

Newspapers and the Press

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Various source media: Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers



The story of American newspapers of the nineteenth century is rooted in the commerce of ideas that was part of the fabric of the new nation. The earliest Congresses showed their awareness of the importance of enhancing this trade. A reporter was invited to cover the House of Representatives from its earliest sitting, in April 1789. The Senate permitted coverage starting in 1794. For nineteenth-century newspapers, the most important congressional measure was the Post Office Act of 1792, which provided that "Every printer of newspapers may send one paper to every other printer of newspapers within the United States, free of postage. . . ." Editors "borrowed" items from exchange papers, and reprinted them in their own columns, guaranteeing a lively trade in news and anecdotes among the early press. Printers led the lobby for better roads and postal services because they depended so heavily on these exchanges until well into mid-century.

1800-1812: The Press in the Early

National Period

While daily newspapers had existed since 1784, the vast majority of the two hundred or so papers in publication in 1800 were weeklies. A mercantile press served the major seaport cities. Editors went to the docks to gather news directly from arriving ships and published this information in journals made available in shipping offices, coffeehouses, and taverns. These papers contained useful news about ship arrivals and departures, commodity prices, and general business intelligence.

Partisan political newspapers in 1800 ranged from official party organs to papers representing the views of

individual publishers. Coverage of events was uneven, and reportage was usually heavily colored by partisan sentiment. Gossip, rumors, and scurrilous personal attacks were the order of the day. William Cobbett was the prototype. Calling himself "Peter Porcupine," Cobbett in his pugnacious *Porcupine's Gazette* expressed the prevailing sentiment: "Of professions of impartiality I shall make none." Whether as vitriolic as "Porcupine" or "Lightning Rod Junior" (Benjamin Franklin Bache) of the Philadelphia *Aurora*, or as erudite as Noah Webster of the *American Minerva*, politically engaged printers helped stimulate national political debate.

Thomas Jefferson's election to the presidency in 1800 led to the debut of the most important political newspaper of the early nineteenth century, the *National Intelligencer*. Jefferson believed that effective citizen participation in government required an informed public, and so in 1801 he invited Samuel Harrison Smith to come to Washington to launch a national newspaper. Smith's *Intelligencer* was originally a four-page triweekly, paid for in part by government subsidy and in part by the advertising it carried on its first and last pages. It reported the "Proceedings of Congress" on page 2 and miscellaneous Washington news on page 3. For the first third of the century the *National Intelligencer* was virtually the sole source of information about the national government. Across America, newspapers "clipped" items from their exchange copy of the *Intelligencer* to include in their own columns.

The *Intelligencer* offered reasonably straightforward congressional news, but partisanship guided editorial policy in virtually every other paper. Alexander Hamilton-John Jay Federalists published the *New York Evening Post* (still published as the *New York Post* at the turn of the twenty-first century), the Aaron Burr faction controlled the *New York Morning Chronicle*, while Jeffersonians countered with the *American Citizen*.

As the frontier moved westward, settlers took their presses with them. By 1805, Pittsburgh, then on the far frontier, had three papers on a regular publication schedule. Newspapering followed the push to each newly founded community. Most of the frontier papers were small and many died quickly, but many more endured and succeeded. A southern press developed in this era, including the first newspapers in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee. By 1810, Louisiana readers had French, English, and bilingual options.

The rough and ready frontier journals were typically personal enterprises, written, typeset, and printed by one man, often on paper he had made. Because there was little cash and few markets in the West and South, papers there carried less advertising than their eastern city counterparts. They also differed in coverage. While they might still carry European news culled from their exchange papers and national political news (from the *Intelligencer*), the frontier papers pioneered local coverage, reporting about crops, new lands opened for settlement, Indian relations, internal improvements like plank roads, bridges or fords, and canals.

Still, the news mainly flowed east to west, and not very quickly in either direction. News of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's return to St. Louis from their epic journey reached even the best-connected newspapers over a month after the event, and then only when the *National Intelligencer* reprinted a letter from Thomas Jefferson replying to Clark's notification of the completion of the mission.

1810-1830: The War of 1812 and the Era of Good Feelings

As the economy grew, the mercantile press assumed an even more important place in the seaports. Large commercial exchanges had reading rooms with "news books" containing both maritime reports and regular newspapers. Proprietors paid for such devices as semaphore signal systems to get the latest news from the harbor.

The War of 1812 strongly affected newspapers. The question of entry into the war stimulated partisan comment. The Federalist *Connecticut Courant* opposed the war as "wicked, foolish, unnecessary and in no interest to America." Republican sheets like the *Albany Argus*, the *Richmond Enquirer*, and the *National Advocate* (New York) fervently supported the war effort. But more profoundly, the War of 1812 stirred the public's interest in getting the latest available news. The *National Intelligencer* became a daily in 1813, partly to feed this hunger. Newspapers invested in a newly invented power press that could print eight-hundred copies per hour to allow for more frequent and rapid press runs. In his debut editorial for the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Nathan Hale (nephew of the patriot) wrote in 1817: "One

of the peculiar traits [of Americans] is the insatiable appetite which exists in all classes of people in this Country for news. It is ... so universal that it has given rise to a salutation ... 'What's the news?'"

By 1820 over 550 newspapers were being published in America. Special interest newspapers first emerged around this time. America was largely agricultural, and farm-oriented newspapers emerged in this period. *The American Farmer* was first published in Baltimore in 1819, and the *Albany Plough Boy* in 1820. The *American Turf Register*, often cited as the first sporting paper, was devoted to the improvement of American breeding stock.

The Columbian Centinel, in welcoming President James Monroe to Boston, called the 1820s the Era of Good Feelings. A decline in the most virulent partisanship (albeit temporary) allowed Americans—and their newspapers—to turn their full attention to business. In 1820, each of America's seven largest cities featured newspapers with "Advertiser" or "Mercantile" in their titles. The paper that would become the *Providence Journal* proudly announced in 1820 that its sole editorial task would be the securing of tariff protection for American business.

The best-known special interest presses were the abolitionist newspapers. There were a few antislavery papers in the Upper South, such as Tennessee's *Emancipator* (1819); Benjamin Lundy's *Genius of Universal Emancipation* (1821), first published in Baltimore in 1824; and Kentucky's *Abolition Intelligencer* (1822). By 1834 the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*

was being published in Philadelphia. The *Boston Philanthropist* appeared in 1826.

1830- 1845: The Penny Press

Political partisans were connected to their factions through party newspapers. Men of commerce could afford the costly mercantile journals. But the growing population of urban working people was largely unserved by the press. Several aggressive publishers saw this opportunity and seized it. They were helped by advances in technology that allowed ever-faster and more economical printing. (The new "Hoe" press, installed in big city papers as early as 1832, could run four thousand papers an hour.) The key stimulus, however, was the realization that the old mercantile and partisan political papers had lost pace with the times, that ship crossings and reprints of lengthy congressional speeches were not what urban readers wanted.

Benjamin H. Day was barely twenty-three years old when he founded the *New York Sun* in September 1833. His vision, grasp of new technology, and interest in a new readership made him a true revolutionary. He sold his paper for a penny a copy. (Six cents was then the going price in New York.) Four months from its founding the *Sun* was selling four thousand and by 1836, thirty thousand copies a day; the *Sun's* circulation led all American papers until the 1850s. Day's formula overturned journalistic conventions of the era. He abstained from partisanship, ignored political speeches, and eschewed detailed analyses of congressional actions. Instead he emphasized news with immediate impact: crime incidents and court

cases, local politics, human interest stories, anecdotes, odd happenings, even animal stories. He was not above using hoaxes as circulation builders; a famous story reported the discovery of batlike creatures living on the moon.

Day also introduced new distribution and advertising concepts. Using a plan then employed only in London, he hired boys and unemployed men to “shout” his papers in the streets. Most importantly, he saw that he could deliver customers, in unprecedented numbers, to his advertisers. The *Sun*’s large circulation allowed Day to shift to advertising as a significant revenue source, allowing him to sell his newspaper for a penny.

James Gordon Bennett began the *New York Herald* as a penny paper in 1835. Like Day, he was nonpartisan: “We shall support no faction . . . and care nothing for any election. . . .” He delivered news (“facts, on every proper and public subject”) and human interest (“human nature [in] its freaks and vagaries”) in a refreshingly direct way. Bennett delighted in reporting the scandals, misdeeds, and hypocrisies of the upper classes, incurring their anger but building an enthusiastic following among his penny press faithful. He went further than anyone in covering financial news. His regular “Money Market” reports reflected shrewd attention to America’s growing industrialization and developing capital markets. Often Bennett’s news approach was sensationalistic. At his behest the *Herald*’s correspondents provided graphic descriptions of fires, floods, and crimes and personally visited gruesome crime scenes to report gory details.

Bennett was also famous for his hard-hitting editorials, for which he was loathed not only by the upper crust but by his competitors, who called him a “loathsome libeller,” a “venomous reptile,” and an “infamous blasphemer.” His success was enormous; by 1840 the *Herald* rivalled the *Sun* in circulation.

Day and Bennett changed the face of urban journalism. By their approaches to pricing, advertising, news concept, speed of reportage, and style of presentation, they reached a new public. American newspaper circulation had been relatively flat from 1820 to 1835; from 1835 to 1840 it grew 8 percent a year.

Horace Greeley, arguably the era’s most famous journalist, founded the *New York Tribune* in 1841 and edited it for thirty years. His was a penny paper dedicated to social reform. Politically active and personally committed, Greeley espoused abolition, women’s rights, temperance, and workingmen’s issues. Greeley deplored the excesses of the *Herald*, but along with Day and Bennett he helped build a new newspaper readership. New York’s three great penny papers were not alone: the *Boston Times*, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, and even the long-lived *Baltimore Sun* were all founded as penny papers that gave a new “feel” to the news.

While the nonpolitical urban penny press was a remarkable development, partisan papers continued to dominate the smaller cities and towns. The Whigs and Democrats had their loyal organs, and every new political movement, such as the Anti-Masons, Know-Nothings, and Free-Soilers, set forth their views in

often hastily edited sheets. Every faction within the major parties had an editorial voice. "Campaign papers," edited only during a given political contest, were common in this day. As the *Richmond Times* wrote: "Neutrality in this country and in this age is an anomaly."

Americans and their newspapers continued to move west. Although improvements in post roads allowed express mail delivery from the East, every town wanted its own paper. When Alexis de Tocqueville visited America in 1831, he was struck by this proliferation of small-town newspapers. America had between 1,000 and 1,200 papers by 1830, three times as many as in France or in England. In 1835 there were 145 newspapers in Ohio alone. Tocqueville commented that "the number ... is almost incredibly large ... there is scarcely a hamlet which has not its newspaper." Tocqueville was less impressed with the quality of American journalists. He argued that editors often had "a scanty education and a very vulgar turn of mind." But if he was elitist about the editors' education, he had little doubt about their activism and their impact: "They attack and defend ... in a thousand different ways ... [when they take a stand] their influence becomes irresistible."

The role of the frontier and small-town press went beyond news and politics. In towns with no schools, newspapers might be the only voice of literacy. The press helped to educate the public, and the network of papers, linked by the postal exchange system, provided a mechanism for common dialogue in a nation of small and often scattered communities.

1844-1860: Technology, Politics, and the Newspaper Business

The Mexican War (1846-1848) was the first American war reported by eyewitness reporters. Pioneer war correspondents George Kendall and James Frenner rode with General Zachary Taylor's troops. Since telegraph lines did not reach the war theater, dispatches went by horseback or boat from the battlefields to New Orleans, the nearest printing center. Once back in Washington, war news was rapidly distributed by telegraphy. Even in war the American press did not abandon its crusty partisanship. Whig and Liberty Party papers blasted "Mr. Polk's War" and the *New York Tribune* wrote: "People of the United States, your rulers are precipitating you into a fathomless abyss of crime and calamity."

In 1844, when the Whigs at their Baltimore convention nominated Henry Clay for President, Samuel F. B. Morse telegraphed the news and Washington had a same-day story. Telegraphy quickly became a staple of newsroom operations. The wires allowed late updates of developing stories and rapid contact with distant places, fostering a new conception of national news.

Advances in printing technology helped editors deliver news faster. By 1850 most big-city papers had installed steam presses that could print twenty thousand newspapers an hour. News coming in as late as the previous evening could be typeset, run, and in a reader's hands by first thing the next morning.

Technology, news hunger fueled by the Mexican War, and the ever-growing ability to deliver large circulations to advertisers changed the economic side of newspapering. Newspapers became businesses, and soon they were big business. Publishers incorporated their enterprises and sought new ways to attract capital. James Gordon Bennett had founded the *Herald* in 1835 on 500 dollars; 70,000 dollars in initial capitalization was needed to start the *New York Times* in 1851; and the *Sun's* 1849 selling price was 250,000 dollars.

Nationally, the number of newspapers grew rapidly, to sixteen hundred in 1840 and twenty-three hundred in 1850. Expansion of this newly lucrative business was especially great in the cities. In 1850, New York supported fifteen dailies, Boston twelve, and Philadelphia and New Orleans ten each. The number of daily newspapers increased by 84 percent during the 1840s alone.

Newspapering, politics, and social issues were still intertwined. Joseph Medill bought the eight-year-old *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1855, and quickly demonstrated the power of even a new member of the press by leading the "Lincoln for President" boom. Medill's paper helped build the legend of the Railsplitter, highlighting Lincoln's homespun wisdom and reporting his speeches in their most favourable light. Henry J. Raymond founded the *New York Times* as a penny paper in 1851. By 1857 the paper was strong enough to publish a powerful series of stories and editorials exposing four members of Congress for having given

away to cronies thousands of acres of public land. (*The Times* called it "the iniquitous Minnesota land grab.")

Women registered a few gains in the male-dominated newspaper world in the 1840s and 1850s. Cornelia Walter edited the *Boston Transcript* from 1842 to 1847 and is credited with being the first female editor of a regular newspaper. Jane Gray Swisshelm edited the *Pittsburgh Sunday Visiter* from 1848 to 1852. She also worked as a Capitol Hill correspondent for various Pittsburgh papers, the first woman to do so. Such opportunities in the mainstream newspaper press were few; most women who participated in journalism did so through magazines or in reform, especially abolitionist, newspapers.

The abolitionist press reached its peak in these decades. Newspapers with names like *Emancipator*, *Anti-Slavery Record*, and *Human Rights* put forward the abolition program amid a storm of controversy. Many abolitionist papers suffered property damage to their presses or personal violence to their editors, in some cases both. John Greenleaf Whittier was editor of the *Pennsylvania Freeman* when its office was burned by a mob. Cassius Marcellus Clay edited his *Kentucky True American* with pistols at his sides at all times. Elijah Lovejoy's murder during the destruction of his newspaper at Alton, Illinois, in 1837 became a rallying cry for ardent abolitionists. The burning of the *Kansas Herald* helped prompt John Brown's Osawatimie massacre of proslavery settlers in the Kansas Territory in 1856.

By 1860, newspapers were poised to play a key role in the Civil War. Telegraph technology and the transatlantic cable, completed in 1858, significantly increased the speed of news delivery. Moreover, the reach of the press had become truly nationwide. About 3,700 papers (387 dailies) were being published in 1860, including over 100 in California alone. Circulations had grown dramatically. In 1830 no American newspaper circulated even 5,000 copies. By 1860 America boasted the largest circulating daily newspaper in the world, the *New York Herald*, with an average daily press run of 77,000.

1860-1865: The Civil War

In 1860 the press in the Northern states was a significant institution, influential in business and powerful in national politics. Large circulations grew even larger as interest in war news swelled. The *Herald's* 77,000 circulation, for example, went to 107,520 copies the day after the firing on Fort Sumter, and did not drop below 100,000 for the rest of the war.

The Southern press resembled that of an earlier America. Most newspapers in the Confederacy were small circulation weeklies. Even a leading daily like the *New Orleans Picayune* ran only five thousand copies. Once the war was joined, Southern papers were in the same straits as the other institutions of the Confederacy, cut off from capital, technology, raw materials, and even personnel. The Press Association of the Confederate States of America never had more than ten correspondents in the field.

The Northern press was a force unto itself. Over three hundred American reporters were in the field (along with dozens more from overseas). The *New York Herald* alone spent 500,000 dollars on salaries, telegraph fees, and logistical support for the fifty to sixty staffers it employed in war coverage. The *Tribune* and the *Times* each had twenty reporters and illustrators in action. Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* (founded 1855) and *Harper's Weekly* (1857) had artists at every major encampment and battle site. Leslie's eighty artists provided over three thousand sketches and drawings. Reproduced by woodcut technology, these sketches allowed the public to see the news as well as read it. Newspapers regularly published maps and battle diagrams.

In the Civil War, reporters for the first time became news gatherers in a regular and systematic way, going to the scene to provide eyewitness coverage. From the *Herald's* well-provisioned staff to the three dogged reporters from the *Memphis Daily Appeal* who accompanied Confederate armies, the emphasis was on immediacy and detail.

The Union government's attitude toward the press was ambivalent. The Lincoln administration used the Associated Press as its regular conduit of official news. The unprecedented immediacy of reporting, however, posed a problem: the enemy could read the news. Robert E. Lee regularly read the Yankee papers for information about command structure, troop movement, and morale. Thus, there was pressure for censorship. The Union military commanders imposed self-censorship in October 1861, and in 1862 the

secretary of state forbade newspapers from publishing the “number, positions, or strength of the military force of the United States.” Generals regularly banned correspondents from theaters of operations. The Confederate Congress made it a felony to publish news of troop movements or naval activity.

Not all Civil War correspondents and artists were ethical or honest; reporters filed “eyewitness” accounts of battles they had not seen, and illustrators well to the rear drew scenes at the front of which they had only been told. Even those on the scene exaggerated or sensationalized and used reportage to inflame partisan sentiment. A disloyal Copperhead press published throughout the War, criticizing Lincoln and his generals, attacking administration policy (especially the draft), glorifying the Confederacy, and urging the end of the war.

Yet an astonishing amount of real war news, direct from battle zones and obtained in the face of danger, reached the public. The newspaper reading habit was now firmly fixed: English visitor Edward Dicey wrote in 1863, “The American might be defined as a newspaper reading animal.”

The 1870s and 1880s: The New Journalism

Newspapers came out of the Civil War with a newfound awareness of their potential. National publications like *Harper’s Weekly* covered, with text and woodcut illustration, the big stories: westward expansion, Indian wars, industrialization. As in earlier decades, local frontier papers were prized community assets: the

Montana Post sold out its first press run of nine hundred copies in minutes, at fifty cents a copy. Cheyenne, Wyoming, first laid out as a railroad town in July 1869, had a newspaper, the *Leader*, within three months of its founding. In an age of land speculation, newspaper advertisements and news columns trumpeted the romance of the West and its attractiveness as a destination for settlers. But western journalism was not all rosy promotion. Reporters for frontier papers like the *Black Hills Pioneer* rode with the U.S. Cavalry, came to know Indians and Indian agents, and thrilled the nation with tales of frontier valor.

The Civil War left established newspapers with a more discerning and news-hungry readership, whose loyalty could no longer be taken for granted. Reporters could not wait for news; they had to uncover it, using techniques developed during the war, and it had to be delivered quickly and attractively. The front pages of papers, for most of the century the province of advertising, were much more devoted to news after the war.

Able editors capitalized on the trend. Charles A. Dana bought the *New York Sun* in 1868 and announced a policy of publishing news that was “the freshest, most interesting and sprightliest.” Knowing that more sophisticated readers wanted good writing, he was among the first to hire college graduates as reporters. He revived human interest writing and campaigned against scandal. By 1876 Dana had built the *Sun* into a 130,000-copies-a-day giant.

The 1870s were the great age of the *New York Herald* and of James Gordon Bennett, Jr., son of the founder. Bennett spent money to make money. He used the costly transatlantic cable freely, continued his Civil War practice of hiring a large reportorial staff, and diversified his newspaper's content (creating the first real estate section, for example). Bennett's famous aphorism, "I make news," was never better demonstrated than in his hiring of reporter Henry M. Stanley to find missionary David Livingstone in Africa. Stanley's three-year mission provided plenty of copy and reader interest for the *Herald*. Like his penny press predecessors, Bennett was not above using a hoax to build circulation. In 1874 he front-paged a story that all the animals had escaped from the New York Zoo and were on a citywide killing rampage.

Direct subsidies from political parties to newspapers had nearly disappeared by the 1870s, but many papers had clear political sympathies. Reconstruction brought these out, as Republican papers attacked President Andrew Johnson and called for his impeachment, while Democratic papers supported Johnson's lenient policies toward the former Confederate states. More papers, though, were adopting an independent editorial stance. Whitelaw Reid of the *Tribune* crowed, "Independent journalism! That is the watchword of the future in the profession."

Editorial independence allowed for social muckraking and crusades against political corruption. The most famous was led by *Harper's Weekly* and the nominally Democratic *New York Times* against the felonious New York City government of Tammany Hall and "Boss"

William M. Tweed. *Harper's* provided the scathing cartoons of Thomas Nast and the *Times* did the gritty legwork that would be a model for future investigative reporting, digging through city documents to find cost overruns, padded payrolls, and kickbacks. Tammany allegedly offered the *Times* 5 million dollars not to publish the records and offered Nast an art scholarship to study in Europe.

Tammany was not the only target. The *Sun* coined the slogan "Turn the Rascals Out!" in campaigning against the second Grant administration. The Scripps papers exposed overcharging in the funeral business, mistreatment in workhouses, and the abominable living conditions in slums in Cleveland and Detroit. The unforgettable "Nellie Bly" (Elizabeth Cochrane) pioneered undercover investigative reporting by posing as an unwed mother to expose baby selling and simulating insanity to report on asylum conditions.

The great figure of the "New Journalism" was Joseph Pulitzer. Originally from the German-language press, Pulitzer first ran the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and then the *New York World*, both publishing successes. Pulitzer's New Journalism was built on a strong news base. He had a large reporting staff, trained in the importance of accuracy and comprehensiveness. He urged reporting on the city's underclasses, especially the rapidly arriving immigrants. Pulitzer urged his reporters to find "what is original, dramatic, romantic ... odd, apt to be talked about," yet he also stressed "accuracy, accuracy, accuracy."

Editorially, Pulitzer took on the New York Central Railroad, Standard Oil, and a group of bribe-taking city councilmen he called the “Broadway Boodlers.” His crusades were legendary, as were his stunts. He sent the tireless Nellie Bly around the world in an attempt to beat the fictional circumnavigation record in Jules Verne’s *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873). She completed the trip in seventy-two days, and Pulitzer milked a circulation bonanza as the public followed her trip.

The New Journalism was visual. Pulitzer led in the use of illustrations: pen portraits of political figures, a drawing of the new Brooklyn Bridge, maps, cartoons, diagrams, and soon “half-tone” photographic reproductions.

The 1890s: Yellow Journalism

William Randolph Hearst, at the *San Francisco Examiner* and then at the *New York Journal* in 1895, thought of himself at first as a practitioner of Pulitzer-style New Journalism. Hearst’s *Journal* stressed hard news, crusaded against special interest and scandals, and generally took an activist stance: “While Others Talk, the Journal Acts.”

But soon, in a feverish circulation war with Pulitzer’s *World*, Hearst’s *Journal* turned to lurid sensationalism, gimmicks, and hoaxes. Hearst cut the *Journal*’s price to a penny and hired away Pulitzer’s key reporters and his cartoonist, Richard Outcault, creator of the cartoon character the “Yellow Kid.” Hearst featured Outcault’s character in so many editions that “yellow” came to

stand for the brand of journalism that Hearst espoused. Hearst soon completed his conversion to the full yellow style: scare headlines, extensive use of pictures (including faked ones), comics, features, ultra-sensational reporting, and patent pandering to society’s underdogs. Hearst’s circulation gains were so dramatic that Pulitzer rose to the bait and began to imitate the yellow approach.

The Hearst-Pulitzer battle reached its zenith, and yellow journalism its greatest fame, in the agitation over Spanish colonial rule in Cuba. Both papers used yellow techniques to build war fever in America, including phony “eyewitness” accounts, faked pictures of atrocities, and inflated claims of Spanish treachery, culminating in their irresponsible reporting of the mysterious explosion of the battleship *Maine*. (The *Journal* called it “the Work of an Enemy”; the *World* claimed, falsely, to have evidence that a Spanish bomb was the cause.) The results were dramatic. At the height of the 1898 war fever, the *Journal* was circulating a staggering 1.5 million copies a day, with the *World* close behind. The *World* earned 500,000 dollars in profits in 1898.

Newspapering had truly become big business. The age of personal journalism in the cities was over. Small-town papers felt the change too, though much more slowly. Journalist Lincoln Steffens said in 1897: “The magnitude of financial operations of the newspaper is turning journalism upside down.”

The profession itself was changing as well. Joseph Pulitzer advocated specialized academic training for

journalists, and women were increasingly entering a still largely male bastion. An 1893 survey found 250 working newspaperwomen in the United States, plus scores more doing rewrite and clerical tasks. Nellie Bly filed powerful reports on the Pullman strike in 1894, and conducted a memorable interview with feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1896. But male reporters and editors saw these as aberrations, and dismissed Bly and her colleagues as “stunt girls.”

As the century ended, yellow journalism was fading. Although about one-third of big-city papers in 1899 were still “yellow,” many never had been or were turning their backs on these techniques. The press world was dividing into the “serious” newspapers of record, like the *New York Times*, purchased by the Ochs family in 1896, and picture oriented, popular appeal papers like those in the Scripps group.

In 1800 the American newspaper industry consisted of only 200 barely solvent one-man operations. A century later the American press was made up of 21,000 papers, many with large and complex reportorial, editorial, and business staffs, and generating 96 million dollars in annual advertising revenue. By 1900 the American press was at once a major industry and a mature medium of communication.

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