of an efficient national network and might even push newspapers back into more dependence on the cumbersome postal exchange system. Editors found nothing incongruous in the 1883 statement of Western Union president Norvin Green that “most complaints [against WU] are by people who never use it and never would at any price except in case of death.”⁵⁰

There was always a certain amount of churn at the margins of the monopolistic Western Union business, just as there was with news agency challenges to the AP. Independent telegraph companies such as New York’s Bankers & Brokers line or the Franklin Telegraph Company attempted to carve out specialty markets for themselves to serve particular interests. Combined, they never carried more than ten percent of the nation’s telegraph business. The independents were also created as foils for investors, often fraudulent corporations that demonstrated some modest operations, sold stock to credulous buyers, and then folded. Bennett, capitalizing on the national Telegraph Act of 1866 that forced open rights-of-way along railroads and roadways, aided a combination of smaller telegraph companies to form an independent network across New England and initiated a news service across them. His 1868 move was not so much a journalistic one to provide content as it was a defensive business reaction against what he thought were machinations to have the government buy Western Union’s telegraph lines at an inflated price of \$60 million. Bennett’s actions led to removal of the *Herald* from the AP, a move that accidentally guaranteed long-term competition to the dominant news agency.⁵¹

These business dealings were opaque to most consumers of the news who saw in the increasing web of telegraph wires stretching overhead in cities or paralleling railroad tracks and roadways simply a sign of progress. For all of its innovative effect on communication the telegraph remained fundamentally

⁵⁰ Joshua D. Wolff, *Western Union and the Creation of the American Corporate Order, 1845-1893* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 2, 7, 115, 121; Norvin Green to J.G. Carlisle, December 15, 1883, Western Union Telegraph Company Records, Smithsonian, cited in Wolff, p. 8.

⁵¹ Wolff, pp. 121, 126-127. Gould made two different “runs” on Western Union, in 18profiting hugely each time.

the same as Morse's original demonstration project, a line between two places requiring an operator on each end. A single line could carry twenty-five to fifty words per minute; line length was limited to between three to five hundred miles before either an operator or automatic repeater was necessary to boost the signal strength by transferring a message to the next segment. Each station required hundreds of battery cells, with attendants mixing the dangerous chemicals that gave the electrolytic charge; all of the equipment had to be constantly adjusted to account for weather conditions and normal wear and tear. More communication volume required more lines and more operators, a labor-intensive market, and much of the invention that surrounded the telegraph was aimed more at either protecting or circumventing the original Morse patents. When J.B. Stearns developed a prototype machine in 1868 that would send a message each way, simultaneously, on a single telegraph wire, a process known as "duplexing," Western Union hired a young inventor to create as many variations of the machine as he could. WU officials didn't deploy any of the 17 duplexers that Thomas Alva Edison came up with – they simply wanted to protect themselves from any conceivable competition in the market. The 1874 invention of Quadruplexing technology emerged quickly only because Edison unethically sold the technology he developed with Western Union money to financier Jay Gould, who was launching a stock scheme to gain control of the company.⁵²

All of the technological limitations, inventions, and convoluted ownership schemes paled, though, by comparison with the vast public acceptance of the innovation. By 1875 the utility of the network itself had far outstripped public interest in the minutiae of the technology that drove it. "How thought is transmitted over a long stretch of wire is an unanswered problem to the majority of those who daily patronize the telegraph companies," wrote a reporter in the literary journal *The Friend* in

⁵² Daniel H. Craig, "Machine Telegraphy of Today," promotional pamphlet, 1891, Melville E. Stone Papers, Box 8, Folder 537, Newberry Library, Chicago; "About the Telegraph," *Saturday Evening Post*, Oct. 1, 1881; Wolff, *Western Union*, pp. 213-214. Gould manipulated Western Union stock twice, using rival telegraph companies and railroad right-of-way ownership to beat down the WU stock price, acquire majority interests, and then demand vast payouts from the company to relinquish those interests.

September of that year. Even though telegraph company officials would testify to Congress that fewer than 2 percent of the U.S. population personally used the telegraph, their proxy, the newspaper, led most people to feel ownership in the system's effects. Where an earlier national audience claimed that their news was sent at the speed of lightning, Americans of the 1880s could be much more practical. "The current of the wire does not travel at anything like the speed of lightning, vis. 228,000 miles per second. The resistance of the wire reduces its rate to a small fraction," reported the *Saturday Evening Post* in an update of world telegraph technology. Whatever the speed, it was enough to change the news.⁵³

⁵³ "The Electric Telegraph – Late Improvements," *The Friend: a Religious and Literary Journal (1827-1906)* 49, no. 6 (Sep. 25, 1875): 49, 6; American Periodicals p. 43; "About the Telegraph," *Saturday Evening Post* (Oct. 1, 1881): 61, 11; American Periodicals p. 9.

CHAPTER 5 EXAMINING NEWSPAPER COVERAGE – IMMIGRATION

The networks that supported the newspapers quickly became vital to the business of news, but they also changed the nature of news itself. The press during the time period of roughly 1850 through 1890 was not simply marking time, but was engaged in a professional transformation toward what would later be described as the “Full News” independent press of the twentieth century.¹ An increasingly sophisticated understanding of important national issues, and more technical competence in reporting on them, should be evident in changes in news coverage over this time period. Focusing on a single major issue, Immigration, this idea was tested and significant results were found indicating that newspapers were indeed changing the nature of their content during the studied period. Content analysis of several full-text searchable newspapers, and of a variety of slightly less-accessible national newspapers, reveals this increasing sophistication and shows that the increasingly-networked press was accomplishing important self-imposed work as the Civil War years were left behind.

The national population was growing rapidly and civic life became more extended and complex over the course of the nineteenth century.² Newspapers, which had started the period primarily as politically-supported ventures, used new technology, speedier distribution mechanisms, and new business approaches to their audience to exploit an increasing appetite for information. They evolved new methods of identifying, reporting, and displaying the news in order to position themselves as trusted intermediaries conveying facts. These results can be seen by focusing less on the overall appearance of newspapers, which remained typographically dense and (to our eyes) relatively unappealing, and instead looking closely at how they worded their stories. Immigration, a national and local issue of significant interest, offers an excellent window into this changing world.

¹ John Zaller has described the implications of the “Full News” press in an article addressing the modern loss of such wide, independent coverage. John Zaller, “A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen,” *Political Communication* 20 (2003), 109-130.

² The 1840 Census listed just over 17 million people, while that of 1890 recorded nearly 63 million. It was the 1890 Census that formally declared the American western frontier no longer existed as an unsettled area due to the increase in population. www.census.gov

In examining the way the press covered one complicated subject of national importance over time, the evolution of the press can be seen to be more intentional and less formulaic than has been represented.³ Far from being a social organ with a nativist knee-jerk reaction against aliens, the press moved toward objectivity, or at least toward complexity of coverage that gave some balance to its stories. Its terminology remained earthy and its portrayals were unapologetically racist, but underlying those factors one sees an emerging broadening viewpoint based on data and factual input. The positivist historical view of newspapers holds that objectivity is the key feature of news, and that its ultimate stage of evolution was the modern, detached, and professionalized journalism of the late twentieth century. That advanced press was described by sociologist Gaye Tuchman as bound by a “fetishism of facts,” a model that prevailed until the recent introduction of electronic social media and its challenge to the notion that a professional press was normative or even necessary.⁴

The Study

To identify the extent of newspaper change over this time, quantitative content analysis of stories involving immigration and its attendant complications was conducted. The analysis allows for a statistical look at various hypotheses, framed as research questions, and uses data gathered from a significant sampling of texts that are then sorted through a coding process. Results of that coding are analyzed for statistical significance and any significant results may then be used to characterize the overall nature of the texts.

Researchers examining contemporary news media have shown that newspapers create a highly-limited set of shorthand choices used to characterize immigrants that then leads audiences to adopt

³ See, for example, Robert W. McChesney and Ben Scott, “Introduction,” *The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2003), xvii. The two describe a late nineteenth century newspaper environment of “gimmicky features, fakery, and hysterical headlines.”

⁴ Gaye Tuchman and Harvey A. Farberman, “Facts of the Moment: The Study of News,” *Symbolic Interaction* 3 (2) (Fall 1980), 9-20.

those characterizations as an immigrant classification method.⁵ Researchers have also found that media coverage of ethnic minorities is generally overwhelmingly negatively biased and that consumers tend to adopt stereotypic attitudes presented by news media. As it is unlikely that consumers of the past were significantly more sophisticated than news consumers of today, generalizing from modern audience reactions to the behavior of a past audience in response to news stimulus seems logical. Thus, media effects such as concepts that news media help establish out-group and in-group identities should translate back in time. This effect is particularly strong among less-educated news consumers.⁶ In the case of the nineteenth century, low levels of education and literacy, even in metropolitan centers, meant that for many news consumers the day's paper read aloud by a friend or relative may have been their only window into immigrant issues.

With that power to set agendas and frame issues in mind, research questions for this analysis were these:

RQ1: Does newspaper coverage of immigration issues change over time in America prior to the early 1890s?

RQ2: Is the change negative (against immigrants/immigration) or positive (more accepting of immigrants)?

RQ3: Did newspapers create coded interpretations of immigrants for readers?

RQ4: To what extent do news articles show an attempt to define citizenship?

Two separate sets of data were secured as part of this content analysis. Each was a nonprobability purposive sampling of American newspapers in order to seek references to immigrants, emigrants, and the movement of people to or from an area where they made an impact that was of

⁵ Daphna Lemish, "The Whore and the Other: Israeli Images of Female Immigrants from the Former U.S.S.R.," *Gender and Society* 14 (2000), 333-349; Hajo Boomgarden, News and Ethnic Prejudice: Threat Framing of Immigrants and its Impact on Anti-immigration Sentiments, paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Dresden, Germany, June, 2006.

⁶ Christian Schemer, "The Influence of News Media on Stereotypic Attitudes toward Immigrants in a Political Campaign," *Journal of Communication* 62 (2012), 739-757.

interest. The first concentrating on 1852, 1862, 1872, and 1882, and the second spanned decade intervals from 1840 to 1890. Roughly 4,000 articles were identified in each of the initial searches. The first data set was winnowed to a total of eighty-six useful articles, while the second totaled 192.⁷

Articles were stored as .pdf files and coders worked directly from either the electronic file or a printout of the article. Each article was identified with a number for tracking purposes, and articles were stored in a Microsoft Excel database for later processing. Inter-coder reliability was tested using Cohen's Kappa, with results for each variable ranging from "fair" to highs of "almost perfect." Two coders evaluated the initial set of articles while the later set was self-coded; however, coding reliability was checked in that case using a sample of twenty articles coded by two people.⁸

The codebook used ten variables to analyze each article. They were: Story identification number; Apparent story origin; Newspaper publishing the story; Coverage type; Characterization of coverage (positive/negative); Characterization of immigrants (where they came from); Primary presentation of immigrants (ethnic or national identity); Story intent (from warning about immigrants to urging assistance to them); Citizenship approach; and Context of story (crime, social, etc.).

Responses to the variables listed in the codebooks were tested for statistical significance using chi-square tests and setting 0.05 as a cutoff.⁹ From the first data set, significant results were found ($p=0.001$) that answered RQ3, whether newspaper articles created a coded interpretation of immigrants

⁷The first data set, accessed in 2012-13, relied on the ProQuest historical full-text *New York Times*. The second, accessed in 2015, included the ProQuest historical full-text *Chicago Tribune*, *Detroit Free Press*, *New York Times*, and the Newsbank Readex database *America's Historical Newspapers*, which included newspapers from the South, the far West, and New England. Each search returned thousands of "hits" which were then read to secure articles that somehow substantively presented an immigration issue. Search terms included both broadly-defined searches of "immigr* OR emigr*," and more specific advanced strings including "immigra* OR emigr* AND citi* OR (Iris* OR Germa*) OR (Chin* OR Ital*)". Other modifiers included Eur*, Asia*, Brit*, Pol*, Mex*, Jap*. Most searches returned more than 300 results; some returned thousands of results. Many of the results returned were not useful, such as coverage of remote European wars or the occurrence of an ethnic name in a headline; others were repeated findings of the same article.

⁸ Intercoder reliability was moderate for the second data set. The codebooks used and coder reliability information are found in Appendix 1.

⁹ The chi-square test checks against the null hypothesis, which would be that the data could just as easily come from random factors as from any significant input. A value of 0.05 means that there is less than a 5 percent chance that the results could be arrived at accidentally.

for readers. Analysis of “coverage type” against “story intent” suggests that news articles were indeed written in a way to give readers an easy way to classify (stereotype) immigrants. Comparison of “characterization of coverage” against “context of story” suggests that the type of an immigrant article, such as crime, social issues, or political issues, strongly determines the characterization of immigrant roles presented to the reader.

The first data set was too small to achieve statistically significant results with relation to the other RQs, but the second data set found strong significance ($p=0.000002$) for results between the coverage type of a story (whether it was simple or complex) and the apparent story intent (warning of immigrants, predicting immigrant behaviors or listing their actions, or supporting or urging assistance to immigrants). Since the number of complex stories increases between 1850 and 1890, this suggests that the answer to RQ1 is positive and that newspaper coverage of immigration does change over the study period. A comparison of the characterization of articles against their context (crime, labor, political, social issues, or no particular context) also achieved statistical significance ($p=0.00003$). This further bolsters the positive answer to RQ1.

Comparing the primary presentation of immigrants (their native background) with characterization of coverage also reached statistical significance ($p=0.0014$). This supports the idea expressed in RQ2 that newspapers did show change over time in presenting immigrants in positive or negative lights. Charts presented later in this chapter that were created using this favorability data will show individual immigrant groups and their presentation during the study time period.

Results were not statistically significant ($p=0.55$) for analysis of citizenship approaches suggested in RQ4. Though many articles in the study did show an attempt to define citizenship roles, and will be discussed as interesting artifacts, their numbers were too small to qualify the category as a major aspect of news coverage during the selected study period.

Appearing in the News

Articles on immigration effects were a growing part of the nation's newspaper system after the early 1840s, when the flow of European immigrants into the country's opening heartland was facilitated by increasingly efficient railways and full utilization of transportation assets including steam navigation on rivers, lakes, and canals, and surface transportation on postal stage roads. This ongoing act of peopling the nation by borrowing from abroad led to significant tensions within society, and those tensions were reflected in newspaper coverage of the issue.¹⁰ Historian Robert H. Wiebe writes that anti-alien sentiment was a key factor in what he calls the "crisis in the communities" that dotted America as isolated islands of culture in the late nineteenth century. Referring to "swarms of sexually potent immigrants" as a perennially mentioned danger, Wiebe writes of antialien forces as being "protean" and powerful. "They abused the immigrant in rising crescendo after the middle of the decade. Mixing contempt with fear, natives pictured the newcomers as dispirited breeders of poverty, crime, and political corruption, and simultaneously as peculiarly powerful subversives whose foreign ideologies were undermining American society," Weibe explains, while noting that the immigrants did not need to be physically present in a community for such sentiments to be publically expressed.¹¹ Weibe worked from many sources, including speeches, private papers, and association publications, and one would expect to find the shrill tone he suggests reflected extensively in newspapers of the day. Instead, sampling of newspapers of the time finds a somewhat bemused press attempting to explain immigrants and reactions to them in fairly balanced terms. The national news dialogue did grow more somber by the 1890s, but seems to contain little of the hostility implied of antialienists. The importance of this is

¹⁰ Between 1851-1860, 2 million Irish, 1.3 million German, and 600,000 English immigrants came to the U.S.: between 1861-1869, 1.3 million German, 1 million Irish, and 600,000 English; between 1871-1880, 1 million German, 600,000 Irish, and 600,000 English. While other European immigrants reached the U.S. before 1880, significant immigration from Italy, central Europe, Russia, and the Baltic countries occurred after 1881, while immigration from England, Ireland, and Germany steadied at about 1 million for the decade ending in 1890. http://www.pbs.org/destinationamerica/usim_wn_flash.html (accessed 12/2/12).

¹¹ Robert H. Weibe, *The Search for Order 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), pp. 52-54.

not to undercut Weibe’s assertions – actions such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 show antipathy toward immigrant groups – but to assert that the press was different than the general public or casuists in particular movements. In a world of “island communities” the newspapers were connected by networks of wire, rails, and postal exchanges, and reported on immigrants with an unexpected amount of balance and positivism.

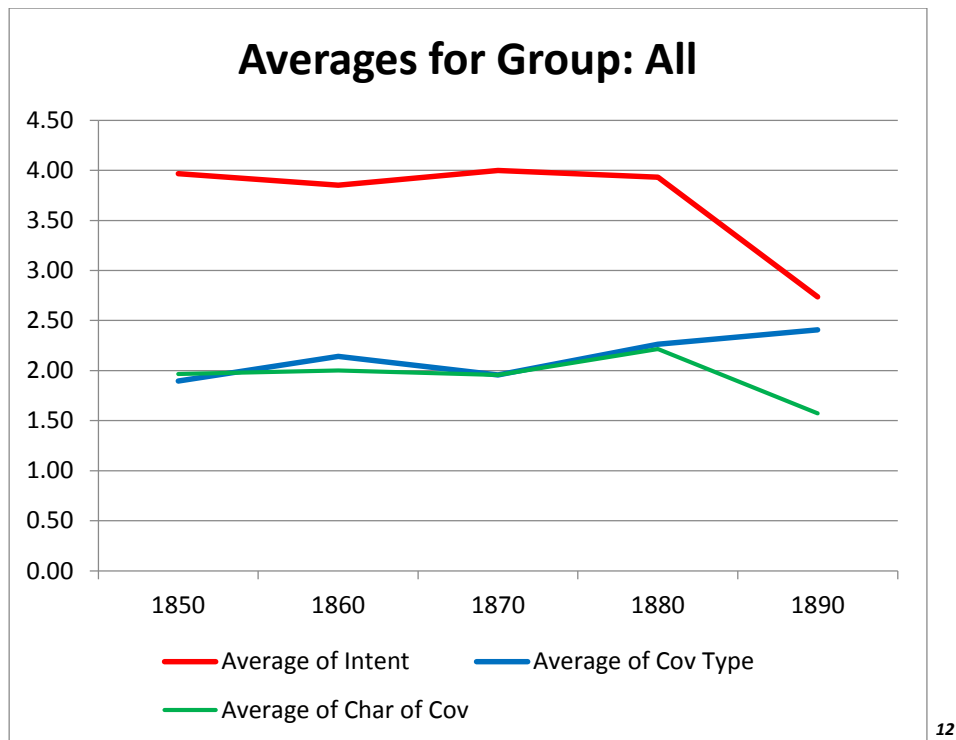


Figure 2: Immigration Intent v. Coverage Character and Type

An example can be seen in an 1869 article on the Chinese in America written by Joseph Medill. Writing from San Francisco, the former *Chicago Tribune* managing editor and co-owner sought to calm politically-based fears over Chinese immigration – fears that were being raised by Irish labor operatives on the West Coast. “The Celtic hostility to the Chinese is founded on their admirable qualities as

¹² Source data from 2015 content analysis. All figures are based on average percentages of coded answers to three variables. Coverage type includes simple, intermediate, and complex (maximum 3); Char of Cov includes positive, negative, and neutral (maximum 3); Average of Intent includes warns of immigrants/urges action against, lists immigrant action, predicts immigrant effects/supports calm, and urges assistance to immigrants (maximum 4). The falloff in 1890, coupled with increasing complexity of stories, shows an activist press pursuing agendas against immigrants (Chinese, European paupers).

laborers,” explained Medill in an article that appeared in the *Tribune* on August sixth. He urged calm over Chinese immigrants, writing that they would never want to vote, did not intend to own property, and only intended to stay in America while earning money for a “fortune” to take home to China.¹³ While often expressing fear of immigrant allegiance to old-world political values or power (particularly Catholic religious power), though, some newspaper figures like editorial cartoonist Thomas Nast also campaigned for immigrant assimilation, if not complete equality of immigrants or tolerance of their cultures.¹⁴

Medill’s attempt to explain exactly how certain immigrants ought to be understood illustrates an evolutionary change that the daily press experienced in the nineteenth century. Mark Wahlgren Summers has claimed that the time between the end of the Civil War and the 1880s was an uncomfortable one of growth and division between the newsmen and the politicians who had counted on strict support from a political party press. While “professionalism came haltingly,” new journalists in the post-war years created new rules in reporting, editing, and distribution of the news, including the independence of editors.¹⁵ Like Medill, other news writers increasingly chose to make stories involving immigration into political lessons or explanations for citizenship behaviors. They also chose to frame stories in ways that expanded understanding of how citizenship rights and privileges were playing out among the new immigrant communities and in interaction with existing Americans. That these stories were shared and borrowed widely is shown by attributions given at the time of publishing – New Orleans credited San Francisco, Chicago gave credit to Philadelphia, and Detroit borrowed from New York. The idea that this was national knowledge and that distant sources could be relied upon was made

¹³ *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 6, 1869, page 2. Medill’s message must be understood as being based within the racialized stereotypes of the time.

¹⁴ Morton Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast* (New York: Oxford, 1968), 64, “Uncle Sam’s Thanksgiving Dinner.” Nast’s cartoons against Catholics were intended to discredit Irish Democrats as much as they were aimed at the Irish as an immigrant group.

¹⁵ Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Press Gang: Newspapers & Politics, 1865-1878* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1994), 4-5.

clear. The network effect could lead to ludicrous results, with the same immigrant ship apparently bursting into flames and sinking in the Caribbean multiple times over several months (as editors found space for the initial story to run), but in general the effect meant that a serious and complex article about a local phenomenon of immigration might become a generalized national issue. This increasingly took newspapers away from toeing a strictly local party line in politics, and increased their role as conservators of social responsibility in a broad national sense.¹⁶

The longitudinal study shows that the press continued a trend toward complex coverage of immigration issues and immigrants themselves. This purposive sampling is admittedly limited, but within its limitations it does offer evidence that newspapers were doing a different kind of “work” by the end of the study period than they were at the beginning, and this “work” indicates a changed self-appointed role and responsibility within society.¹⁷

To a modern audience accustomed to a closely-policed border and stringent immigration caps, the wide-open nature of immigration to the U.S. in the mid-nineteenth century is difficult to comprehend. Americans of the time saw immigration as the key to both national growth and to accumulating the “operatives” needed to labor in factories, the settlers to continue continental expansion, and craft specialists who could bring particular industrial skills. The availability of land in the U.S. provided a draw for immigrants, and a series of European economic, political, and crop disasters pushed tens of thousands to emigrate from Western countries, particularly the Irish potato crop failures beginning in 1845.

Immigration, immigrants, and their effects on citizenship were major components of news coverage, from the nativism of the 1840s and 50s, through Progressivism in the later nineteenth

¹⁶ Gerald J. Baldasty, “The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Modern American Journalism,” *Three Hundred Years of the American Newspaper*, ed. John B. Hench (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1991), pp. 407-408.

¹⁷ For the scholarly definition of journalism as work, Gaye Tuchman, “Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected,” *American Journal of Sociology* 79, 1 (July 1973), 110-131. Tuchman spent more than two years observing newsrooms to document her theory that news reporting consisted of ordinary work that made continuous emergency coverage into a routine task.

century. The female journalist Nellie Bly's first plan to break into print in 1887 was to voyage to Europe in order to travel back to America incognito as an immigrant in steerage, reporting on immigrant thoughts and the process of reaching the U.S.¹⁸ The immigrant community was often presented as a dangerous outside influence as seen in routine crime reporting as well as reporting of crises such as labor battles over the Erie Canal, the New York City Draft Riots of 1863, and the railroad strike of 1877.

In Medill's case, cited earlier, the writer was clearly partisan but also attempted to explain a complex issue and to recommend a particular approach to that issue. Democrats had found an issue that resonated with California voters (and, by implication, might spread to the rest of the nation) and were spreading fear that a wave of Chinese immigration would overwhelm American laborers. On a long swing through the West, Medill had seen something different. Chinese coming to the United States were frugal, industrious, and ingenious, he wrote, "[T]ruly a strange reason for the enmity evinced in California toward them As they do good work for low wages, and keep sober, they are persecuted, maligned and barbarously treated," he wrote. The most reassuring thing about the Chinese, according to Medill's article, was their lack of interest in acquiring American citizenship. Estimating that the average Chinese immigrant's intended to spend no more than twenty years in the United States, Medill calculated that the total number of "Chinamen" in the U.S. could never be more than twenty times the annual immigration because there was no natural increase in the Chinese population. "They never bring their wives and families with them," he stated. Political leaders of the Irish immigrant community were raising a false argument when they claimed that Chinese immigrants sought citizenship privileges, including the right to vote, Medill explained. The nearly 40,000 Chinese already on the West Coast would never vote, and this made them ideal immigrants.¹⁹

¹⁸ Jean Marie Lutes, "Into the Madhouse with Nellie Bly: Girl Stunt Reporting in Late Nineteenth Century America," *American Quarterly* 54, 2 (June 2002), 217-253.

¹⁹ *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 6, 1869, page 2.

The complexity of this kind of news coverage is significant when compared to the nativist themes claimed by Wiebe and present in many immigrant stories found in earlier nineteenth century stories. A sampling from the *New York Times* in September, 1852, reveals immigrant mentions primarily in crime and accident stories. Overall, Irish immigrants figure prominently as perpetrators of crime, while Germans follow as victims, but immigrant behaviors are generally paired with tragedy of some kind. Of 25 articles analyzed in the 2012 study, four involve Irish murderers and two German ones, while three involve immigrants as victims of fires or other accidents.²⁰ Examples include the story of Frederick Krantz, “the German who killed the Negro Thomas Miles . . . was under the influence of liquor, affording another sad commentary on the destructiveness of the rum traffic.” Another article concerns a destructive arson fire that burned “the upper stories of these building [which] were occupied by several hundred persons – estimated as high as five hundred – mostly poor Germans and Irish, who lost their all.”²¹ Other short items included a story from a Buffalo paper about a German man whose seven children had died of disease that summer, a story from Ohio about General Scott meeting with an Irish delegation, and a single prophetic sentence under the headline “Irish Items” stating that the British ship *Ganges* had landed 244 Irish passengers who confirmed the failure of the potato crop and who predicted a “great tide” of emigration to America.

Yet an editorial reprinted from the *Milwaukee Sentinel* in the same year stands out, again dealing with the long-range issue of Chinese immigration. Stating that some 28,000 Chinese were already in California, the editorialist welcomed their immigration as a positive good:

[T]he overflowing population of China, when once the wall that has cooped them in at home is broken down -- will pour over the kindly Pacific seas, to a country so full of attraction for them. I have before hinted, I believe, in one of my letters that possibly in

²⁰ In addition to articles on crime, accidents, and immigration statistics, offerings included two political stories, one on temperance, one on Catholic religious organizers, two on California immigration, two political stories, one economic story on establishment of an immigrant steamer line to Ireland, three on Chinese immigration, and a feature on the Post Office’s “Dead Letters” department that included misdirected Irish immigrant letters primarily as an example of the humorous attempts of an illiterate community to deal with its mail.

²¹ *New York Daily Times*, Sept. 30, 1852; Sept. 29, 1852.

this new element of our population may be found the substitute for what is now its worst element – Slavery.²²

The editorialist also suggested that bringing Chinese immigrants to America would be an effective alternative to sending Christian missionaries to China. “It can only result in good,” he concluded. Two other stories detailed Chinese immigration in a positive light, one noting the appointment of an American as commissioner for Chinese emigration and the other briefly describing Chinese “villages” of up to 1,500 people being established in the California gold fields.

Statistical stories published in the *New York Times* in 1852 showed a generally positive approach to immigrants and immigration. An article borrowed from the *Alta Californian* exulted that immigration from overseas was expected to bring 82,000 people to the state through San Francisco, while another 40,000 or more were expected to arrive overland. The *Times* itself matter-of-factly listed the August arrival of more than 36,500 immigrants, the majority from England, in 397 vessels.²³

The overall nature of the coverage itself was conversational, opinionated, and informal. Immigrants may have been represented as fallible, but immigration in general was good, whether from Europe or Asia. The newspaper often showed itself intimately in touch with its readers. In one example, the *Times* undertook a story correction for an article that had identified an immigrant criminal offender named Joseph Eldridge as a confidence trickster known as “Black Joe.” The editor stated: “The man called ‘Black Joe’ was another person entirely . . . We make this statement on the authority, and at the request, of Mr. Eldridge himself,” in a paragraph led by a small pointing hand symbol.²⁴

By 1882, a vastly changed *New York Times* is evident when it comes to immigration coverage. In prior decades statistical reporting had been limited either to day-to-day steamship arrival announcements or end-of-decade census statements regarding foreign-born population. Now longer

²² *New York Daily Times*, Sept. 27, 1852: “Chinese villages are springing up through the diggings. Peking, Canton, and Hong Kong are among the names already given to these Celestial settlements.”

²³ *New York Daily Times*, Sept. 13, Sept. 1, 1852. English immigrants totaled 18,859; the smallest represented group was Portugal/Spain, with just one immigrant, followed by France, with three.

²⁴ *New York Daily Times*, Sept. 1, 1852.

and more analytical stories appeared, typified by an 1883 piece headlined “European Passenger Traffic: Number of persons landed at this port by each steamship line for 1882” that not only chronicled arrivals but estimated business practices of the immigrant shipping companies.²⁵

At the individual story level, more complex articles and themes are evident. In a story titled “Railroads at Castle Garden,” the newspaper’s reporter writes of testimony in the Senate investigation of how immigrants were exploited on their arrival in the United States. Steamship companies which had guaranteed at least two days of support to arriving immigrants instead were offloading bewildered passengers within hours of their arrival at New York, sometimes at 2 a.m.. Meanwhile, steamship pursers in collusion with railroad companies sold tickets at enormously inflated prices to the bewildered new arrivals. Castle Garden was the primary processing point for immigrants before the Ellis Island facility was opened in 1892. The landing point served as a location for edgy capitalism, and writers wanted to see reform there in order to help immigrants avoid scams. “In the Castle Garden rotunda, the railroad companies had the monopoly of the sale of tickets If immigrants who had tickets West were taken directly from the steamers to the railroads, and did not go to Castle Garden at all, it would save them much time and money,” the article stated.²⁶ This extended kind of article with a social approach to immigration shows significant attention to assimilating immigrants and protecting them – a far cry from fearing them as criminals or societal threats.

Other coverage, especially from Southern newspapers, showed concern or interest for the overall movement of immigrants through the nation. The New Orleans *Daily Picayune* in 1850 chronicled the number of emigrants passing Laramie, counting even their horses, mules, oxen, and sheep. The Cincinnati *Commercial Advertiser* in 1870 discussed a “steady tide of emigration” flowing from the North into the South, with to Texas with its booming export economy in cattle, wool, and hides. The *Chicago Inter-Ocean* in 1880 reported on Black migration from Alabama to Kansas, explaining that an ongoing

²⁵ *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1883. (See Appendix 1).

²⁶ *New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1882.

three-year exodus was draining labor from the South because of better opportunities in the West, where “They were gradually acquiring farms of their own, paying for the land in installments.” The *New Orleans Democrat* urged British shipping interests to send the enormous *Great Eastern* to visit the port in 1880, exclaiming that immigrants would find New Orleans her natural American port because the developing West was “bound [to New Orleans] with links of steel.”

From demographic articles enumerating draft animals and the flow of people that were common in the earlier part of the century newspaper writers and editors moved to more analytical and developmental work. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1870 analyzed the Franco-Prussian war as a positive good for America in an article titled “The Effects of Immigration” in which the writer noted that European mismanagement of its population was the arrival of “human freight, and they are discharged upon our wharves – such invoices of muscle, heart, brain, industry, perseverance and ambition to succeed as were never crowded into a country before.” The Vicksburg *Daily Commercial* in 1880 extolled the plans of Thomas Hughes and his English associates in establishing the utopian settlement of Rugby in East Tennessee, but warned that if “the enterprise is to be governed on charity principles, it will fail; if on the co-operative plan it will not work unless clear-headed, practical business men are at the head of the control.” (The *Commercial* was right, and the original gentlemen-farmers had mostly moved away by 1878). In these and other stories the writers of the later nineteenth century showed an eclecticism and an interest that outstripped narrow coverage expectations of immigration.

Content analysis found that newspaper articles in the period corresponded to modern practices in creating a coded interpretation of immigrants for readers.²⁷ The statistical correlation of these stereotypes was strong and the evidence shows sophisticated use of created immigrant identity to move

²⁷ For current scholarship examples of coded news interpretations of immigrants, see Hajo Boomgarden, “News and Ethnic Prejudice: Threat framing of immigrants and its impact on anti-immigration sentiments,” (paper presented at the International Mass Communication Association, 2006); Daphna Lemish, “The whore and the other: Israeli images of female immigrants from the former U.S.S.R.,” *Gender and Society* 14 (2000), 333-349.

stories forward by counting on the reader's expectations to fill in information that otherwise would have needed significant news explanation. This coding could be seen in terminology, such as the use of "Celestial" or "Mongolian" for Chinese, or in behavioral traits – the "lager-drinking" German is an example. In the 2012-13 study, some sixty percent of news stories fell into the "simple" category, and within that category news stories were overwhelmingly shown to support wariness of negative immigrant behaviors (e.g. murder, theft, carriers of disease). When coverage was "complex," on the other hand, the story intention generally either warned of overall immigration effects (voting strength or patterns, resistance to temperance movements) or supported calm about immigrants (e.g. Germans holding ethnic festivals, the Chinese not forming a permanent culture within the U.S., and the like).

Use of immigrant identifiers in news stories offers a glimpse of gradual societal change in acceptance of particular immigrant groups. While the nature of coverage of immigrant groups remained relatively stable during the period, new immigrant groups represented new threats. Irish immigrants predominated in negative stories, especially criminal stories, until the 1880s. They were then supplanted by Germans as the immigrant group with threatening behaviors. The Germans, in turn, were followed by consistent warning that Italians and Chinese were a new threat. In 1852, the Irish comprised 42 percent of negative immigrant references in the *Times*; by 1882, they represented only 11 percent of the category. Negative references to Italians and Chinese combined to form 28 percent of such coverage, while German negative stereotyping, at 32 percent, was falling from a high of nearly 50 percent in the previous decade. Newspapers echoed but also led the national turn from treating immigration as a positive good to a dubious and even threatening force that needed stringent controls in the late nineteenth century. Framing of immigrants as sometimes hapless, often-dangerous, participants in the civil environment was a constant in coverage, though the particular group of immigrants exhibiting such behavior gradually changed. The violent Irishman of the earliest coverage faded, to be replaced by German and, later, by Italian offenders characterized by their frequent use of knives and "razors"

against one another. These stereotypes were resorted to as a form of journalistic shorthand. By using such a trope, the audience was invited to fill in expected details, saving the writer the space or time that would have been needed to make criminal incidents individual.

The 2015 data extended and affirmed this trend in reporting immigrant identity, as the following charts show.

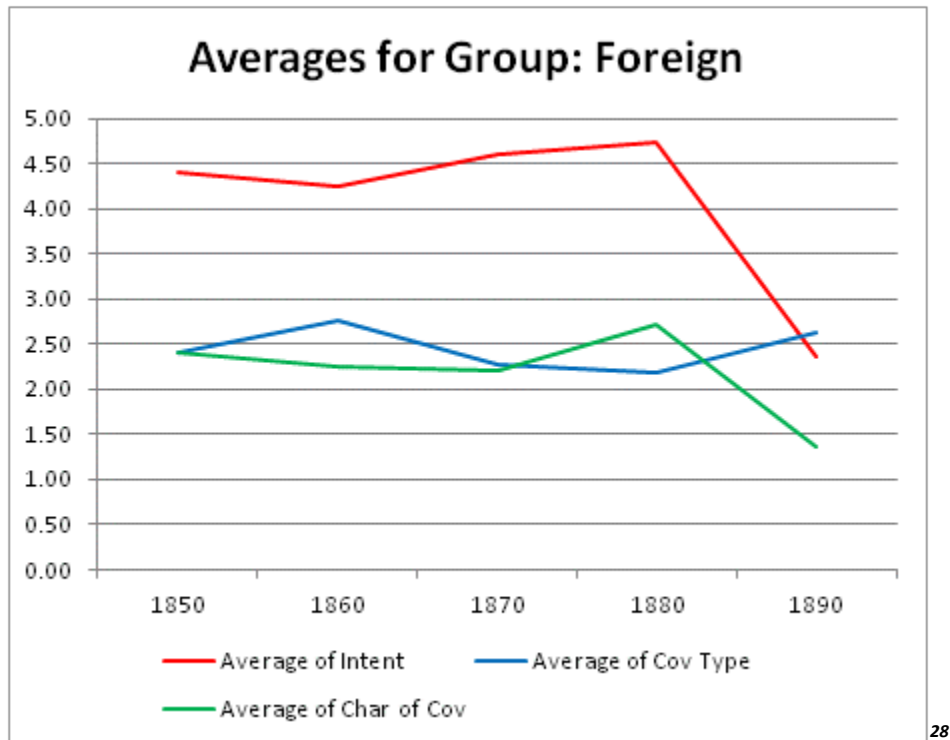


Figure 3: Intent, Character and Type - Foreign Immigrants

²⁸ This and the following charts are based on averages of variables from the 2015 content analysis. As complexity of stories increases (blue), general favorability toward immigrants declines (red) and positive versus negativity of content (green) skews toward negativity.

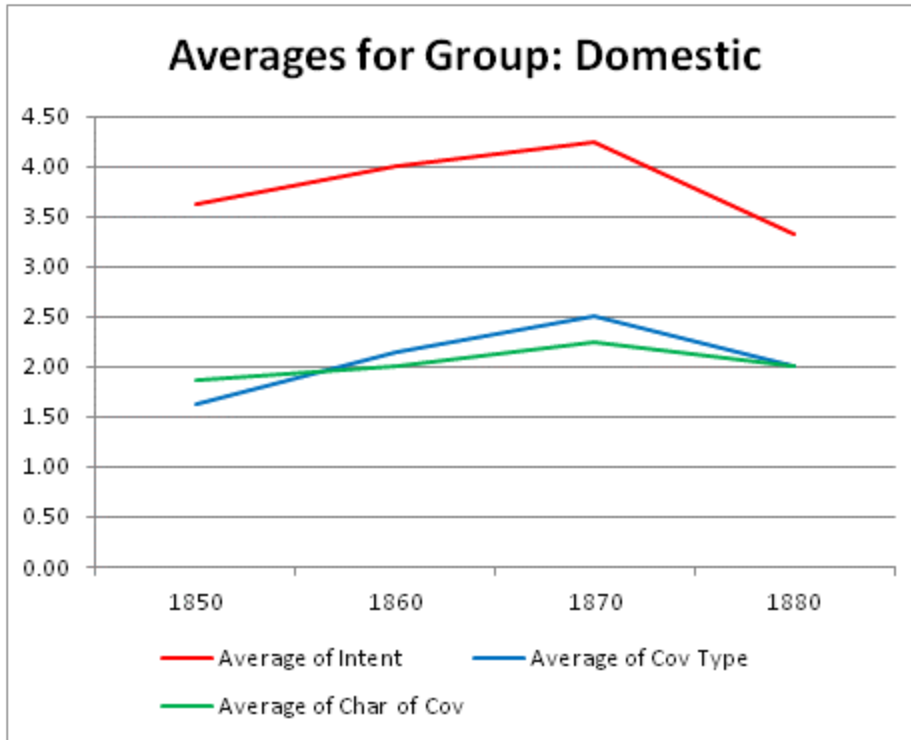


Figure 4: Intent, Character and Type - Domestic Emigrants

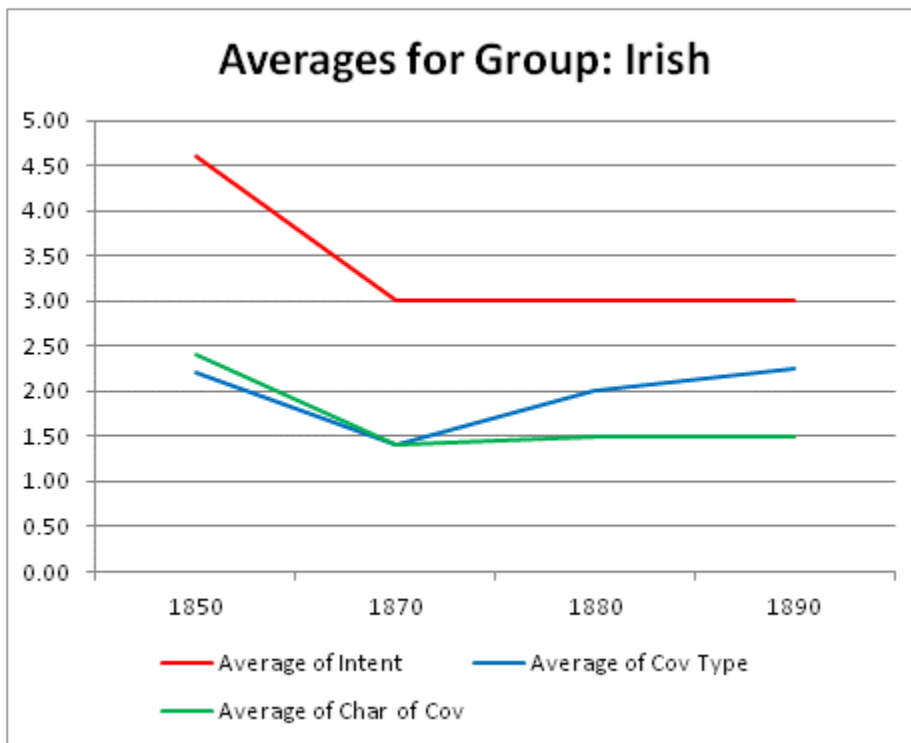


Figure 5: Intent, Character and Type - Irish

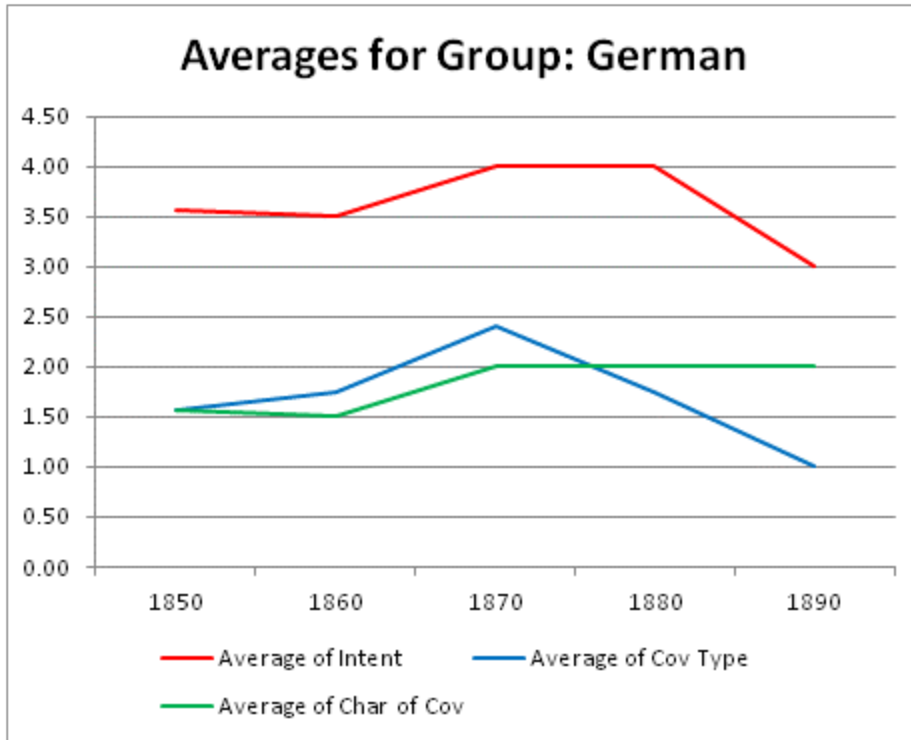


Figure 6: Intent, Character and Type - German

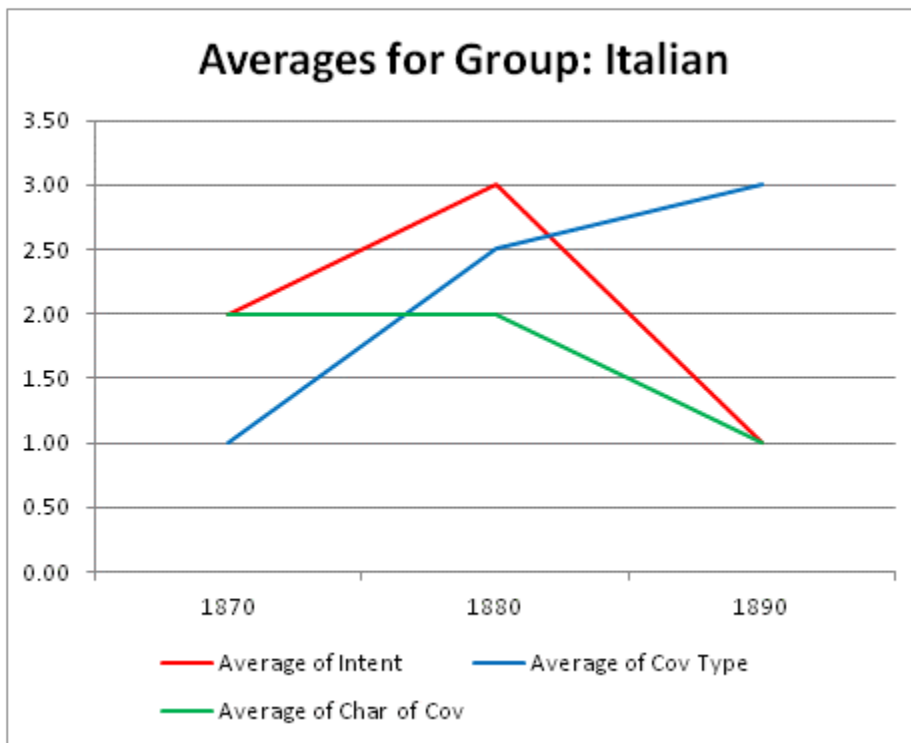


Figure 7: Intent, Character and Type - Italian

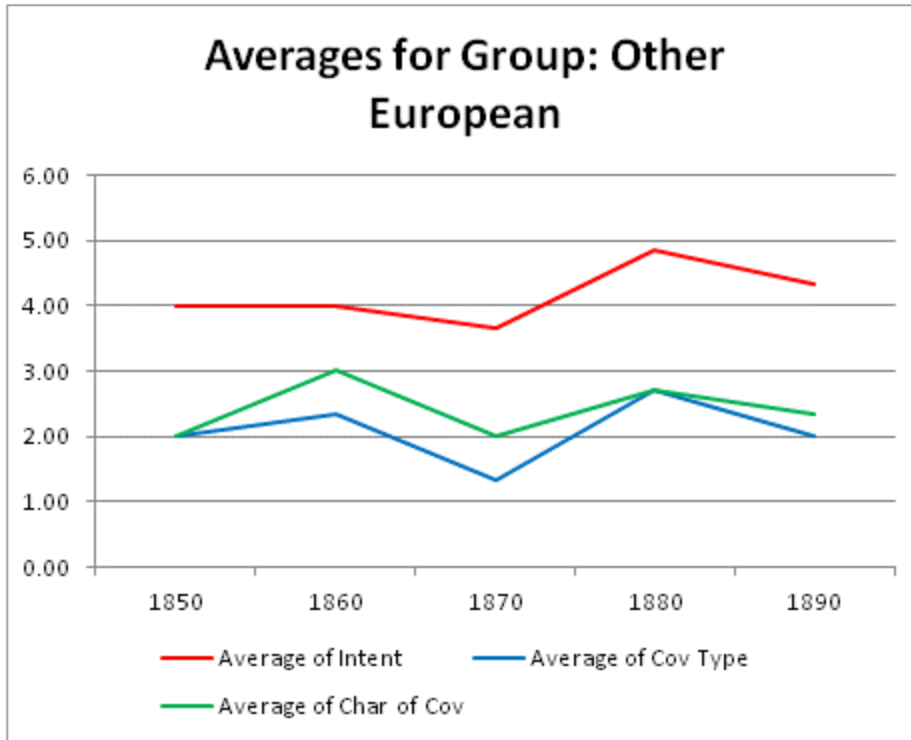


Figure 8: Intent, Character and Type - Other European

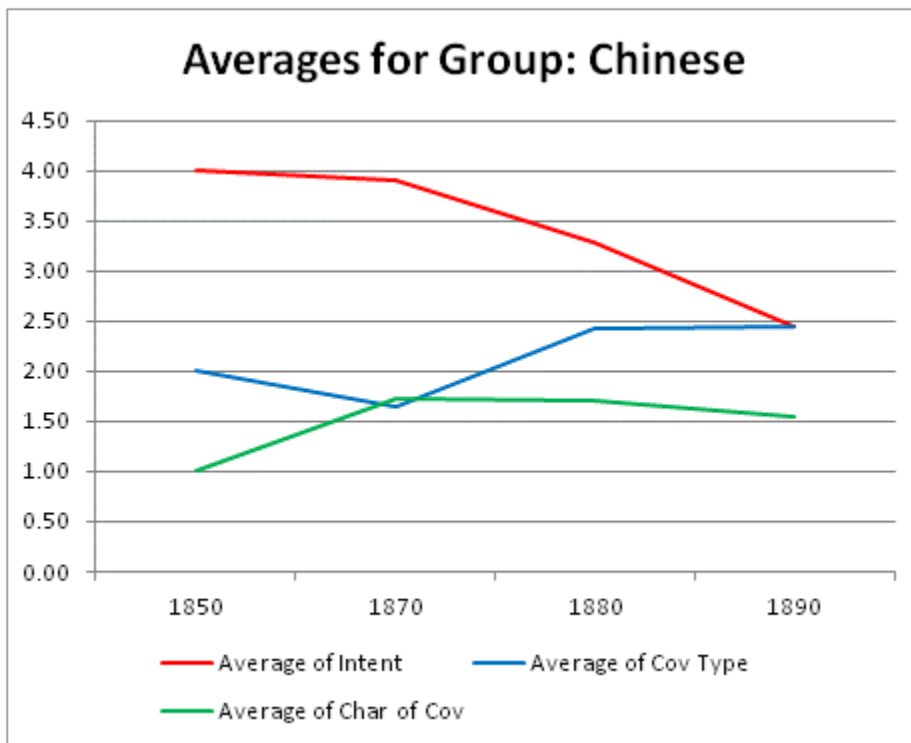


Figure 9: Intent, Character and Type - Chinese

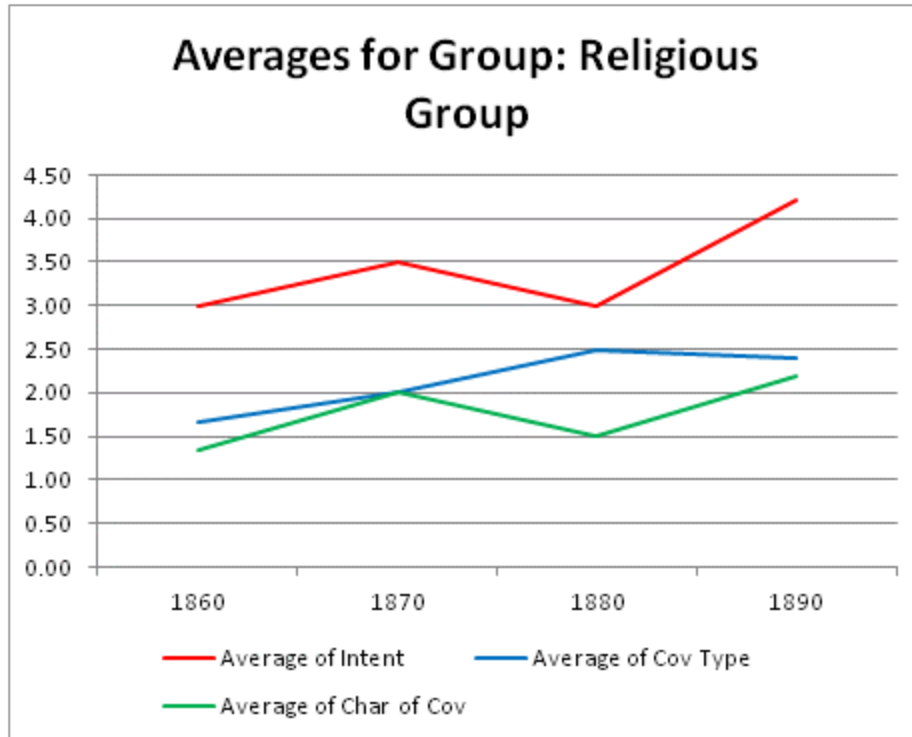


Figure 10: Intent, Character and Type - Religious Groups

Some surprising anomalies crop up in later decades, as when the *Times* virtually defended Chinese presence in the United States in 1882. It could be expected that negative stereotyping of Chinese immigrants would be natural in the year that the Exclusionary Act was passed by Congress, but the *Times* had taken a strong editorial stance against the bill itself based on opposition to the Democratic Irish leaders of the exclusionary movement. While the paper was not pro-Chinese immigrant, its reporters and editors made strenuous efforts to pin responsibility for the act onto corrupt Democratic politicians. In doing so, the newspaper issued several stories that called action against the Chinese into question and presented a balanced view of Chinese presence in the U.S.

The 1880s shift away from immigration incidents (such as a crime or a single event) and toward continuing stories of significant interest to readers presages the twentieth century interest in the feature story and the second- and third-day continuing coverage that readers expect. Immigrant coverage themes developed along several lines, but by far the most prominent was the campaign to

characterize immigration from Europe as the dumping of “pauper labor” on American shores. In a remarkable *Times* story in February, 1884, borrowed from a Pennsylvania paper, immigrants themselves are held harmless but the practice of dumping them in the United States is excoriated.

During the past few years the influx of what has generally been termed “the pauper labor of Europe” has been steady. While the Chinese were uppermost in the thoughts of those who were interested in the question, this so-called pauper labor escaped general attention. But as the Chinese have gone the champions of home industry, or number one, have cast their eyes over the continent in search of other evils in need of eradication, and finally their glances have rested on “the pauper labor of Europe.” It is alleged to be a scourge which should not be tolerated by any well-regulated government.²⁹

Immigrants themselves in the story were represented as harmless to America, industrious, thrifty, and willing to make ends meet by taking in boarders and cooking for groups of workers. The text reflects amusement over unpronounceable names and discusses the often-cruel ways that storekeepers or mine bosses invented joke names for them that the immigrants unknowingly adopted. While rarely attacking immigrants, the stories developed rapidly as a nationalistic response to perceptions of unfair treatment. The theme of pauper labor soon became one of particular nations, especially England, using unchecked immigration to America as a convenient mechanism for getting rid of not only the poor, but other undesirables including criminals and mentally defective people. By 1887, the *Times* was running headlines that warned about England “assisting” wholesale immigration to America: “Not a Home for Paupers: England’s Mendicants Must Stay Away.”³⁰ Others were jumping on the immigrant exclusion bandwagon, as well. The *Dallas Morning News* urged expulsion of Chinese students still lingering in North America, and the *Omaha Morning World-Herald* trumpeted creation of a new political party whose aims included restriction of “pauper immigration.” This turn to the negative in the later

²⁹ *New York Times*, “Not a Dangerous Class: Hungarians and Poles who work in the coal mines,” Feb. 18, 1884.

³⁰ *New York Times*, June 11, 1887.

nineteenth century seems to show a borrowing of nativist issues and the forming of public opinion against immigrant populations.³¹

These extended stories appeared at a time when newspapers and journals were proliferating in number, and when existing newspapers were increasing the number of pages they printed for each issue. Historian Alan Trachtenberg has claimed that the media became part of the “incorporation” of America by creating audiences who no longer needed direct experience of the world, but who could become consumers of images and sentiments produced by others. The textual march of the news business toward more thematic, extended, and interpretive stories and away from the short episodic coverage of earlier decades supports this concept, though it is not clear whether consumers of the news felt more involved or less involved in daily life due to the print information they received.³²

The extensive introduction of halftone illustrations in the late 1880s led mass communications in a new and sensationalistic direction at the turn of the century. This turn to sensationalism occurred with the rise of a new flash press, epitomized by the *New York Journal*, one that gained much of its news sustainability through extravagant spending, relentless self-promotion, and “scoops” involving misdeeds of public people or governmental stumbles. The rise of this Yellow Journalism, which can be dated from 1896, used the fruits of late-century developments including the rise of the human interest story, the introduction of pictorial dailies meant to be read by increasingly available public lamplight in the evening, and the formalization of new techniques such as the “interview” story and the celebrity feature.³³ By the turn of the century, the mechanically reproduced image represented a fundamental new era in journalism, but one that depended for its foundation on the gradual, fundamental changes that had occurred during the latter half of the nineteenth century (see Appendix I for an example of a

³¹ *Dallas Morning News*, September 16, 1890; *Omaha Morning World-Herald*, Sept. 5, 1890.

³² Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 122.

³³ Trachtenberg, 124-5; W. Joseph Campbell, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 3.

half-tone-intensive immigration story). These changes can be observed in the coverage of a single issue, immigration, but were undoubtedly equally represented in other story categories.

Coverage of the larger subject of immigration reveals a significant increase in complexity of coverage and concern for the citizenship implications of the massive, unchecked influx of foreigners to America. Here, newspapers appointed themselves to explain what immigration meant and how its effects should be interpreted. From Medill's early efforts to soothe readers on the subject of Chinese immigration, to national and even international coverage of Seward's 1862 call for more European immigrants, to the *New York Times* late-century characterization of the need for stringent exclusionary laws and regulations for those who might be diseased, politically dangerous, or unwanted based on race, news organizations created an intermediary, explanatory, position between government and the man in the street. From this platform they instructed a response to a significant national issue by localizing, simplifying, and formalizing the issue, framing ideas in a way that invited individuals to feel at least informed if not empowered. Moving from the informality of letter-writers (who might want to solve slavery by importing Chinese workers) and miscellaneous columns of items borrowed from here and there, newspapers hardened up a particular style and narrative method that cloaked coverage of the issue with authority – the authority of news.

This pattern of development shows that the changes that followed the creation of information networks and fast communication were not just changes of newspaper volume, circulation increases. Newspapers were not simply adding a megaphone to their existing processes or patterns of coverage – instead, they were fundamentally changing the nature of news and what constituted news. The changes in communication were fundamental to reporting, presentation, and framing of events in a manner that made the newspaper a national civic representative. It became a source with the authority to interpret to major issues, and it was a player that safeguarded its position with increasing professionalism that

would lead, gradually, to the quest for objectivity that marked the core of media growth in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 6 SHIFTING THE POWER CENTER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In 1892 there was a seismic shift in American newsgathering and distribution. The center of the national Associated Press was moved from New York to Chicago. The move was made against the will of Eastern news magnates, and was possible not so much by the burgeoning size of the Western city (soon to become America's second-largest by population) as it was by the increasingly skillful use of electric communication networks. Enterprising Western journalists saw that the news appetites of their communities were under-served by an Eastern press feed dominated by New York. These entrepreneurial news leaders also recognized that the highly complex and increasingly stable telegraphic networks displaced existing powers and authority within newsmaking, allowing for a daring gamble that the physical location of a news center did not matter so much as its access to telegraph nodes. They saw that news was a commodity, and that its power came from the far-flung sources on the network rather than from any concentration in a particular metropolis. The nature of an associated press created a community of news that was non-partisan, immediate, and lean, because partisan opinion would not apply and could not be sold to the diverse community of editors and publishers who made up the association. The takeover of the Associated Press by a brash group of outsiders represents the ultimate maturing of the nineteenth century newspaper as a networked and robust modernizing entity.

Victor Lawson was a key person in this Western success, and he represented the innovative and restless type of manager or editor that had been created in this news evolution. Lawson understood the networked environment as both a newsgathering and a business tool. The actions that Lawson took as Executive Director of the Western Associated Press showed professional use of virtuality – that is, that the power of news associations was network dependent rather than location-specific – and a keen appreciation of news as a commodity that had universal value. News leaders headed by Lawson orchestrated the creation of a new, national, Associated Press and disfranchised Eastern power brokers who had dominated for-profit sale of the news. The effort replaced them with a coalition dedicated to

distribution of factual and opinion-free news developed by reporters and editors who hewed to a national standard. This assumption of the national news function could only have happened with the maturing of professional newsgathering, the awareness of public interest and citizenship value to the process of newsmaking, and fluency in high-speed distribution of the news commodity. The story of that extended event is told primarily from outgoing correspondence, telegrams, and minutes of meetings copied in bound books marked “Associated Press” and held in the Victor Lawson papers at Chicago’s Newberry Library. In these records Lawson refers to the event as a “war” and adopts the intimate term “Our friends, the enemy” to describe the incumbent opposition. The phrase demonstrates that leaders of the national press knew they were inextricably interconnected even when factions were battling for control of news flow.¹

In the early 1870s Lawson was the co-publisher of an ethnic newspaper, the *Skandinavian*, which flourished in the years immediately following the Civil War. With John Anderson, Lawson put out a profitable weekly whose circulation depended largely on the U.S. Mail and whose composing and printing was performed on the third floor and in the basement of a Chicago office at 123 Fifth Avenue.²

¹ The records of the events are largely contained in Midwest MS Lawson, Series 1, boxes 2 and 3, Newberry Library, Chicago, and are in the form of glue-bound volumes of carbon flimsies originally assembled into indexed account books. While pages are individually numbered, original assembly of the documents put some out of date sequence. The phrase “our friends, the enemy” occurs in several communications in 1893, e.g. Victor Lawson to General Felix Agmus, proprietor Baltimore *American*, Oct. 7, 1893, Box 2, Folder 5, p. 463. Historians who have used the Lawson records and who have written about news associations, telegraphic networking, and the rise of competition to the New York Associated Press include Menahem Blondheim, *News Over the Wires* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1994), Richard R. John, *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010), and most recently Johathan Silberstein-Loeb, *The International Distribution of News, the Associated Press, Press Association, and Reuters, 1848-1947* (New York: Cambridge University, 2014). Of these, Blondheim largely writes of developments until the late 1880s with some following attention to politics and their relationship to telegraphic monopoly, while John appears most interested in the evolution and emergence of the telephone rather than the development of news associations. Silberstein-Loeb gives a good overview of the events of the final organization of the Associated Press and in many cases uses the same records that are cited here, but is interested in more general detail and the overall shaping of news services than in what the events of the time show for news transmission in the United States. A contemporary of the events themselves, Melville Stone, wrote extensively about them in the early nineteenth century, but Stone’s agenda was partly hagiographic, aggrandized the Associated Press and its creators, and his accounts blurred many of the working details and conflicts of the time.

² The building was later re-addressed as 15 North Wells Street when the city rationalized and unified its street names and numbers in the early twentieth century.

The building also housed the composing room for the *Morning Courier* newspaper, an unaffiliated printing business that made its money by buying early morning copies of other Chicago papers, plagiarizing their lead articles, and issuing a later-morning edition of the copied stories. Into this gregarious mix came a new paper begun by Melville Elijah Stone, Percy Meggie, and William L. Daugherty. The three men invested \$6,000 in 1875 to start the *Chicago Daily News*. Their first typesetter and compositor, Andrew Blainey Adair, later reminisced that the operation leased a 21-by-21 foot space at the back of the fourth floor of the Fifth Avenue venue, and that the newspaper's major possessions were 150 pounds of minion-sized type, another 150 pounds of agate-sized type, and fifteen fonts of display head letters. Printing was done on a drum cylinder press, one side at a time, and the papers were hand-folded and sent out in bundles of ten or twenty in the hands of newsboys whose cry was "The daily nous, wan cent."³

The fledgling *Daily News* faced stiff competition in the rapidly growing young city. The great Chicago Fire of 1871 had leveled more than buildings – it fundamentally reshuffled business structures and the pathways of property and wealth on the shores of Lake Michigan, giving established firms a chance to reinvent themselves and giving upstarts, such as the proprietors of the *Daily News*, a chance to insert themselves into new city patterns. Competition was fierce in the rebuilding city, however, and while Chicago remained an optimistic place to do business, the international economic Panic of 1873 also led to a financial downturn that lasted until 1879 and further challenged emerging businesses

³ Andrew Blainey Adair, "50 Years in the Composing Room," Field Enterprises Collection, Series 1: Chicago Daily News, Subseries 4: Publications, Box 29, Folder 365, Newberry Library, Chicago. Chicago changed its street numbers in 1909 and further changed addresses in the Loop district in 1911, <http://chicagohistory.org/research/resources/architecture> (accessed April 14, 2015). No particular font is listed for the type owned by the *Daily News*, but agate type is roughly ¼ inch tall and minion, at 7 points, is larger. For comments on the *Morning Courier* see Melville E. Stone, "Property in News," Midwest Stone MS, Box 7, Series 3, Works, Folder 512, Newberry Library, Chicago. The drum cylinder press was an advanced technology compared to lever-action platen presses such as the Washington or Columbian press, but was still a single-sheet press; Richard Gabriel Rummonds, *Nineteenth Century Printing Presses and the Iron Handpress* (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2004), pp. 165-167; Stone sold his interest in the *Daily News* to Lawson in 1888.

including the *Daily News*.⁴ In difficulty, and running the *Daily News* at a \$300 per week deficit, the three original investors in the new newspaper reached out for business and financial assistance by making new investor Victor Lawson business manager for the operation in 1876.

Lawson was dynamic and energetic. Recipients of Victor Lawson's business letters could envision something much grander than an operation of 300 pounds of type and a back-attic office. Writing to a Pittsburg company that sought a discount to place a large advertisement in the paper, Lawson was adamant that only the prices printed on the newspaper's rate card would apply. "These are the rates we charge any and all advertisers. We do not cut them. Our circulation is now 40,000 daily." In reality, the newspaper had just passed 20,000 in circulation, and had broken even for the first time only in late 1877, but Lawson had found a taste for doing business battle on behalf of his newspapers. In response to one advertiser who demanded a discount he pugnaciously responded "The insolence of your proposition can only be compared with its stupidity. Did it ever occur to you that possibly we made our own rates?" he wrote, concluding that any further communications "will receive no attention."⁵ Lawson could be nurturing, though, when it came to increasing business. In a May letter to news agents in Ottawa, Illinois, Lawson promised generous support for a "combination" paper. Combinations were papers that were partially printed, leaving open pages for a local publication to add their own printed copy. "We always share the expense of starting the 'Combination' by furnishing a liberal number of

⁴ The "Great Fire" destroyed more than 17,000 buildings in an area of 2,200 acres. Among the gutted buildings was the *Chicago Tribune's* two year old, four story "fireproof" headquarters located at Dearborn and Michigan avenues. Lloyd Wendt, *Chicago Tribune: The Rise of a Great American Newspaper*, 1979, Rand McNally, Chicago, 318-321. . Newspapers available in Chicago in 1871 included the *Daily Tribune*, *Evening Journal*, *Times*, *Evening Post*, *Weekly Journal*, *Republican*, and *Working Man's Advocate*, as well as several German-language papers. <http://www.newberry.org/sites/default/files/researchguide-attachments/Newspapers.pdf> (accessed March 24, 2015). The Panic of 1873 was the first international industrial recession and, in the U.S., was exacerbated by government decisions to revert to gold as the monetary standard, substantially reducing the money supply. David Blanke, "Panic of 1873," <http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/beyond-the-textbook/24579> (accessed March 24, 2015). Melville E. Stone owned an iron foundry that burned in the fire; like some other entrepreneurs, the loss led him to change his business, Stone MSS, Box 8, Series 3, Newberry Library.

⁵ Adair, "50 Years," describes the unprofitable operations; Lawson to Reed, Bergstresser, Feb 25, 1878; Lawson to E.N. Freshman & Porra, March 21, 1878, underlining original, Lawson Papers, "Outgoing Correspondence, Personal, 1878-1898," Series 1, Box 8, Folder 18, Newberry Library, Chicago.

papers free,” wrote Lawson, continuing to gently explain that the Ottawa request exceeded the numbers normally furnished by 5,000 copies. “But we shall be willing to supply you with that number free and you may use them in a week or a month, as you prefer,” he wrote, adding that the *Daily News* would happily supply up to 5,000 handbills to advertise the new combination. The offer was generous, as papers supplied to clients normally brought in 66⅔ cents per 100, a promotional sacrifice of nearly \$35.⁶

In June, 1878, Lawson leveraged his assets even more to buy the *News* its future. The *Chicago Post* had gone bankrupt and ceased publication in May, and Lawson’s business connections had brought him word of a bargain. In a letter prominently marked “Confidential” and written in haste to “Friend Johnson,” he urgently requested a loan in order to buy up the assets of the failed newspaper in order to incorporate them into the *Daily News*. At stake was the property of the newspaper, which Lawson considered to be mostly trash. “We get a press like other 4 cylinder and some materials and fixtures which can cost probably realize, all told, a \$5,000 outlay.” Far more valuable, though, was the *Post*’s franchise for the Western Associated Press. Lawson set the creditors’ likely price of the franchise at \$10,000, but its real value was inestimable. By 1879, an Associated Press franchise in Chicago was worth more than \$100,000, but Lawson did not cite a specific dollar value in his letter. “The possession . . . would be of great value inas much [sic] as we should then have the whole field of evening journalism secured against any future competition and thence have only one paper – the *Journal* – to divide business with. It is a golden opportunity beyond a doubt,” he wrote in haste. Lawson also outlined the *Daily News*’s business situation, claiming the paper was making more than \$1,550 a month and expected to see a profit of \$15,000 over the next twelve months, but noting that constantly adding to the paper’s circulation was an expensive proposition. Friend Johnson or another financier must have come through,

⁶Lawson to Streeter & Black, May 3, 1878, Lawson MS.

though there is no correspondence directly showing it, because the *Post* press franchise and its Hoe rotary press were added to the *Daily News* operation.⁷

The evening news position was critical to the *Daily News* expanding its regional circulation. While later twentieth century papers increasingly viewed the evening paper as a weak competitor in a time of radio and television news cycles, in the nineteenth century evening city papers had unique advantages. Not only were they able to incorporate news and prices from the morning business cycle and overnight information from police and city departments, but the timing of their printing made them the freshest news available for suburban and rural consumers dependent on a news drop from the railways. Morning news from the city would be stale evening news by the time it reached remote readers. Lawson, in a letter to a news distributor in Bourbon, Illinois, noted that the physical timetable of distribution meant that trains leaving the city late in the afternoon could not reach far-flung distribution points until late at night. "I think the best plan would be to send the 5 o'clock edition which reaches Bourbon at 3.25 a.m., thus enabling you to get later news and get it the first thing in the morning. This is the only thing we can do owing to the way the trains run," he wrote.⁸

More crucial to the *Daily News*, though, was inclusion its franchise with the Associated Press, which instantly made the paper a member of the Western Associated Press (WAP). That regional organization, which had been conceived of in 1862 at an Indianapolis convention of Western newspaper editors, was created as a collective foil to the expense and high-handedness of the original New York Associated Press (NYAP). The NYAP had its beginnings in the 1840s with the formation of cartels to consolidate shipping and commercial news gathered far off the coast and brought to the metropolis by fast schooner. This focus on gaining early market prices from European sources morphed during the

⁷ Lawson to Friend Johnson, June 18, 1878, Lawson MS, Box 8, Folder 18; Menahem Blondheim *News Over the Wires*, cites the \$100,000 value for Chicago and a \$500,000 price for a New York City AP franchise, basing the estimate on a letter from William Henry Smith, AP general manager.

⁸ Lawson MS, Box 22, Folder 8, letter to A.N. Johnson, January 12, 1878[1879]

Mexican War of 1846 into an association of four New York newspapers for the gathering and dissemination of wartime news.

On Oct. 12, 1856, seven news organizations joined forces to create the “General News Association of the City of New York” that merged the Harbor News Association in with existing Telegraphic associations, with: “All property in boats, furniture, or other articles belonging to either of the other associations being hereby transferred and conveyed to this Association, and all rules and regulations of the former associations being annulled.” The organizing members included Hale and Gerard Hallock, of the *Journal of Commerce*, J. and E. Brooks, of *The Express*, James Gordon Bennett, of *The Herald*, Moses S. Beach, of *The Sun*, Horace Greeley and McElrath, of *The Tribune*, J.W. Webb, of the *Courier and Inquirer*, and Raymond Wesley and Company, of *The Times*. The covenant they signed restricted any new members of the association to those that could be agreed upon unanimously by the existing members, “. . . but the news obtained may be sold to other parties, for the general benefit of the Association, on the vote of six-sevenths of its members.” Growing up with the development of the telegraph itself, explained in an earlier chapter, the NYAP was able to negotiate favorable press rates and to regulate news sent over the wires.⁹

The telegraph itself was special enough to deserve capitalization whenever it was mentioned in the 1856 document, setting aside “Telegraphic” news from all other news. Any member getting regular telegraph dispatches from a correspondent, or receiving special news over the telegraph, was required

⁹ “General News Association of the City of New York” organizing papers, copy, in Stone MS, Box 8, Folder 529, “New York Associated Press Contracts 1856-1865,” Newberry Library, Chicago; officers of the new association included Gerard Hallock, president, Moses S. Beach, secretary, and George H. Andrews and Frederick Hudson, executive committee. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought?*, 748. One of the earliest beneficiaries of telegraph-pooled national communication was the Seneca Falls convention of July, 1848, labeled the first international convention on women’s rights, 846. Richard R. John, *Network Nation*, 77-78, explains that the NYAP did not immediately have much power to negotiate telegraph rights because of the pressure against it of F.O.J. Smith, who owned the Morse patents for telegraph lines throughout New England and controlled the flow of information from the eventual trans-Atlantic telegraph hub in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Menachem Blondheim, *News over the Wires*, also promotes the 1848 founding date and details formation of the AP and its telegraph association with the American company minutely, 110-117. Melville Stone, “News Gathering,” *The Editor and Publisher and the Journalist* 48 (No. 46), April 22, 1916, p. 1419-1420, claims the NYAP was founded “in parallel” with the Harbor News Association in 1848, though the contract document citing 1849 for the latter group was in his possession.

to inform the other members and allow them to use the same material. Any member could order a special report to be sent to them by telegraph, but, again, they needed to offer that report to all the other members. News reports from “conventions, political meetings, trials, executions, public dinners, sporting intelligence,” and state legislative sessions were exceptions to the sharing rules. News coming from Washington, D.C., and from New York’s state capital at Albany, could also remain exclusive to an individual paper without violating the association’s agreement.¹⁰

The NYAP initially benefited from a close alliance with one major telegraph firm, the American Telegraph Company., and its links to Atlantic Coast news. The city’s importance as a commercial and governmental hub, meanwhile, along with its early telegraph connections, made it the natural metropolis from which news would flow to the nation. As telegraph consolidation occurred and Western Union dominance of the network arose, however, the NYAP found itself at odds with newspapers in the interior of the country which did not have franchises with the exclusive association. These newspapers, restricted from obtaining the comparatively inexpensive wire news budgets sent by the NYAP and yet connected to the telegraphic grid, clamored for a government takeover of the telegraph system or, at the very least, a cap to be set on telegraph rates. The National Telegraph Act of 1866 proved a half-measure in this direction though it did allow for government use of the wires to transmit commercial information, primarily weather, at advantageous rates. When Congress investigated the telegraph business in 1879 as a result of complaints of a monopoly, it incidentally revealed the hidden power of the Associated Press. The press monopoly seemed to outweigh the dangers of a telegraph communication monopoly, especially when it was revealed in testimony that newspapers were forbidden to criticize the NYAP or to mention its business methods publicly.

¹⁰ “General News Association,” Stone MS, articles XIII – XV.

This Congressional revelation gave power to a movement that had already been developing competing press associations, epitomized by the Western Associated Press.¹¹ Facing the cumulative power of the NYAP after the close of the Civil War, editors of papers remote from the metropolis organized their own regional wire services. Western editors and publishers representing some 33 newspapers organized themselves in Indianapolis in 1862 to discuss their mutual need for negotiating power, and for more and better telegraphic news at lower prices. While formal incorporation would not come until 1866, when WAP governing documents were filed in Michigan, an 1864 joint agreement between a committee representing this Western Associated Press and the NYAP shows the burden the papers of the interior faced. To create and receive their own 2,000 word report each day directly from New York would cost “fifty per cent. more and supply a less quantity of news than was received under the old arrangement; while to increase the quantity to the point desired by some of the papers, would run the price greatly beyond the means of a portion of the publishers.” The temporary answer to this cost challenge was to establish two classes of telegraphic news feed. In an eight-point contract, the Cincinnati-based committee recommended a 2,000 word general news report from Buffalo for papers that did not want to pay more. For those willing to spend more, a special news report, also of 2,000 words, would be available directly from New York City. The circular noted that if eleven papers chose the new report, their cost would be \$182 more per month, compared to an individual cost of some \$520 for “special” reports of the same number of words “transmitted a much shorter distance.” The Western men hired T.W. Knox, listed as an “experienced correspondent,” to assemble the special report, with his \$2,500 salary to be divided between the papers receiving the report. Two classes of news were

¹¹ John, *Network Nation*, National Telegraph Act 78-79; government use, 123; Jay Gould was able to take over Western Union twice in stock raids, and cleverly used public acts meant to create competition to do just the reverse. Once such was the Congressional act which attempted to produce competitors to Western Union by requiring railroads to run their own private telegraph systems. By acquiring insolvent railroads and then creating a sham competitor telegraph network Gould was able to force Western Union stock prices down. At one point in the late nineteenth century, Gould owned more railroads and a bigger share of the national telegraph network than any other person, appeared about to own a trans-Atlantic cable, and was rumored to be within one newspaper of owning a majority of the NYAP, putting the financier in a unique position to control national information, 184. Blondheim, *News over the Wires*, 160-163.

established in this way, dividing papers in the hinterland into greater and lesser entities based on ability to pay for decisions made about the news network itself.¹²

The Western Associated Press (WAP) was formally incorporated in 1866 by editors who had gained new skills and proved their own independent abilities during the Civil War and who found subscriptions to New York-based news both expensive and irrelevant to their local subscribers. The daily NYAP telegraphic report would contain a worldwide listing of shipwrecks of New York-based vessels, or city commercial news about local warehouse conditions that was useless to Ohio River valley farmers. Internal squabbles between the NYAP member newspapers also distracted from providing a vibrant national report. A battle between the New York *Herald* and other NYAP members over the *Herald's* attempt to achieve a news monopoly occupied the press association in a fight over who would fund the gathering and transmission of news over the newly-completed Atlantic Cable. The conflict was sidestepped by the entrepreneurial businessman Daniel H. Craig, who realized that the post-war rise of the monopolistic Western Union telegraphic power weakened the NYAP and made it vulnerable to competition. Craig had been an early and creative competitor in distribution of European news arriving in America by ship. His enterprise and his regular beating of the efforts of domestic reporters by innovative methods including the use of carrier pigeons, private yachts, chartered commercial vessels, and finesse of early telegraphic rules that came perilously close to criminality, led the NYAP to hire him as its general agent (business manager). Within a few years, Craig saw opportunity and set out to create a parallel and unaffiliated national commercial news service that would bypass the NYAP. The NYAP believed it held a monopoly on news; Craig knew the news itself was valueless without a monopoly on transmission. To participate in this new network, launched in 1866, NYAP member papers would need to violate a contract clause that forbade them to subscribe to any other news service, but militant Western editors facing a 25 percent cost increase for NYAP services were ready to do more than that. Murat

¹² "Remarks by the Committee," confidential printed circular, Stone MS, Box 8, Folder 529.

Halstead, of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, and Horace White, of the *Chicago Tribune*, were delegated by the Western association members to go to New York to try to negotiate a new arrangement; when the NYAP refused to budge, the Western Associated Press fully embraced Craig's new telegraphic news feed. Historian Peter R. Knights explained in a deeply focused 1965 monograph that the first "press war" showed WAP leaders that they held significant power to influence the news, but the two competing news services overtaxed the ability of telegraph lines to carry their extensive reports. The Western Union Company imposed a truce, and within a year, the NYAP made concessions to the Western customers, Craig was out of the picture, and Western papers were back on the overall AP news feed. The press war of 1866 had empowered owners and editors of papers on the periphery to think of themselves as the equals of those in the metropolis of New York City, though, and a lengthy on-again, off-again "war" between Eastern and Western news interests was launched.¹³

Just as membership in the NYAP had been crucial for major players in the East, a seat at the table in the Western Associated Press was critical for the business success of any newspaper operation with plans to be a major player in the West, where Chicago dominated as a network hub. Regional news associations collected the news of their area and forwarded it to the NYAP; in making concessions to the WAP, the overall Associated Press ceded business control of its membership to the regional associations. This made the regionals the interface to the required telegraphic subscription to a national cable news feed. Papers still relying on the postal exchange system, with its antebellum practices, found themselves rendered irrelevant in the face of the speed and content carried by telegraph. At the same time, obtaining membership in any of the associations was difficult and subject to strict competitive limits. In the national Associated Press, in the later nineteenth century, a four-fifths vote was required to allow a new membership. A new supplicant for membership might be voted down based on proximity to a

¹³ Blondheim, *News over the Wires*, 145-149; Peter R. Knights, "The Press Association War of 1866-1867," *Journalism Monographs* 6 (December, 1967), covers Craig's career and the press war in detail as well as the rise of the WAP (22-24); for the overloading of the wires, 50-51..

competitor (often within a 50 mile limit, though 150 miles was considered too close in some cases) or for being in competition within either the morning or evening publication cycle.¹⁴

Victor Lawson's business acumen and relentless energy no doubt helped WAP members select Lawson to head the Executive Committee in 1881 at a time when the Western Associated Press was again flexing its muscle against what it saw as Eastern domination. For the next three years Lawson would work closely with fellow committee members Charles W. Knapp, of the St. Louis *Republic*, and Frederick Driscoll (always referred to as "Colonel"), of the Saint Paul *Pioneer-Press*, making decisions and steering strategy for the 57-member WAP. Correspondence shows him focusing on tactical operating matters for the regional press association and on larger strategic, national, concerns of the newsgatherers. Minutes of the January, 1892, meeting of the executive committee demonstrate a heavy focus on the telegraph and on what seem to be isolated local matters. Driscoll, Knapp, and Lawson discussed a new franchise for an unnamed paper in Devil's Lake, North Dakota, valuing it at \$1,500, and agreed to establish an afternoon "pony" report for the Rockford, Illinois, *Gazette* at the rate of \$25 per month over and above normal telegraph tolls, with an extra \$8 per month for an early morning report.¹⁵

The committee members also had to deal with apparent espionage or flagrant violation of the Western association's rules. An independent telegraph office in Kansas City, located across the street from the Kansas City *Star*, may have been staffed by an unscrupulous operator, or the operator may have allowed the *Star's* reporters to loiter and overhear the news. Western editors worried that the association's reports that they paid for were ending up in the wrong hands. A petition to the WAP demanded that the AP office be moved to the main Western Union telegraph company facility and that

¹⁴ Blondheim, *News over the Wires*, 149-151. Of just over 600 original members in the AP as of 1900, nearly half had protest rights to prevent unwanted competitors, Margaret A. Blanchard, "The Associated Press Antitrust Suit: A Philosophical Clash over Ownership of First Amendment Rights" *The Business History Review* 61, 1 (Spring, 1987), p. 44 and 44n3, http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/stable/3115774?pq-origsite=summon&seq=2#page_scan_tab_contents (accessed March 26, 2015).

¹⁵ Victor Lawson Papers, Newberry, Series 1, Box 2, Folder 4, "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Western Associated Press, Jan. 4, 5, 6, 1892 Chicago." For membership statement regarding the WAP see Lawson to H. Mends, Reuter's, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 255. A "pony" was a shortened version of the normal press association news feed, generally about 1,500 words as opposed to the more than 3,000 words sent to larger papers.

a Western Union operator take over the business of the *Star* office. The committeemen instructed William Henry Smith, general manager, who managed both the NYAP and the WAP as well as their joint business operation, to “secure the absolute separation of the lines and operating offices of the Associated Press from any other Press Association, as far as may be necessary to prevent the report of this Association from being overheard, or surreptitiously obtained.”¹⁶

The Western Associated Press had already attempted once to attack the New York AP in a news war that commenced in 1882. The attempt was engendered through Western Union’s warm relationship with the WAP and was led by William Henry Smith, whose business control of telegraphic communication for newspapers was extensive and dated back to the early Morse franchise battles along the East Coast. Coupled with the investments and political infighting of investor Jay Gould, the attempt by the WAP took the NYAP by surprise, but the latter association was strong enough and took action timely enough to create a news “peace” that would hold through the rest of the decade. During this time New York leaders again sank into a form of self-interested myopia, while many of the original spirits who had guided the NYAP to its monopolistic dominance left their newspaper roles, died, or moved on to other business. Relatively unremarked in the wake of the peace agreement was the rise of a new news service, the United Press (unrelated to the later United Press International of the twentieth century).¹⁷

William L. Laffan was the management force behind the United Press. Originally an art critic and then a railroad investor, Laffan earned his way into Charles A. Dana’s good graces (enemies said by naming a locomotive after Dana) and became manager of the New York *Sun*. Cited by a gossip columnist as a man who was roundly disliked for his “Yankee Shrewdness,” Laffan at the *Sun* took over an informal special news service that had been started in 1882 by managing editor Chester Lord and others at the paper and soon converted it into a strong, national news source. His motive was not lofty – Laffan

¹⁶ Lawson Papers, Series 1, Box 2, Folder 4, “Minutes,” p. 4, 5.

¹⁷ Blondheim, *News over the Wires*, 166.

wanted the cash being generated by the special service to go into his *Sun* accounts, rather than to the men who founded the news special service. Dana would serve as the titular United Press president, with Laffan as vice president and its true head, Walter P. Phillips as its general manager, and John R. Walsh as treasurer.¹⁸

As the New York Associated Press looked inwardly, believing in its inherent dominance of news based on its position at the commercial center of the United States, it tended to either ignore discontent on the periphery or to use heavy-handed tactics by which remote news organizations paid the fare for information that could only have been useful in New York City and environs. Meanwhile, the tendrils of the cheaper United Press network, also New York-centric, crept further into the Eastern Seaboard, the near West, and the South to papers not affiliated with the NYAP. Leaders of the Western Associated Press, keenly interested in their own wellbeing, resented the high-handed actions of the New Yorkers and chose to take independent action. The Westerners first overt act took place quietly in 1891 when they incorporated a dummy corporation in Illinois on August 20 under the name of The Associated Press. The purpose of the corporation, which would later prove to be a legal weakness, was to: “Buy, gather and accumulate information and news; to vend, supply, distribute and publish the same; to purchase, erect, lease, operate and sell telegraph and telephone lines and other means of transmitting news; to publish periodicals; to make and deal in periodicals and other goods, wares and merchandise.”¹⁹

The corporation was capitalized with \$30,000 for three hundred shares of stock, 98 of them in the hands of Azel F. Hatch, the brother-in-law of the WAP’s attorney, and one each in the names of Vernon S. Barnes (Walsh’s private secretary) and Charles Huntoon, presumed by Lawson to be an

¹⁸ “The Looker On,” *Brooklyn Life* 11 (May 25, 1895), no. 273, p. 6, https://books.google.com/books?id=b6FEAQAAAMAJ&pg=PA68&lpg=PA68&dq=Laffan+united+press&source=bl&ots=YFCnwtvLnf&sig=DF0wpVwv0hQ09k__NvOimdy9o&hl=en&sa=X&ei=WBU5VdmXEoidNs3dgaAH&ved=0CCQ_Q6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Laffan%20united%20press&f=false (accessed April 23, 2015).

¹⁹ Lawson to Knapp, September 29, 1892, Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 173. The incorporation was filed in Book 43 of Corporations, page 209, Cook County.

employee of either Walsh or Scott. The three men met and elected themselves “directors” to fulfil the legal requirements set by Illinois, and then quietly disappeared from the public record. “Of course the purpose is to have the stock properly transferred to the newspapers who enter the Association, and the board of directors of course will resign and make way for a bona fide board,” wrote Lawson to Knapp the next autumn.²⁰

With its business backed up by a safe haven for continuity, the WAP executive committeemen could enter into the tough steps they expected to take to remove NYAP dominance over their telegraphic news reporting. The joint operating contract with the New York players was due to expire on January 1, 1893. Lawson and his companions were careful to make friendly noises within the joint executive committee of the two wire services, but were also firm with the NYAP when it began showing signs of preparing, itself, to thwart any upcoming split. When the NYAP began calling itself “The” Associated Press and attempted to develop its own news agents in the Midwest, for instance, Lawson reminded the joint executive committee of contract language specifically prohibiting the New Yorkers from doing either the naming or the news sourcing within WAP territory.²¹

The Westerners also had to take care of the ticklish matter of William Henry Smith, business agent for both the New York Associated Press and for the Western Associated Press. Smith was gregarious, a great networker, and considered one of the most powerful news executives in America when it came to press associations and the telegraph. Historian Blondheim cites a *San Francisco Post* reference to Smith as a person who could make executives crawl, make men and women famous, and one who “has got the attentive ear of more men and women than any other man in the country.”²²

Referred to by the WAP executive directors as “William Henry,” Smith was both indispensable and a tremendous weak point when it came to their intentions regarding the NYAP. Smith knew

²⁰ Lawson to Knapp, p. 174.

²¹ Lawson to Gard J. Howland, Oct. 12, 1892, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 217.

²² *San Francisco Post*, undated, cited in Blondheim, *News over the Wires*, p. 1.

everybody, which meant that he also knew exactly where to retail the intimate business the WAP was attempting to undertake. An independent operator by nature, he was famously fickle in his business methods, and also touchy about his personal honor. Only Smith had the contacts and the bonhomie to carry out the next step that Lawson, Knapp, and Driscoll intended – sewing up a quiet joint agreement with the Southern Associated Press. Fortunately for Lawson et al, Smith’s weakness for flattery and eye for the main chance gave them leverage. Despite strict rules to the contrary in his AP contracts, Smith, at the formation of the United Press, had accepted a gift of several thousand dollars’ worth of UP stock. Neither the gift nor more than \$6,000 in dividends from the stock had been declared to either the joint AP executive committee or the WAP executive committee. Smith’s transgression was brought forward in WAP minutes as a committee assignment to force the agent to disgorge both the stock and the dividend cash to the Western Associated Press as required in the WAP bylaws.²³

The move to hook and silence Smith nearly blew up in the WAP executive directors’ face. Smith had just resigned as Treasurer of the joint operation after twenty-one years holding both titles, and was removed also as Treasurer of the WAP. A telegram about the removal and Smith’s shock at the WAP insistence regarding his UP stock made the New York board suspicious. Solomon S. Carvalho, manager of the *New York World*, was all for organizing a book audit of Smith’s NYAP accounts, which would have revealed the Western situation. Lawson covered quickly, wiring William L. Davis personally at the *New York World* to explain that WAP dealings with Smith were simply a matter of the Western board selecting a new treasurer and ordering an expert accountant to check Smith’s records as part of the handoff. “That has now happily been bridged over for the time being at least,” Lawson wrote Smith in a letter marked “confidential” and which closed with the hope that none of the activity would affect Smith’s “personal relations” with the association or its members. Lawson also complimented Smith on

²³ “Minutes of WAP BOARD Jan 4, 5, 6, 1892,” Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 24, No. 25

his acquisition of the *Indianapolis News*, where the business agent apparently intended to install his son, Delavan, as editorial manager. Smith had joined the ranks of Western AP publishers.²⁴

There still remained a personal confrontation before Smith was finally disempowered by the Western men. William Henry, stung at the WAP Board decision, had failed to follow through on initial promises to hand over the stock and the dividends. Lawson and Nixon, taking advantage of attendance at the joint executive board meeting in early May in New York, set up a meeting the following Monday at Smith's invitation. "Mr. Smith began by claiming that the resolution of the Executive Committee under which Mr. Nixon and I were acting could only be construed as a reflection on his honor, etc., etc.," Lawson wrote. Smith had consulted privately with senior journalists, including Whitelaw Reid and Henry Watterson, all of whom told him that he was being insulted. "He finally announced that he was still willing to help the Western Associated Press in the great undertaking opening before it, but that respect must be paid to his feelings, and people mustn't persist in stepping on his corns, etc., etc., etc." Lawson continued, obviously unimpressed with William Henry's honor. Nixon and Lawson palliated Smith by explaining that there was nothing new or dishonoring in the WAP demand; Smith had previously said that he would turn in his U.P. stock on several occasions, and now the Board was simply insisting that he do so. "There was no demand in the resolution other than a demand that he should complete a performance which he himself had voluntarily assumed." Smith then told the surprised men that he no longer had the stock shares, that he had turned them back to the United Press and could not produce them. Smith was willing to pay the dividend money back into the WAP treasury, but only on his own terms and in a way that would leave no record. The meeting took a significant amount of time, and the two WAP representatives were put to the test to both conciliate Smith to keep him working with them, and to be firm enough with him to prevent him from throwing his weight around. Smith, chastened, was

²⁴ Lawson to William Henry Smith, May 20, 1892, Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 4, pp. 85-87.

a far different creature than William Henry Smith, power broker, and the WAP wanted to keep him chastened.²⁵

Creation of Exclusive Link between Western AP and Southern AP

At the end of the meeting, Smith showed the WAP men a letter signed by a large committee of Southern papers. The letter showed that Southern editors were ready to let Smith negotiate for their interests when it came to press associations. "The impression made on my mind at the time was that Mr. Smith really has the inside track with these southern people, and that so long as he pretends to work with us on the general plan outlined, and so long as we have confidence enough in his representations to work with him, we shall be compelled to credit him with good faith and act accordingly," wrote Lawson. The general plan included bringing the Southern Associated Press into alignment with the WAP both in order to cut off New York news domination of the South and to limit the territorial claims of the United Press. If the U.P. could be limited to a territory stretching from Virginia north, and from the Eastern seacoast to the Allegheny Mountains, then the Western service could dominate the rapidly developing portion of the nation all the way to the Pacific. There was even hope of turning the New York State Associated Press and the New England Associated Press into allies, further extending WAP control. It was an alliance with the Southern organization that was most important, though, and Smith held the keys to that alliance. In the same letter, Lawson revealed that the intention of the WAP was to sever relations with the NYAP, but to keep the matter quiet. The two executive committees would conduct negotiations with one another "touching relations after January next," but the negotiations would be delayed and protracted. National political conventions would occupy June, and then the vacation excuse, "which is always of universal application," would take up

²⁵ Lawson to Driscoll, May 20, 1892, Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 88-91. Richard A. Schwarzlose gives Smith much more credit for empowering the WAP than is apparent in Lawson's business papers, and cites Smith's characterization of the new AP leadership as "aggressive gentlemen [who] indulged in much calumny." Smith retired in 1893 after completing the WAP's business. Schwarzlose, *The Nation's Newsbrokers, Volume 2: The Rush to Institution, from 1865 to 1920* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1990), p. 165.

July, August, and September. "In October we can begin the work of negotiation and it will then be easy enough to bridge the thing along until the first of January, when, in the language of William Henry Smith, 'two or three sharp orders (on his part) will settle the whole thing,'" Lawson assured. Regardless of formal meeting minutes or polite business correspondence indicating hopes for a continued relationship, by May of 1892 the Western plan to separate was extensively detailed, at least in the minds of the three-man Executive Committee.²⁶

Lawson had laid out the general plan in an un-dated memorandum titled "Re-organization of the W.A.P." The document would serve as the basis of later formal letters to key individuals, but in its initial form it shows Lawson's orderly mind at work, totting up possible advantages and disadvantages in a numbered list. The reorganization held no place for the New York Associated Press, but was predicated on consolidating power and reducing expenses in dealing with the continuing presence of the United Press. Freeing WAP members from the "extra assessment" they were paying to the U.P. for daily news bulletins was crucial; in many cases where the U.P. network overlay the WAP's Western Union service, newspapers were essentially paying bribes to keep their "territory" exclusive by receiving redundant news reports. Under a single header, Lawson listed the germs of four separate plans. The first was "combination with 3 other associations," while the second was "renewed alliance with New York" and the third was listed simply as "Independent." The fourth option, which would absorb a year's worth of time and frustration, was "Combination with U.P." Under the latter option Lawson and his Executive Committee friends intended activation of the new, national, Associated Press corporation, which would then run the Western Associated Press until that entity's charter expired at the end of 1893. The corporate action, then, was predicated on two business expirations that would happen roughly one year apart: the end of the ten-year "peace" operating agreement with the NYAP, followed by the end of the

²⁶ Lawson to Driscoll, May 20, 1892, p. 91.

WAP and its absorption of its business by the new entity, The Associated Press [referred to subsequently as the AP].²⁷

Under the heading “Advantages” Lawson listed eight points. While the first was establishment of mutual financial interest, and another was the annual saving of \$42,000 currently paid to the NYAP, the key points were contained in items numbered 2, 3, and 6. The first two of those points were that the W.A.P would secure absolute possession of its own news territory from Eastern influences, and that the NAP would have the undisputed right (Lawson underlined the word) to gather and sell news everywhere except in the U.P.’s diminished Eastern territory. A bolder vision was revealed in point number six: “Combination makes practicable ENFORCEMENT [sic] of rules and regulations for government of the business of news gathering and distribution throughout the country.” Compared to that lofty vision the two disadvantages Lawson listed seemed minor – one was that the daily NAP telegraphic report might be received undeservedly by some U.P. networked papers still operating in the old WAP territory, and the other was that the U.P. would get a stock boost from the deal that would make a few men rich, while any financial gain for the WAP would be diluted among many participants.

Work to cement the relationship with the Southern Associated Press continued throughout mid-1892. Covering Virginia, Eastern Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, the Southern association was larger and more powerful than either the New York AP or the New England AP. It reached territory that demanded more telegraphic news than it generated, but it was a territory that could be lucrative to its own members if they might remove tolls they paid to both the New York AP and the United Press. Southern publishers were also interested in fixing a number of network weaknesses in addition to saving money. Lines leading to New Orleans had been disrupted by imposition of a low-speed cutoff to serve Vicksburg, where rural operators not only slowed the news flow but also interrupted it repeatedly with business and personal messages. In a case

²⁷ “Re-organization of the W.A.P.”, undated memorandum filed in 1892 papers, Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 238.

that eventually had to be arbitrated, the Crescent City publications claimed they only received half the news they paid for. New Orleans' discomfiture over the arrangement was falling on deaf ears, and several other city newspapers had similar complaints. Meanwhile the financially troubled Memphis *Appeal-Avalanche* perplexed the news network. Its proprietor W.A. Collier retained personal bargaining power within news associations and conducted constant warfare against New York interests, which made him useful to the WAP, but the insolvent newspaper was years behind on paying its assessments for news received, an unaddressed situation that weakened enforcement power against other papers that might try to dodge payment. Several of the Southern editors were also prominent voices in the national dialogue concerning journalism, among them Adolph S. Ochs, who served as secretary for the Southern association. Ochs, publisher of the Chattanooga *Times*, would purchase the *New York Times* in 1896; as secretary, he largely represented the Southern Associated Press in its negotiations.²⁸

The WAP work came to fruition on October 18, 1892, when a secret "Memorandum of Agreement with the Southern Associated Press" was entered into the WAP records. Under the agreement the U.P. agreed to give up all revenue it might have made from the Southern territory, and claims to that territory, in exchange for an annual \$20,000 payment for Eastern news delivered to the South. The Western association was represented by "William Penn Nixon [president], Victor F. Lawson, Frederick Driscoll and Charles W. Knapp, representing themselves and their associates, who propose to organize The National Associated Press." This was the tipping point that Lawson had been engineering.²⁹

²⁸ For New Orleans telegraph complaints, "Southern Associated Press arbitration request," undated, Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 5, p. 620. The insolvent *Appeal-Avalanche* was acquired by the Memphis *Commercial* in 1895; "About the Memphis Appeal," *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* National Endowment for the Humanities, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024448/> (accessed April 23, 2015). Ochs acquired the *New York Times* in 1890 for \$75,000, <http://www.nytc.com/who-we-are/culture/our-history/> (accessed April 23, 2015).

²⁹ "Memorandum of Agreement with the Southern Associated Press," Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 232. Gardiner G. Howland was general manager of the *Herald*, Carvalho manager of Pulitzer's *World*, and Jones was the son of George Jones, co-founder of the *New York Times* with Henry J. Raymond. Nixon was publisher of the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*.

Lawson explained that the situation was fluid and that nothing firm had been negotiated for the WAP at the time, but that the New York Associated Press was in trouble. "The New York Associated Press is doing a number of things that are improper, and, in fact, that are in violation of their obligations toward our Association under the contract," Lawson wrote in a confidential letter to A. J. Aikens, of the Milwaukee *Evening Wisconsin*, sent just before the Southern AP agreement. Without specifically listing the NYAP infractions, he noted that management of the NYAP seemed to have fallen into the hands of "Mr. Howland, representing the New York *Herald*, Mr. Carvalho, representing the New York *World*, and Mr. Jones of the *Times*," implying that their management was corrupt. Carvalho and Howland, who was chairman of the Joint Executive Committee of the two associations, he wrote, seemed to be trying to bluff the WAP in negotiations. The Westerners in turn were demanding at least equality with the NYAP in any future business, but Lawson hinted that might be a moot issue: "The New York Association is making a great mistake. In fact, we believe it is approaching disintegration," he stated, adding that the NYAP was losing its leading members (including Whitelaw Reid) and had lost control of its monopoly on European news from the Reuter/Havas/Wolff news service. Without Western subscribers, the NYAP would not be able to renew the crucial European contract. With all of these weaknesses showing, the WAP instructed its president, Nixon, to serve formal notice to the NYAP that the contract between the two associations would end on January 1, 1863. In reassuring Aikens, Lawson revealed a lot of information but did not show his full hand. The NYAP was not "disintegrating" so much as being taken apart by the WAP.³⁰

On October 20 and 21 letters, overnight messages, and telegrams were sent to up to 40 leading members of the Western Associated Press urging them to come to an October 22 conference to be held in a parlor at Chicago's Grand Pacific Hotel. Many of the messages ended with the words "do not fail, on any account, to be there." With the Southern agreement in hand, Lawson was eager to gain approval of

³⁰ Lawson to Aikens, Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 220.

a compact to cement the business of the U.P. and the WAP. In the hotel parlor and remotely, by proxy or by telegraph, thirty-four “first-class” members of the association voted to join such a compact. Lawson and the executive committee could move into negotiations to finalize the U.P. relationship and to end that with the NYAP knowing that the WAP membership was united behind their leadership.³¹

The New York leadership was not sitting still for this, however. Gaining information of the Southern negotiations and other maneuvers through personal connections and an article in *The Editor, the Publisher, and the Journalist*, NYAP leadership fought back. Its first attempts to establish its own news bureaus in the Western territory and to style itself as “The” Associated Press had been brushed back. Howland, chairman of the NYAP joint committee, attempted to schedule a meeting timed to disrupt the WAP’s October gathering, but was rebuffed in this by Lawson. Meanwhile, news came from William Henry Smith that the New York men were trying to claim that the WAP owed the NYAP a significant amount of money related to proceeds from the Pacific Coast and Overland wire service. More than that, the New Yorkers (no doubt seeing an inside job) were attempting to remove Smith from his position as General Manager. In a stern letter to Howland, Lawson reminded the NYAP that Smith could be removed from the NYAP rolls, but could not be fired from the joint business operation without a decision by the Joint Executive Committee. Writing for the WAP, Lawson said: “The Committee is now prepared to consider our relations with the New York Associated Press. Precedent however, to such an action, we must have a satisfactory adjustment of the relations of the past ten years.” Struggling to move nimbly against the well-planned onslaught, the NYAP found itself instead bogged down by safeguards originally intended to protect its own dominant position. Lawson and the WAP had studied the rules carefully during the interlude since the press wars of 1866, and knew how to maneuver now that their network and territory were secure. He rejected an NYAP offer to meet in Chicago or to have

³¹ Lawson to Carter H. Harrison, Oct. 21, 1892, as an example of “Do not fail” language, Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 236; Lawson to H. Mends, p. 255, lists 57 total members of the WAP, 37 of them “first-class papers of leading position and financial strength,” seven German language papers, and 13 “of the minor class.”

any special executive sent from New York to engage in a business dialogue. Lawson turned the clumsy NYAP claim of money owed to it into a pretext to cut off discussion: "Nothing can be done ... until we have received and considered the claim," he declared.³²

As the Chicago leaders were holding off NYAP overtures, Lawson wrote a lengthy evaluation of the situation to Reuter's news agent in the United States. The Western intention was to sidestep both NYAP and U.P. attempts to monopolize the European news by establishing their own separate contract with Reuter, which would connect them to French and German news agencies as well. Under the opening "The Associated Press situation is now as follows," Lawson explained that the Western Associated Press would not renew its New York contract.

The New York Associated Press is not the strong ally it was ten years ago, either as to its membership or its personnel. It has lost the Sun, and will lose The Tribune after the presidential election. Mr. Dana and Mr. Reid alone – among the New York people – understand the Associated Press business . . . this leaves the management in the hands of the present Executive Committee – the Herald, World and Times. The Times, since the death of Mr. Jones, is administered by his son and son-in-law, neither of whom has had any personal experience. This leaves the administration to the Herald and World, neither of whose proprietors live in this country. They must act through their employes [sic] . . . the newspapers of the Western Associated Press and the country at large cannot afford, and will not longer continue, to be placed at the manifest disadvantage of such an unequal and hampering partnership.³³

Lawson's frank outline shows what must have been a long-formulated argument against the NYAP. Had there ever been a true news association "peace?" Whether one had existed or not, the next section of his extensive letter to Mends showed a matter-of-fact declaration of what he intended the news association of the future to be. Once the new Associated Press was in place, consolidated with the United Press, they would make a truly national news service. The consolidated association would operate in all fifty states and territories; its contracts would forbid receiving or delivering news to any "paper, person, or corporation not in friendly alliance with it." The old NYAP would be cut off while the

³² Lawson to Howland, Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 4, pp. 251-253.

³³ Lawson to H. Mends, Lawson MS, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 255.

new consolidated service would flourish, using the United Press's inexpensive leased telegraph lines to give superior service even within areas the NYAP could still reach. "The result will be that ... we shall shut out the New York Associated Press from collecting or selling news in thirty-nine of the fifty states and territories," he declared. The victors in this bloodless contract fight would be magnanimous to their defeated opponents because room was being made for most of them to join the new Associated Press. "They will therefore suffer no loss in the receipt of news, but they will cease to mismanage the press business of this country, to the great damage of the American press." Lawson's anger at the New York dominance dissipated when he envisioned the future for his new organization. Making news flow over a telegraphic network based around Chicago rather than New York was not the aim. With Reuter's service aligned with the newly emerging Associated Press, world news dominance might be at hand. "Such a contract will literally place a complete news girdle around the earth," Lawson wrote, urging early action and signing himself Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Western Associated Press and member of the Joint Executive Committee governing the New York Associated Press and the Western Associated Press "under present contract."³⁴

Lawson must have shared this vision with others, at least with Knapp and Driscoll, but the specificity of his goal in his description to Knapp does not occur in other communications of 1892. Later writing, particularly by Melville Stone in the 1920s, created a different and less-specific history of the emergence of the Associated Press, one that labeled its actions as a spontaneous revolution. In a speech titled "The Revolution of 1893," Stone recounted that brave Midwestern newspapers reacted to bad men in New York, one a banker, another a telegraph operator, and a third a New York newspaper business manager, who conspired against freedom of the press. "These men were responsible to no one and were bent only on money making. The menace was obvious . . . the public was subject to any sort of misinformation." The demands of citizenship meant that it was up to the Western men to save

³⁴ Lawson to H. Wendt, pp. 257-258.

Americans from losing the “fundamentals of our form of government” by placing new-gathering into the hands of a “purely cooperative organization.” In likening the acts of 1893 to the American Revolution of 1776, Stone clearly went overboard – a news combination, while of the utmost importance to the Press, was hardly a matter of intense public interest. Stone’s linkage of the news network to citizenship responsibilities, however, shows that by the end of this study’s period news professionals viewed themselves as an indispensable part of the national structure, one working in a network that was not aligned to a particular party or political outcome.³⁵

The ousting of the New York Associated Press was no overnight revolution and was instead a series of carefully planned chess moves, no matter what Stone remembered later. With notice served to the NYAP that the WAP would sever relations at the start of 1893, Lawson next moved to safeguard the emerging Associated Press and to cement the consolidation of the United Press. Now he wrote to influential editors and publishers to flesh out his earlier memorandum of advantages and disadvantages with more financial detail. The new structure would eliminate \$250,000 to \$260,000 in U.P. costs currently being paid by WAP members; combined with the \$42,000 in savings from eliminating the NYAP annual charge and the \$20,000 expected from the Southern association, minus certain expenses, the new association could show a \$260,000 to \$300,000 financial advantage, he wrote. This financial coup was expected to remove some of the sting of the inevitable centralization of power that the Associated Press would create. Lawson recognized that the collection of strong, independent minds that ran the nation’s top newspapers was unlikely to welcome a change in its broadly democratic way of doing association business. The so-called “Detroit town meeting” style used by the WAP to manage itself in the past revealed weakness, though. He feared that the U.P. was already maneuvering to sow dissension in the ranks of the newly forming AP. In a telegram to the San Francisco Chronicle publisher Michael

³⁵ “The Revolution of 1893,” Midwest Stone MS, Box 7, folder 514, Newberry Library, Chicago. Stone served as General Manager of the AP from its formation for more than 20 years, but in his later career as a public speaker and writer he seems to have created a hagiographic image of his beloved AP.

Henry de Young sent at the end of October Lawson warned that old cronies from the New York Associated Press, now working on the United Press side, were known to be trying to split the *Chronicle* off from the WAP. "I understand they have failed with McLean of Cincinnati Inquirer, and do not believe they will succeed with Chicago Tribune . . . if all our members remain true to the Western Associated Press I am very confident New York will have to meet our reasonable terms," Lawson wired, warning that a split in the WAP ranks would mean "long and expensive warfare" with the rival news service. The motif of warfare would appear more and more in correspondence and meeting minutes of the WAP, and Lawson's hopes regarding the Chicago *Tribune* would be dashed – that paper did defect, and its individual decision to go it alone left the Chicago men with the insecurity of a potential enemy and spy in their midst over the crucial year to come and afterward in the protracted struggle between the AP and the UP.³⁶

Recognition that other newspapers might be able to do to the AP, what the AP was doing to its fellow associations, shows that the power of the telegraphic network was clearly understood; meanwhile, the provision of news itself as a commodity demonstrates that the emerging AP management was not focused only on getting the story, but on professional direction of news flow. This is a highly advanced concept requiring a very high level of organization. Newspaper editors and publishers may have remained idiosyncratic, colorful, violent, and fallible – M.H. de Young, for instance, was called a newspaper blackmailer and had been shot and wounded on the street in 1884 by sugar company owner Adolph Spreckels over personal attacks made in the pages of the *San Francisco Chronicle* -- but what their association was achieving transcended personalities and political alliances. The meticulous planning that the Executive Committee had put in place led to telegraphic network steps being taken as 1892 wound to a close. In November the Western association cut off news feeds from areas in the South, particularly Memphis, to the New York Associated Press. The New

³⁶ Lawson letter to M.H. de Young, Oct. 26, 1892; Lawson telegram to M.H. de Young, October 31, 1892, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 262, 276.

Orleans papers, previously mentioned, created a clamor that nearly undid the Southern AP by demanding to join the Western AP – this was resolved by Lawson getting a joint contract for the United Press to serve New Orleans, relieving the Southern representatives of fear that the WAP was making incursions onto their turf. At the same time some Northern papers contacted Lawson urgently to note that a new competitor seemed to be making inroads in WAP territory. This was the Press News Association, later known as the Telegraphic News Company. Lawson revealed to the worried editors that the “new” competitor was actually an arm of the WAP/AP venture. The Press News Association was created to provide newspapers that could not join the Associated Press with a limited news feed, one that would keep them happy and put them on a telegraphic news network without allowing them to compete with the member papers. Lawson explained that in Chicago his two evening competitors, the *Mail* and the *Dispatch*, were subscribers to the service. “It is foolish to think in this day of cheap telegraphy we can absolutely stifle competition. The next best thing, and the practical thing, is to in a large degree control it,” he wrote, asking his recipients to keep the information confidential.³⁷

By mid-November, the Western Associated Press leaders were testing to see if the New York press leadership would simply accept the new association structure as a *fait accompli*, or whether they needed to prepare for a press “war.” William Henry Smith, angry at being fired by the NYAP, clamored for the WAP to cut off its telegraphic news feed to the NYAP. Lawson telegraphed Smith to say that such an action would be “impracticable” both physically (because of extensive telegraph interconnection with NYAP member papers) and legally – the WAP contract wouldn’t expire until January and the WAP didn’t want to give the NYAP any legal handholds to use against them. At the same time the WAP was in direct contact with James Gordon Bennett, warning the *Herald* publisher to desist in trying to organize a NYAP

³⁷ Lawson to Howland, undated telegram, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 278; Lawson to Albert J. Barr, November 2, 1892, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 287; “Michael H. de Young, Unfinished History,” *Shaping San Francisco’s Digital Archive@Foundsf*, http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=Michael_De_Young (accessed April 22, 2015); DeYoung’s brother, Charles, was murdered in the *Chronicle* office in 1880 by the son of a political opponent; Robert F. Karolevitz, *Newspapering in the Old West* (Seattle: Superior Publishing, 1965), p. 48.

Western news service. Describing the business moves made by the WAP, Lawson invited Bennett to accept the inevitable and have individual New York City papers join the new AP. "When you cease to get western news from our papers as an association you will not be allowed to get it from the individual members and clients of our Association," Lawson write Bennett. In separate messages to WAP members, Lawson stated that it was time for WAP representatives to go to New York for a face-to-face meeting with the enemy. The executive committee members needed to see how close their opponents might be to folding. A meeting of the nine original stockholders in the new Associated Press would be held in Chicago on November 29, and the next day a meeting of the old WAP was scheduled to be held in Detroit, and each of those meetings needed to take up the business of ending the NYAP.³⁸

In the end, it was William L. Laffan and the United Press who capitalized on the situation created by the WAP. On December sixth William Henry Smith notified Lawson that Laffan had issued UP franchises to the *Herald*, the *World*, and the *Tribune*, and that a meeting of the NYAP was scheduled for the next day. "The *World* will move, and the *Tribune* second, the transfer of the New York Associated Press to the United Press," Smith wrote. Minutes of the final meetings of the NYAP entered as evidence in a 1902 court case show that on December seventh it was unexpectedly revealed to board members that the *Herald* and the *World* had already agreed to accept United Press stock worth \$72,500 each, and that the *World* took the stock because it estimated it would cost \$100,000 per year to resist the Western Associated Press. Some members of the NYAP were shocked that the others had abandoned the association and bartered as individuals. Carvalho told them that an attempt to meld the NYAP with the UP had already failed, though it would have been desirable from the standpoint "that it would appear there never had been a combination rather than a surrender." However, the telegraph would have given that point away, he noted, because the NYAP news would obviously have come from the United Press

³⁸ Lawson to Smith, Nov. 9, 1892, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 314; Lawson to Bennett, letter of Nov. 12, 1892 and telegram of Nov. 14, p. 337, 345; Lawson to Horace Rublee, Nov. 14, 1892, p. 346. The nine original stockholders in the Associated Press were Albert J. Barr, Eugene H. Perdue (Cleveland *Leader*), W.A. Collier (Memphis *Avalanche-Appeal*), James W. Scripps (Detroit *Evening News*), Frederick Driscoll, Charles W. Knapp,

network. When Elliott F. Shepherd, owner of the *Mail & Express*, asked for a day to see if he could arrange for some way to continue the NYAP's business, he was turned down; Stone, of the *Journal of Commerce*, said that it was wise to simply "accept the inevitable." Lawson, receiving repeated telegrams from New York, noted the NYAP board actions in detail and declared that the NYAP was dissolved. In a letter to Driscoll on December eighth, he wrote "the funeral ceremonies are to come off at another meeting to-morrow," adding in a postscript that he had just heard that the NYAP had released the New York state press association and that the new Associated Press had made a contract with them for \$25,000 per year. "The Herald this morning booms Dana for United States Senator. Herbert de Reuter cables congratulations on the result. I guess we are all right."³⁹

Telegraph messages went out from Walter Phillips to the United Press in New York to former NYAP clients in Philadelphia, Washington, and Baltimore, offering to continue service to them, and Phillips, himself a trained telegraph operator, testified that "they gave 'O-K' to it." John Walsh telegraphed Lawson, meanwhile, to let him know that Phillips and Laffan had taken over NYAP operations. "The best of feeling prevails on the part of everyone . . . Nothing is printed anywhere and we are pledged to a generous silence about the whole thing." A giant had tumbled, demonstrating that the continued expansion of information distribution channels could not be ignored and that the reach of the telegraph and the demand for commodity news outweighed the specific geographic placement of any newsgathering organization.⁴⁰

³⁹ Lawson to Driscoll, telegram, December 6, 1892, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 416; Minutes of the New York Associated Press, Dec. 7-8, entered as testimony in *The United Press*, plaintiff, against the A.S. Abell Company and others, defendants, New York Supreme Court, Trial Term, Part 12, under Defendant's Exhibit No. 7, *Case on Appeal ans [sic] Exceptions*, pp. 214-222, https://books.google.com/books?id=b6FEAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA68&lpg=PA68&dq=Laffan+united+press&source=bl&ots=YFCnwtvLnF&sig=DF0wpVwv0hQ09k__NvOimdy9o&hl=en&sa=X&ei=WBU5VdmXEoidNs3dgaAH&ved=0CCQ Q6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Laffan%20united%20press&f=false (accessed April 23, 2015); Lawson to Driscoll, December 8, 1892, Box 2, Folder 4, p. 432.

⁴⁰ 40 newspapers and agencies eventually agreed to continue their NYAP contracts under the auspices of the United Press; *United Press v. Abell*, "Testimony of Frederick G. Mason," *Cases on Appeal ans Exceptions*, p. 130.

While the “best of feelings” might prevail at the opening of 1893, Lawson and the WAP faced a huge amount of work. The old WAP organization would run in parallel with the new Associated Press for a year as that association developed its bylaws, recruited and accepted new members, and solidified its business structure and obligations. The anticipated good feelings between the UP and the AP disintegrated quickly, and the idea of a business treaty consolidating the two associations died as Laffan and elements of the old NYAP membership attempted to jam the Western Associated Press into a legal corner in order to discomfit the new Associated Press. WAP books lodged in New York were stolen as part of an effort to show that the United Press, successor the NYAP, was owed a huge debt for telegraph services provided but not paid for. Lawson, repeatedly bargaining with Laffan and Phillips both in person in Chicago and remotely in New York City, remained encumbered with “our friends, the enemy.”

Individual publishers and editors within the Associated Press ranks themselves created huge distractions, both intentionally and unintentionally, and behaved with maddening slowness when it came to signing on as members or complaining against other potential members. Rumors surfaced throughout 1893 that either the AP had “swallowed” the UP or vice-versa. By February of that year, the good fellowship that had marked January had broken down so much that UP treasurer Walsh, the former conduit of information, now accused the Western Associated Press of trying to destroy the UP. Michael de Young, the *Chronicle* publisher, poured oil onto the flames when he visited New York and declared to the United Press that they were to go out of business and “explained to us what was to be our lot and how complete were the plans of our western partners for our humiliation and extinction.” At a painstakingly arranged February fifteenth meeting with Laffan, the United Press vice president refused to answer any of the questions brought by the Western men, instead saying that Dana had forbidden the consolidation arrangement from going forward. The reason for Laffan’s silence was explained when, that evening, the WAP executive committee was served with a legal summons. The old NYAP interests sprung a New York State Supreme Court case on the Western Associated Press based on the stolen

ledgers. If this was news peace, it was a messy sort of peace, and Lawson could be forgiven for seething in efficient indignation. On March tenth he wrote to de Young about “our friends the enemy,” explaining that “We are very likely to have a brush with New York, but history will only repeat itself and we shall come out on top.” He also revealed an epochal change in business management; William Henry Smith would not lead the new Associated Press operation, and with Smith’s amicable consent Melville Stone would serve as business manager at a salary of \$10,000 per year.⁴¹

Antagonism between the two associations surprised and angered some outside observers, such as Herbert de Reuter, who offered to bargain separately with the Associated Press. De Reuter’s reaction was the Associated Press’ gain; Stone, sent to Europe to negotiate an exclusive contract with Reuter’s and with secret authorization to spend up to £5,000 (approximately \$746,000 in 2015 dollars) for the privilege. Walter Neef, formerly the NYAP agent in Britain, had already accepted Lawson’s commission to represent the new AP, and with his friendly introduction Reuter’s management agreed to the contract for just £3,500. Neef was immediately appointed the formal European agent for the AP and Stone was authorized to spend up to \$4,000 to secure headquarters and execute European contracts; the AP membership paid a special assessment of \$50 to support this activity.⁴²

Apparently unaware of the damage they were doing to their own cause, United Press leaders continued making on-again, off-again demands of the emerging Associated Press. The reality gradually sank in that the two business models, one a mutual benefit association, the other a for-profit news service, were antithetical. Laffan and Phillips tried to renegotiate a possible consolidation based on telegraph contracts in May, 1893. They proposed to abandon a telegraph contract made with the

⁴¹ Lawson, various January-February 1893, Box 2, Folder 5, “Outgoing Correspondence, Associated Press – 1893 Jan – 1894 Feb.”; Lawson to Driscoll, January 10, 1893, pp. 9-11; Lawson to M.H. de Young, January 17, 1893, p. 30; “Report of the special committee on re-organization and conference with United Press to the board of directors of the Western Associated Press,” undated, pp. 93-94; John R. Walsh to Lawson, excerpted by Lawson, pp. 149-154; service of suit detailed in Lawson MS pp. 182-184; Lawson to de Young, March 10, 1893, p. 225.

⁴² “Minutes of a meeting of the executive committee of the associated press held in Chicago, March 3, 1893,” Box 2, Folder 5, p. 282-283, cont. p. 388.

Baltimore & Ohio railroad and split the short-term gain with Lawson and the AP leaders. Such short-term money schemes were not part of the Associated Press vision, which had grown. Lawson now suggested that the United Press give up territory in British North America and along the Pacific Coast. Phillips, of the UP, blustered that the Western Associated Press was trying to beat down UP revenues and that it was a case of accept or fight. Driscoll wrote to Lawson to warn that attempts to make a deal with the UP were doomed. "Bear in mind, it is not as though we were treating with honorable gentlemen . . . whatever course we pursue, we are bound to receive severe criticism." The possibility of consolidation was waning with the introduction of personal recriminations.⁴³

In the midst of it Joseph Medill of the Chicago *Tribune* notified Lawson that the *Tribune* would not support a campaign against the UP, stating that the *Tribune* needed the UP's Eastern news more than it needed membership in the AP, and warning that two or three other papers would defect from the WAP if the *Tribune* went out. Lawson met personally with Medill to smooth the matter over, but it was clear that a decision point had been reached. One more effort to mend fences with the UP was tried with a July counter-proposal to the earlier May offer made by Laffan. Laffan rejected it, saying that too much time had passed. On July 20, the executive committee met and adopted a motion authorizing Lawson and Stone to take action to "protect the news service of the Association by providing an independent foreign and eastern service if necessary." In a later motion, the committee informed William Henry Smith that the Western Associated Press would cease its news service after July 31. From that date, The Associated Press would go it alone, shedding the last vestige of its Western limits, ignoring the United Press, and forming a truly national news service.⁴⁴

Lawson saw this not just as a business contest, but as a fight for the soul of American journalism itself. He told S.H. Kauffman, of the Washington, D.C., *Evening Star*, that he sincerely believed it was: "A

⁴³ Richard Smith, Jr., to M.E. Stone, telegraph, June 7, replicated in Lawson, p. 358-359; Driscoll to Lawson, letter of June 8, 1893, p. 372-373.

⁴⁴ Lawson to Walsh, undated confidential letter, p. 421; Laffan to Lawson, July 14, 1893; "Minutes of the executive committee meeting, July 20," Lawson MS Box 2, Folder 5, p. 430, 434.

contest for the independence of the American press as against the possibility of autocratic domination of two or three individuals. There is much more – very much more – in this question than may appear at first thought. The question at issue involves, not so much the matter of individuals, as of basic principles which vitally affect our newspaper properties, and it is no exaggeration to say also go to the question of American citizenship.”⁴⁵

If a few newspaper publishers and editors working for personal profit could put a news service at the convenience of a political party or a particular candidate, or to support monopolistic business interests, then the network effect of news could be used for corrupt purposes. Lawson girded the AP for war. A campaign among stockholders raised a fund of more than \$300,000 for contingencies in the fight against the UP, while a series of letters, telegrams, and delegations was sent out to enlist Eastern seaboard papers to defect from the UP and join the new AP. The Baltimore *Sun* and *American* and the Philadelphia *North American* were among those specifically approached, while others among the forty who had continued their former NYAP relationships with the UP were also targeted. AP bureaus were set up in Washington and New York by October, and Lawson promised satisfactory Eastern news service as well as foreign service. By December, Lawson estimated that the UP’s revenues had been diminished by some \$300,000, even allowing for the few papers that had defected from AP ranks. “The inexorable logic of arithmetic is now involved in this situation, and its laws all make for the success of the Associated Press and the more or less failure of the United Press as a competing service,” he promised a Philadelphia editor, and “our friends that enemy are in a very troubled state of mind.” The news association fight was still intense enough, though, that some AP management telegrams were sent in

⁴⁵ Lawson to S.H. Kauffman, Oct. 2, 1893, Box 2, Folder 5, p. 459.

code, including one of January 22, 1894, that obscured names but still revealed that the news fight would be carried on to the finish.⁴⁶

The fight guaranteed that the United Press model of a for-profit, tightly controlled news agency would not prevail. By late 1894 Victor Lawson, now signing himself as president of the Associated Press, would tout the AP as a mutual cooperative association with equal rights for all shareholders.⁴⁷ It was “Already ‘the most powerful news-gathering organization in existence,’ and . . . will surely become the sole dominating national news-gathering organization of this country. If there are other associations, they will no [sic] be competing associations.” In 1897, the United Press, bowing to the AP power, went into receivership, eliminating the last vestige of the NYAP’s once-dominant structure. More had been achieved than the dominance of one association over others, however. Melville Stone noted that in newsgathering and distribution the AP would “sell no news, make no profits, declare no dividends, but should be the agent or joint reporter of its members.” In doing so, the AP imposed a new standard for brief, factual, and unbiased news. Stone viewed it as essential to national self-government that citizens receive the news and then make up their own minds. “The Associated Press might tell the story of a robbery, but it was not permitted to say that it was wicked,” he wrote. Stone returned repeatedly in speeches, published articles, and an autobiography to explaining that the power of a national network made opinions too powerful to be allowed. He believed that professional, objective, and timely news was fundamental to citizenship. That news entered the Associated Press network at many different

⁴⁶ Lawson to Clayton McMichael, Dec. 15, 1893, p. 538-544; Lawson to Driscoll, coded telegram, Jan. 22, 1894, p. 652 – as a sample of the coding, part of the dispatch reads “Dance wires wet sour hull ash, but not to be announced yet, and that ranch has sent proposition to broil sun . . .”.

⁴⁷ Shwarzlose writes that the new Associated Press practiced remarkable transparency in its business dealings, with annual reports growing to include both a full report from the board, reprints of court proceedings, full bylaws, and details of membership and subscription fees; the AP annual report of 1898 was 520 pages long. Shwarzlose, *Nation’s Newsbrokers*, p. 170.

places, and its power came from the far-flung sources on the network rather than from any concentration in a particular metropolis.⁴⁸

It was ironic, then, that the success of the new Associated Press ran afoul of Illinois law. Incorporated as an organization to sell news, produce newspapers, and run telegraph lines, the corporation was sued in Illinois by newspapers unable to obtain full membership. State law there did not have any provision for an exclusive corporate franchise, but New York State, much more friendly to specialized business legislation, already had useful laws on the books for just such a case. Though operating from Chicago, in 1900 the Associated Press dissolved its Illinois corporation and its members joined The Associated Press, incorporated in New York.⁴⁹

Few histories of the Associated Press give Victor Lawson much prominence, befitting a man whose primary work was as an *eminence grise* behind a national movement. Lawson himself avoided the limelight. He had newspapers to run in Chicago, and his work throughout the engineering of the Western Associated Press' successful campaign was related to correspondence to key people who could make things happen, the smoothing of ruffled egos, and the careful positioning of business support for events to come. He was a man of great depth, as his voluminous correspondence shows, and he seems to have concealed his overall vision in a way that let others – Smith, Stone, Driscoll, Knapp – appear to be the primary movers. It is no surprise that Lawson is not better known. He ran the Chicago *Daily News*, which grew to be one of the nation's biggest and most influential newspapers, in the same way. When Lawson died in 1926, *TIME Magazine* featured business obituary articles on both Lawson and *New York Sun* owner Frank Munsey. In a four-page column titled "Genius," after describing Munsey's up-and-down career, *TIME's* writers remarked that Munsey had lived as part of the "big world." Lawson, labeled the "builder" of the *Daily News*, left his newspaper to be a religious and charitable trust. It was one of

⁴⁸ "The Revolution of 1893," Melville Stone MS, Box 7, Folder 514; Untitled speech, probably 1914, Stone MS, Box 7, Folder 520.

⁴⁹ "News Gathering," Stone MS, Box 7, Folder 509.

his few plans to fail – banks didn't want to run his trust, and the Congregational Church was not suited to make publishing decisions. "Both men realized the difficulty of passing on titanic newspaper properties. Mr. Munsey consulted friends. Mr. Lawson consulted nobody," wrote TIME.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ "The Press: Genius," *Time Magazine*, Jan. 4, 1926, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,728803,00.htm> (accessed March 24, 2015). Lawson died childless and his wife was listed as an "eccentric living in the country," shorthand for a mentally ill person confined to an asylum. The *Daily News* was acquired by Lawson's nephew Walter Strong for \$14 million (\$6 million of it loaned by Chicagoans of substance); it was later owned by Knight Newspapers, eventually the Knight-Ridder news chain, and was sold to the Marshall Field family's Field Enterprises in 1959. Circulation declines and mismanagement led to the paper's closing in March, 1978.

CHAPTER 7 RISE OF PROFESSIONALISM

Far from anything the size of the *Chicago Daily News*, The Print Shop at The Henry Ford's Greenfield Village in Dearborn is crowded with iron machinery and type-cases. It is a delightful exhibit. Two page prints of the "Montrose Democrat Newspaper" hang from drying lines overhead. There's a Prouty Power Press No. 1 from the 1880s with its enormous hand wheel and flat paper feed mechanism, a typical press for a country newspaper. The exhibition is centered on a Hoe "Washington" single-sheet press made in 1858. The arched press sits bathed in the light from a broad paned window and its traveling feed table with its bright white frisket makes a slow journey into and out of the press where a small set of type creates a modest handbill. Around the press are related implements for display – inking equipment, two composing sticks, a page proof quoined in a type frame, and some scattered type. "Imagine taking all of these tiny little letters and lining them up to try to make a page," says an interpreter to a visiting family on a hot summer's day. "Why, I couldn't even tell you if this one is a 'u' or an 'a.'" She goes on to tell them that it would take hours to put together a single page, and then demonstrates the press by running it through a cycle and stamping out a piece, pulling the press lever while stating "three hundred pounds per square inch." The happy daughter of the family receives the still-sticky handbill, and it's off into the July afternoon, with a mental picture of a newspaper print shop as a tediously quaint place where things happen slowly and fussily.¹

The Henry Ford has made an intentional interpretation of American late nineteenth century work in its Liberty Craftworks section.² Even for a rural print office, though, the folksy interpretation shortchanges the reality of communication work of the 1880s. The Prouty press would have been awash in activity, with a printer overseeing inking and feed operation while a helper cranked the big wheel at a

¹ Visit to The Henry Ford/Greenfield Village, July 6, 2015.

² Various interpretations being performed in June-August 2015 included historic baseball (1867 rules), tales from Huck Finn (1885), young Laura Ingalls (1877), and Orville, Wilbur, and Katharine Wright (1903), centering the Greenfield Village experience around the end of the nineteenth century.

rate of three hundred impressions an hour. The Hoe “Washington” would be pounding out job printing work briskly – business cards, sale flyers, stationery -- while the real heart of the print shop would be the type cases where a compositor, holding the mechanical composing stick in his left hand, would be reading a longhand document and filling line after line with nimble fingers at the rate of at least thirty-five words per minute. There would be no question of which piece of type was an ‘a’ and which a ‘u,’ because their position in the type case guaranteed the letter. Many editors, Horace Greeley among them, could compose directly to the stick without writing down their thoughts, assembling the lines of type in mirror image with apparent effortless. Visitors to Greenfield Village are intrigued with the final mechanical process of a system that was run by experts, but the thump of the hand press places the nexus of press work at the wrong point. It is the copy being printed, and not the press itself, that shows the heart of the matter. News in the later nineteenth century was a system fed with copy by a business workforce of dedicated writers, led by professional editors, and one that had little patience with the idea of bucolic craft work. It was an industry that had its own professional publications, such as *The Journalist*, founded in 1884. In cities from Cleveland to Chicago and St. Louis, in the same era being shown at Greenfield Village, steam-driven Hoe rotary cylinder presses were imprinting thousands of pages an hour in an automated system very close to that used by letterpress operations of the late twentieth century. With some flamboyant exceptions, editors thought of themselves as being in what has more recently been termed “the truth business,” and the increased flow of information delivered by networks spread that business widely. Increasingly, the copy flow threatened to overwhelm even the fast steam press; it even threatened to overwhelm the capacity of the eventual reader.³

³ The fastest rate recorded for hand typesetting was 2,500 ems an hour, Walker Rumble, “The Race is to the Swift: The 1886 National Typesetting Championship,” *Chicago History* 28, No. 1. http://www.chicagohs.org/documents/chicago-history-magazine/ChicagoHistory_Vol28No1_Rumble.pdf (accessed July 15, 2015). *The Journalist* merged in the early twentieth century to become *Editor and Publisher Magazine*. The writer was employed as a reporter at *The Oakland Press*, an afternoon letterpress daily in Pontiac, Michigan, with its print shop in the basement of the building, and has personal experience with pressmen and press operations dating through 1987. For “the truth business” see Brent Davis, “I’m in the Truth Business: William

Historian Frank E. Fee, Jr., has demonstrated that antebellum newspaper editors and publishers were already thinking of themselves as members of a profession and were holding gatherings to discuss and impose sets of ethics meant to improve the quality of news and the image of newsmen. Long before the 1877 establishment of the American Newspaper Publishers association there were serious statewide and regional attempts to do what Fee has quoted as “exalt the profession.”⁴ The scale of the news industry demonstrated in the previous chapter regarding the takeover of the Associated Press shows that by 1890 newsmen were organized on a business basis and were manipulating capital as well as technology to control a complex cooperative venture. Such a large effort required structures, staffing, and dedicated executive leadership, all of which were similar to the most complex industrial businesses described by Alfred D. Chandler in *The Visible Hand*. At the national level the creators and distributors of news in the late nineteenth century behaved more like executive staff of the Pennsylvania Railroad than they did like Samuel Clemens’s idiosyncratic editor in his essay *Journalism in Tennessee*. “While he was in the midst of his work somebody shot at him through the open window and marred the symmetry of my ear. ‘Ah,’ said he, ‘that is that scoundrel Smith of the *Moral Volcano*—he was due yesterday. And he snatched a Navy revolver from his belt and fired,” wrote Clemens in his guise as Mark Twain. In Twain’s writing the news business was rendered as a comedic series of social and physical attacks based on personality, a mode which followed his own hapless journalistic adventures in frontier mining towns and in the newly-developing West Coast. Twain’s frontier experiences were the source of much of the humorous and self-deprecating lecture material that later made him famous, but they have left an exaggerated cultural picture of the foibles of the average newsman. To be sure, general managers and divisional superintendents of the news agencies remained colorful and individualistic, but their employment was specific to the flow of news itself rather than to the generation of copy. Mass media

Bradford Huie,” University of Alabama Center for Public Television and Radio documentary, 1997, cited in Theodore L. Glasser, *The Idea of Public Journalism* (New York: Guilford, 1999), xiv, note 1.

⁴ Frank E. Fee, Jr., “‘To exalt the profession’: Association, Ethics, and Editors in the Early Republic,” *American Journalism* 31 (summer 2014) No. 3, 329-357.

historian Betty Houchin Winfield argues that true journalistic professionalism only arrived after 1908 with the founding of the Missouri School of Journalism, but the nature of corporate journalistic businesses seems to argue otherwise for the industry long before the turn of the century. Metropolitan daily newspapers of the time, even those of secondary cities, look like vertically-integrated corporations in which specialized workers, from day-laboring delivery boys up through executive editors, dealt with every phase of news creation and distribution in assembly-line form. Paper came in at the bottom of the building and left as a news product to be sent by surface transportation to a chain of sales agents and representatives. The news itself entered and left the building partly by means of the telegraph network (and, after 1881, by telephone as well). Special departments dealt only with subsets of the news assembly process – typesetters, pressmen, compositors, engravers, copy editors, even the staff who broke down dead type and washed it in lye to ready it for another use, all had full-time specialized jobs that did not include news reporting. Operating these diverse departments required intermediate specialists such as managing editors, the very emerging managerial class that Chandler focused on as a harbinger of modernity.⁵

Manton Marble certainly considered that he was entering a profession when he graduated from the University of Rochester in 1855 at age twenty. A letter of recommendation from university president M.B. Anderson written on Marble's behalf affirmed that he had exhibited "integrity diligence and talent. His scholarship is exact comprehensive and thorough. He is a clear facile and elegant writer." After extolling Marble's taste in literature and art, Anderson noted "His knowledge of the world is beyond most young men of his age. He proposes to become a journalist." The university president

⁵ Mark Twain, "Journalism in Tennessee," 1871, repr. in *Oldtime Comments on Journalism*, ed. Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, notes that the telegraph was one of the first truly national businesses before 1880, 288. While he does not discuss the Associated Press or news agencies, they were among the largest and most consistent customers of the telegraph, and their organization paralleled "the rapid growth of the multiunit managerial enterprise," 200; Betty Houchin Winfield, *Journalism 1908: Birth of a Profession* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 2008), 1 -3, states that professionalism emerged as a reaction to journalistic extremes surrounding circulation wars and the Spanish-American War of the late 1890s, and cites the founding of university schools of journalism as the touchstone for professionalism: "Journalism must be accountable to its critics; professionalism would be a solution," 3.

recommended Marble as perfectly equipped to become an assistant editor. Other friends of high status pitched in to help Marble realize his ambition as well. His minister, Rev. William Hague, introduced him to the publisher of the Boston *Courier*, and the editor of the Rochester *American* sent an open letter praising Marble's newspaper work. Stating that Marble was a "favorite contributor," C.P. Denny explained that Marble was acceptable not only to the editors but also to the readers. "Consider him eminently adapted to the life of a journalist," the editor concluded. The letters reveal no surprise that a university man would go into a news career, but they also show that there was an accepted picture of a particular skill set that identified a journalist. Marble was hired by the Boston *Journal*, but his ambition quickly led him to seek a position in New York City.⁶

In 1858 Marble successfully campaigned for 'a position' on the New York *Evening Post* with many letters of recommendation from friends and mentors. He simultaneously sought assignments from Boston editors, proposing regular submission of letters about New York life to George S. Hillard, associate editor of the *Boston Courier*. Hillard turned him down, writing that "We are a good deal pinched for room, and men of business would not read letters from New York, if they were as good as Mad. De Sevigne's," but a later letter showed that Marble was writing about New York state government for the *Courier*.⁷ In the next year he submitted a series of articles to *Harper's Magazine* based on western travels undertaken as the *Post's* reporter.

Marble helped found the *New York World* in 1860. Established with political funding from the Democratic Party, the paper was meant to be the public voice for the national Democratic platform, but Marble also recognized that it needed to follow sound journalistic rather than political principles. A letter received from Caleb S. Henry, editor of the *New York Review* magazine, reminded him that the newspaper's success depended on "the stockholders giving the absolute, entire & unrestricted control

⁶ Letter of M.B. Anderson, Oct. 8, 1855; letter of William Hague, Oct. 8, 1855; letter of C.P. Denny, undated; all Vol. 1, Manton Marble Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁷ Hillard to Marble, April 2, 1858; Hillard to Marble, April 8, 1858; both Vol. 2, Manton Marble MS, LoC.

of its columns to a competent editorial body – organized and managed by some one editorial chief. If they meddle with it . . . it will fail.” Marble set up that body and became its chief, adamantly referring to himself as the proprietor of the *World* and its sole owner after April 12, 1861. Rivals at the *New York Times* and the *New York Tribune* repeatedly attacked the newspaper’s backing, asserting that it was secretly owned by Democrat Fernando Wood or partially funded by Copperhead interests in the North. The *World*’s attacks on what Marble viewed as the excesses of the Lincoln administration got the paper labeled a “semi-secession sheet.” In a plaintive letter to the Henry J. Raymond of the *Times*, Marble wrote “I am the sole proprietor of the World. You will do me the justice to say so in the Times, will you not?”, and added that the ongoing Civil War made newspaper quarrels “of all things most disquieting and impertinent, nor are they ever welcome to my taste.” The audiences of the competing papers would hardly have believed that polite correspondence could flow between the heads of ferociously rival publications, but Raymond in a return note made gentle apologies for the public accusations. He explained that they had occurred while he was out of town and unable to review the work of an associate editor, and stated “I sympathize fully with your dislike of personalities and am resolved (so far as my subordinate in my absence & the general casualties of a newspaper office will permit) to live at peace with all my brother Editors.” The antagonistic public face of rival newspapers was often a façade that disguised professional operating courtesy between management teams. One example occurred when a correspondent from the *New York Herald* was taken prisoner by Confederate forces at Front Royal in spring, 1862, leaving the *Herald* cut off from news of the operation or the fate of its reporter. The *World* cordially sent information about the correspondent’s captivity to managing editor Frederic Hudson, receiving a note of thanks in return. Not all of the cordiality would be viewed as above-board today, though it does show how close-knit the New York editors could be; in May, 1863, editors met to agree to an across-the-board rise in circulation prices.⁸

⁸ Letter of C.S. Henry to Marble, date missing, 1862; Letter of July 18, 1862, to Henry J. Raymond and three letter

What Marble thought of the professionalism of journalists is interestingly revealed in an exchange of letters that began in Spring, 1863, between himself and the father of a would-be journalist. E.D. Beach had sent Marble a selection of his son's articles and poems with an eye toward getting the young man a job in journalism, and Marble treated the request with seriousness, reading and commenting on the selection. On May 21 he wrote back to Beach to praise the literary quality of the son's work, but added:

Many trials of young men, some as promising as he, have led me to hesitate in inferring what I may loosely call 'newspaper ability' from the possession of 'literary ability.' The one requires not merely such judgment tact and prudence as come hardly otherwise to the most gifted men with experience and years, but also so much acquaintance with affairs, with men, with the relations of men to events; requires much long training in what seems to most clean and well-educated young men the mere drudgery of a newspaper office that I have known many of them to break down in the first year of such a trial who were most anxious to undergo it and who possessed all the necessary literary ability which could be expected or desired.⁹

Marble went on to warn that only one in twenty men who tried to become journalists were ultimately successful, and that the field required extraordinary dedication for scant pay. Marble would have felt that keenly; he himself was taking a below-normal salary of just \$3,500 a year in order to keep the *World* budget balanced, and the *World's* senior editors made no more than \$2,000 annually.¹⁰ "It is not, I am sure, any desire to represent the profession of journalist to you as something mysterious and extraordinarily difficult" that led him to warn the father off, he wrote. Other careers were more rewarding for less work. Journalists had to show the same industry and enterprise as any merchant, had to be aware as any politician of a fickle audience, and as wise as a judge. "The function of the journalist is in no way different from that of the statesman, except in this, that his judgment must be quicker and

drafts, undated; Letter of Raymond to Marble, July 24, 1862; Letter of Frederic Hudson to Marble, May 27, 1862; all Vol 3, Marble MS, LoC; letter of Raymond to Marble, May 15, 1863, Vol. 4, Marble MS.

⁹ Letter of Manton Marble to E.D. Beach, May 21, 1863, Vol. 4, Manton Marble MS, LoC.

¹⁰ Letter of Samuel Barlow to Calvin Comstock, Esq., proprietor of the *Albany Argus*, June 25, 1863, Vol. 4, Marble MS. The *World* was in negotiations to acquire the *Argus*, and the letter reveals financial and investment details of the *World*. Marble had invested \$50,000 in the paper, which had only turned profitable that year. The merger took place in 1864 and created a third publication, the *Campaign Argus*, which was the official party newspaper of the Democratic presidential campaign of George B. McClellan.

of its expression there can be less reticence because his paper is published daily and the people soon forsake a paper which is not prompt." Papers, in the meantime, were engaged in an explosive expansion of coverage that challenged journalists at every level, Marble declared.

Without committing ourselves to the dogma that all editors are wise men, I make no doubt that you will agree with me when I say that the wisest man [would find] scope enough for all his wisdom if he chose to be an editor. The modern newspaper has grown to be such an *omnium gatherum* that no department of human activity is out of the range of its camera or remains foreign to its intelligence.¹¹

After this thorough description, Marble offered to give the boy a trial if he wished to try out the challenging but bleak profession that he had described. Later letters show that the son came to New York and interviewed with Marble, but once back at home politely declined the opportunity.

Other Marble correspondence shows the administrative tasks that beset the growing news organization. A subordinate, D. G. Croly, wrote to resign his editorship in order to work for a competitor, and Marble made counter-offers to keep him. Eventually a salary of \$40 per week in gold, or \$70 in greenbacks, lured Croly back into the fold, but with a promise to give up outside writing contracts. "I promise responsibly not to write any more for the *Round Table*, *Sunday Mercury*, or any other paper, but to devote my whole energies and time to the *World*," Croly promised, assuring that he would earn the *World* at least four times as much as his new salary would cost. Proposing a number of staffing changes, Croly assured economy. "I will try to get the most work done for the least pay of any first class office in the city," he told Marble.¹² Croly would be one of the few staff in the *World* office when federal soldiers occupied it in May to suppress publication after the "Bogus Proclamation" incident, and a string of notes and letters shows New York editors working together through the Associated Press to craft a collective *mea culpa* to President Lincoln and Secretary Seward. An almost comic June letter from the *World* Washington D.C. agent in charge of military correspondence demonstrates the sometimes absurd difficulties of maintaining far-flung reporters. George W. Adams had telegraphed his resignation to

¹¹ Marble to Beach, Marble MS, LoC.

¹² Letters from D.G. Croly to Manton Marble, April 16, 20, and 21, 1864, Vol. 7, Marble MS, LoC.

Marble and sent a follow-up letter to express his frustration. Reporter after reporter had been sent to him from New York City, demanding horses, provisions, wages, and other expenses, but none of them had obtained the necessary passes to go to the Army front lines. When Adams didn't give them any cash, the enterprising would-be reporters bought things anyway, simply expensing them to the *World*. The most recent reporter sent to him had cost hundreds of dollars and only after equipping him was it realized that he had already been ejected from Army correspondence once and would be subject to court-martial if he returned a second time. Adams was frustrated and furious; Marble had to sooth him by telegraph and letter to retain his services.¹³

Problems with correspondents weren't limited to wartime emergencies, but were perpetual, as the 1869-70 letters of Whitelaw Reid show. Reid got his start as an enterprising Washington Civil War correspondent for the Cincinnati *Gazette*, one whose ideas of reporting went far beyond partisan puffery or slavish devotion to a particular politician or general. In the early days of the war Reid had broken the rules by reporting on shoddy uniforms, defective equipment, and contaminated rations, provided to Ohio soldiers sent to the field. His authoritative reporting of Washington affairs and later military campaigns gained him a national following, and his articles appeared under the byline "Agate" in many major newspapers. After the war he came to work for Horace Greely as editor of the *New York Tribune*.¹⁴

Reid's extensive business correspondence exhibits a professional executive newsman at work dealing with reporters and molding and shaping the business of news coverage for an imagined audience. On October 6, 1869, he orders an internal employee not to accept special telegrams without checking with him first; on October 8, Reid sends a confidential note to a fellow editor concerning a former reporter ("I doubt whether he will suit you. He wasn't a first-class reporter, and we dispensed with his services because we could do better"), admonishes a lazy reporter ("Your dispatch arrived 36

¹³ Letter of Geo. W. Adams to Manton Marble, June 30, 1864, Vol 7, Marble MS, LoC.

¹⁴ Andrews, *North Reports*, 46-47.

hours too late, and was wholly anticipated by the arrival of the paper from which you made it up”), and counsels a peer not to try to find editorial work in New York (“Our office is overrun with people on temporary service. None of them able to get assignments enough to make fair wages”). The letters reveal a community of skilled workers in a professional field who had to be taken seriously but also collegially. On October ninth, Reid thoughtfully but firmly answered an apparent complaint from a Washington, D.C. , reporter who disliked the way his articles were headlined, pointing out that news must be tailored to its readers and not to the whims of its reporters. “It would not be good journalism – at least it would not be good New York journalism – to print the matter about the Cuban Revolution under one head and the most important facts that you give concerning it under a separate head,” Reid wrote. His concern to teach the business of journalism demonstrates a broad approach to a discipline rather than a tactical focus on resolving a single staff problem.¹⁵

Reid was a politically active public figure in New York City, and as such was frequently skewered by political commentators such as Thomas Nast, who always drew Reid as a waspish, exotic, and gangly figure obsessed with political plotting or isolated in an untidy world of his own. Nast’s obsessive dislike of Horace Greeley may have simply been expanded to include his chief henchman, but as a public figure Reid stood as a representative for the adversarial press.¹⁶ Within the *Tribune*’s operations, though, Reid stands out more as a benevolent but firm patriarch. He hired wartime peer Bradley S. Osbon at \$30 per week to cover naval news, even though there was a “lack of special interest in naval news on the part of *Tribune* readers,” because the newspaper’s city editor boosted Osbon’s abilities so highly. “I am sorry that I cannot make you a better offer than this, but it is really an addition of so much to the share of a department which is already drawing more than its just proportion of the amount of money at my

¹⁵ Reid to Baird, letter of Oct. 6, 1869; Reid to “confidential,” to Pangborn, and to McAllister, letters of Oct. 8, 1869; Reid to James R. Young, letter of Oct. 9, 1869; Reel 3, Reid Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁶ Nast’s cartoons for *Harper’s Weekly* frequently included Reid, especially during the 1872 Greeley-Grant presidential race. Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons* (New York:Macmillan, 1968), 100-101.

disposal,” Reid commented. Departmental budgeting is scarcely the sign of an infant press, and Reid’s attention to detail on expenses and salaries was considerable. In a letter to Johnny Reinhauser, a boy learning bookkeeping in the *Tribune’s* offices, Reid announced a dollar raise in his weekly pay and promised more in the future if his abilities improved. At the same time, he warned that an “old *Tribune* man” had said: “The *Tribune* was a great place for spoiling boys and that he had known a great many promising boys who worked here ruined. I don’t think there is any danger of you, but remembering what has happened to other will do no harm.”¹⁷ Encouraging the work of young employees was one place Reid could put his budget dollars; another was development of the vast network of stringers and occasional correspondents who contributed to the paper. The *Tribune* tended to pay from fifteen to thirty-five dollars for outside contributions – Maj. John Wesley Powell received the higher figure for his article on exploring the Colorado River, while the editor of the Williamsport *Daily Gazette* was offered the lower figure for local coverage of a murderer’s execution. “The *Tribune*, as you know, doesn’t go very largely into reports of this sort. We would not care to make more than a column out of it, including the telegraphic dispatch reporting the execution,” Reid notified the *Gazette* editor.¹⁸

In handling this web of correspondents Reid shows unique attention to the development of female reporters. In November of 1869 Reid asked the powerful head of Western Union, Anson Stager, to intercede with staff at the telegraph company’s Cleveland office on behalf of a woman journalist who would be covering the Woman’s Suffrage convention for the *Tribune*.

We send a young lady, Miss Hutchinson, who has done a good deal of reporting . . . Won’t you do me the kindness to give your operators special instructions that these reports may not be delayed, as young ladies are not in a general way specially familiar with the business of crowding forward telegraphic dispatches and watching the sharp tricks of their antagonists. Perhaps a little kindness in this way may be of special value, and will be gratefully appreciated.¹⁹

¹⁷ Reid to B.S. Osbon, letter of Oct. 14, 1869; Reid to Johnny Reinhauser, letter of Oct. 15, 1869, Reel 3, Reid MS, LoC.

¹⁸ Reid to managing editor, *Daily Gazette*, letter of Nov. 18, Reel 3, Reid MS, LoC.

¹⁹ Reid to Anson Stager, letter of Nov. 21, 1869, Reel 3, Reid MS, LoC.

Other female journalists received support from Reid as well. He wrote to Susan B. Anthony to introduce “Mrs. E. Wilmington [who] comes to you as a correspondent of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*,” and asked Anthony to help explain the suffrage movement to her. Reid was against votes for women, but cheerfully stated “She little knows what an alien and hopeless reprobate I am in your eyes. Pray make her confidence in me good however to the extent of giving her all the information you may and converting her if you can!” And in another case Reid offered significant encouragement to Philadelphia contributor Rebecca Davis, saying that three recent articles (on temperance, a political figure, and a women’s rights convention) “were good. I don’t mean to say that others have not been, but these were notably so. Some disappointed outsider said lately his succeeding had to hit the bull’s eye of *The Tribune’s* mark: you hit it each of these times. Pray do so again.” These communications belie the image of the news business as unwelcoming to women’s contributions.²⁰

Riding herd on the mistakes of remote reporters was another significant responsibility for Reid, indicating the extent of the network that brought in the news. In an early 1870 telegraphic exchange with John Russell Young, head of the Associated Press Washington, D.C., bureau, Reid found his patience sorely tried. The Tribune had wanted a report of a ball held in honor of England’s Prince Arthur, but Young telegraphed back that he couldn’t secure a reporter for the event. Reid sent a telegraph demanding the coverage and followed with a hot letter laying out newspaper expectations of a remote bureau. “The matter wanted was simply a column account of the ball, a thing which any newspaper man can do and which there is not a reporter in the city department of the Tribune who would not feel himself abundantly competent to undertake,” he wrote. He then launched into a critique of the bureau, where he felt the bureau chief ought to personally be doing more reporting work. “You have a strong force on salary. That force is abundantly able to do much work which I find you have been engaging

²⁰ Reid to Susan B. Anthony, letter of Feb. 4, 1870; Reid to Mrs. Rebecca Davis, letter of Feb. 6, 1870; Reel 3, Reid MS, LoC.

outside parties for.”²¹ Young was not the only target of Reid’s remote ire; the ubiquitous Henry O’Reilly, now out of the telegraph-building game and instead acting as the Tribune’s Albany governmental correspondent, received constant chivvying. O’Reilly’s lack of success demonstrates how the journalism game had changed from its earlier years in the 1820s and 30s, when he had served as editor of the politically Democratic *Rochester Daily Advertiser* in New York state.²² O’Reilly’s skills were not up to the reporting load demanded of modern journalists. It had been unwise to send the aging speculator as a journalist despite his longtime political ties and his early editorial-writing experience. O’Reilly tended to either send too little material, or to send too much on topics that weren’t particularly newsworthy. He regularly missed the messenger assigned to carry his dispatches or was so far behind in writing them that the messenger was late for newspaper typesetting deadlines. When O’Reilly did come through with something useful, other newspapers generally had beaten him on the stories or sent more stories on other relevant topics. Even O’Reilly’s physical writing was not up to snuff, and Reid had to admonish him that reporters needed to write their dispatches legibly in ink and only on one side of the page – typesetters could barely make out O’Reilly’s pencil scrawl covering both sides of each sheet. As frustrating as O’Reilly was to Reid, the blundering legislative correspondent caused the editor to reveal fundamental journalistic reporting principles as he instructed him in his job:

As to the suggestions for which you ask, perhaps you cannot do better than to compare the amount of news received by the Tribune from Albany with the amount received by other papers, The World, Times, Sun & Herald during the present session. The difference you will observe consists mainly in foreshadowing the legislative events to happen which those correspondents have been able to make and in their familiarity with the gossip of caucuses, talk about organization of committees, feeling of members, &c. &c. Some of these things are not of special value, but yet the readers of The Tribune wish to have as much news indicating present and future operations in Albany as any other papers.²³

²¹ Reid to John Russell Young, letter of Jan. 27, 1870, Reel 3, Reid MS, LoC.

²² Dexter Perkins, ed., “Henry O’Reilly,” *Rochester History* VII (January, 1945) No. 1 http://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v7_1945/v7i1.pdf (accessed July 9, 2015).

²³ Reid to O’Reilly, letters of Jan. 18, 24, 25, 27, Feb. 1, 1870, Reel 3, Reid MS, LoC (underlines in original text).

News now was a specific commodity and simple personal musings on legislative subjects was not useful, while O'Reilly appeared to hew to an earlier understanding that a correspondent's role was to focus deeply on matters of personal interest. Reid had to warn O'Reilly not to be too credulous of politicians who would use him as a megaphone for political party purposes only. The reporter also had to be able to multi-task; it did no good to have a single long feature on an abstract subject, such as canals, when other newspapers were receiving multiple different stories from the same legislative session.

Finally, Reid had to deal with the enterprising nature of news reporters who would take a salary from one agency and then illicitly send their material to several competitors. One such was New York reporter George H. Stout, a *Tribune* employee who was detailed to work on Associated Press copy. Rumor had it that Stout was instead helping build up an independent New York News Association to compete with the A.P., and doing so by sharing telegraphic dispatches. In late January, 1870, Reid fired a warning shot in a letter that inquired whether Stout was giving telegraphic news to papers outside the Associated Press. "I should be glad to avoid this subject but the matter is forced upon me," he warned, citing complaints made to him about Stout. By February confidential letters from Reid to A.P. editors showed that Stout had not complied, and that an investigation showed the reporter had been working to become chief agent of the new news organization. The problem was that firing Stout as a *Tribune* employee would "throw him into their arms," while retaining Stout would antagonize other A.P. clients. In a series of letters marked "private and confidential" Reid discussed either turning Stout into a double-agent of sorts, or holding the reporter in a form of employment limbo in which the Associated Press could decide whether he remained a *Tribune* employee or not. "Stout appears to be the one we want to fight the association," Reid told J.W. Simonton, but at the same time had worked industriously for six months to overthrow the A.P., which meant that agency was the more injured party. No letter resolving

the issue was found, but its picture of entrepreneurial treachery within news organizations indicates the complicated balancing acts that managers had to maintain.²⁴

The New York press was the heart of the nation's news network for the bulk of the nineteenth century, but examples of the growth of press professionalism were not limited to the metropolis. In Louisville, Kentucky, Col. Henry Watterson held sway at the *Courier-Journal* in a career that left him considered one of the deans of American journalism by the early twentieth century. Many newspaper editors and publishers styled themselves as "colonel," but Watterson was the real thing, having served on Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's staff in the Confederacy's Western armies. Known as "Marse Henry" in an unapologetically racist and patriarchal time, he had edited the *Chattanooga Rebel* during 1862 and 1863, moving the newspaper operation in a box car as Northern forces pushed inexorably southward. Watterson never repudiated his service to the Southern cause, but as editor in Louisville he sought national reconciliation and became a leader of American thought and an ardent admirer of the legacy of Abraham Lincoln. No fan of the "lost cause" narrative, he was impatient with attempts to resurrect the conflict between the states. He refused to take up quarrels, as when in answer to a 1920 letter from an attorney seeking to establish that Abraham Lincoln was illegitimately fathered by John C. Calhoun, Watterson brusquely directed his secretary to send the man a copy of his laudatory Lincoln oration, and the secretary, G.E. Johnson, scrawled "Ansd. Fully" on the letter in blue pencil.²⁵

Watterson was known for employing ten or more editorial writers for the *Courier-Journal*, and he wrote many essays on the field of journalism and journalists. Watterson's work was eagerly sought by national newspapers, and James Gordon Bennett sought his input for the *New York Herald* seemingly whenever an epochal event occurred in the journalistic world. Telegrams came to him from France to ask for a review of the Chicago political convention in July, 1892, and to ask for an authoritative obituary

²⁴ Reid to Stout, letter of Jan. 24, 1870; Reid to J.W. Simonton, letter of Feb., (day not specified) 1870; Reid to Simonton, letter of Feb. 10, 1870, Reel 3, Reid MS, LoC.

²⁵ Henry Watterson papers, Box 1, General Correspondence, "B" Miscellany, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Henry Watterson, "Looking Backward," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, March 9, 1919.

on Charles A. Dana, owner-editor of the *New York Sun*, on his death in 1897. His correspondents ranged from Jefferson Davis (who wrote in 1877 asking him to employ a former Confederate soldier as a reporter) to Andrew Carnegie (who in 1911 urged consumer protection through government price regulation of business combinations).²⁶

Watterson considered himself a news professional from an early date. Immediately after the close of the Civil War he landed a temporary writing assignment for the Cincinnati *Evening Times*, a paper that he described as a placid money machine for its owner, Calvin W. Starbuck. When the *Times's* head editor drowned in a boating accident Starbuck hired Watterson to replace him, saying "I propose to hire you as an editorial manager. It is as if building a house you should be head carpenter, I the architect."²⁷ That idea of editorial management stayed with Watterson as he and two partners revived a Nashville newspaper, *The Republican Banner*, and then later when old Confederate associates urged him to come to Louisville to take over editorship of the troubled *Journal*. Both the *Journal* and its competitor, the *Courier*, offered Watterson an ownership stake and the post of sole editor, but after reviewing the books of each he pushed for a combination of the two papers, a move that he secured with a combination of a shrewdly-conducted newspaper circulation 'war' and financial bluff that nearly bankrupted the *Journal* but finally convinced the *Courier's* owner to give in, with the combined publication appearing in November, 1868. After two years of holding a news monopoly in Louisville, Watterson realized that the real value to the newspaper was not in having a captive audience for circulation, but in managing the flow of news through licensing out the *Courier-Journal* press association feed. "We found that at least the appearance of competition was indispensable and willingly accepted

²⁶ James G. Bennett to Henry Watterson, letter of July 7, 1892, Bennett to Watterson, telegram of Oct. 17, 1897, Box 1, General Correspondence, Watterson MS, LoC; Jefferson Davis to Watterson, Box 4, General Correspondence, Watterson MS, LoC; Andrew Carnegie to Watterson, letter of June 16, 1911, Box 2, General Correspondence, Watterson MS, LoC. For Watterson biographical information, Christopher H. Sterling, ed., *Encyclopedia of Journalism* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009), 482 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0325600/> (accessed July 9, 2015) and Andrews, *South Reports*.

²⁷ Henry Watterson,

an offer from a proposed Republican organ for the Press dispatches which we controlled," he wrote in his autobiography, continuing "Then and there the prosperity of the Courier-Journal began, the paper having made no money out of its monopoly."²⁸ An 1882 letter from the newspaper's president Walter N. Haldeman to Watterson shows that management of news distribution remained at the core of *Courier-Journal* business operations, with extensive discussions about the length of time *The Louisville Commercial* should be allowed to contract for dispatches and a suggestion that Watterson should contact "Hueston of the Ass. Press, or Jones of the Times, or Hurlburt, and learn their method of supplying N.Y. papers out of the Assn with news – for how long a time do they get to contract, &c, &c." The franchise service for the *Commercial* was valued at \$25,000 and would be provided at \$30 per week, representing six percent interest on the total amount.²⁹ Far from quaint Americana, this was hard-boiled business involving news as a paying commodity. Watterson attributed the overall change to the Civil War: "At its close new conditions appeared on every side. A revolution had come into the business and spirit of journalism," he wrote.³⁰

Watterson was a major player in this new business attitude, and he was also involved in attempts to safeguard it through securing federal copyright protection for newspaper articles, shown in an 1885 letter from Roswell Smith, president of The Century Company in which he wished Watterson well for passage of "your bill for copyright on newspapers." Newspaper articles under the exchange system had been considered fair game for any user, and many purchasers believed ownership of a single copy of a paper entitled them to ownership of its contents. According to Melville Stone, general manager of the Associated Press, it was "the invention of the electric telegraph and the consequent development of newsgathering" that created a new copyright problem. "Unless a book or painting was registered,

²⁸ Watterson, "*Marse Henry*": *an Autobiography*, Vol. 1 electronic edition (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1998), 171-172. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/watterson1/watterson1.html#wat161> (accessed July 10, 2015). The electronic work is part of the UNC-CH digitization project "Documenting the American South."

²⁹ Walter N. Haldeman to Watterson, letter of Aug. 12, 1882, Box 5, Watterson MS, LoC.

³⁰ Watterson, *Marse Henry*, p. 175.

publication was equivalent to abandoning the author's rights," Stone wrote in his memoirs in a chapter titled "Property in News." But to register a work and retain copyright to it in the nineteenth century required that the printed title, two copies of the work, and a fee had to be presented to the Librarian of Congress. The cumbersome process simply could not work in the case of news dispatches. The copyright problem was not resolved until after the 1909 revision of copyright law specifically mentioned newspapers, but attention from individuals such as Watterson and Stone show early professionalizing attempts to regulate journalistic production work.³¹

The elaborate and formal structure of newsgathering and dissemination at the agency level also demonstrates a commitment to press professionalization, as witnessed by the printed annual reports of the Western Associated Press. Fifty-two papers were represented at the 1869 general meeting of the association, which heard motions relative to admission of new newspapers into membership and continuation of the New York Associated Press relationship for news distribution. The twenty-page printed report of the meeting included detailed information of cable charges and news fees being paid by the Western association: \$42,000 as an annual subscription for dispatches, twenty percent of the cost of California dispatches, \$8,000 per year for the exchange of American news, and a quarter of the expense of European cable news in excess of \$150,000. At least \$55,000 would be spent by the cooperative on news transmission. Charts provided by the general news agent William Henry Smith showed total expenditures of more than \$148,000 in 1867, more than \$158,000 in 1868, and an anticipated \$158,000 in 1869, with a total of more than seven and a half million words of news transmitted over the nearly three-year period. "There has been less political

³¹ Roswell Smith to Watterson, letter of Feb. 6, 1885, Box 12, Watterson MS, LoC; Melville Stone, "Property in News," chapter draft from *Fifty Years a Journalist*, Box 7, Folder 512, Melville Stone MS, Newberry Library, Chicago, IL. The 1909 law remained unenforced until an Eighth U.S. District Court decision by Judge Grosscup on Dec. 23, 1918, held that newspapers, as collected works, had copyright property value; "Neither facts nor ideas may be copyrighted, but only the mode of their expression," Joseph W. McCormick, "Newspaper Copyright," *Faculty Publications, Paper 1496*, William and Mary Law School Scholarship Repository, <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/facpubs/1496> (accessed July 10, 2015).

and more general news than during the same months of the preceding years, and the character of it has been superior, though not in all respects what it should be," Smith reported. More words were being sent from the West to the East, though this was due to "the carelessness and verbosity of the reporters . . . I have taken steps to correct this evil," Smith said, and noted that a program was underway to educate news agents and to curb reporting. The association was entitled to send eight thousand, seven hundred words a day, and Smith was determined to make each word count. Internal education, specific monitoring of transmissions, and exact reporting are further marks of the professionalism that was being imposed on news flow. "I have repeatedly invited the attention of reporters to the importance of being the first to make announcement of news, as the saving of time is what gives to telegraphic communications their superior value," Smith intoned in his report. Clearly, this was a managed and modernizing operation conducted by dedicated staff, the harbinger of a corporate approach to the news. Editors attending the meeting not only viewed themselves as intimately connected with one another, but authorized the generation of a single journalistic standard for news sent over the wires.³²

That news was serving a burgeoning number of newspapers. Census data shows that from an 1850 total of some twenty-five hundred newspapers of all kinds, by 1880 there were more than eleven thousand. Nearly one thousand of the 1880 total were daily newspapers, up from two hundred and fifty-four in 1850. Even cities of small population were represented with two or more newspapers, though the barriers to entry were increasingly high after the 1870s. The *Chicago Daily News* was started when Melville Elijah Stone, Percy Meggie, and William L. Daugherty invested \$6,000 in 1875. Their first typesetter and compositor, Andrew Blainey Adair, later reminisced that the operation leased a 21-by-21 foot space at the back of the fourth floor of 123 Fifth Avenue, and that the newspaper's major possessions were 150 pounds of minion-sized type, another 150 pounds

³² "Proceedings of the Western Associated Press at the Fifth Annual Meeting, held at Cleveland, November 24, 1869" (Detroit: Tribune Printing House, 1870), 10, 15-18.

of agate-sized type, and fifteen fonts of display head letters. Printing was done on a drum cylinder press, one side at a time, and the papers were hand-folded and sent out in bundles of ten or twenty in the hands of newsboys whose cry was “The daily nous, wan cent.” The building also housed the composing room for the Morning Courier newspaper, an unaffiliated printing business that made its money by buying early morning copies of other Chicago papers, plagiarizing their lead articles, and issuing a later-morning edition of the copied stories.³³ By the 1890s, such a startup was far more difficult to accomplish; historian Gerald Baldasty estimates it cost half a million dollars to start a “big city” newspaper by the turn of the century.³⁴ The cost for presses had grown from thousands to tens of thousands of dollars and the acceptable processes for printing were vastly more complex, while organized skilled trades boosted wage expectations and the necessary expense of access to news agencies, telegraph and cable lines, and professional staff made the ease of earlier startups seem improbably simple. Part of the drive for this came from vastly increased commercial advertising, with revenues that finally freed many newspapers from depending on their circulation price alone for support, but that also changed the dynamic of what counted as success in the news business. Advertisers sought out larger papers that would bring them contact with more potential customers, a benefit to larger newspapers but an immediate challenge to smaller and startup operations. The

³³ Andrew Blainey Adair, “50 Years in the Composing Room,” Field Enterprises Collection, Series 1: Chicago Daily News, Subseries 4: Publications, Box 29, Folder 365, Newberry Library, Chicago. Chicago changed its street numbers in 1909 and further changed addresses in the Loop district in 1911, <http://chicagohistory.org/research/resources/architecture> (accessed April 14, 2015). No particular font is listed for the type owned by the Daily News, but agate type is roughly ¼ inch tall and minion, at 7 points, is larger. For comments on the Morning Courier see Melville E. Stone, “Property in News,” Midwest Stone MS, Box 7, Series 3, Works, Folder 512, Newberry Library, Chicago. The drum cylinder press was an advanced technology compared to lever-action platen presses such as the Washington or Columbian press, but was still a single-sheet press; Richard Gabriel Rummonds, *Nineteenth Century Printing Presses and the Iron Handpress* (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2004), 165-167; Stone sold his interest in the Daily News to Lawson in 1888.

³⁴ Gerald Baldasty, *E.W. Scripps and the Business of Newspapers* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1999), 5.

advertising presence also contributed to the business shift of the newspaper for its operations that separated editorial leadership from daily affairs of the paper.³⁵

The public was aware of the increasing professionalization of the news in the late nineteenth century, and in nostalgic longing for ‘the old days’ showed that they were not entirely comfortable with the new conservative modes of coverage that were emerging. “The impersonal and commercial journalism changed completely customs and conditions,” wrote historian James Melvin Lee in 1917. His history of American journalism deplored the 1880s-1890s transition of the newspaper editor from supreme commander of his publication to an executive functioning within the management structure of a publisher. “After he ceased to have the controlling interest, it passed into other hands represented at official councils by the business interest,” Lee wrote. Readers who had formerly bought the day’s paper because of a close interest in an editor’s thoughts now received a cold summary of news events. In Lee’s thinking, this separation of the business office from the editorial one created editorial professionalism by limiting the responsibilities of those handling the news.³⁶ In Lee’s description It was a necessary transition due to the increasing complexity of the newspaper business, but not a positive one, an opinion shared by many observers. Senator Knute Wilson mourned the new professionalism in a public letter to eighty-year-old Henry Watterson. “Our great newspapers of today are wholly impersonal. One scarcely knows who the editors or chief writers are: and, moreover, the editorial matter of today is much inferior, both in quantity and quality, to that of the old time,” Wilson declared.³⁷

The dubious public welcome to the effects of a professionalizing press is intriguing because a later generation of commentators would celebrate the transition as a hallmark of responsibility and as

³⁵ James Melvin Lee, *History of American Journalism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), 355-56. <https://archive.org/details/historyamerican00goog> (accessed July 15, 2015).

³⁶ Lee, *History of American Journalism*, 351-353.

³⁷ Wilson testimonial article to Watterson, “Marse Henry” edition, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, March 2, 1919, Box 20, Watterson MS, LoC.

the move that positioned American newspapers (and, by implication, “the news media” including radio and television) to serve as a bulwark of freedom and citizenship rights. Modernists of the later twentieth century would dismiss the wild excesses of the early press as primitive evolutionary steps toward the full-news ideal of later times. Yet it was already a professionalizing press that incorporated new college-trained journalists, new photographic reproduction technology, new press and production technology such as the linotype, and new communication tools such as the telephone and the teletype. The influences of faster and broader communication bandwidth led to an impetus to professionalize, and nineteenth century participants in the industry did so intentionally, knowingly, and introspectively. The early participants knew that they were losing something in the transition, but they recognized its progress. John Hay, writing to Henry Watterson in 1902, thanked him for sending a selection of articles. “I have read with great interest, and with the sense, which is continually darkening around me, of the rapid shrinking of my horizon,” Hay said. He might have been speaking for a generation of earlier editors who recognized that their former mode of work was done.³⁸

³⁸ John Hay to Henry Watterson, letter of December 16, 1902, Box 6, Watterson MS, LoC. Hay died that year at age 70.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

On a 1902 summer vacation in Maine, Joseph Pulitzer decided that it was time for journalists to go to college. "My idea is to recognize that journalism is, or ought to be, one of the great and intellectual professions," he wrote in a memorandum of his thoughts in seeking to endow a program at Columbia College in New York City. Predicting complaints that journalism was a mere business and so could not be numbered among collegiate professions, Pulitzer preempted future challengers by saying that so was the Church, and statesmanship, and literature. All of them involved business methods and practices and, like newspapers, could not help being involved in business. "To differentiate between journalism as an intellectual profession and as a business must be a fundamental object," he wrote. Pulitzer repeatedly referred to journalism as a profession in his memorandum, and at the end of it concluded "I cannot help thinking that there is no profession in which every student of the United States is more directly interested."¹

The idea of achieving a university imprimatur on professional journalism had been around for a long time. Whitelaw Reid had recommended it as early as 1872, though his ideas met with scorn from others in the field such as Frederic Hudson who felt that only participation in the press could give a reporter the special training that was needed. Communication historians have made much of the university school of journalism as the harbinger of maturity for the press, and the early twentieth century blossoming of schools of journalism gives a convenient threshold to date the objective and respected press of the later century. Labeling the advent of the modern newspaper this way also conveniently purifies the excesses of Yellow Journalism and the press' jingoistic and self-serving role in bringing on the Spanish American War; such behavior can be dismissed if it is attributed to a pre-professional time when journalists were not subscribers to a gentlemanly set of university-specified

¹ Joseph Pulitzer, "Germ," in James Boylan, *Pulitzer's School: Columbia University's School of Journalism, 1903-2003* (New York: Columbia University, 2003).

ground rules. But historians using this demarcation ignore Pulitzer's own use of the word "is" in favor of his "ought to be." Pulitzer viewed journalism as a modern profession at the time that he conceived of his college program. What he wanted was reporters and editors equipped with a deeper background and more skills in finance, constitutional traditions, history, and economics, among others. This academic knowledge would supplement education in practical journalism and editing so that newspapers would have a ready-made cadre of employees to deal with the increasingly complex coverage needs they faced. The *New York World's* owner in the new century thought that the profession needed better-equipped reporters, and knew the demands that news coverage presented no longer allowed for the lengthy period of training "drudgery" that the *World's* founder, Manton Marble, once described to a would-be journalist.²

There is another problem with taking the founding of university journalism schools as a departure point, and that is their own slow acceptance. Pulitzer's eventual \$2 million grant to Columbia College only took effect in 1912, a decade after Pulitzer's founding memorandum and after the publisher's death allowed college leaders to establish its operational rationale free from Pulitzer's micro-management. The Missouri School of Journalism had its beginning in 1908, and others soon followed -- Winfield notes that two dozen college and university programs formed over the next twenty years.³ The contention that university-trained professionals significantly changed journalism is correct in the long run, but the establishment of a school is a vastly different thing than its graduates having an effect. It would take years before even the earliest graduates of the first schools would be in a position to have a major impact on news and news coverage; an even longer time before these graduates would become lead editors, city editors, managing editors, or publishers able to put their new thinking to work making formative changes to the news environment. By that time newspapers faced a new contender, broadcast radio, and another wave of technological change was speeding up the news cycle. Though

² See previous chapter, Marble to Beach, May 21, 1863, Marble MS, LoC.

³ Boylan, *Pulitzer's School*, p. 24-25; Winfield, *Birth of a Profession*, 1, 4.

contemporary organizational scholars, such as sociologist W.B. Elkin, viewed journalism as disorganized, primitive, and chaotic, newspapers did not mark time waiting for university graduates to come and change the profession.⁴

Newsmen remained dubious about university-trained journalists and about university programs. The difficulty was not so much that the graduates would be academically overqualified, they argued, but that they would not emerge with a profound sense of what made news. Melville Stone, who sat on the Missouri school's advisory board, worried that the academic approach to the news business was likely to teach excessively liberal ideas based on socialist theory. In a 1922 speech to the Michigan Press Association, he warned that a school of journalism was useless unless it taught history, citizenship, and "something of our civilization and our peculiar form of government." Otherwise, Stone felt, simply reading the newspaper itself might be a better indoctrination to the profession.⁵ Stone's writing shows him to be a deeply conservative man with a practical business sense and a pragmatic view of how to get things done. He reveled in the so-called "old boy" network of the time and plied associates with favors, receiving many himself, to accomplish journalistic purposes. Stone and leaders like him had little interest in an academically-led structure producing a new crop of idealistic reporters. They were already working for an ideal of their own, epitomized by the Associated Press and its mission of conveying unbiased information in terse and compact form by the most rapid means possible. The telegraph network made newspapers into business outlets selling a perishable commodity, wrote historian James Melvin Lee: "Shop-worn goods the merchant can sell at a special sale to bring at least the cost of the production, but stale news a publisher cannot market at any price," he explained.⁶

⁴ 1920 saw the first commercially licensed AM radio station; an unlicensed station, WWJ in Detroit, began broadcasting regular voice radio programs in August, 1920; in 1922, the teletype became commercially viable. W.B. Elkin cited in Winfield, *Birth of a Profession*, p. 4. Winfield in 1908 claimed journalism was "a modern profession, only just emerging from the biological stage of development."

⁵ Stone, "The School of Journalism," proof of Oct. 4, 1922, Box 7, Series 3, Works, Stone MS, Newberry Library.

⁶ Lee, *History of American Journalism*, 353.

This focus on freshness and speed in the news originated with commercial demands for information that moved markets, as has been shown with reference to the early competition that formed associations like the Harbor News Organization in New York City and its offshoot the early New York Associated Press. War with Mexico, continued Western settlement, and the California gold rush provided increased pressure for rapid access to news in the 1840s, and the contentious political events and sectional tensions of the 1850s only increased the appetite for current information. It was the Civil War, though, that brought together the elements needed for the full flowering of the news. The importance of wartime events and the hunger on the part of millions of home-front readers for quick word of distant battles and army movements coupled with availability of the telegraph, the railroad, and the steamboat to move messages regardless of expense. The war destroyed ordinary rules and barriers to participation as well, allowing recruitment a new group of young reporters access to cover the most important events, eclipsing the old-school correspondents and political operatives who once provided remote copy to editors. An even younger corps of new technology workers emerged to staff the telegraphic network with its wartime demands – the telegraph became fully diffused as an innovation during this time and those who understood it best and manipulated its technology were mere teenagers, their age identity hidden behind miles of wire and their operating identity represented by the speed of their telegraphy and their on-wire “fist,” or the way that they operated the telegraphic key. Journalism historian David Mindich argues persuasively that governmental administrative use of the network to manipulate public opinion and to conduct the vital business of the war transcended the partisan press strictures that had prevented a truly national audience from forming. News services and the telegraph now “delivered a single message to newspapers of all political stripes,” and dispatches from the administration created a “shared discourse” that both heightened the power of the executive and created a federal audience.⁷ This may not be quite the triumphalist achievement that Mindich

⁷ Mindich, “Stanton, the Inverted Pyramid, and Information Control,” *Civil War and the Press*, 197.

makes it, shadowed as it is in Roland Barthes description of state power as reliant on the national press to uphold the government as the ideal of efficiency, and Michel Foucault's concept that journalism in idealizing the state gives inherent legitimacy to some sources while de-legitimizing others. The emergence of a truly national discourse does represent an evolutionary climb upward and one that built a foundation for national dialogue to underlie the purely political or sensationalistic coverage of the earlier press.⁸

The end of the war left readers with a new way of looking at the news and new expectations for what constituted news. An expectation was set that a newspaper would have its own reporter in the field as an authoritative source on major events, or that a vetted authoritative source from a news agency would report as a substitute. The enterprise required of reporters during the war – writing dispatches while riding on a train headed toward the nearest telegraph access, sending those dispatches at any hour of the day or night, working and scheming to beat all other reporters – did not dissipate with the passing of the war. The cadre of successful wartime correspondents continued to look for new applications of their skills, and the rise to management of many of them staffed newsrooms with professionals who expected equal enterprise from their staffs and who had seen the benefit of applying new technology in creative ways.

The end of the Civil War left a vastly enhanced communication network that had been built largely with government dollars. It was rapidly awarded, gratis, to private industry, returned to its original patent rights holders in such a way that monopolistic consolidation was quickly effected. The rise of Western Union over all other telegraph competitors was swift and thorough, and the unique relationship between the wire carrier and the news agencies that used it led to professional standards and new expectations for what constituted regular news business practices. As the minutes of press associations show, the hand-in-glove relationship between the telegraph companies and the news

⁸ Roland Barthes "Mythologies" reviewed by Richard Brody, "The Uses of 'Mythologies'", *The New Yorker*, April 19, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/the-uses-of-mythologies> (accessed July 16, 2015).

organizations was carefully monitored, extensively analyzed, and deliberately constructed. The fact that the Western Associated Press knew what its word flow was between east and west, and that its agents trained reporters to maximize effectiveness while minimizing the number of words actually sent, shows a managerial dedication to an enterprise that is far from chaotic. That this paralleled the continuing postal newspaper exchange program demonstrates that newspapers depended on networks to feed the vast appetite for copy; recent academic work tracing “viral” news stories gives evidence of the interconnection of news organizations across geographical barriers and demonstrates that important relationships were based on trustworthiness of the news delivered from one paper to another.⁹ This is far from the “objectivity” standard that became so important in late twentieth century news analysis, but it does represent a hewing to fact-based and spare journalistic writing whose practitioners prided themselves on removing “opinion” from their transmissions.

This transition toward factuality bolstered the public effect of the growing news network, which was to increase trust in reporting and the validity of any particular newspaper despite its avowed political leaning. In doing this the newspapers created national community. At a time when personal use of the telegraphic network was still prohibitively expensive, the newspaper traffic democratized the network by giving readers virtual access to their national brethren. A resident of Des Moines, now on the national transcontinental wire, could envision a direct connection to the doings of a resident of New York City or the decisions of representatives in Washington, D.C. The newspaper, at a few pennies a day, gave cheap access to the results of the most advanced forms of communication. As one commentator pointed out, individuals by the 1870s no longer wondered how the telegraph worked, but simply expected that information would fly from one end of the system to the other. The magic of real-time communication promised so elaborately by Morse with his “What hath God wrought?” public relations

⁹ See chapter 3, Cordell, “Infectious Texts: Viral Networks in 19th Century U.S. Newspaper,” Northeastern University.

magic had become a commonplace phenomenon, but largely through vicarious experience in the proxy of the newspaper.

The unintended consequence of ubiquitous rail and telegraph networking was the destabilization of previously accepted geographic strictures, epitomized by the takeover of the New York Associated Press by the Western Associated Press (described in Chapter 5). The advantage of cheap and rapid communication was that it worked in any direction, making it possible to manufacture a nexus for the national news dialogue and to place it at any convenient point within the network. New York media barons had assumed that their dominance of the news was a natural right conveyed by the economic power of the metropolis and its unique position as the Atlantic window for commerce. They were correct about the economic importance of the entrepot, but failed to realize that the rest of the nation would be impatient or subservient to a news feed that magnified New York-centric events and required tribute from the hinterland to operate. What did a Saint Louis editor care about the insurance claim for the sinking of a New York-based commercial ship? The growth of the telegraph network and improved cable communications direct to European sources created an environment that allowed news agencies to contract with one another for direct feeds at (comparatively) inexpensive rates. Enterprising Midwestern editors realized that by organizing, they could create a power shift favoring their transmissions and serving their needs. Their success created a big business with its heart located in the distributed network of the hinterland, no matter where its corporate offices were located. Evidence from the Victor Lawson Papers shows that they also realized that anybody could do the same thing, and that they put safeguards in place to protect the new national Associated Press from a similar takeover. They created a secondary news service to keep smaller publications happy, and developed a business structure that gave at least the illusion of competition.¹⁰ Though minor competitor agencies would rise

¹⁰ Lawson to Howland, undated telegram, Box 2, Folder 4, 278; Lawson to Albert J. Barr, November 2, 1892, Box 2, Folder 4, 287, Victor Lawson papers, Newberry Library.

up in the future, the AP monopoly and its cooperative structure left it serenely dominant for the next century.

Within the larger picture of networked communication, newspapers of the nineteenth century can be seen doing the work that communication scholars and theoreticians have assigned to the “modern” newspaper. As shown in the case of the New York City Draft Riots of 1863, newspapers were not only telling their readers about the news, but also about how to think about the news, the act known as “framing.” The riots were conducted by a nefarious “other” population, one that could not possibly represent the real population of the city, and national coverage both affirmed that the “other” existed and reassured that order had triumphed and that norms had returned. Content analysis of newspapers covering the single issue of immigration, meanwhile, finds that newspapers helped assign identity to immigrants and to create pictures of immigrant groups that could be used by readers to reinforce social hierarchies. Immigrant groups matured over time from early categorization as “dangerous” to an accepted categorization of exotic but understood. The dangerous, violent Irish in the 1840s and 1850s became the politically powerful Irish of the 1890s. The dangerous, hapless Germans [“Dutch”] of the 1850s and 60s became the lager-sipping, civically involved group whose annual Turnfests and civic ceremonies made for interesting coverage. In constructing immigrant identity the newspapers took on the role of instructing on citizenship. Though Robert Wiebe writes of 1880s antialien sentiments and “abuse[ing] the immigrant in rising crescendo after the middle of the decade,” a reading of general coverage of the time shows newspapers seeming concerned with larger issues of immigration than particular abuse of any one immigrant group. Complex and lengthy stories dealt with subjects such as whether England was dumping its paupers on American shores and, if so, what to do about it? And, while nativist fear of such things as Catholic political motives remained a constant, many news stories reassured readers about immigrant behaviors, such as stories about the dedication of mine workers who had come from central Europe. True shrillness about immigration would emerge at the

turn of the century as individuals like Melville Stone would warn about “uneducated” immigrants with no fundamental American cultural values swamping the nation with uninformed voting, but the nature of news coverage from 1840 to 1890 seems to have been a gradual rise in complex and subtle articles and a general falling-off of reports on the exoticism of immigrant behavior, good or bad.¹¹

In taking on the role of civic educator, newspapers collectively assigned themselves as guardians of civic values and arbiters of reality. In the mid-twentieth century and during the Cold War journalists and media leaders retold this story in the guise of being inheritors of First Amendment guarantees that allowed them to stand in for the general public as privileged observers and questors for the truth. The media narrative became one of a golden age of objectivity, the result of dismissing the “hacks” of the nineteenth century and replacing them with monastically-dedicated professionals who held themselves aloof from the squabbles and politics of society in order to preserve their preeminent role of preserving American freedoms.¹² Nineteenth century journalists were less concerned with the appearance of objectivity and more concerned with being authoritative to their particular imagined audience – Manton Marble believed there was a particular *New York World* reader, and Whitelaw Reid instructed his writers to remember to look for what the *New York Tribune* audience wanted and expected in its newspaper. They were frank about the newspaper being a business; the grand narrative of the press in later years tended to mask the fact that newspapers existed as a business and tried, instead, to discuss their role as discoverers of truth or as vehicles meant to raise uncomfortable questions into public dialogue. Nineteenth century leaders would have been in hearty agreement with Nerone when he states that: “Media are instruments . . . to reproduce and multiply capital, to serve the interests of capital, because they are owned and directed by capital.” Within that admission, though, those early journalism

¹¹ Stone, “The School of Journalism,” Stone MS, Newberry Library.

¹² The New York Times contract for its writers including contract and freelance reporters requires that contributors refrain from political activity, even to the level of prohibiting lawn signs promoting a particular candidate, in order to promote an image of objectivity.

improvers would have stated that doing the thing well and thoroughly, crisply, and with skill, was what they eagerly sought in professionalizing their industry.¹³

Oddly today we seem to be moving back into an earlier form of journalism which is termed “Public Journalism,” with activities including “crowdsourcing,” in which observations by untrained observers are aggregated with limited interpretation. The all-pervasive access given by the Internet and its World Wide Web and the immense communication bandwidth accessible to individuals at low cost has reduced the importance of the newspaper especially, but media in general, as intermediaries. At the same time the Internet has severely disrupted the advertising financial model that arose in the 1870s and supported news publications through the twentieth century. The continuing shrinkage in professional news ranks and the scrapping of many major newspapers has seemed like a race to the bottom; many news organizations have eliminated cost centers such as copy editing pools and independent local reporters in order to control costs. Attempts to outsource rote coverage of city council and school board meetings to Indian-based video transcription services, or to use computer-driven writing machines to produce sports coverage, show the desperation caused by shrinking budgets. The rise of the blogger, essentially a modern version of the amateur letter-writer of the Early Republic, challenges the idea that there are benefits to the large business organization represented by integrated local newspapers. Soul-searching on the part of journalists has led to statements like that of communication professor Theodore Glasser that “Journalism is in the problem-solving business, not the truth business,” or that journalism is a philosophy, not a professional trade. “We pretend that news is a concrete thing that we merely collect and present, albeit with artful grace,” writes Glasser, invoking the

¹³ Nerone, *Revisiting Four Theories*, 29. Nerone argues that those twentieth century theorists such as Wilbur Schramm who thought of mass communication as a service, under libertarian and social responsibility theories, overlooked the brutal truth that just because they were not dominated by the state, they did not automatically inherit the virtue of representing society more fairly than did publications in authoritarian countries. Business has its interests, too, otherwise “our media system would be owned and operated by philanthropic agencies and not-for-profit corporations.”

philosopher Richard Rorty.¹⁴ It is an intriguing retreat from the grand narrative, and one that is problematic, in that it encompasses media phenomena such as the highly-successful but inherently wrong anti-vaccine movement, politically-backed ideologue sites such as the Drudge Report, and narrowly-focused news opinion presenters like Fox News. The *New York Sun* and its controversial “Trip to the Moon” hoax series of articles of 1835 may have found twenty-first century company. Attempts to broaden the news to take citizen input into account and to deliver a product that is relevant to anti-corporatist desires has removed authority from any particular news agency and rendered all accounts of any event as fungible, as demonstrated in early 2015 with “news” coverage of the shooting of a black man in Ferguson, Missouri. Each interest in the Ferguson case was able to reach its own Internet audience directly, with the result of riotous standoffs based on separate sets of “facts.” The imaginary national audience has become, instead, an audience of interests – and the question of how that differs from that of the Party Press, or of the days of Yellow Journalism, is an interesting one.

This research has shown that early newspapers were doing “modern” things, and that they faced many of the same network effects that have challenged the press today. They reacted to these effects by democratizing advanced technology for public consumption; by forming managerial business structures; by improving and increasing the type and amount of news delivered to the public; and by professionalizing their staffs and policing their membership. Yet in seeking to reveal their advances, this work may only have joined them to a newly superseded ethos in journalism. Was “professional” journalism a hundred-year flash in the pan? Only time will tell.

¹⁴ Glasser, *The Idea of Public Journalism*, xv.

APPENDIX A

Codebook 1, 2012-13

Codebook and Protocol: 19th Century Newspapers and Immigrant Coverage

Introduction

This project assesses newspaper coverage of immigrant issues at various points from the 1840s – 1880s. It examines the way newspaper editors and reporters portrayed immigrants and whether significant change in portrayal occurred over the time period. Coders will be provided with articles to evaluate, rather than entire newspapers to search. The following definitions are important.

Immigrant can mean a person coming to the United States from a foreign country or territory, a person of foreign birth now living within the United States, or (importantly) a person as part of a movement from one area of the United States into another. Immigrants are not necessarily from overseas. Territories and foreign possessions were being acquired by the United States during this historic period, which included the conquest, purchase, or occupation of land in the West. Immigrants are often characterized by ethnic groupings popular in the 19th century but now considered demeaning in the 21st century. Religious groupings may also characterize immigrants.

Immigration can mean the movement of people to or within the country to a particular point.

News Story for this project includes published letters, editorials, articles borrowed from other publications, telegraphic listings, partisan political writings, editorial cartoons, and other non-advertising copy. The coders will remember that newspapers evolved considerably in the 19th century, that many descriptors used during the time period are now considered unusable or scurrilous language, and that the concept of requiring “balance” or “fairness” in news belongs more to the 20th century.

Primary Presentation of immigrants means the most significant identification, e.g. Irish immigrants may be identified primarily by their Roman Catholic faith, or primarily by their Irish heritage. In a story that may involve two or more immigrant characterizations, one must be chosen as the primary presentation (e.g. in a crime story involving an Irish perpetrator and a German victim, the primary presentation would be whichever person the story was primarily about – if it is about arresting the perpetrator, it’s an Irish story, or if it is about the unfortunate victim, it’s a German story).

Procedure

The coder will first SKIM through the numbered news story provided in order to gain a general overview. The coder should not need to read the story at a deep level.

The coder will then return to the story to analyze its content according to the variables in the codebook. As stories will already have been documented for newspaper source, date, and location in the paper, coders will only need to record the identifying number for the story before beginning to code.

The coder should not worry about comparing or changing results of earlier coding they may have done as they gain experience and comfort working with the articles. One of the aims of the coding project is to make the coding results themselves abstract so that data compilation can be done in a valid way. Coders should remain detached about their results and not try to force patterns into existence. Coding errors and difficulties will make themselves obvious later on in processing the project, and can be accounted for then.

Clarification of Variables

In identifying story origins (V2.), the coder will use clues such as bylines, datelines, editorial style, or headlines to try to determine where the story originated. Newspapers of the time borrowed from one another heavily, but often without attribution.

In identifying other newspaper coding (V3.), “East Coast newspaper” would include cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Washington, D.C., Charleston, Richmond, and Atlanta

“Large City newspaper not East Coast” would include cities such as Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, St. Louis, New Orleans, and the like.

The term “Other newspaper/cannot tell” can include religious or ethnic papers as well as small-town papers or political movement publications (e.g. temperance, suffrage).

Coverage type (V4.) is a binary choice between apparently simple stories and apparently complex ones.

Simple stories are those that are short, that present little immigrant information or characterization, that present only one aspect of an immigration story, contain only statistical information, or that simply reinforce stereotypes. An example would be the arrival of a number of immigrants on a particular ship, or a crime story that simply identifies the background of a criminal as a non-American one.

Complex stories need not be extremely long to count as complex. They are those that invite analysis, that may discuss several immigrant types and differentiate between them, that may discuss national policies on immigration, or countries of origin, or political approaches to immigration, etc. An example of a complex story might be a feature-type story of walking the immigration docks, or a discussion about the intentions of Chinese immigrants entering the United States.

For Primary Presentation, the identifier “F” (foreign, generalized group) should be used if multiple immigrant types are mentioned either as part of a “they’re all foreign, you can’t trust them” type of approach; or if the story is a survey or roster of all foreign arrivals, such as a port entry listing; or if immigrants are being discussed in general, as in “tour Castle Garden but be prepared for the smell as the immigrants get off the boat . . .”.

Variable 8 (V8.), story intent, includes six definitions that are meant to form a scale of values, from urging action against immigrants to urging assistance to immigrants. The coder should try to guess the intention behind the choice to write or publish the article, and place the article somewhere on this scale.

As an aid to understanding the terms, “Supports calm about immigrants” might include an article from the West Coast stating that Chinese immigration is self-limiting, while “Supports wariness about immigrants” might include an article stating that European paupers are being dumped on American soil, or might include crime reports that show immigrants as criminals.

“Warns of immigrant effects” might include health warnings, such as a cholera outbreak, or economic warnings that American jobs are at risk due to immigrant pressures.

The variable (V9.) regarding “Citizenship Approach” seeks to determine whether news articles move beyond simply reporting events, and to see whether the articles are recommending actions related to participating in the republic.

For the purposes of this project, there is a citizenship approach present if the articles make policy recommendations, discuss voting, discuss naturalization, recommend actions for citizens to take, or recommend actions for immigrants to take.

An article that discusses governmental recruitment of immigrants to come to America may have a citizenship approach; an article that discusses participation of immigrants in an election may have a citizenship approach; an article that only discusses immigrant arrivals probably has no citizenship approach.

“Context of story,” (V10.), is meant to gain an overall view of the story. The selection “Multiple Contexts” is not a favored choice, but if a story has multiple contexts, the coder should list “M” first, and then list the two most significant contexts, one over the other, with a diagonal dash leading from “M” to each one:

C
M
L

VARIABLES

V1. Story Identification

V2. Apparent story origin

- 1 = newspaper's own reporter
- 2 = newspaper's editor/editorial staff
- 3 = letter writer or occasional contributor
- 4 = another newspaper*
- 5 = telegraph or wire service
- 6 = graphic artist or cartoonist

V3. Other newspaper coding (*code if V2. = 4)

- 1 = East Coast newspaper
- 2 = Large City newspaper not East Coast
- 3 = Foreign newspaper
- 3 = Other newspaper/cannot tell

V4. Coverage type

- A = Simple (single mention of immigrant origin, no analysis, stereotype)
- B = Complex (more than brief mention; may play one immigrant group off against another; implications of political or citizenship involvement).

V5. Characterization of coverage

- P = Positive, welcoming of immigrants.
- N = Negative, dismissive, rejecting, or warning of immigrants/immigrant behaviors.
- W = Neutral

V6. Characterization of immigrants in story

- O = overseas, from outside the U.S., in local terms
- B = from within the U.S. or from areas contiguous with the U.S., in local terms
- E = in-transit, not a long-term local population
- G = general, not a local phenomenon.

V7. Primary presentation of immigrant groups in story

- F = foreign, generalized group.
- I = Irish

G = German
 T = Italian
 M = Mexican
 C = Chinese, other Asian
 B = Catholic
 P = non-Catholic religious sect (includes Mormon, Quaker, etc.)

V8. Story intent

A = Urges action against immigrants
 D = Supports wariness about immigrants
 Q = Warns of immigrant effects
 Z = Supports calm about immigrants
 X = Urges assistance to immigrants
 V = No intent indicated

V9. Is there a citizenship approach?

I = Discusses voting
 D = Discusses naturalization/intent to obtain citizenship
 E = Discusses legislation aimed at immigrants, either pro or con
 F = Recommends behaviors for immigrants to follow to become citizens
 G = Shows citizens dealing with immigrant issues
 N = Article not responsive to citizenship issues

V10. Context of story

C = Crime, as either perpetrator or victim
 S = Social, including relief or charity issues, population growth
 P = Political, including issues of municipal infrastructure
 L = Labor, including employment issues
 E = Education, including assimilation programs
 M = Multiple contexts (list two most significant)
 N = No particular context.

(Codebook 1 proved to be too granular for the limited data set available. The codebook was rewritten and definitions clarified for the second data collection).

Codebook 2, 2015

Codebook and Protocol: 19th Century Newspapers and Immigrant Coverage

Introduction

This project assesses newspaper coverage of immigrant issues at various points from the 1840s – 1890s. It examines the way newspaper editors and reporters portrayed immigrants and whether significant change in portrayal occurred over the time period. Coders will be provided with articles to evaluate, rather than entire newspapers to search. The following definitions are important.

Immigrant (or Emigrant) can mean a person coming to the United States from a foreign country or territory, a person of foreign birth now living within the United States, or (importantly) a person as part of a movement from one area of the United States into another. Immigrants are not necessarily from overseas. Territories and foreign possessions were being acquired by the United States during this historic period, which included the conquest, purchase, or occupation of land in the West.

Immigration/Emigration can mean the movement of people from overseas to America, or within America from one place to another.

News Story for this project includes published letters, editorials, articles borrowed from other publications, telegraphic listings, partisan political writings, speech transcripts, and other non-advertising copy.

Procedure

The coder will first SKIM through the numbered news story provided in order to gain a general overview. The coder should not need to read the story at a deep level or know the history of a particular time or place. Each story has been selected because it has key words within it – immigrant, emigrant, national origins (e.g. German) or social attributes (e.g. Fenian, an Irish associative term). Some lengthy stories may have only a single section involving immigrants – the reader can limit themselves to that section.

The coder will then return to the story to analyze its content according to the variables in the codebook. Coders do not need to name the article; they will only need to record the identifying number of the story before beginning to code. Results should be listed in an MS-Excel worksheet which is included on the thumb drive given to the coder.

Nineteenth century articles can be hard to read. Their type font and typeface can be difficult. Each article is presented as an Adobe Reader file so that you can manipulate the size and view. Newspaper identities are present as headers in most of these .pdf files and may be a helpful tool for answering prompts V1 and V2. Please try to avoid getting caught up in the narrative, always a risk when reading newspapers.

As your first work, please code the ten stories listed under Group Five, Lot 4, and send the results to me as soon as possible. I will use these results to measure inter-coder reliability, that is, whether each coder is seeing roughly the same results as they analyze the stories.

The coder should not worry about comparing or changing results of earlier coding they may have done as they gain experience and comfort working with the articles. One of the aims of the coding project is to make the coding results themselves abstract so that data compilation can be done in a valid way. Coders should remain detached about their results and not try to analyze patterns or discover trends. Any coding errors and difficulties will make themselves obvious later on in processing the project, and can be accounted for then.

Clarification of Variables

Story identification number is the number of the story file itself. Coders may ignore the group and lot numbers (they are there for later analysis) and simply use the sequentially assigned story numbers. There are 193 stories in the sample.

In identifying *story origins* (V2.), the coder will use clues such as bylines, datelines, editorial style, or headlines to try to determine where the story originated. Newspapers of the time borrowed from one another heavily, but often without attribution.

In *identifying newspaper coding* (V3.),

“East Coast newspaper” would include cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Washington, D.C., and the New England states.

“Western Newspaper” would include cities such as Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and states including Wisconsin and Minnesota.

“Southern Newspaper” would include Charleston, Richmond, Atlanta, New Orleans, and states like Arkansas and Texas.

The term “Other newspaper/cannot tell” can include religious or ethnic papers as well as small-town papers or political movement publications (e.g. temperance, suffrage).

Coverage type (V4.) is a choice between apparently simple stories, intermediate ones, and apparently complex ones.

Simple stories are those that are short, that present little immigrant information or characterization, that present only one aspect of an immigration story, contain only statistical information, or that simply reinforce stereotypes. An example would be the arrival of a number of immigrants on a particular ship, or a crime story that simply identifies the background of a criminal as a non-American one.

Intermediate stories might offer some analysis, but may not fully develop an issue. An example would be a story explaining the love-triangle background to an immigrant suicide, or mentioning that immigrant trains to Manitoba are uncomfortable.

Complex stories need not be extremely long to count as complex. They are those that invite analysis, that may discuss several immigrant types and differentiate between them, may discuss national policies on immigration, or countries of origin, or political approaches to immigration, etc. An example of a complex story might be a feature-type story of walking the immigration docks, or a discussion about the intentions of Chinese immigrants entering the United States.

Primary Presentation of immigrants (V7) means the most significant identification, e.g. Irish or German. In a story that may involve two or more immigrant characterizations, one must be chosen as the primary presentation (e.g. in a crime story involving an Irish perpetrator and a German victim, the primary presentation would be whichever person the story was primarily about – if it is about arresting the perpetrator, it’s an Irish story, or if it is about the unfortunate victim, it’s a German story).

For Primary Presentation, the identifier “F” (foreign, generalized group) should be used if multiple immigrant types are mentioned either as part of a “they’re all foreign, you can’t trust them” type of approach; or if the story is a survey or roster of all foreign arrivals, such as a port entry listing; or if immigrants are being discussed in general, as in “tour Castle Garden but be prepared for the smell as the immigrants get off the boat . . .”.

Story Intent (V8) means the coder’s judgment of what the news story was probably meant to accomplish. Did it urge action against immigrants, such as limiting their arrival, legislating against them, or asking to have them removed? Did it warn about immigrants or their behaviors (e.g. Hungarians may be dangerous)? Did it support immigration or point it out as a good thing? Use the categories offered to characterize the news story.

As an aid to understanding the terms, “Supports calm about immigrants” might include an article from the West Coast stating that Chinese immigration is self-limiting, while “Warns about immigrants” might include an article stating that European paupers are being dumped on American soil, or might include crime reports that show immigrants as criminals.

“Warns of immigrant effects” might include health warnings, such as a cholera outbreak, or economic warnings that American jobs are at risk due to immigrant pressures.

“Lists immigrant action” might include simple information such as an arrest, an arrival, or a note that a number of immigrants passed a particular point on a route.

Citizenship approach (V9) means analyzing the article to see whether it proposes ways for immigrants to behave as denizens of the U.S. Does the article prescribe ways immigrants should behave in order to act as U.S. Citizens? Does the article discuss citizenship values (e.g. voting responsibilities or general civic behavior)? Does the article attempt to isolate immigrants as a class separate from citizens?

For the purposes of this project, there is a citizenship approach present if the articles make policy recommendations, discuss voting, discuss naturalization, recommend actions for citizens to take, or recommend actions for immigrants to take.

An article that discusses governmental recruitment of immigrants to come to America may have a citizenship approach; an article that discusses participation of immigrants in an election may have a citizenship approach; an article that only discusses immigrant arrival numbers probably has no citizenship approach.

“Context of story,” (V10.), is meant to gain an overall view of the story. The selection “Multiple Contexts” is not a favored choice, but if a story has multiple contexts and no clear dominant theme the coder should list “M.”

VARIABLES

V1. Story Identification Number _____

V2. Apparent story origin

- 1 = newspaper's own reporter
- 2 = newspaper's editor/editorial staff
- 3 = letter writer or occasional contributor
- 4 = another newspaper
- 5 = telegraph or wire service

V3. Newspaper actually publishing the story

- 1 = East Coast newspaper
- 2 = Western newspaper
- 3 = Southern newspaper
- 4 = Other newspaper/cannot tell

V4. Coverage type

- A = Simple (single mention of immigrant origin, no analysis, stereotype, or simple list)
- M = Intermediate (some analysis or care has been taken).
- B = Complex (more than brief mention; may play one immigrant group off against another; implications of political or citizenship involvement).

V5. Characterization of coverage

- P = Positive, welcoming of immigrants or praising immigration.
- N = Negative, dismissive, rejecting, or warning of immigrants/immigrant behaviors.
- W = Neutral

V6. Characterization of immigrants in story

- O = overseas, from outside the U.S., in local terms
- B = from within the U.S. or from areas contiguous with the U.S., in local terms
- E = in-transit, not a long-term local population
- G = general, a national, not a local, phenomenon.

V7. Primary presentation of immigrant in story

- F = foreign, generalized group.
- D = domestic, internal migrants.
- I = Irish
- G = German

T = Italian
 OE = other European
 M = Mexican, other Spanish
 C = Chinese, other Asian
 B = Religious group

V8. Story intent

A = Urges action against immigrants
 D = Warns about immigrants
 Q = Predicts immigrant effects
 Z = Supports calm about immigrants
 X = Urges assistance to immigrants
 L = Lists immigrant action

V9. Is there a citizenship approach?

I = Discusses voting
 D = Discusses desirability of immigrant group for U.S.
 E = Discusses legislation aimed at immigrants, either pro or con
 F = Recommends behaviors for immigrants to follow to become citizens
 G = Shows citizens dealing with immigrant issues
 N = Article not responsive to citizenship issues

V10. Context of story

C = Crime, as either perpetrator or victim
 S = Social, including relief or charity issues, population growth
 P = Political, including issues of municipal infrastructure
 L = Labor, including employment issues
 E = Education, including assimilation programs
 N = No particular context.

(Some categories of Codebook 2 resulted in too diffuse a sample to be evaluated. Results from Variable 8, Story Intent, were combined as follows: A+D, Q+L, and Z+X. Results from Variable 9, Citizenship Approach, were combined as I+D, E, and F+G.)

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ABSTRACT**“WE SEND OUR NEWS BY LIGHTNING . . .”: THE INFORMATION EXPLOSION OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND ADAPTATION IN THE PRESS, 1840-1892**

by

TIMOTHY L. MORAN**December 2015****Advisor:** Dr. Marc W. Kruman**Major:** History (Early American)**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

This dissertation examines the change that came to American newspapers and reporting between 1840 and 1892 as the result of increasing communication bandwidth and the emergence of fast communication networks. Improvements in news distribution by post roads, steam navigation, and steam railways, followed by application of telegraphic communications, significantly speeded the news and changed the news cycle itself by linking metropolitan news centers with peripheral newspapers. The American Civil War brought this new information technology together with an event that created massive audience demand for timely and factual news, as opposed to purely political or commercial information. In postwar years the press moved toward an increasingly fact-based and professionalized form of reporting that supplanted the earlier Party Press and Penny Press. Newspapers democratized the expensive new communication technology of the Morse telegraph, making its benefits available to a wide audience, but also created a powerful news monopoly in the process. Newspapers assigned themselves new roles of interpreting national issues for an imagined national audience, and used techniques such as framing and agenda setting to create media identities for groups like Irish, German, and Chinese immigrants or events such as the New York City Draft Riots of 1863. The rise of communication networks under Western Union and ancillary telegraph networks eventually allowed

Western Associated Press newspapers in the hinterland to take power away from the dominant New York Associated Press, supplanting it with a new national news organization named the Associated Press but based in Chicago. This created a new kind of news coverage, one that was spare, uniform in style, and which attempted to move beyond opinion, presaging the twentieth century “full news” approach to journalism. In this process the newspapers of the mid- to late nineteenth century demonstrated intentional progress toward a modern form of journalism. This represents an era in newspaper development that is separate from the later rise of the Yellow Press, the Muckraking Press, and Sensationalism.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Timothy L. Moran was born in Detroit, Michigan, and graduated from Earnest W. Seaholm High School in Birmingham, Michigan, in 1975. He graduated from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in Journalism from the College of Communication in 1979, and received a Master's Degree from Wayne State University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in History (Early American) in 2012. He has worked as a journalist, columnist, and editor since 1979 for a variety of newspaper and magazine publications. He is a member of the American Historical Association, the American Journalism Historians Association, the Automotive Press Association, and the Organization of American Historians. He is a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in History from Wayne State University in December, 2015.