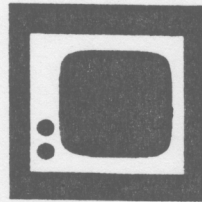


# MEDIA



by NANCY BERNHARD

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# OVERVIEW

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**Big Business.** During most of the nineteenth century, a newspaper or a magazine could be started with a little borrowed cash and a lot of hard work. Most publications expressed the views and preferences of their publishers and editors: it was the age of personal journalism. By 1900 it took at least a million dollars to launch a newspaper in New York City, and most publications were affected by business concerns. So began the age of corporate journalism. What had been a personal, local, and literary enterprise became steadily more bureaucratic, national, and professional throughout the twentieth century. In 1900 there were 2,226 dailies with a combined circulation of 15.1 million in the United States.

**Big Questions.** Rapid growth in population, resources, and power had turned the United States into a decidedly industrial nation by the turn of the century, but basic questions about the character of the nation remained unanswered. What role would the United States play in world politics? How could unrestricted economic individualism be reconciled with the goals of social reformers who crusaded against the ills of capitalism? How many people would benefit from the wealth generated by the nation's prodigious natural resources? Would the government guarantee living and working conditions, educational opportunities, health, and security? And not least, what was the role of the press in monitoring business and government? These questions were discussed and answered in the pages of the nation's newspapers and magazines.

**The Spirit of the Reformer.** To many observers, the most pressing problem facing the American nation at the turn of the century was the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few huge corporations, known as the trusts. Between 1898 and 1904, 5,300 individual companies combined into just 318 trusts. Aided by corrupt politicians, the trusts accrued power for themselves at the expense of thousands of American workers, some of whose wages did not sustain their families. Newspapers and magazines took up the challenge of exposing the trusts and cleaning up the political machines that smoothed their way. These "people's champions" campaigned for a more equal distribution of wealth, for the rights of the worker and the farmer, and for honesty in

government. Wealthy Americans distrusted the publishers of the dailies crusading for reform, while the larger public also attacked the publishers for their wealth and privilege.

**The Illustrated Weekly.** American manufacturers introduced a wide new array of consumer products in this era and needed to publicize them. Old-style religious and literary magazines were not a suitable outlet for the splashy advertisements these products required. During the first decade of the twentieth century, half the space of the general-circulation weeklies was filled with ads, driving down their price and driving up their circulation. This circumstance, along with innovations in printing technology in the 1880s and 1890s, made the magazine a dominant mass medium of this period, before the introduction of movies or radio. The cost of producing a weekly magazine with pictures dropped steadily. In 1893 *McClure's* debuted at fifteen cents a copy. In 1903 *Collier's* sold for just five cents, compared with twenty-five cents for one of the older publications such as *Harper's* or the *Century*. The *Saturday Evening Post*, purchased in 1897 by Cyrus H. K. Curtis and edited from 1899 until 1937 by George Horace Lorimer, became the largest-circulation weekly in the nation, reaching one million in 1908. Lorimer, aiming at the middle-class businessman and his family, attracted famous writers such as Joseph Conrad, O. Henry, Jack London, Stephen Crane, and Bret Harte.

**Investigative Zeal.** Cheap and well produced, *Collier's*, *McClure's*, *Everybody's*, *Arena*, and *Cosmopolitan* pioneered a new kind of magazine journalism. They exposed the monopolistic and abusive practices of the trusts in oil, insurance, railroads, and food production and brought to light the deep corruption in municipal, state, and federal government. Groundbreaking journalists, such as Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, Ray Stannard Baker, and David Graham Phillips, became celebrities in their own right. Mr. Dooley, the wisecracking saloon keeper created by another muckraker, Finley Peter Dunne, commented, "Time was whin th' magazines was very ca'ming to th' mind. Th' idea ye got fr'm these publications was that life was wan glad, sweet song . . . But now, when I pick up my fav'rit magazine, what do I find? Iv'rything

has gone wrong . . . Here ye arre! Last edition! Just out! Full account iv th' Incalculated!"

**A Name for the New Investigative Journalism.** President Theodore Roosevelt enacted a series of moderate reforms to curb the worst abuses of the trusts. He appreciated the work of responsible journalists in bringing problems to public attention, but he railed against those who, driven by sensationalism, sullied the reputation of all businessmen and politicians. On 14 April 1906 he delivered a speech at the new House Office Building in Washington, D.C. Roosevelt cited a passage from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) as a metaphor for the journalists determined not to see any good anywhere: "the Man with the Muckrake, the man who could look no way but downward with the muckrake in his hand, who was offered a celestial crown for his muckrake, but would neither look up nor regard the crown he was offered, but continued to rake to himself the filth of the floor." The speech won headlines everywhere, and conservative papers fastened onto the label "muckraker" as a derogatory term for reformist journalists. It could be a good term or a bad term: to muckrake meant to investigate and to expose. Critics and supporters alike dubbed muckraking a "literature of exposure," with a "perspective of revolt" and irreverence toward all authority. Muckraking diminished through the decade, and historians give the date of its death as 1912, when *McClure's*, which had pioneered the movement, joined the trend to publish more fiction after the magazine changed hands.

**The Ladies.** Not every publication was swept up in the spirit of muckraking. While the long-standing leader in women's magazines, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, did publish important exposés, it also published fiction by William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle,

and Sarah Orne Jewett. Its longtime editor, Edward Bok, aspired to improve home life in America with advice on everything from marriage to nutrition to architecture. His campaigns to beautify American neighborhoods and to clean up American morality proved popular and influential. He joined forces with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union to attack patent medicines, which often contained high percentages of alcohol and narcotics. In 1901 *Good Housekeeping* inaugurated the Good Housekeeping Institute, which conducted experiments to evaluate a range of household products and practices. In 1900 *McCall's* and the *Woman's Home Companion* already contained the "service" departments familiar to readers of today's women's magazines: beauty, children, home, food, and features.

**Color.** The first decade of the twentieth century brought the flowering of two kinds of color in American publishing. First, a humorous blend of folklore and political commentary known as the "colyum" made its way into the newspapers. Writers such as Bert Leston Taylor, George Ade, and Don Marquis made their names writing verses and telling stories. More literally, color printing became technologically and financially viable at this time. It began in earnest with the introduction of color supplements to the Sunday papers, filled with cartoons and comic strips. A new kind of artistry combined political commentary, zinging wit, and draftsmanship, and the modern comic strip was born. Both kinds of color added fuel to the circulation wars between the papers in big cities, with writers and artists constantly being lured from one paper to another. And both kinds of color led people who had never bought a newspaper before, especially children, to become regular readers.



# TOPICS IN THE NEWS

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## BOOK PUBLISHING

**Publishers Modernize.** During the nineteenth century, most book publishers in America believed theirs was an ivory-tower profession, bearing the cultural and social responsibility of providing Americans with works of literary distinction or political and philosophical distinction, whether such volumes returned a profit or not; but in the decade 1900 to 1909, shocked by the collapse of two of the nation's oldest and most formidable houses, Harper and Appleton, publishers grew progressively less genteel and more aggressively profit-oriented and business-minded. In the very first year of the decade, the venerable institutions of Harper's and Appleton did not disappear from the American publishing scene, but only because they were rescued from bankruptcy by Wall Street financiers. In the process, Wall Street found the publishers' idealism quaint and their mismanagement maddening; and in the following years a much more fiscally minded generation of managers moved into the industry to work alongside the high-minded editors and proprietors. As a result, although many major houses, like Scribners, Putnam's, and Dutton, continued to be owned by the families whose names they bore, they began rapidly transforming their business and marketing methods and dramatically expanding into large-scale businesses of the twentieth century.

**Growth and Expansion.** In this dynamic and turbulent period, more and more books were mass-produced, a feat made possible by the fact that printing and binding were becoming progressively mechanized. In 1900 *Publishers' Weekly* noted that the capacity of bookprinting houses and binderies in New York alone was estimated to be one hundred thousand volumes per week. The same publication observed that the publishing industry was developing in other ways: in the single year 1900, for example, more than seven thousand new books, mainly by American writers, had been published by nearly six hundred publishers. By 1907, despite the panic of that year, the number of new books published had risen to 9,620, the largest number ever recorded. As the decade proceeded, new publishing houses, such as Doubleday, Page and Company sprang up — mainly in New York City — and traditional houses, such as Scribners, incor-

porated. At the same time, to increase markets and guard their balance sheets, the new breed of profit-oriented publishers saw to it that the distribution of their titles became more national and even international, as American books appeared in homes and bookstores in Europe, Canada, and Mexico. And in this important transitional decade, as the business grew and redefined itself, New York City became the undisputed capital of the publishing world.

**Fiction Predominates.** Meanwhile, the boom in fiction publishing that had begun after the Civil War showed no signs of abating, and while biography, history, economics, and poetry continued to sell, fiction became the great mainstay of the industry. Sales of novels of all types climbed higher and higher, with best-sellers enriching author and publisher alike. In 1900 Mary Johnston's *To Have and To Hold*, a historical novel about colonial Virginia, sold more than 250,000 copies in six months. For perspective, consider that an analyst a few years later recalled that, as recently as the late 1890s, a book was considered highly successful if it sold 25,000 copies. Then in 1904, according to the annual listing in *The Bookman*, a top best-seller was *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, by Kate Douglas Wiggin; in later years writers such as Upton Sinclair and Booth Tarkington enjoyed huge sales; in 1908 Mary Roberts Rinehart, one of the most popular authors of the time, published yet another best-seller, *The Circular Staircase*. In this same year, of 9,254 new titles published, 1,458 were works of fiction; these numbers represented a constant trend during this time, and if they were to include fiction for children, they would be much larger. During these years America's taste for fiction, especially popular fiction, seemed insatiable. High-brow publishers took pains to distinguish melodramatic and sensationalistic novels from the more worthy and realistic "literature," such as that advocated by William Dean Howells, and written by Henry James, Edith Wharton, and Stephen Crane. Publishers generally vied for successful fiction writers by offering large advances and royalty rates as much as 20 percent of sales, and devoted great energy to wooing the reading public by spending ever larger sums on advertising and promotion. Even as rates for ads placed in books and magazines skyrocketed, one noted publisher estimated in 1904 that

even small publishers spent \$50,000 a year on advertising. Indeed, in 1909 Henry Holt, a longtime giant in the business, complained that with so much competition for fiction readers, marketing and advertising costs had made it difficult to clear a profit on a book.

**Authors' Rights.** In the nineteenth century, publishers generally treated their authors with little consideration; but in the years 1900–1909 American writers, aided by a new cadre of literary agents, began to demand better compensation and more control over their work. Quickly gone were the days when Henry Holt had refused to give his authors written contracts and declared that royalties in excess of 10 percent were “immoral.” In the past, both publishers and editors had changed manuscripts to suit their own tastes, without consulting the person whose name would appear on the book. This practice, too, stopped, as the growing number of literary agents worked ever more aggressively to protect the integrity of the authors' works, and, of course, ensure their authors' largest advances and highest royalties. In addition, the first decade of the twentieth century saw the first bidding wars between houses for the works of popular authors, a practice appalling to traditional publishers, who yearned for the years when, at least in their memories, a loyalty existed between publisher and author, and business was conducted on a more gentlemanly basis. In the new commercial climate of the early 1900s, Charles Scribner II, a titan of the industry, was aghast that he might be forced to pay more than “whatever the book is fairly worth.” Despite his resistance to such new methods, however, he managed to assemble an impressive literary stable at Scribners, whose authors included Edith Wharton, Thomas Nelson Page, and Richard Harding Davis.

**Revolts against Commercialization of Literature.** Between 1900 and 1909, the dramatic and accelerating commercialization of the book industry provoked strident protests from some publishers, especially older ones, who, keeping a nineteenth-century ideal of the nature and purpose of publishing (which one had likened to teaching and even the ministry), felt their traditionally honorable profession was being corrupted. These men — there were very few women in publishing management at this time — were repelled by the growing and seemingly irreversible dominance of economic issues in the publishing business. They disliked the new literary agents, the bidding wars for books, the huge advances paid to authors, the excesses of advertising, the cutthroat competition for readers, the sheer yearly volume of new and frequently undeserving books. One prominent publisher contemptuous of such trends was Henry Holt; writing in 1907, he particularly vented his spleen against literary agents, charging that they had “forced over-production by selling several of an author's books before they were written, and dazzling him with forced earnings from forced work, followed by inferior earnings from inferior work.” Holt then declared, on a larger point: “It would be an immense gain for the cause of literature and to the

## SALESMANSHIP ON PAPER

Riddle, circa 1901:

“Why is the merchant who doesn't advertise like a man in a rowboat?”

“Because he goes backward, I suppose.”

“No; because he has to get along without sales.”

After a couple of decades when advertising used enticing impressions and images to draw buyers to a product, it returned to the language of the hard sell at the turn of the century. In 1904 an enterprising copywriter arrived at the Chicago offices of the eminent Lord and Thomas advertising agency. He sent up a note that said, “You do not know what real advertising is. If you want to know, let me come up and tell you.” An executive named Albert Lasker was sent to receive the visitor, one John E. Kennedy. The two spoke until three o'clock in the morning, when Kennedy was made the firm's new chief copywriter.

“Advertising,” Kennedy told Lasker, “is salesmanship-on-paper.” Forget pretty and diverting ads, he said. Tell the customer in reportorial prose the hard facts that a skilled salesman would convey in person. Treat the customer sensibly, as if he or she was uneducated but smart. And so began a new phase in advertising style, which was actually another turn in an old cycle that would continue to turn throughout the twentieth century.

Source: Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators* (New York: Morrow, 1984).

profit of all worthy authors . . . if the ‘commercial enterprise’ that has come in from Wall Street . . . were taken out of the publishing business — if the competition consisted simply in selecting books wisely, making them tastefully and honestly, informing the interested public of their existence and supplying them to whatever legitimate demand they might effect through their own merit.” Another publisher who disdained business trends in this decade was Walter Hines Page, former editor of the *Atlantic*, who wrote in *A Publisher's Confession* (1905) that publishing was “the worst business in the world,” and that every successful publisher “could make more money going into some other business.” Why, then, do people continue to become publishers? According to Page, the genuine publishers “every year invest in books and authors that they know cannot yield a direct or immediate profit . . . because they feel ennobled by trying to do a service to literature.”



## ARE JOURNALISTS BORN OR MADE?

Joseph Pulitzer first conceived the idea of a professional school of journalism in the early 1890s, but the trustees of Columbia University rejected his plan. By 1903 the university had accepted his gift of \$2 million, but debate within the newspaper profession raged over the wisdom of this approach. Many reporters believed that news talent was born rather than made. Influential educators asserted that a course in liberal arts and experience on a college newspaper would suffice as formal training. Reporters of the hard-knocks school dismissed the idea of journalism education, saying it would create a two-tiered profession. Pulitzer countered that he had never met a born editor and proposed courses in law, ethics, truth and accuracy, the liberal arts, statistics, science, principles of journalism, and news. Conceding that some people had an innate "news instinct," Pulitzer nonetheless believed that education would keep that instinct from overriding the "restraints of accuracy and conscience." The groundbreaking ceremony was held in 1904, and the Columbia School of Journalism officially opened in 1912.

Source: Marion Marzolf, *Civilizing Voices: American Press Criticism, 1880-1950* (New York: Longman, 1991).

**Doubleday, Page and Company.** On January 1 1900 a new house made its debut in New York City. Frank Doubleday, who had left Scribners after a tempestuous relationship with Scribner and briefly gone into business with magazine and newspaper publisher Frank McClure, decided to form a partnership with Walter Hines Page. A deeply committed professional and a prodigy of energy, Page's aim was nothing less than the promotion of social democracy, education, science, sanitation, and dignity. Combining forces, the two men founded Doubleday, Page and Company, establishing their offices in Union Square, an area of New York rapidly becoming the heart of the publishing district. In the following years, these two publishers brought the new house to rapid prominence. Frank Doubleday was tall, zestful, charismatic, and very commercially astute. He pioneered advertising techniques for his company's books by, for example, placing his ads in newspapers and particularly in magazines, whose readers he judged more likely to be Doubleday patrons. He was fascinated by the challenges of book advertising. He observed: "Each book is its own individual advertising problem, and when you have made a success with one you have hardly any definite principle to put into words or guide you in advertising the next." Besides starting a chain of bookstores, he took mail-order and subscription selling of books far beyond their nineteenth-century dimensions. Both he and his partner,



Adolph S. Ochs, publisher of *The New York Times* from 1896 until his death in 1935

meanwhile, encouraged the seeking out of writers of merit and importance and the forming of long and fruitful relationships. In the course of the decade, Doubleday, Page and Company set a new standard among successful New York publishers, and the only thing more impressive than its list of authors — which included Joseph Conrad, Booth Tarkington, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, O. Henry, Edna Ferber, and Joel Chandler Harris — was its profit statement.

### Sources:

- Mark Sullivan, *Our Times: The United States, 1900-1925*; volume 1, *The Turn of The Century*; volume 2, *America Finding Herself*; and volume 3: *Pre-War America* (New York: Scribners, 1927, 1930);
- John Tebbel, *Between Covers: The Rise and Transformation of Book Publishing in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987);
- Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, volume 2: *The Expansion of an Industry, 1865-1919* (New York & London: Bowker, 1975).

## CITY LIFE AND THE TWO JOURNALISMS

**An Urban Nation.** In 1790 less than 5 percent of the U.S. population lived in cities of more than twenty-five hundred people. By 1920 more than 50 percent lived in cities. As the nation became increasingly urban and mobile, people knew fewer of their neighbors personally, and the daily newspaper's importance as the main source of community information and identity grew. Two distinct kinds of journalism evolved to meet the needs of city dwellers. The first, epitomized by the "Old Gray Lady," *The New York Times*, adhered to a policy of strict factuality. *The New York Times* aspired to strict objectivity and took a tone of scrupulous dispassion. Its readers were largely upper-middle-class people who needed accurate information for their businesses and who preferred the paper's cultivated tone. The second style, known vari-



Galveston, Texas, on 9 September 1900, the day after the city was devastated by a hurricane and flood that caused more than five thousand deaths

ously as the New Journalism, yellow journalism, entertainment journalism, or the “use-paper,” targeted a much broader audience of urban workers. Papers, including Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal*, sought to entertain their readers with stories rather than inform them with strictly construed facts.

**The Honor of Adolph Ochs.** When he purchased the bankrupt *New York Times* in 1896, Adolph Ochs was the publisher of the *Chattanooga Times*. His initial innovations, lists of the out-of-town businessmen arriving and leaving, real estate transactions, court cases, and market prices, made *The New York Times* indispensable to the city’s growing class of professionals. He added a Sunday magazine and book-review section. He promised dignified language, calm headlines, and intelligent discussion. Before settling on the slogan “All the News That’s Fit to Print,” he considered “It Does Not Soil the Breakfast Cloth,” meaning both that he used a less smeary ink than his competitors and that he insisted on good taste. In 1898 he lowered the paper’s price to a penny, and the circulation tripled within a year. Circulation jumped past one hundred thousand in 1901, and advertising lineage doubled. In 1904 Ochs built the Times Tower in midtown Manhattan and hired Carr Van Anda as managing editor, two moves that supported the reputation of the *Times* as the newspaper of record for the twentieth century. But nothing created the lustrous image of the *Times* as much as the veneration accorded its publisher. Ochs was seen as a man of impeccable morals and judgment.

**The Newspaper Wars Continue.** During the late 1890s a famous circulation battle between the New York papers of Hearst and Pulitzer resulted in a series of escalating stunts and increasingly sensationalized features. The war culminated in 1898, when the papers fanned the flames of actual battle between the United States and Spain. By 1900 the competition had moderated. Sexy sensationalism lost its edge because people had heard it

all before. Now the papers reached for a smart, “seen-it-all” sophistication. Pulitzer left the working-class audience to Hearst and fashioned his *World* as a liberal organ. Each paper, and their many competitors and imitators, vied to be seen as the champion of the common man and woman. In politics, this meant crusading against the power of big corporations and corrupt politicians. It also meant luring readers with juicy stories about murders and sexual scandals, color pictures, comic strips, and celebrity writers. Most immediately for the urban populace, it meant stories and columns that illuminated the confusing new fashions and manners that prevailed in the city. New Yorkers alone had fifteen papers to choose from, as they rode the subways to work or walked the crowded downtown streets. Both informational journalism and story journalism helped their readers to accommodate to city life in the dawning twentieth century.

Source:

Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

## THE GALVESTON FLOOD

**Disaster.** On 7 September 1900 hurricane-force winds and rain whipped the states on the western end of the Gulf of Mexico. A storm surge smashed into the city of Galveston, Texas, on the north end of Galveston Island. The four bridges connecting it to the mainland were swept away; most of the city’s buildings were destroyed; and five thousand of its forty thousand residents died. Survivors waited through the night on rooftops. The rest of the world waited days for news of Galveston’s fate, so cut off was the city and the region by severed telegraph lines, flooded roads, and impassable railroad tracks. Militiamen with bayonets patrolled the streets to keep scavengers and newspaper reporters away.

**Annie Laurie to the Rescue.** Winifred Black, a reporter for the *Denver Post* and special contributor to the Hearst papers who wrote under the name Annie Laurie,



## THE TIMES TOWER

On 18 January 1904 the cornerstone to a new headquarters and printing plant for *The New York Times* was laid in midtown Manhattan, on Longacre Square, where several new subway lines would converge. A replica of Giotto's Florentine Tower, the building soared 375 feet and delved several stories below street level.

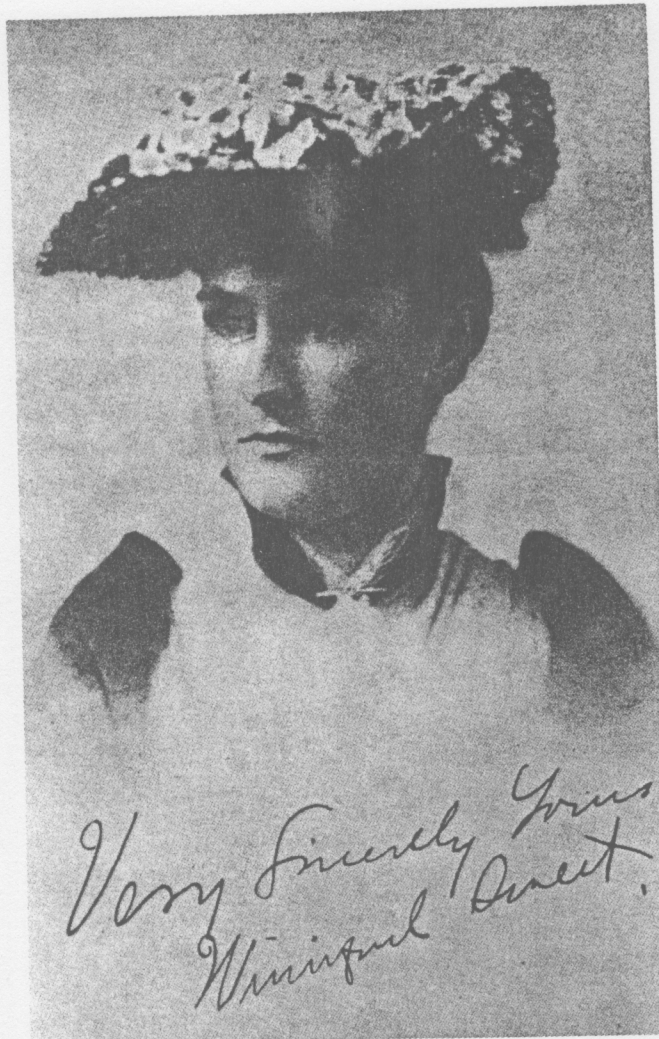
In the move from the paper's old Park Row address, not one of five thousand pieces of linotype was lost. The first paper to come off the new presses, which could print and fold 144,000 copies of a sixteen-page paper in an hour, rolled off on 2 January 1905. The celebration marking the move began on New Year's Eve, when publisher Adolph Ochs proposed to drop an enormous lighted ball to mark midnight, beginning a famous tradition to mark the New Year. Longacre Square soon became known as Times Square.

Sources: Meyer Berger, *The Story of the New York Times, 1851-1951* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1951);

Elmer Davis, *History of the New York Times, 1851-1921* (New York: New York Times, 1921).

was the first reporter to arrive on the scene. Dressed as a boy, she sneaked onto the boat that met the relief trains coming from Houston. After twenty-four hours she filed stories for the Hearst syndicate describing the terrible stench of decaying bodies and the need for disinfectant. "In pity's name, in America's name, do not delay one single instant. Send this help quickly or it will be too late!" She related the story of a man who floated all night on a piece of his roof with his wife and mother, kissing them good-bye because he did not think he could hold on. When he awoke, he was alone on the raft and did not know when they had died. She described vast pyres where thousands of bodies were cremated. The tiniest details moved her: a baby's shoe, a piece of a woman's dress, letters.

**Hearst Promotes Charity.** The staff and readers of Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner*, *Chicago American*, and *New York Journal*, where Laurie's stories appeared, hurried to fill trains with supplies, relief workers, and money. The three trains raced across the country to see which would arrive first, the name Hearst blazing in banners on their sides. In New York the publisher himself organized a charity bazaar at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel and several theatrical benefits featuring Broadway stars. The *Journal* carried a daily list of contributions led by Hearst's own \$1,000. Critics charged that the good Hearst did in Galveston was tainted by the magnate's shameless self-promotion: he had his eye, as many Americans knew, on the White House.



Winifred Sweet Black, who reported the Galveston hurricane devastation for the Hearst papers under the pseudonym Annie Laurie

**Relief.** With the help of Galveston's police chief, Annie Laurie took over a school building that had survived the flood and turned it into a hospital, quickly spending the initial \$60,000 Hearst forwarded to her on blankets, cots, pillows, and cookstoves. Her stories eventually raised more than \$350,000 in contributions from Hearst readers. She also found permanent homes for forty-eight orphans, proving her talent as a tireless organizer as well as a vivid and stirring reporter.

Sources: Madelon Golden Schlipp and Sharon M. Murphy, *Great Women of the Press* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983); W. A. Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst* (New York: Scribners, 1961).

## THE HEYDAY OF THE FOREIGN-LANGUAGE PRESS

**A Nation of Immigrants.** In 1900, 46 percent of the nation's population was composed of first- or second-generation immigrants. Beginning in 1896 immigrants from southeastern European countries outnumbered

those from northwestern European countries, bringing with them a diversity of languages and cultures that America had never before experienced. Many of these new Americans could not read at all, and most of them could not read English but were eager to learn. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, most foreign-language papers were run by intellectuals or clergy on the European model of dedication to one religion or ideology. In the first decade of the twentieth century all this changed. More than one thousand foreign-language papers operated, the number peaking at thirteen hundred in 1914. More than 140 of these were dailies, and 40 percent were in German. German-, Polish-, and Yiddish-language papers claimed circulations of one million readers in each language; the Italian papers reached about seven hundred thousand; and the Swedish, five hundred thousand. The single largest daily was the German *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, with a quarter of a million readers.

**Learning to Assimilate.** Innovators such as Abraham Cahan of the Yiddish *Jewish Daily Forward* and Charles Barsotti of the Italian *Il Progresso* brought the conventions of Pulitzer's New Journalism to their readers: an emphasis on features and plenty of pictures. While foreign-language papers printed news from the home countries of their readers and news from within their ethnic communities, they also provided advice for successful assimilation into American culture. They carried news about employment opportunities and proper behavior on the job and articulated a sense of ethnic identity and pride consonant with successful adjustment to life in America. An enthusiastic promoter of Italian culture and Italian-American pride, Barsotti raised statues of famous Italians all around New York City: Verrazano in Battery Park, Garibaldi in Washington Square, Columbus in Columbus Circle, Dante at Broadway and Sixty-third Street, Verdi at Broadway and Seventy-third Street.

**Success Means Failure.** The growing number of foreign-language publications early in the century does not indicate how volatile the industry was. For every one hundred papers that started, ninety-three stopped. As each generation of immigrants passed into the mainstream of American culture, the need for an "immigrant" press diminished. After World War I newly restrictive policies abruptly arrested the flow of immigration. By 1960 there were half the number of foreign-language publications that there had been in 1914. A more appropriate term for those remaining would be *ethnic papers*, since the readers were no longer necessarily first- or second-generation immigrants. The flowering of the immigrant press between 1900 and 1930 remains one of the most understudied areas of American history.

## NEWSPAPERS AT SEA

**W**ith the advent of wireless telegraphy, oceangoing ships could communicate with stations on either side of the Atlantic. For five dollars, the Marconi Company's station on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, would report the arrival of ships to their steamship companies. In 1901 the *New York Herald* contracted with Marconi to lease the services of the Nantucket station in order to gather the news from Europe as quickly as possible. The desire of the *Herald* for news from any incoming ship conflicted with the Marconi Company's policy of noncommunication with any ship that did not lease its services.

Marconi also provided news service in the opposite direction, providing news from shore to passengers on ships. While transmission grew less reliable with distance and the telegraph operators' prose showed considerably less color than that of newspaper writers, passengers enjoyed the novelty of news produced at sea. On 22 February 1903 when the Cunard liner *Etruria* arrived in New York harbor, it carried the first oceangoing newspaper produced from wireless reports from Great Britain. The ship also carried a famous passenger, Guglielmo Marconi.

Source: Susan J. Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting: 1899-1922* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

Source:  
Sally M. Miller, ed., *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987).

## "LET MUNSEY KILL IT!": THE BIRTH OF THE NEWSPAPER CHAIN

**A Businessman's Vision.** In 1890 New York had fifteen English-language daily newspapers. By 1932 it had half that number. The twentieth-century trend toward newspaper consolidation began in earnest during the century's first decade. Frank A. Munsey did as much as any other person to bring this about. His own rags-to-riches tale began when he started a children's magazine, the *Golden Argosy*, and proceeded to build a publishing empire with *Munsey's*, an illustrated general-interest weekly that had a circulation of 650,000 in 1900. A shrewd businessman with no sentimentality toward the traditions of newspaper publishing, Munsey saw chaos and disorder in an industry that he believed had 60 percent too many products. He dreamed of a chain of five hundred newspapers. In addition to creating vast economies of scale, this enterprise would employ the greatest minds in every field, dispensing wisdom from a central



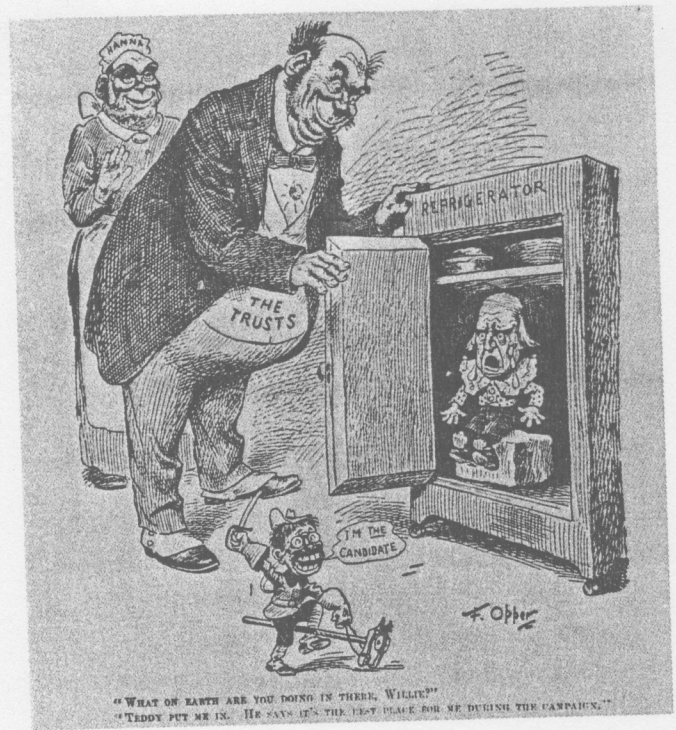
facility, with local coverage left up to each outlet. "The combined genius of the men in control would be the most uplifting force the world has ever known," he exclaimed.

**Munsey Fails.** Munsey became known as the Grand High Executioner, and the slogan "Let Munsey Kill It!" was a familiar refrain around flagging papers, as he bought and consolidated property after property. In the first two decades of the century, Munsey bought and sold at least fifteen newspapers in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., but only a few remained profitable. *Saturday Evening Post* publisher Cyrus H. K. Curtis attempted consolidation of Philadelphia's industry, and Herman Kohlstaad of Chicago made similar moves. Newspapermen blamed these businessmen for ruining a noble profession with crude commercial interests. When Munsey died in 1925, William Allen White of the *Emporia Gazette* commented: "Frank A. Munsey contributed to the journalism of his day the talent of a meatpacker, the morals of a money-changer and the manners of an undertaker. He and his kind have about succeeded in transforming a once-noble profession into an eight percent security. May he rest in trust!"

**Scripps Starts Small.** Other entrepreneurs, away from the vast urban centers of the East, found greater success with chain journalism. Edward W. Scripps started the first successful chain when he launched the *Cleveland Penny Press* in 1878. Scripps seldom bought established properties. He looked for growing industrial cities in the Midwest and created new papers. If they showed a profit in the first ten years, he gave 49 percent of their stock to their editor and business manager. If not, he closed them. In 1902 Scripps began a feature and illustration syndicate to supply his growing empire. In 1907 he organized the United Press Association as a competitor to the Associated Press wire service.

**Gannett's Gradual Growth.** In upstate New York Frank E. Gannett bought a partial interest in the *Elmira Gazette* in 1906 and then merged it with the *Elmira Star*. In the 1910s he bought two papers in Ithaca and combined them, and in the 1920s acquired others in Rochester, Utica, and in other northeastern states, laying the groundwork for the largest chain in the country. Munsey's vision for economies of scale and standardization of quality were fulfilled by other men, who started small and built their empires from scratch.

**Steady Consolidation.** In the 1900s ten chains controlled just thirty-two dailies. (In the 1990s Gannett publishes more than one hundred dailies.) Critics continue to debate the pitfalls of chain journalism: standardization, a corporate editorial slant, and lack of local control. While the growth of chains and syndicates reduced diversity in American publishing, it undeniably improved the quality of small papers in remote locales. In any case, the first decade of the twentieth century brought the techniques and practices of modern financial management to an in-



A 1901 *New York Journal* political cartoon by Frederick Burr Opper depicting William McKinley put "on ice" for the presidential campaign by Vice President Roosevelt, bottom center, to the chagrin of McKinley's powerful supporters, the trusts and big-business advocate Sen. Marcus Hanna

dustry that had long been run by gentlemen publishers and editors luxuriously detached from the balance sheet.

**Sources:**

- Edwin and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, fourth edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978);
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## THE NEW YORK JOURNAL AND THE ASSASSINATION OF WILLIAM MCKINLEY

**Hatred of the Trusts.** The most volatile political issue at the turn of the century was the growing power of enormous corporations. Prominent publishers, including Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, used their papers to campaign against the trusts as the enemy of their readers, the common people. The reelection in 1900 of Republican president William McKinley meant that little would be accomplished to curb the centralization of economic power that came, the trusts' opponents argued, at the expense of the industrial worker and the farmer.

**The Journal Cartoonists Get Rough.** Hearst's *New York Journal* had an outstanding staff of political cartoonists, an art form just then coming into its own. Homer Davenport began in 1900 to draw President McKinley as the stooge of the millionaire industrialist Mark

Hanna, drawn wearing a suit of dollar signs. McKinley and his longtime patron were portrayed as the bullying, criminal, scornful agents of the trusts. Davenport's new colleague, Frederick Burr Opper, started a series called "Willie and his Papa," with McKinley depicted as a small son to the trusts, attended by a nursemaid resembling Hanna. McKinley's vice-presidential nominee, Theodore Roosevelt, was shown as a show-off playmate stealing Willie's limelight and making him cry. Respected *Journal* editor Arthur Brisbane pronounced McKinley "the most hated creature on the American continent."

**An Incendiary Rhyme and a Provocative Editorial.** On 4 February 1900 the governor-elect of Kentucky, William Goebel, was shot dead in an election dispute. Famous story writer Ambrose Bierce of the *Journal* penned a harsh quatrain:

The bullet that pierced Goebel's breast  
Can not be found in all the West;  
Good reason, it is speeding here  
To lay McKinley on his bier.

Hearst began to regret the virulence of his papers' assaults on the president and sent his associate James Creelman to Washington to apologize for the personal nature of the attacks. But on 10 April 1901 the *Journal* again became vicious. An editorial against McKinley, probably written by Brisbane, ended with the shocking sentiment "If bad institutions and bad men must be got rid of only by killing, then the killing must be done." When this line came to Hearst's attention, he called an immediate stop to the presses. It did not appear in later editions, but Hearst's enemies filed it away.

**Shots in Buffalo.** Public sentiment against the trusts grew so volatile that even McKinley had begun to consider some limited moves against them. On 5 September 1901 he stopped at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo to give a speech. The next day he graciously held a reception to shake the hands of hundreds of citizens. One half-mad twenty-eight-year old, Leon Czolgosz, concealed a pistol under a handkerchief and shot the president twice. McKinley lived nine days before he died on 14 September. Vice President Roosevelt, vacationing at a remote spot in the Adirondacks, could not be reached for several hours.

**Hearst Burned in Effigy.** The publisher learned of the shooting in Chicago and said quietly to editor Charles Edward Russell of the *American*, "Things are going to be very bad." All of his papers took a sorrowful, solicitous, hopeful stance while waiting for news of McKinley's fate. When the president died, Hearst's enemies reprinted the cartoons, the poem, and the editorial that seemed to incite assassination. It was widely believed that Czolgosz was carrying a copy of the *Journal* in his pocket when he shot the president, but that story is apocryphal. Nonetheless, the Hearst papers were widely boycotted, and their publisher was burned in effigy along with anarchist

## BROWNIE CAMERAS

With the introduction of the Brownie Box camera in 1900, popular photography received its greatest boost. The camera cost one dollar, and a roll of film with six shots cost ten to fifteen cents. Previously, photography had been the province of professionals, who needed expensive equipment and elaborate studios. Now everyone could experiment. The cameras sold well, and the Eastman Kodak Company continued to manufacture them until the mid 1960s, when they were superseded by the popular Instamatic line of cameras.

Emma Goldman, whose lecture Czolgosz cited as his true inspiration for the assassination. Hearst punished none of the writers or cartoonists but soon changed the name of the *Journal* to the *American*. A cloud hovered over his empire for about a year, but by 1902 he was popular enough to win election to the House of Representatives from New York.

### Sources:

Edwin and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, fourth edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978);

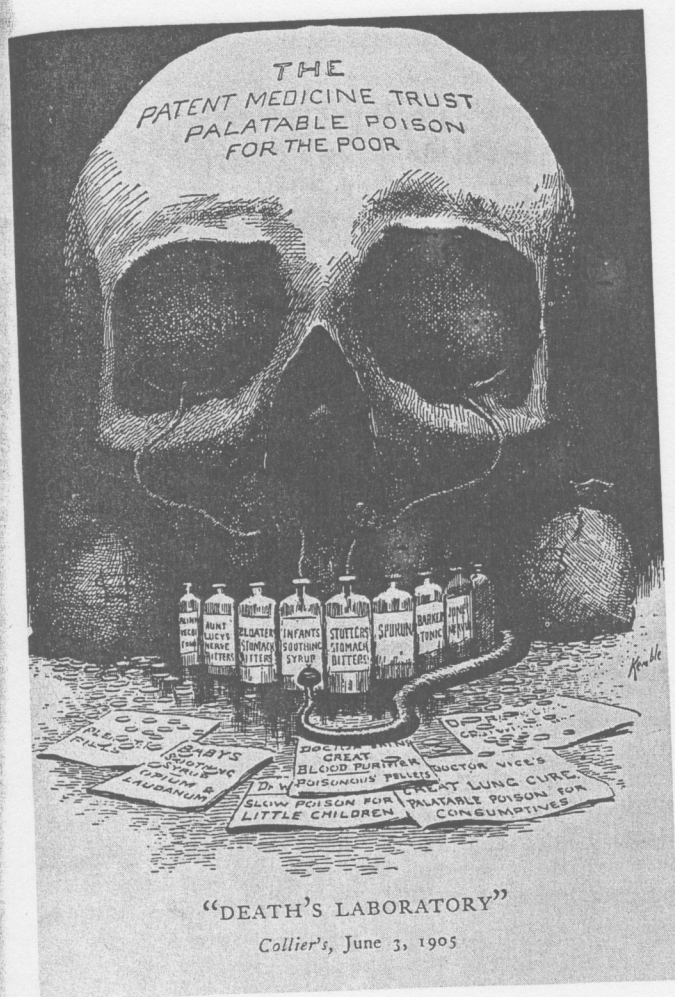
W. A. Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst* (New York: Scribners, 1961).

## PATENT-MEDICINE ADVERTISEMENTS

**The Poison Trust.** The 1900 census reported that eighty million Americans spent a total of \$59 million each year on patent medicines. More of that money went to pay the cost of advertising in newspapers and magazines and on billboards than into either production costs or profit. These tonics, elixirs, and syrups contained up to 80 percent alcohol and often had morphine, cocaine, or the heart stimulant Digitalis as a basic ingredient. Naturally they sold well. Paine's Celery Compound, Burdock's Blood Bitters, Doctor Pierce's Favorite Prescription, and Colden's Liquid Beef Tonic promised to cure maladies ranging from a baby's fussiness to cancer. Many people trusted these nostrums as an inexpensive alternative to visiting doctors, and even church publications printed their advertisements.

**Protests Grow.** In 1892 Edward Bok, editor of the influential *Ladies' Home Journal*, had decreed that his magazine would no longer accept ads for patent medicines. By 1904, when the industry's success showed no signs of flagging, he began to print the contents of some of the most popular cures. He ran incorrect information about Doctor Pierce's Favorite Prescription and was forced to print a retraction and pay damages, but he continued his editorials, calling upon all decent people to boycott the medicines. He appealed to the temperance





Cartoon indicting the patent-medicine industry that appeared as a full page in the 3 June 1905 issue of *Collier's* magazine

movement to fight them as if they were cocktails, which indeed many were. Bok hired a young lawyer and journalist named Mark Sullivan to check his facts and carry on the research. Lydia Pinkham's remedy for women had been a staple of the patent-medicine market for several decades, and the ads invited women to write to Pinkham for advice. Sullivan took a photograph of her tombstone in Lynn, Massachusetts, showing that Pinkham had been dead for more than twenty years. He interviewed people in the industry and described how they laughed, passing around letters to nonexistent quacks from sick and desperate people. Sullivan published two articles in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, but Bok felt that the bulk of his research was not appropriate for his audience. Sullivan sent it along to *Collier's*.

"The Great American Fraud." Editor Norman Hapgood at *Collier's* appreciated the fine investigative work of distinguished muckrakers such as Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell but wanted nothing to do with their sensationalistic imitators. He recognized the value of Sullivan's research and assigned an experienced health

journalist, Samuel Hopkins Adams, to continue researching patent medicines. In June 1905 *Collier's* printed a full-page cartoon labeled "Death's Laboratory," showing a death's-head with medicine bottles as teeth, suggesting that the remedies poisoned children. On 7 October 1905 Adams's long-awaited series began to appear under the headline "The Great American Fraud." With documents, illustrations, and wit, Adams made a devastating case against the noxious cures. *Collier's* was criticized for joining the ranks of irresponsible muckrakers, but the magazine's popularity picked up, encouraging Hapgood to pursue other important investigations.

The Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. While bills proposing to regulate the food and drug industries had been proposed for many years in Congress, the work of the muckrakers in 1904–1906 created an irresistible public demand for action. The early 1906 publication of Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*, detailing the horrifying conditions in Chicago's meatpacking plants, dominated the headlines. President Roosevelt joined the American Medical Association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and the National Consumer's League in fighting for this bill. The legislation required the label of any product to list harmful ingredients such as alcohol or narcotics, but it did not require disclosure of other ingredients. While an important step, the Pure Food and Drug Act ensured only minor improvements. Within a few years Samuel Hopkins Adams was again publishing articles on patent medicines, condemning the government for its failure to enforce the Pure Food and Drug Act.

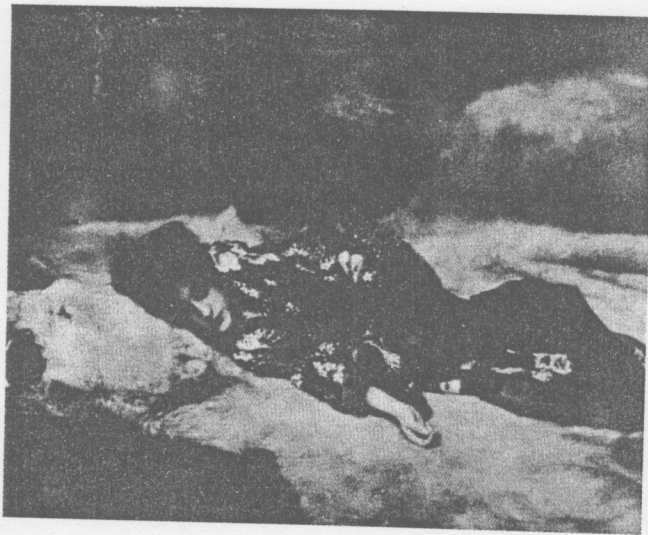
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### THE MURDER OF STANFORD WHITE

The Murder of the Century. On 25 June 1906 world-famous architect Stanford White, forty-seven, took in a show at the rooftop café of Madison Square Garden, a complex he had designed. Harry Thaw, heir to a Pittsburgh railroad fortune, killed him with three shots from a pistol. Thaw's beautiful young wife, the model and actress Evelyn Nesbit Thaw, had carried on an affair with White and had told her husband that the architect had raped her when she was a virgin of sixteen.

A Morality Tale. The incident provided sensational fodder for New York's fifteen newspapers. William Randolph Hearst's *Evening Journal* pinpointed what the case seemed to reveal about the city's rich: "The flash of that pistol lighted up an abyss of moral turpitude, revealing powerful, reckless, openly flaunted wealth." The circulation of Joseph Pulitzer's *World* jumped one hundred thousand the first week after the murder. Photographs of Nesbit, a poor girl from Pittsburgh who had become a



Evelyn Nesbit posing in Stanford White's studio

sensation for her perfect features and versatile image, had previously appeared in hundreds of newspapers and magazines. She was immortalized as a Gibson Girl, one of illustrator Charles Dana Gibson's icons of American beauty. The papers portrayed her as a tragic innocent caught between White, a man of voracious appetites for everything beautiful, and Thaw, an obsessed and vindictive eccentric. Even the staid *New York Times* gave the affair extensive coverage, its high-minded publisher, Adolph Ochs, explaining that White's stature and Thaw's social prominence gave the case "sociological" import. Within a week of the murder, Biograph had produced a motion picture dramatizing the tale.

**The Defendant's Public Relations Machine.** The entire Thaw family fortune was mobilized to portray young Harry as a hero who had nobly slain a predatory fiend. The family hired an early practitioner of public relations, who wrote a book titled *A Woman's Sacrifice*. They paid to mount a play called *For the Sake of Wife and Home*, where a character named Shaw shoots a notorious scoundrel called Black for ruining a young woman. While Thaw dined in prison on squab and champagne from Delmonico's restaurant, the public, by a margin of two to one, expressed approval of his crime.

**"The Girl in the Velvet Swing."** The trial of Harry K. Thaw began on 23 January 1907. The public had to be banned from the New York courtroom to accommodate hundreds of reporters and illustrators. Thaw's attorneys claimed that their client was not guilty by reason of temporary insanity, hinging their entire case on the testimony of Evelyn Nesbit Thaw and what she had told her husband about her relationship with White. Her witness-stand accounts of how White pushed her on a red velvet swing in his office and forced her to drink champagne until she blacked out and how she awoke, naked and terrified in his bed, sold millions of papers.

**The "Sob Sisters."** A panel of famous women reporters — including Dorothy Dix, Ada Patterson, Annie Laurie, and Nixola Greeley-Smith — who sat at a central table in the courtroom, milked the story for all it was worth. Irvin Cobb, reporter and humorist for the *World*, dubbed these women, who turned America's courtroom dramas into titillating serials for the yellow press, "Sob Sisters." Laurie, who would write more than sixteen thousand articles in her forty-seven-year career, resented the name and said, "I'd rather smell the printer's ink and hear the presses than go to any grand opera in the world." Cobb himself was appalled by the parade of paid witnesses called by the defense, dubbing one "Dr. J. Mumble Viceversa."

**Thaw Later Released.** The first trial ended in a hung jury. In the second trial Thaw's lawyers altered their strategy to say that Thaw was thoroughly rather than temporarily deranged, and he was committed to a facility for the criminally insane. He was released after seven years, at which time his marriage was promptly dissolved. When she was near death in 1967, Evelyn Nesbit claimed that Stanford White was the only man she had ever loved.

Sources:

Carl Charlson, *Murder of the Century*, PBS;

Gerald Langford, *The Murder of Stanford White* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962);

Michael Macdonald Mooney, *Evelyn Nesbit and Stanford White: Love in the Gilded Age* (New York: Morrow, 1976).

## THE RACE TO THE NORTH POLE

**An Accident Brings Peary to the Times.** By 1908 an American explorer, Comdr. Robert E. Peary, had made several attempts to reach the North Pole. The *New York Herald* had subsidized his previous expeditions in return for the exclusive rights to his story. In 1908, seeking funding for another attempt, Peary discovered that his contacts, the financial officer William Reick and the city editor Charles M. Lincoln, now worked for *The New York Times*. Peary then asked to see the new city editor, who told him that the public was tired of Arctic adventures. Discouraged, Peary walked from downtown all the way to the new midtown headquarters of the *Times*. *Times* publisher Adolph Ochs and managing editor Carr Van Anda shared a boyish enthusiasm for the scientific exploration of remote places, and in short order the paper paid Peary \$4,000 for the exclusive New York rights to his story. The *Times* would also distribute the story for him elsewhere at no cost. Peary departed New York harbor on 6 July 1908 and dispatched letters on his progress from Newfoundland and Labrador. Then he disappeared.

**Cook Makes a Claim.** On 1 September 1909 the world was inspired to learn that Dr. Frederick A. Cook of Brooklyn, a surgeon on two previous Peary expeditions, had reached the North Pole on 21 April 1909. He claimed to have buried an American flag in a metal tube at the top of the world. The *New York Herald*, as it turned





The Robert E. Peary party at the North Pole on 6 April 1909

said that the Eskimos who accompanied Cook told him that the doctor had not gotten far enough north to lose sight of land. Scientists and explorers, as well as newspapers, began to take sides. Cook versus Peary became the most celebrated scientific controversy of the decade. In October Cook's guide, Edward N. Barrill, swore that Cook's claim was false.

**Two Scoops.** The dimensions of the *Times* scoop, and its increase in circulation, were enormous, as scientific and public opinion weighed in on Peary's side. His vivid account ran in the paper for four days, from 8 to 11 September 1909. He said that his second-in-command, a Cornell engineer named Ross G. Marvin, had died on the ice on 10 April 1909, just days after reaching the pole. The Peary story solidified the reputation of *The New York Times* as the leader in accuracy and enterprise in news gathering, a standard that had long been set by the *Herald*. Seventeen years later the *Times* got a second scoop on the Peary expedition from Peary's son and the commander of his boat on the 1909 expedition. The reporter George Palmer Putnam found out that Marvin had not drowned as Peary first reported but that their Eskimo guides had murdered him.

Source:

Meyer Berger, *The Story of the New York Times: 1851-1951* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1951).

## THE SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE AND FIRE

**490 City Blocks Ruined.** On 18 April 1906 a major earthquake shook the city by the bay, and by the following day a massive fire had consumed the remaining downtown structures. The entire business district was destroyed; an estimated 700 people had died, including 270 inmates of an insane asylum; and 300,000 were left homeless. Estimates of the property damage reached \$500 million.

**The Local Papers Do Not Miss a Day.** The buildings housing the city's newspapers, the *Examiner*, the *Call*, and the *Chronicle*, all burned. At the *Chronicle* twenty linotype machines crashed several stories through the flames to the basement. The three papers joined forces the first day after the disaster and printed a combined edition across the bay in Oakland called the *California Chronicle-Examiner*. Manufacturers speedily shipped new presses out. William Randolph Hearst, who owned the *Examiner*, commandeered a press just shipped to a Salt Lake City paper by doubling its price. He also added a dollar a week to the salary of every employee on the paper to help with their added expenses.

**Creative National Coverage.** While some reporters rushed to the scene (Annie Laurie in Denver received a one-word telegram from Hearst: "GO."), others had to cover the story from a distance. The *New York American* used a retouched photograph of the great Baltimore fire of 1904 and received a barrage of reproaches from its

out, had paid Cook \$25,000 for his exclusive. The *Times* scavenged overseas papers for its own coverage and gave it full play, but Van Anda felt Cook's account lacked proof.

**Suspicion Grows.** Correspondents in London began to doubt that Cook could have crossed from Cape Columbus to the pole in thirty-five days, as he claimed. A U.S. Navy admiral who had been on a previous attempt contradicted Cook's descriptions of the far northern terrain. When Cook reached Copenhagen, the British reporter Philip Gibbs interviewed him, and Cook claimed that all his written records of the expedition had been shipped directly from Greenland to the United States. He conceded that the only witnesses on the last leg of his journey were Eskimos unschooled in scientific documentation. The interview, which politely called Cook's claims "inconclusive," was reprinted in the *Times*.

**Peary Surfaces with His Own Claim.** On 6 September 1909, more than a year after he sailed from New York, a telegraph message from Commander Peary in Indian Harbor, Labrador, contained the message "G.O.P.," the prearranged signal that he had achieved the pole. The date he gave was 6 April 1909, two weeks before Cook's claim. Celebrating in Copenhagen, Cook was generous. "Two records are better than one," he cabled the *Times*. When told of Cook's claims, Peary became angry and



San Francisco after the earthquake on 18 April 1906 (photograph by Arnold Genthe)

rivals. Will Irwin of the *New York Sun*, who had been a reporter and editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* from 1900 to 1904, wrote a story titled "The City That Was" completely from memory, and it became an instant classic of newspaper journalism. It read, in part:

The old San Francisco is dead. The gayest, lightest hearted, most pleasure loving city of the western continent, and in many ways the most interesting and romantic, is a horde of huddled refugees living among ruins. It may rebuild; it probably will; but those who have known that peculiar city by the Golden Gate and have caught its flavor of Arabian Nights feel that it can never be the same. It is as though a pretty, frivolous woman had passed through a great tragedy. She survives, but she is sobered and different. If it rises out of the ashes it must be a modern city, much like other cities and without its old atmosphere.

Although the story appeared without a byline, as was the custom of the day, word quickly spread of Irwin's authorship, and newspapers around the country reprinted it. In all, the tragedy in San Francisco demonstrated the newfound ability of the press to create an instant national story from a local event.

**Sources:**

Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History, 1690-1960* (New York: Macmillan, 1962);

W. A. Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst* (New York: Scribners, 1961).

## SUNDAY COLOR COMICS

**Art, Commerce, and the Color Press.** Between 1895 and 1905 the comic strip coalesced as a new art form and newspaper feature. The gradual improvement of color presses throughout the 1890s led publishers, in their frantic circulation wars, to introduce color supplements to their Sunday papers. Only the doggedly serious *New York Times* refrained from adding comics. In order to meet the demand from readers, most papers reprinted art from humor magazines such as *Puck* and *Life*. Some political cartoonists began to draw weekly features, but most of the strip artists came to the new form directly.

**Hogan's Alley.** Richard Felton Outcault began his career doing technical drawings for Thomas Edison. In 1896 Outcault began drawing a weekly feature for Pulitzer's *Sunday World* titled *Hogan's Alley*. In choosing the subject of a poor urban neighborhood, Outcault followed the literary realists and progressive reformers of the day. His drawings were funny, but they also aimed to stir the reader's conscience. *Hogan's Alley* was not a comic strip but a packed single frame. One character, a jug-eared toddler in a stained nightdress, captured the public's imagination.

**The Yellow Kid.** The color yellow had given press operators a big headache because it took too long to dry





THE OPEN-AIR SCHOOL IN HOGAN'S ALLEY.

*Hogan's Alley* comic strip in the *New York World* by George B. Luks, drawn after the strip's creator, Richard Felton Outcault, was hired away by the Hearst chain. The message on the Yellow Kid's shirt, bottom right, refers to the feud between Hearst and *World* publisher Joseph Pulitzer.

and inevitably smudged. When Pulitzer's operators developed a fast-drying yellow, they tried it out on the large expanse of the shirt of an elf in the strip, and thus gave birth to the Yellow Kid. The character was so popular that Pulitzer used the kid's likeness on promotions for the *World* and it spawned a merchandising frenzy: Yellow Kid cigarettes, a magazine, even a Broadway musical. He also gave his name to the circulation wars between Pulitzer and Hearst and defined an era in newspaper publishing, that of yellow journalism. Outcault migrated between the *World*, the *Journal*, and the *New York Herald*, setting off lawsuits as to who retained the rights to the Yellow Kid.

**Buster Brown.** By 1902 *Hogan's Alley* had run its course. Outcault, feeling pressure from social critics who complained that the Sunday comics were too crude, created a new strip centered around an upper-class rascal named Buster Brown. Buster terrorized servants, wrecked society balls, frightened the elderly, and created continual pandemonium. Buster had a dog named Tige and a sister, Mary Jane, based on Outcault's daughter. Each misadventure ended with Buster delivering a homily on what he had done wrong and what he had learned. Outcault derived these nuggets from the writings of Ralph Waldo

Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Henry George, which he kept in his studio. The move from Hogan's Alley to Buster's opulent home reflected the artist's own social ascent. He grew wealthy leasing the Buster Brown character to manufacturers. In 1906, after a chance meeting with William Randolph Hearst in Stratford-upon-Avon, Outcault switched employers once again to the *Sunday Journal* and again was taken to court over the rights to his creation. This time, he got to keep Buster's likeness, but the *Herald* got to keep Buster's name.

**The Katzenjammer Kids.** German-born Rudolph Dirks began drawing Hans and Fritz for the *Journal* in 1897 when he was just twenty years old. These pranksters spoke in pidgin German and were meant to attract German American readers. *Katzenjammer* literally means "howling cats" but colloquially refers to a hangover. Dirks's true innovation was the comic strip. He abandoned the static vignette in favor of evolving stories with developing characters. He also was a master at the placement of speech balloons, which were not yet widely used. (The Yellow Kid's remarks, for example, had been printed on his shirt.) When the United States went to war with Germany in 1917, the strip's name was briefly changed to *The Shenanigans Kids*.

**Opper's Happy Hooligan.** The most prolific and humanistic turn-of-the-century cartoonist was Frederick Burr Opper. He not only drew some of the most successful comic strips; he also illustrated children's books and drew political and magazine cartoons. His scathing political cartoons about Theodore Roosevelt so delighted the president that he kept them in a scrapbook. Opper's respectability quieted the funnies' critics, and beginning in 1899 he was known as the "dean" of the comic artists, even though he worked for the notoriously sensational Hearst. His *Happy Hooligan* (along with *Gloomy Gus* and *Montmorency*), *Maud the Mule*, and *Alphonse and Gaston* strips lasted into the 1930s and became indelible parts of American culture.

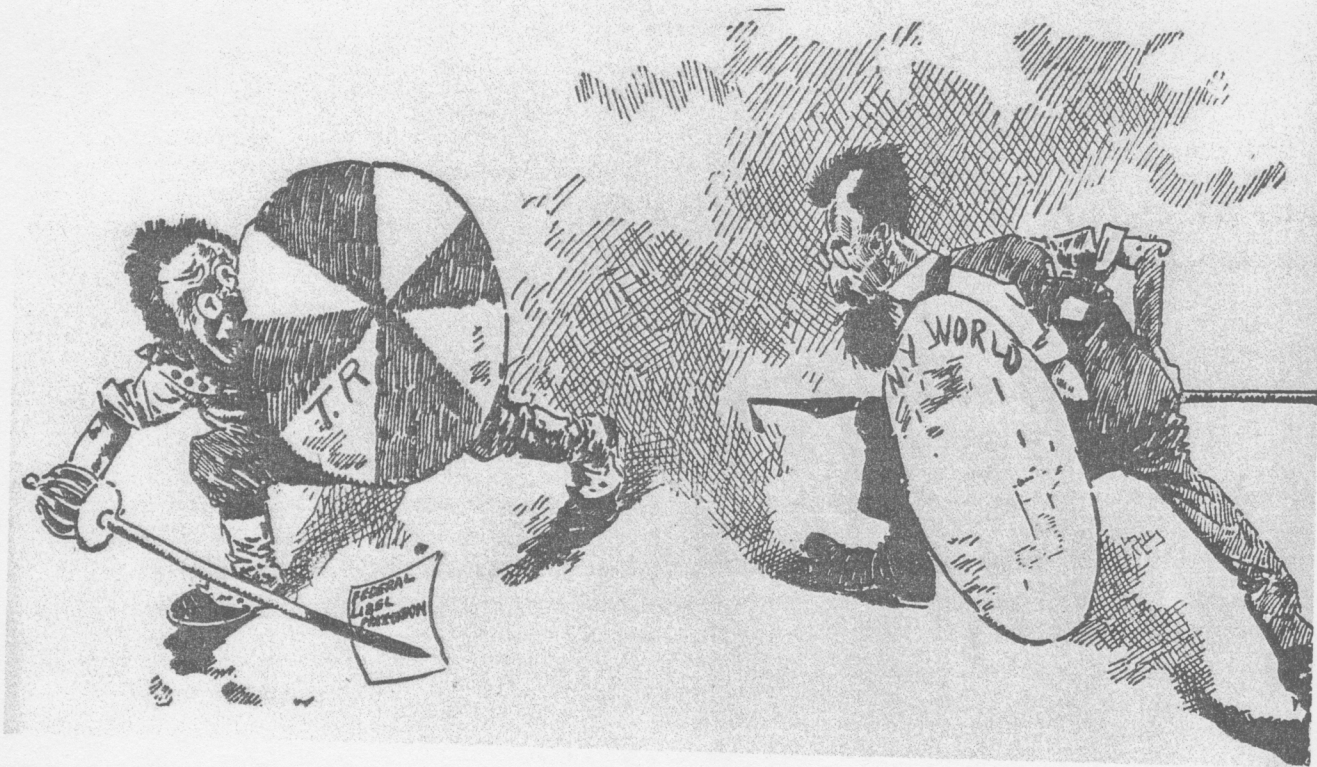
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### THEODORE ROOSEVELT SUES JOSEPH PULITZER FOR LIBEL

**Questions over the Panama Canal.** On 4 November 1903 a small revolution established the state of Panama, formerly part of the nation of Colombia. Two United States warships, the *Nashville* and the *Dixie*, sailed offshore to deter interference by the Colombian military. The new state of Panama was far more receptive than Colombia had been to American plans to complete the long-stalled Panama Canal, a project begun by a French syndicate and now secretly backed by wealthy American investors. President Roosevelt privately expressed reservations over the way the project's future had been se-



Cartoon in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* ridiculing the feud between President Theodore Roosevelt and Joseph Pulitzer, publisher of the *New York World*, whom the president had sued for libel

cured, but publicly he defended every action taken by his government. William Nelson Cromwell, a handsome and influential New York lawyer, had spread his clients' money liberally in the Congress, including \$60,000 to the Republican campaign fund in 1900.

**Threat of Political Blackmail.** Shortly before the 1908 election, Panamanians disgruntled over their small share of the profits going to the canal's overseas investors threatened to expose the part played by powerful Republicans. Roosevelt's handpicked successor was William Howard Taft. Taft's brother Charles and Roosevelt's own brother-in-law, Douglas Robinson, had each gained a fortune when the United States paid \$40 million, supposedly to buy out the French syndicate that had begun the canal. Cromwell, the lawyer who brokered the deal with the French and guided the canal legislation through the Congress, gave the story to Pulitzer's *World*, including his own denial, in order to forestall a political scandal. The story was repeated by the *Indianapolis News*, secretly owned by Vice President Charles W. Fairbanks, who was furious that Roosevelt had backed Taft for the Republican nomination for the presidency.

**The President Strikes Back.** Roosevelt heatedly denied all charges of impropriety. The *World* began to trace the \$40 million paid by the U.S. government and ran a story claiming that the money had gone not to the French government as alleged, but to a dummy corporation

fronting for J. P. Morgan and Company. It suggested that people close to the president had profited richly and implicated American greed in the Panamanian revolution. The paper accused the president of deliberate lies. Pulitzer himself, cruising the Atlantic on his yacht, was shocked to learn that his *World* had printed the allegations against Charles Taft and Douglas Robinson based only on the statements of their lawyer, Cromwell. Roosevelt demanded that the district attorney of New York prosecute Pulitzer for libel. Although the district attorney felt that he too had been unfairly attacked in Pulitzer's papers, he declined to indict, but Roosevelt found more willing prosecutors. He told one U.S. district attorney, "I do not know anything about the law of criminal libel, but I should dearly like to invoke it against Pulitzer, of the *World*."

**The Grand Jury Convenes.** On 17 February 1909 a District of Columbia grand jury indicted Pulitzer, his editors Caleb Van Hamm and Robert Hunt Lyman, as well as Pulitzer's corporation, for five counts of criminal libel against Theodore Roosevelt, J. P. Morgan, Douglas Robinson, Charles P. Taft, Elihu Root (the secretary of state), and William Nelson Cromwell. Similar indictments were issued against the *Indianapolis News*. The *World* took an unrepentant editorial stance. Its editorial director, Frank I. Cobb, wrote, "Long after Mr. Roosevelt is dead, long after all the present editors of this paper



## TEDDY ROOSEVELT'S BALLOONS

Theodore Roosevelt revolutionized the relationship between the president and the press. He took reporters into his confidence, treated them as professionals, and used them much to his advantage. Previously, all presidential announcements were carefully guarded until the day of official release. Roosevelt gave them to the press days in advance, with prohibition on publication until the release date, so that full analysis could accompany the statement.

Roosevelt also invited correspondents he particularly liked, including *The New York Times* Washington bureau chief Richard Oulahan, known as the "fair-haired," to talk with him during his morning shave. They could not quote him directly without his consent. In this way, Roosevelt adopted a technique pioneered by James G. Blaine, known as the "trial balloon." He could get public reaction to a policy without tying his name to it. When the new West Wing of the White House opened in 1902, Roosevelt designated an official press room. He understood that a colorful president could lead public opinion and force the unruly Congress to follow his lead.

Source: Donald Ritchie, *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

are dead, *The World* will still go on as a great independent newspaper, unmuzzled, undaunted and unterrorized." The old and sickly but still fierce Pulitzer cruised the Atlantic outside the three-mile territorial limit to avoid arrest.

**A Victory for Freedom of the Press.** In 1909 a federal judge dismissed the case against the *Indianapolis News*, citing clear improprieties in the Panama Canal affair. The *World* decided to challenge the government's jurisdiction in its case rather than to fight the charges themselves. But when a New York judge dismissed the charges against the paper in January 1910 as "opposed to the spirit and tenor of legislation for many years," Pulitzer was not satisfied. He kept needling his opponents to appeal the case to the Supreme Court, so that it might end with a resounding affirmation of the freedom of the press. On 3 January 1911 the Court handed down a decision that did exactly that. The *World* commented that the victory was so sweeping "no other President will be tempted to follow in the footsteps of Theodore Roosevelt, no matter how greedy he may be for power, no matter how resentful of opposition." This prophecy would prove to be short-lived, as American involvement in World War I brought new government efforts to curtail press freedom.

Source:  
W. A. Swanberg, *Pulitzer* (New York: Scribners, 1967).

## THE JANUARY 1903 MCCLURE'S

A single issue of a magazine rarely changes the shape of journalism, but in January 1903 *McClure's* did just that. Three long, detailed, and pathbreaking articles on the relationship between business, labor, and government appeared together in the preeminent reformist magazine. Its editor, Samuel S. McClure, contributed an editorial that marked the advent of muckraking as a coherent movement in investigative journalism, although that term would not be used by Theodore Roosevelt for three more years. His "Concerning Three Articles in this Number of McClure's, and a Coincidence that May Set Us Thinking" noted the corruption common to corporations in Ida Tarbell's "The History of the Standard Oil Company," labor unions in Ray Stannard Baker's "The Right to Work," and city government in Lincoln Steffens's "The Shame of Minneapolis."

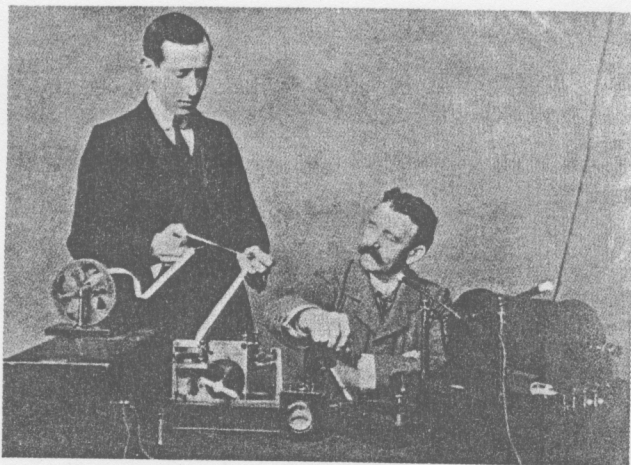
Who is left, McClure asked, to uphold the law when businessmen, workingmen, politicians, and citizens all disregard it for their own benefit? "There is no one left: none but us all," he answers. The public would pay the price for such thoroughgoing dishonesty. "And in the end the sum total of the debt will be our liberty."

Source: Louis Filler, *The Muckrakers* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976).

## THE WIRELESS TELEGRAPH

**Marconi Sends an S.** By the turn of the century, reporters had long made use of telegraph wires to transmit news to their papers. Innovations in the development of "wireless telegraphy," or radio, as it came to be known, proceeded rapidly in the first decade of the twentieth century. Wireless pioneer Guglielmo Marconi announced on 15 December 1901 that he had transmitted the letter S across two thousand miles from Cornwall in England to Newfoundland, Canada. While the press lionized Marconi as a heroic, humble, and tireless genius, his competitors pointed out that this feat was unverifiable. Only Marconi and his assistants had witnessed it.

**The New World Sends Greetings to the Old.** On 21 December 1902 Marconi succeeded in sending a full message twenty-three hundred miles from the governor general of Canada to King Edward VII. In January 1903 he transmitted "most cordial greetings" from President Theodore Roosevelt to the British monarch. By the end of that year he had inaugurated regular transatlantic commercial service. By 1907 the cost of ten cents a word far undercut the twenty-five cents that the cable telegraph companies charged. Press clients received a discount rate of five cents a word, and in 1907 *The New York Times* inaugu-



Guglielmo Marconi reading a wireless message, with his assistant George Kemp, circa 1900

rated a special Sunday section called the “Marconi Transatlantic Wireless Department,” with news from its London correspondent. No longer was the flow of news physically restricted by the speed of ships or the laying down of cables.

**The Limits of Marconi’s Vision.** Marconi conceived the future of wireless telegraphy as a series of improvements on point-to-point communication, and he hoped to establish a monopoly in that industry. His innovations came primarily

in the development of tuning devices to better isolate and use the spectrum of electromagnetic waves. His chief competitors, Americans Lee De Forest and Reginald Fessenden, concentrated on different aspects of wireless technology. De Forest advanced the technology of reception with his invention of the three-element grid audion tube, or triode, announced to the public in October 1906. This was the forerunner of the vacuum tube, which became central to all broadcast reception later in the century. Meanwhile, Fessenden concentrated on transmission.

**The Human Voice Takes to the Air.** In October 1906, over the eleven miles between his laboratories in Brant Rock and Plymouth, Massachusetts, Fessenden sent the first radio transmissions of voice and music, rather than just the dots and dashes of telegraphy. Like Marconi, Fessenden conceived of radio broadcasting as a way to improve point-to-point communications — in effect, to invent wireless telephone service. On Christmas Eve 1906 he broadcast a recording of Handel’s “Largo,” himself on violin playing “O Holy Night,” and himself singing and making a speech. Startled shipboard telegraph operators as far away as the Caribbean reported receiving the spotty transmissions. This is considered the first radio broadcast in history. It would be left to later innovators to reconceive the technology for uses other than point-to-point communication.

Source:  
Susan J. Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899–1922* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

## HEADLINE MAKERS

### ABRAHAM CAHAN

1860–1951

EDITOR AND NOVELIST



**An Exiled Russian Radical.** Born in Lithuania, Abraham Cahan immigrated to New York in 1882 to escape persecution for his socialist views. A fiery speaker, he helped to organize the first Jewish tailors’ union on the Lower East Side in 1884. Cahan dominated the intellectual and

public life of the rapidly expanding Jewish immigrant community on the Lower East Side of New York City from 1900 to 1920 as editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*. He was brilliant, with a grim temperament, and could be

quite spiteful. He both symbolized and shaped the power of the immigrant press at a time when 20 percent of the nation’s population was foreign born.

**The Forward.** The Yiddish-language daily the *Jewish Daily Forward* was founded on 22 April 1897 with Cahan as editor. He soon resigned over conflicts with its publishers about who wielded ultimate control of the paper. The publishers wanted the paper to be an outlet for socialism, while Cahan would have patterned it after the papers of Pulitzer and Hearst. He went to the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, where his editor was Lincoln Steffens. When Steffens left to become an editor at *McClure’s* in 1901, Cahan lost interest and began writing fiction. In 1902 Cahan was rehired by the *Forward*, with the mandate of telling stories rather than spouting socialist ideology. Circulation soared, but some intellectuals accused him of low taste and vulgarity, and he was once again



forced out after six months. In 1903 he returned with assurances of complete control.

**Yellow Journalism for Jews.** Cahan remained at the helm of the *Forward* for more than forty years, aiming it at an audience of laborers and housewives. He wanted to provide them with useful information and compelling stories in which they recognized themselves rather than with anti-capitalist dogma. The introduction of a sports page to the *Forward* caused quite a stir. In 1906 he inaugurated the famous "Bintel Brief" (Bundle of Letters) feature, with letters from readers sharing their views and tales on subjects ranging from marriage to proper American behavior. Illiterate people sometimes visited the paper's offices to dictate their stories. Cahan remained a socialist but was never dogmatic. His politics aimed at practical improvements in the lives of his readers. He crusaded first and foremost for better working conditions in the garment industry, where many Jewish immigrants worked.

**Literary Achievements.** Cahan published his first short story, "A Providential Match," in 1895 and attracted the interest of *Atlantic* editor and novelist William Dean Howells. Howells helped Cahan to find a publisher for his first novel, *Yekl: A Tale of the Ghetto* (1896). In 1913 *McClure's* serialized his autobiography, and in 1917 he published a fictionalized version of it called *The Rise of David Levinsky*.

**Political Trouble during the War.** The constituency of the *Forward*, many of whom had fled persecution in czarist Russia, tended to support the Germans after the outbreak of World War I in Europe. This unpopular position endangered the paper's third-class mailing privileges, and Cahan soon backed off. When the United States entered the war and the Russian Revolution took the Russian army out of it, circulation soared to over two hundred thousand. While Cahan initially supported the goals of the Bolshevik Revolution, by the late 1920s he became one of Joseph Stalin's harshest critics. In the 1920s the *Forward* added Los Angeles and Boston editions, and by the 1930s it was far removed from its radical socialist beginnings. Cahan died in 1951 at the age of ninety-one.

Source:

Jules Chametzky, *From the Ghetto: The Fiction of Abraham Cahan* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977).

## DOROTHY DIX

1861-1951

ADVICE COLUMNIST



"Mother Confessor to Millions." Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer started her column "Dorothy Dix Talks" in New Orleans in 1896. It lasted until her death in 1951, making her probably the best-known woman writer of her era. William Randolph Hearst

lured her from New Orleans to his *New York Journal* at the turn of the century, and with his syndication operations, her readership eventually reached some sixty million throughout the world.

**Poor in the New South.** Elizabeth Meriwether grew up in a poor but cultivated Tennessee family after the Civil War. When she was twenty-one, she married her stepmother's brother, a charming but emotionally unstable man who could not hold a job. The marriage was unhappy, but they never divorced. Faced with the need to support her family, she began to work as a freelance writer. Eliza Nicholson, publisher of the *New Orleans Picayune*, recognized the thirty-three-year-old's abilities and hired her as a "Gal Friday" to the paper's sharp editor, Maj. Nathaniel Burbank. She graduated from the obituaries and drudge stories of the cub reporter to her own straightforward column of advice to women, called "Sunday Salad." Her down-to-earth style brought a barrage of letters.

**Sob Sister Extraordinaire.** Her first story for Hearst was to cover the saloon-busting tour through Kansas of temperance leader Carry Nation in 1901. "What a waste of good liquor," Dix wrote, in the voice of an inveterate southern belle. She became a favorite with Hearst's brilliant editor Arthur Brisbane, who helped sharpen her prose. He asked in 1902, "Did any man ever make a quicker success in the newspaper business than Dorothy Dix?" She covered titillating murder trials, including the Harry K. Thaw trial, and became the most dogged of the "Sob Sisters," wrangling interviews from victims, perpetrators, and their families. By 1917, at age fifty-five, she ceased work as a reporter to concentrate on her column and sermonettes.

**The Hall-Mills Case.** In 1926 Dix was persuaded to cover one last trial, that of a New Jersey minister's wife accused of killing her husband and his church-choir lover. The jury shared Dix's sympathies, and the woman was acquitted.

**Everyone's Problems.** People wrote to Dorothy Dix about universal difficulties: interfering parents, unfaithful spouses, recalcitrant children, romance, religion, etiquette, and recipes. She urged spouses to work out their disagreements, children to listen to their parents, and young men and women to hold to their ideals. She was an early advocate of the Nineteenth Amendment. If possible, she thought, women should stay home with young children, but as she herself had learned, having a vocation is crucial in case of need. She continued to dictate her column until she died in 1951 at the age of ninety. She allowed no one to carry on under the name Dorothy Dix.

Sources:

Harnett T. Kane and Ella Bentley Arthur, *Dear Dorothy Dix: The Story of a Compassionate Woman* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1952);

Madelon Golden Schlipp and Sharon M. Murphy, *Great Women of the Press* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983).

## WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST

1863-1951

EDITOR, PUBLISHER, POLITICIAN, COLLECTOR



**Empire.** Born to a family fortune made in mining, William Randolph Hearst built one of the largest communications empires in U.S. history. His assets, estimated at between \$200 million and \$400 million, included sixteen daily newspapers with a combined circulation of more than five million, the

International News Service, King Features, the *American Weekly Sunday* supplement, *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Good Housekeeping*. He also amassed one of the finest private art and antique collections in the world.

**A Rich Kid's Diversion Turns to Serious Business.** Young Hearst was thrown out of Harvard University in his junior year for a series of practical jokes. He distributed chamber pots to faculty members with their names inserted on the bottoms and tethered a jackass in the home of one professor, with a note that read, "Now there are two of you." He then went to work at Joseph Pulitzer's *World*. He admired both its sensationalism and its idealism. His father, who served as a U.S. senator from California, had purchased the *San Francisco Examiner* to further his political ambitions. Young Hearst proposed to take it over and turn it into a real newspaper, increase circulation, subscribe to the telegraph service of the *New York Herald*, and clean up California with campaigns against the influence of Southern Pacific Railroad magnates Leland Stanford and Collis P. Huntington. He was twenty-four years old.

**Talent Raids.** In 1895 he bought the *New York Journal*, a morning paper. Within a year it was second only to the *World* in circulation. By offering salary increases, he raided the *World* and other papers, hiring away many of its star reporters, editors, and artists, including Arthur Brisbane, Richard Outcault, and Solomon Carvalho. His art department created cartoon characters such as the Katzenjammer Kids, Foxy Grandpa, Alphonse and Gaston, and Happy Hooligan. The next year Hearst added the *Evening Journal* and bought the *New York Morning Advertiser* to secure its Associated Press franchise. His publishing tactics infuriated Pulitzer, who accused Hearst of pandering to the lowest tastes of his readers.

**"I'll Furnish the War."** When a conflict with Spain over Cuba threatened to turn into war in 1898, Hearst used his papers to incite bloodthirst. He sent the artist Frederic Remington to Cuba to draw the coming conflict, but Remington cabled him that all seemed quiet. Hearst cabled back, "You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war." While Hearst's excessive jingoism contributed to public support of hostile action against Spain, most historians agree that the publisher did not actually cause the war.

**Political Ambitions.** Hearst harbored political ambitions and set his eye on the White House. He supported Democrat William Jennings Bryan in 1900 and hoped to be Bryan's running mate in 1904. Since the Democratic convention was scheduled for Chicago, the party wanted a sympathetic newspaper in that city. Hearst dutifully bought the *Chicago American* and was rewarded with the presidency of the National Association of Democratic Clubs, a high-profile national position in the party. He ran for Congress from New York in 1902 and won by a margin of three to one, but the victory was marred when a fireworks accident at his Madison Square Garden celebration killed eighteen people and injured many others. In Congress he worked against railroad trusts and for public ownership of railroads, telegraphs, and mines. He also supported the eight-hour workday, a graduated income tax, and more money to schools and the U.S. Navy. In 1904 Hearst polled second in the balloting for the Democratic presidential nomination and then won reelection to Congress. He ran unsuccessfully for governor of New York in 1906 and mayor of New York City in 1909.

**Later Exploits.** During World War I Hearst got into trouble for his anti-British sentiments, which were construed as pro-German. While his personal popularity plummeted, he continued to expand his empire to twelve newspapers by 1919, including the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, the *Washington Star*, the *Chicago Herald*, the *Wisconsin News*, and the *San Francisco Call*. He lived in semiseclusion at his famous California castle, San Simeon, until his death in 1951 at age eighty-eight.

Source:

W. A. Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst* (New York: Scribners, 1961).

## JOSEPH PULITZER

1847-1911

NEWSPAPER EDITOR AND PUBLISHER



**Beginnings.** Born in Hungary in 1847, Joseph Pulitzer immigrated to Boston to serve in the Union army during the Civil War. After becoming a U.S. citizen in 1867, he worked for various German newspapers and became involved in Republican Party politics, campaigning for *New York Tribune* publisher Horace Greeley for president in 1872. But he soon became disenchanted with politics and the party. He began his newspaper empire with the *St. Louis Staats-Zeitung* and the *Post and Dispatch* in the 1870s, serving as publisher, editor, and business manager. In 1883 he bought the *New York World* from tycoon Jay Gould. The *World* became the strongest voice of the Democratic Party in the United States, crusading for the "people" against the powerful "interests," but Pulitzer did not always conform to party policies.



**The Mastermind of the Modern Newspaper.** Pulitzer created the New Journalism that dominated his age, establishing the model for the big-city daily in the twentieth century. His papers covered crime, sponsored and publicized stunts by its own staff, ran sensational features and more pictures than any other paper, and carried on crusades against corruption in government and business. Pulitzer conceived of news as stories that entertained the ordinary person rather than as strictly factual information. He also revolutionized advertising, linking its price to circulation and standardizing rates. In 1887 he inaugurated the *Evening World* and in 1890 opened the famed World Building on Park Row in downtown Manhattan, in its day the tallest and grandest structure in the city.

**War with Hearst.** The famous rivalry between the *World* and William Randolph Hearst's *Journal* began in 1896. Hearst raided the *World* for talent by greatly outpaying Pulitzer. Their competitive flag-waving is sometimes cited as a cause of the Spanish-American War. The war sobered Pulitzer, and after it ended, he returned the *World* to its former balance and always represented the tendency of critics to lump his papers together with Hearst's under the term *yellow journalism*.

**Into the Twentieth Century.** By 1900 Pulitzer had long since put aside his own political ambitions and wanted his papers to serve as schoolmasters and provocateurs. He cheered the reformist Republican president Theodore Roosevelt and relentlessly attacked New York City's Tammany Hall machine. In 1904 he endowed with \$2 million the first professional school of journalism in the nation at Columbia University. Despite his belief that there was no substitute for practical experience in the world, he believed that labor combined with learning was unbeatable. His estate also endowed the prestigious Pulitzer Prizes. Despite the reputation of his papers for sensationalism, after his death his name became synonymous with the highest standards of journalistic excellence. He died aboard his yacht in Charleston harbor in October 1911.

Source:

W. A. Swanberg, *Pulitzer* (New York: Scribners, 1967).

## LINCOLN STEFFENS

1866-1936

### MUCKRAKER



**A Privileged Boyhood.** When they had a son the year after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in 1865, Lincoln Steffens's parents named their child in honor of the fallen leader. Steffens grew up in Sacramento with all the privileges of wealth. He loved horseback riding, literature, and writing

and attended the University of California, Berkeley. Afterward he went to Germany to study philosophy and then to Paris to study psychology. When he arrived home with a new wife, he found that his father expected him to make his own living immediately. He secured a job covering Wall Street for the *New York Evening Post*.

**Business and Politics Mix.** Covering the financial community, Steffens observed the strong and corrupt connections between powerful business interests and government at every level. He admired the men who, having been drawn into a corrupt system, used their knowledge to help clean it up. His greatest scorn was reserved for alleged reformers who lacked both the information and the character to follow through on their promises. Covering police headquarters, he got a firsthand education in the workings of the Democratic Tammany Hall political machine and the close ties that bound Tammany, the police, and criminal syndicates. At police headquarters he also met the legendary reporter Jacob Riis and the energetic police commissioner, Theodore Roosevelt. Steffens soon went to the *New York Commercial Advertiser* as city editor.

**A Move to McClure's.** S. S. McClure asked Steffens to cover Roosevelt's exploits as a Rough Rider during the Spanish-American War for *McClure's* magazine. In 1901 Steffens accepted *McClure's* offer of the managing editorship of the magazine, where Ida Tarbell and Ray Stannard Baker were already on the staff. With their solid educations, literary aspirations, and investigative zeal, these three young reporters revolutionized journalism.

**The Shame of the Cities.** Steffens pursued the story of municipal corruption, and successful reform, in Saint Louis, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, and Chicago. The most startling aspect of his exposés was the participation of each city's "best" citizens in elaborate systems of graft and payoffs. He wrote, "the source and sustenance of bad government [are] not the bribe taker, but the bribe giver, the man we are so proud of, the successful businessman." He chastised the apathetic public for failing to demand more principled government and cited a blind civic- and commercial-spiritedness for tolerating businesslike thievery. After publishing his municipal investigations in book form as *The Shame of the Cities* (1904), Steffens moved on to the shame of the states.

**It Works.** Writing as a freelance journalist after 1906, Steffens became interested in radicals and revolution. He covered the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. After a visit to the new Soviet Union, he made the memorable observation, "I have seen the future, and it works." His 1931 autobiography is a classic of Progressive Era and journalism history. He died in 1936.

Sources:

David Mark Chalmers, *The Muckrake Years* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1974);

Louis Filler, *The Muckrakers* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976);

Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Muckraking: Three Landmark Articles* (New York: Bedford Books/St. Martin's Press, 1994);

Justin Kaplan, *Lincoln Steffens, A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974);

Lincoln Steffens, *Autobiography* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1931).

## IDA TARBELL

1857-1944

### MUCKRAKER



**Born in an Oil Boom.** Ida Tarbell was raised in northwest Pennsylvania at a time when the discovery of oil was transforming the region into an industrial hub. While many people made fortunes, including her father (who invented a storage system for oil), Ida remembered the terrible acci-

dents, explosions, and fires that claimed many lives and the environmental devastation drilling caused. With her family's new wealth came access to books and magazines, and Ida grew up reading the popular magazines of the day. The only woman in her class at Allegheny College, she trained for a teaching career but soon grew bored with it. In 1882 she took a job with a monthly magazine *The Chautauquan*.

**From Social Issues to Biography.** She wrote on the great reform movements of the 1880s and 1890s: temperance, antimonopoly crusades, housing reform, the eight-hour workday, and other labor issues connected with the Knights of Labor. Her interest in women's roles in social change led her to research a biography of Madame Roland and her part in the French Revolution. In France she decided to try to make her living as a freelance writer for American newspapers and magazines, which were then undergoing a boom of their own as printing technologies brought down costs. She sold stories on French culture and politics to *McClure's* and *Scribner's*. A biographical series on Napoleon for *McClure's*, richly illustrated with portraits, became a sensation. Her series on Abraham Lincoln, which drew on prodigious research, boosted the magazine's circulation by more than one hundred thousand. She became a contributing editor in 1896.

**History of the Standard Oil Company.** When *McClure's* suggested that Ida commence major research into John D. Rockefeller's powerful holding company known as Standard Oil, her father, who had fallen on hard times, warned her against it. He said Standard Oil would ruin the magazine. For five years she searched the public record: court documents, congressional investigations, newspaper accounts, pamphlets put out by reformers. What was envisioned as a three-part series turned into nineteen articles that ran for more than two years.

Published as a book in 1904, *The History of the Standard Oil Company* constituted a devastating exposé of how Rockefeller had used ruthless measures to drive his competitors out of business and secure a monopoly. One Standard Oil executive, Henry H. Rogers, who had been an independent oil refiner and was forced to join the company, met with Tarbell for a period of more than two years and introduced her to others high in the corporate structure. As the series began to appear, other "victims" contacted Tarbell with their own evidence of Standard Oil's domination.

**Plus and Minus.** Never a radical, Tarbell tried to see both sides of every story. She concluded the series by reflecting on the "legitimate greatness" of Standard Oil, the intelligence, organization, and vision it represented. But she found the cost of its success too great: the power it amassed, like all absolute power in history, was used against the public. In further articles on Rockefeller, she called such tactics "Commercial Machiavellianism." In 1906, with Lincoln Steffens and Ray Stannard Baker, Tarbell set out to launch the *American Magazine*, but it failed. She continued to write as a freelance journalist well into the twentieth century, traveling to Italy to write on the ascendant Benito Mussolini, whom she found "gallant" but a "fearful despot." She never became an advocate of women entering public life, finding their domestic role, which she never performed, more crucial. She died in 1944 in a hospital near her Connecticut farm at the age of eighty-six.

#### Sources:

Kathleen Brady, *Ida Tarbell: Portrait of a Muckraker* (New York: Seanev Putnam, 1984);

David Mark Chalmers, *The Muckrake Years* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1974);

Louis Filler, *The Muckrakers* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976);

Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Muckraking: Three Landmark Articles* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

## IDA B. WELLS-BARNETT

1862-1931

### JOURNALIST FOR RACIAL JUSTICE



**Early Adversity.** When a yellow fever epidemic claimed the lives of sixteen-year-old Ida Wells's parents, she determined to keep her brothers and sisters together. She taught in a one-room school near Holly Springs, Mississippi. She soon moved the family to Memphis, in order to take a teacher's examination and find a better job. Riding the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad to her job, she refused to sit in the smoky, dingy car reserved for African Americans and filed suit against the railroad for not providing



“separate but equal” accommodations. Wells won her case and \$500 in damages, but in 1887 the Supreme Court of Tennessee reversed the decision. As a teacher, she began to write for the black church weekly *Living Way* under the pseudonym “Iola” and soon realized that she loved journalism.

**A Crusader for Equality.** Encouraged by the eminent Frederick Douglass, in 1889 Wells accepted the editorship of a small Memphis paper that she renamed *Free Speech*. She attacked the inferior condition of black schools, and in 1892 her articles about the lynching of three grocery-store operators who had been kidnapped from the city jail brought trouble from Memphis whites. While she was on a lecture tour in the East, a mob destroyed the *Free Speech* offices.

**New York, London, Chicago.** To avoid harm in the aftermath of this incident, she took a job with T. Thomas Fortune’s *New York Age*, a leading black newspaper. Wells soon owned one-fourth of the paper and made it her mission to inform the world about lynching. In 1893 and 1894 she made a well-publicized tour of the British Isles and began to organize antilynching committees in Europe and (northern) North America. She decided to settle in Chicago, where she published an influential book, *A Red Report: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States, 1892–1893–1894*. There she married Ferdinand Lee Barnett, a lawyer and founder of Chicago’s first black newspaper, the *Conservator*.

**Prepared.** In 1901 the Barnetts became the first black family to buy a house east of State Street in Chicago. Their neighbors turned their backs and slammed their doors to humiliate them. When young neighborhood toughs stood jeering outside her house, Ida Wells-Barnett let them know that she kept a pistol and knew how to use it. As she often said in her antilynching campaigns, it was necessary to fight fire with fire. She told her young harassers that if she were to die by violence, she would take some of her persecutors with her.

**A Family and a League.** During the first decade of the twentieth century, Wells-Barnett dedicated herself to raising four children; in 1910 she founded a Negro Fellowship League in the roughest section of Chicago. Modeled on her friend Jane Addams’s Hull House, it provided counseling, job services, religious services, recreation, and cheap housing. She chided middle-class blacks, and particularly clergy, for their unwillingness to help the poorest members of the community. She campaigned for women’s suffrage and participated in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 but soon found the organization too accommodationist.

**Legacy.** Until her death in 1931 at age sixty-nine, Wells-Barnett continued to agitate for social justice. She set up black women’s clubs and even ran, unsuccessfully, for the state Senate. Her husband became the first black appointed as an assistant state’s attorney in Chicago and

served for fourteen years. In 1940, after her enthusiastic civic campaign, the Chicago Housing Authority honored her by changing the name of a new forty-seven-acre housing complex to the Ida B. Wells Garden Homes.

Source:

Madelon Golden Schlipp and Sharon M. Murphy, *Great Women of the Press* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983).

## WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

1868–1944

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR, EMPORIA GAZETTE



**What’s the Matter with Kansas?** As a young reporter, William Allen White saw both sides of the radical populism that swept his home state of Kansas. He understood the plight of the poor farmer and workingman but disdained the abilities and the motivations of the movement’s leaders.

In 1895 at the age of twenty-five, after working as a reporter in larger cities, he bought his hometown paper, the *Emporia Gazette*. He used it to promote the town’s fortunes, attract business, and herald the reform wing of the Republican Party. In 1896 he published a scathing editorial against the populist presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan titled “What’s the Matter with Kansas?” This editorial brought him national attention and invitations to write for the *Saturday Evening Post* and *McClure’s*. It also was credited with helping to secure victory for William McKinley over Bryan.

**Common Sense and Respectability.** The circulation of the *Gazette* never exceeded eight thousand, but White’s talent brought him international recognition. He was a lifelong Republican who exemplified respectable, middle-class, progressive liberalism. He attacked the populists as much because they took such a disapproving tone about American life as for their ideology. He much preferred constructive criticism and became a close companion and backer of Republican reformer Theodore Roosevelt. White was more sympathetic to the aggressive muckrakers than Roosevelt. He welcomed Ida Tarbell to *Emporia* in 1905. But like the president, White held that business plutocracy was at the root of political corruption.

**“Mr. Republican.”** As his nickname attests, White was linked throughout the early twentieth century with the struggle to control the Republican Party. He helped Roosevelt to found the Progressive Party in 1911 and championed independent newspapers against the growth of chains and conglomerates. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1923 for a pro-labor editorial called “To an Anxious Friend” and again in 1946. Perhaps his most famous editorial, “Mary White,” came in 1921, when his daughter was killed at the age of seventeen in a horseback riding accident. Later in the century he became a charismatic

leader of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, arguing that commercialism had dangerously degraded the quality of journalism. Press critic Gilbert Seldes judged him "the most outstanding figure in American journalism."

Sources:

Sally Foreman Griffith, *Hometown News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Gilbert Seldes, *Lords of the Press* (New York: Messner, 1938).

## PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

**Robert S. Abbott**, the child of former slaves, founded the *Chicago Defender* on a shoestring budget in 1905. Its masthead carried the motto "American race prejudice must be destroyed!"

In his *Chicago Record* column "Stories of the Streets and of the Town," distinctively midwestern humorist and fabulist **George Ade** immortalized the vernacular in such pieces as "The Fable of the Good Fairy of the Eighth Ward and the Dollar Excursion of the Steam Fitters."

Known as the "dean of American magazine editors," **Henry Mills Alden** reigned at *Harper's* from 1869 to 1919. He gave special attention to American writers and to burgeoning social problems, and *Harper's* became the most widely circulated periodical in the country.

One of the most famous muckrakers, **Ray Stannard Baker** wrote about industry and labor for *McClure's*, where he was associate editor from 1899 to 1905. His groundbreaking article "The Right to Work" appeared in its January 1903 issue.

In 1901 **Charles Walker Barron** bought the Dow-Jones Company from founder Charles Dow and thus became the publisher of the *Wall Street Journal*. He revolutionized economic reporting by moving beyond simple figures and making it accessible to the general reader. He campaigned against irresponsible speculation and for honest investment policies.

**Frederick G. Bonfils** and **Harry H. Tamm**, known as "Bon" and "Tam," bought the *Denver Post* in 1895 and turned it into a sensational success. Its circulation in the 1900s was more than that of its three competitors combined. In 1907 they were shot by their own lawyer but were saved from further injury by a beautiful "Sob Sister," Polly Pry, who grabbed the gun.

**Peter F. Collier** founded the general weekly that bore his name in 1888, and after 1895 he changed its emphasis

from fiction to news and public affairs. He died in 1909 and was succeeded by his son Robert, who continued the muckraking tradition.

Publisher **Gardner Cowles** bought a majority interest in the *Des Moines Register and Leader* in 1903 and in 1908 added the *Des Moines Tribune*. Its daily circulation grew from 14,000 to more than 350,000, and 425,000 on Sunday, becoming the base property of one of the twentieth century's great media empires.

**Cyrus H. K. Curtis** bought the oldest weekly in the United States, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, once operated by Benjamin Franklin, in 1897 and renamed it the *Saturday Evening Post*. Under the editorship of **George Horace Lorimer**, it attained a circulation of 500,000 within five years, reached one million in 1908, and became one of the most profitable and popular publications in United States history.

In 1893 Chicago newspaperman **Finley Peter Dunne** created the philosophical saloon keeper Mr. Dooley. In 1900 he moved to New York to join the staff of *Collier's*.

**Frank E. Gannett** founded what was to become the largest newspaper chain in the country. In 1906 he bought an interest in the *Elmira Gazette* and later merged it with the *Elmira Star*. During the next three decades he bought several other newspapers in upstate New York, establishing his headquarters in Rochester.

**Lewis W. Hine** began to take photographs in 1903 at the suggestion of a friend. From 1907 to 1914 he photographed scenes of child labor for the National Child Labor Committee, often in secret. His work helped to bring about legislative reform of working conditions for children.

The living embodiment of a tough, incorruptible, cigar-smoking editor, **James Keeley** of the *Chicago Tribune* reinvented the paper for the urban twentieth century



by offering its harried and alienated readers useful advice and a sense of community.

In 1902, late in his eventful life as a frontiersman and sheriff, William B. "Bat" Masterson became a sports-writer and then sports editor of the *New York Morning Telegraph*.

St. Clair McKelway was editor in chief of the *Brooklyn Eagle* from 1884 until his death in 1915. It flourished as a local paper but also covered national news.

In 1905 William V. McKean's *Philadelphia Bulletin* became the leading paper in Philadelphia. When he bought it in 1895, it was thirteenth out of thirteen in circulation. By treating the city as a collection of distinct urban villages, McLean built the paper into one of the most successful and prestigious in the country.

Publisher Frank A. Munsey led the trend to ten-cent magazines in the 1890s. *Munsey's* was the first general illustrated monthly to reach half a million in circulation. It specialized in articles on royalty, celebrities, industrialists, and statesmen and ran pictures of nude and seminude women. During the 1900s Munsey also bought and sold more than a dozen newspapers, including the *New York Tribune*. He tried (and failed) to improve the quality of journalism by targeting the largely Republican business class.

Frank Ward O'Malley ("O'Malley of the *Sun*"), ace reporter, covered New York for fourteen years, "thirteen of which were spent in Jack's restaurant." His writing was both funny and dramatic. One of his most famous pieces, "A Policeman Walks East to his Death," described the killing of cop Gene Sheehan from the point of view of Sheehan's mother.

Richard F. Outcault, cartoonist for the *New York World* and later the *New York Journal*, introduced the character Buster Brown in 1902. Outcault had created the

*Yellow Kid* comic that gave yellow journalism its name and touched off a great newspaper rivalry.

Jacob Riis was a crusader against urban slum conditions. Beginning in 1890 with the publication of *How the Other Half Lives*, he became New York's "most useful citizen." In the 1900s he no longer wrote or photographed for the newspapers but continued to publish books, including *The Battle of the Slum* (1902) and *Children of the Tenements* (1903).

In his column "Just for Georgia," which ran in the *Atlanta Constitution* from 1890 to 1927, Frank L. Stanton lovingly depicted the Old South, complete with "cracker" and African American dialects. While he condemned lynching in a famous piece called "They've Hung Bill Jones," he often glorified plantation life.

Banker and founder of the *Chicago Daily News*, Melville Stone served as general manager of the Associated Press from 1893 to 1921. A 1900 court decision ruled that the AP was a public utility and could not refuse subscribers. The organization dissolved in Illinois and reorganized in New York.

Bert Leston Taylor ("B.L.T.") began his "A Line o' Type or Two" column for the *Chicago Journal* for thirty dollars a week. The *Chicago Tribune* lured him away with sixty dollars a week. In 1903 the *New York Telegraph* induced another move, and in 1905 he became an editor at the humor magazine *Puck*. In 1909 he returned to Chicago, the city he loved, at a yearly salary of \$10,000 with the *Chicago Tribune*.

Charles H. Taylor served as manager, editor, and publisher of the *Boston Globe* between 1873 and 1921. He emphasized unbiased reporting, local events, and working-class issues and courted women and children as readers. His innovations upset traditions in the 1870s but set standards for twentieth-century reporting.