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Lisa Varisco’s research on Civil War correspondent Sam Reid was presented at the annual national convention of the Antebellum and Civil War Conference at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga in November, 1997. Previously, an earlier version was presented at the Southeast Regional Colloquium of the Associate for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) held at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, in March 1997.
AN EDITORIAL COMMENT

Welcome to the inaugural publication of the Atlanta Review of Journalism History and to its inviting “windows” on American culture. Through the artifacts of journalism and its practitioners, the researchers whose results appear here, glimpsed through the mind’s eye a period of time long since past.

The era they examined was from 1827 to 1865, before and during the great divide of the 19th Century—the Civil War, or the War Between the States. Their interest was in placing the people of that time in the context of the past, not in judging them by today’s standards. In searching, then, they looked for signs of the culture—in politics, economics, religion, society, intellect and aesthetics.

The four essays published here have already won prizes and praises, as noted in the Table of Contents, in large part because the authors delved into primary sources—evidence “at the scene”—and because their writing focused deeply on specific persons at specific times. Remarkably, all four papers were written by journalism history students who at the time were undergraduates. Since the first writing, however, the authors have revised their papers significantly, for presentation at conferences and again on recommendations by a panel of historians who serve on the advisory board of the Atlanta Review of Journalism History.

All four authors used the traditional tools of historians. As historical detectives they probed in the artifacts of the era for clues that would establish not only facts but also meaning. In a sense, all four authors were time travelers, drawn back into the facts and context of the characters and time. Thankfully, each author came back to the present, enriched and empowered to write.
In these stories the thoughtful reader can sense the effect of time travel and perhaps, if the mood is just right, share the sensation....

One can see in Duff Green’s the American determination to change, through newspapers, the class-centered course of politics. Through Greg Newsome’s eyes one can see Green printing the “pointing finger” to highlight paragraphs emphasizing his candidate, Andrew Jackson.

Gregg MacDonald followed the turns in the editorial paper trail of another Jacksonian Democrat, William Cullen Bryant. Eventually Bryant’s trail turned boldly away from his party’s support of slavery.

In a sense, Barry Parks experienced America’s first foreign war, against Mexico, through the pen of George Wilkins Kendall. Relayed by riders and ships to New Orleans and onward by more riders and telegraphy to New York, Kendall’s stories shaped many Americans’ sense of war and warriors.

Lisa Varisco journeyed to the South during the Civil War through the journalism of Samuel Chester Reid. She followed the war through his early reports in the New Orleans Picayune and the Memphis Daily Appeal, and later in his dispatches in the Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register. The spirit of the South comes alive once again.

This journal’s purpose is to facilitate the discourse of historical journalism and foster scholarly research among students, both in and out of the classroom. It is a project supported by the Journalism History Society, a new chartered student organization at Georgia State University.

Enjoy!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This premier issue of the Atlanta Review of Journalism History would not have been possible without generous donations of time, talent and treasure by a number of persons and institutions involved with the long, elaborated process of writing, revision, planning, judging, editing, financing and preparations for publication.

Funding for this first issue was provided by four separate sources. Two agencies, the Georgia State University Center for Teaching and Learning and the GSU Writing Across the Curriculum Program, both recognized in the Review a model for the publication of superior student research; the Center and the Program each provided a grant for a graduate research assistant and some printing costs. Additional printing costs were allocated by the GSU College Organizations Fee Council to the Journalism History Society, which supervises the publication. Finally, the Department of Communication matched the Fee Council’s contribution.

None of the above grants would have been likely, however, had it not been for an earlier grant of $2,000 from the GSU Provost’s Office under the GSU Improvement in Instruction Fund. That grant permitted us to publish in 1995 the prototype issue of the Review as undeniable evidence that GSU students—undergraduates and graduates alike—produce serious, nationally competitive research and writing. After a celebration honoring the authors was hosted by Dean of Students Dr. Kurt Keppler, the Journalism History Society approached other donors with the proposal of an annual publication. Now, with this first issue, we will be making the rounds again.

Personal acknowledgments are fitting and proper. From the beginning, the Review has enjoyed the support of the chair of the Department of
Communication, Dr. Carol Winkler, and the Associate Chair, Dr. Carolyn Crimmins. At the Center for Teaching and Learning, we owe debts of gratitude to Dr. John Murphy and Dr. Harry Dangel. Support from the Writing Across the Curriculum Program as mustered by Dr. George Pullman in the English Department and College of Arts and Sciences Dean Ahmed Abdelal. The College Organizations Fee Council must be thanked as a whole because their members are too numerous to mention. Thanks too to Glenn Kaalund, our former business manager, for helping us manage our funds wisely.

The work of handling manuscripts, compiling, editing and preparing for publication was shared mostly by two Department of Communication graduate students, first Mindy Duncan and then Lisa V. Daigle. Under their supervision every manuscript was judged and critiqued by at least two professors of journalism history on our national board of advisers.

These judges, of course, deserve credit for helping us lift the level of historical discourse. For the essays in this inaugural issue, we thank Prof. Shirley Biagi of California State University-Sacramento, Dr. Patrick Washburn of Ohio University, Dr. Roy Moore of the University of Kentucky, Dr. William Huntzicker of the University of Minnesota-Bemidji, Dr. Michael Salwen of the University of Miami, Dr. Kittrell Rushing of the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, and Dr. Joseph Mirando of Southeast Louisiana University, and Dr. Wallace Eberhard of the University of Georgia.

Finally, after the judges’ sent us their recommendations, the authors had to shift again into accelerated revision. Thus, in the final analysis, we thank the student authors themselves for their persistence in staying with the project to its ultimate, refined conclusion.
Duff Green’s Political Crusade Through the Press, 1827-1830
Gregory Newsome

Politics in the 1827 presidential election campaign took on “popular, dramatic, and even evangelical qualities” as presidential politicians financed parades, rallies, conventions, and party newspapers.¹ American citizens interested in common ambitions for prosperity and those connected by common dangers turned to the newspapers as an instrument of knowledge and power previously enjoyed by only the “privileged or the learned.”² In 1827 and 1828, political candidates increasingly relied on the press to reach the masses because of wider diffusion of literacy in America. Politicians identified the press as a tool to influence the “opinions of mankind.”³

The tools of the press, used in the 1827-28 presidential campaign, took the form of political party newspapers. Public officials perceived these newspapers as having a strong influence over the “common man’s” opinions.⁴ The party newspapers differed from earlier newspapers because the financial backing came from political officials and represented by the primary component of the political organization.⁵ Political parties and candidates thought that owning

³ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
their own party newspapers gave the candidates the ability to counteract damaging public statements that may injure their reputations. Unfounded rumors circulated by political competing newspapers could cause wide misrepresentation that without correction could lead to negative publicity and a political candidate’s early demise.

The election of 1828 involved two parties, the Whigs and the Jacksonian Democrats. The Whigs represented the middle class composed of Republican federalists that favored “supremacy over presidential dictatorial rule,” that the Jackson new coalition claimed they provided. The Jacksonian Democrats appealed to the common man ideas and principles and used the press to reach the masses of voters since new state laws in 1828 expanded the eligibility to vote on election days.

The political intrigues of the 1828 presidential campaign began when Andrew Jackson decided to focus on party newspapers to promote good public opinion. After his defeat in 1824 by John Quincy Adams, Jackson’s main concern was to protect his character from frequent questioning throughout his 37-year career of military and public service.

As Jackson became more involved in the campaign, the assaults on his private history and public career intensified. These attacks came not only from President John Quincy Adams’ coalitions but from numerous anonymous letters that appeared in newspapers such as the Cincinnati Gazette, the Pennsylvania Gazette in Philadelphia, the Daily National Intelligencer and the National Journal in Washington D.C.⁶ Some of the political malice fabricated in newspaper circulation involved “denouncing Jackson as a military chieftain and a political bulldog who renders his elevation to office dangerous to civil liberty.”⁷ Statements such as these filled the newspapers on a regular basis.

Overwhelmed by these “gutter attacks,” Jackson decided to open a correspondence with John “Duff” Green, the new editor of the leading newspaper in Washington D.C. Green edited the old Gazette with the financial backing of Jackson and his political friends before 1828.⁸ Green changed the Gazette’s name to the United States Telegraph.⁹ In 1826, the Telegraph was originally the organ of John C. Calhoun but also solidly supported any stance that Jackson followed.

In its war of words, the Telegraph gave credibility to Jackson’s campaign for the presidency. As the leading Democratic party newspaper in Washington D.C., the Telegraph relied on correspondence, letters, and individual contacts to inform and elaborate about their favorite and not-so-favorite politicians.¹⁰

In the aftermath of Jackson’s 1824 defeat, the strategy for the Telegraph editor was to build a positive opinion toward Jackson while

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⁸ Remini, p. 165.
⁹ Latner, p. 27.
creating suspicion towards the incumbent, President John Quincy Adams and Secretary of State Henry Clay.

Green's opponents called him "Rough" Duff Green, because of his forceful writing style. He enjoyed creating suspicion by writing articles about the desperate condition of the Adams coalition. He publicly reduced them to "Grog Drinkers, who are lazy and worthless." Green stated, "What! Has it come to this, that a majority of our honest farmers and mechanics whose industry and patriotism is an honor to the American character, be represented by those paid to publicly abuse the man for the people, General Jackson?" Green highlighted Adams' deviant and calculated plans on a "second triumph over the people and the republican principles of the government."

A large number of voters in the 1828 presidential election stood divided on the slavery issue. To persuade the people, Green explained that Adams voted against a bill in December 1805, to "prohibit the importation of slaves in the U.S. after the year 1808." The Telegraph circulated lengthy articles on how this violated the "common rights of humanity." The only situation Adams worried about was his wealthy Bostonian friends' domestic slavery trade deteriorating. By voting against this Importation Bill he was in violation of the "natural rights of mankind."\(^\text{17}\)

Green succeeded in persuading the public because he focused on what the average American could not afford in material possessions in 1827. He identified Adams as a wealthy man who wanted to limit free government. He described Adams as "ruthless, arrogant, and a domineering usurpation of a corrupt Aristocracy."\(^\text{18}\)

When the Telegraph started publication in January 1827, Jackson gave Green guidelines regarding his propaganda to counteract the charges against him. "Should the administration continue their systematic course of slander?" Jackson said. "It will be well now and then to throw a fire brand into their camp by the statement of few facts."\(^\text{19}\) However, he said, "Female characters never should be introduced or touched by my friends, unless a continuation of attacks should be made against Mrs. Rachel Jackson, and then only by way of just retaliation upon the known guilty."\(^\text{20}\) It appeared that Jackson was giving the Telegraph approval to retaliate against other political candidates' wives whenever the newspapers publicly disgraced Mrs. Jackson.

However, Green took a different approach to his revenge statements published in the Telegraph. Green honored Jackson's guidelines but followed a more dignified approach by only using his newspaper to publicly attack the male politicians. He intentionally

\(^{11}\) "Official Slander," U.S. Telegraph, October 25, 1827, p. 3.
\(^{12}\) Ibid.
\(^{13}\) "From the Kentucky Argus," U.S. Telegraph, October 9, 1828, p. 3.
\(^{14}\) Ibid.
\(^{15}\) "Mr. Livingston's Speech," Pennsylvania Gazette, August 13, 1828, p. 2.
\(^{16}\) Ibid.
\(^{17}\) U.S. Telegraph, October 9, 1828, p. 3.
\(^{18}\) U.S. Telegraph, October 25, 1827, p. 3.
\(^{19}\) Remini, 164.
\(^{20}\) Ibid.
\(^{21}\) Ibid.
avoided direct attacks on other political candidates’ spouses in his hard-hitting, energetic articles.

The early format for the Telegraph resembled a political tabloid. The Telegraph relied on depositions and letters from individuals for conspiracy news and rumors. An example of this involved Jackson’s wife, when the newspapers circulated rumors of her lack of education. The Republicans made this claim because of comments made to them by guests from Britain during a formal party. The visiting British made comments about Jackson as being from the “dregs of society.” The British went on to insult Jackson’s wife by claiming, “She was from the common peoples’ toe, perfectly ignorant of good breeding.” The statement referring to the common peoples’ toe implied that she was from a poor common family and that she had to till the earth for her survival.

The Republicans reported to the Telegraph that the British visitors said, “The world would laugh at you, and other nations will despise you.” The British visitors also stated that, “Their king will be ashamed to receive a minister from under such a man as Jackson.” The insults went even farther by encompassing the past, in stating that, “By electing a man like Jackson, it will be the worst thing for you that has ever happened since the revolution.”

Green responded by labeling Republicans as puppets who flaunted themselves with British aristocrats. Green, who enjoyed commenting on political arrogance, replied that, “Jackson was emphatically one of us, the people, for Mr. Adams was one who we believe to be warmly attached by the principles to monarchical institutions.” These types of comments, linking Adams with the Aristocrats in Britain, filled the pages of the Telegraph’s periodicals during the months preceding the election of 1828. The editor, Green, obviously planned to compare Adams as not being in touch with the American people, while Jackson favored the common man company. Green compared and contrasted the associations of the Adams’ delegation concerned with the Royal Palace to a God fearing virtuous woman such as Mrs. Jackson.

Green was always trying to boost Rachel Jackson’s image because Jackson was continuously on the defensive when it came to his wife’s reputation. Early in their marriage in 1791, Jackson was a Tennessee state prosecutor that commanded high moral standings at the time. He married Rachel Robards in spite of reports that she and Lewis Robards were not legally divorced. Jackson claimed that he thought the divorce was final. Although Jackson had been a hero in the defense of New Orleans from the British on January 8, 1815, the character of his beloved wife plagued him throughout his political

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Chronicles of America, p. 601.
31 Ibid.
campaigns in 1824 and again in 1828.

Charles Hammond, editor of the Cincinnati Gazette, originated the adultery charges. Hammond wrote that in the summer of 1790, “General Jackson prevailed over the wife of Lewis Roberts, of Mercer County, Kentucky, to desert her husband and live with him in the character of a wife.”

Jackson, a Kentucky state prosecutor in 1790, said he was under the misimpression that Rachel Robards' divorce was legal, and that the newspaper reports from 1791 were not accurate. “Jackson and his wife were visibly shaken by the widespread coverage in the newspapers of the circumstances surrounding their marriage.” It was accusations such as these that influenced Jackson’s financial backing of the Telegraph to officially address and defend his family's character against these charges. These public statements about Mrs. Jackson were so dramatic that Mr. Jackson reported to the newspapers that the death of Mrs. Rachel Jackson, in December 24, 1828, was due to the continual attacks on their marriage.

The personal attacks on Jackson increased as his presidential campaign gained momentum in the winter of 1827. In the midst of all the party newspapers’ personal attacks, the followers of Jackson’s Democratic party were still enthusiastic about “Old Hickory’s Common Man” ideas. Jackson compellingly defended his character to a mass audience for the first time in his political career.

Jackson forcibly attempted to meet all of the obligations his constituents placed on him in their search for information, clarification and the continual necessity of explanation regarding his past behavior in connection with personal and public events. Controversial statements appeared regularly in competing party newspapers such as the Daily National Intelligencer.

One issue contained concerns of Jackson’s reasons for voting against George Washington in the House of Representatives in 1796, the role Jackson played in the Burr conspiracy in 1806, his reason for executing six militia men in 1814, and his alleged profiteering from bails of cotton during the defense of New Orleans in 1815. All of these concerns demanded explanation and justification in the Democrats and the public’s view. These questions warranted attention, but the propaganda against his wife bothered Jackson the most.

Because Jackson took a high moral position in the 1828 campaign, a group called the “Anti-Jackson” coalition revived the charge that he had an “adulterous and bigamous marriage” and challenged him to explain his own reprehensible behavior in running off with another man’s wife. Jackson’s marriage received widespread coverage by the newspapers, especially the Cincinnati Gazette. Jackson’s opposing political advocates published information about the Adams’ background to boost their prestigious image over

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32 Remini, p. 163.  
33 Chronicles of America, p. 207.  
34 Remini, p. 163.  
35 Shaw, p. 11.  
36 Latner, p. 10.  
37 Remini, p. 163.  
38 Ibid.
Jackson’s rough, military chieftain demeanor. The Republican party newspapers, such as the Intelligencer, stated that Mr. and Mrs. Adams received their education from British schools, “They have got polished by many years residence in London from respected families.” Green responded to these statements by identifying Jackson’s family as one of us, “the people,” and Adams as “warmly attached to the monarchical institutions of education and marriage” and should be considered a dangerous pair.

The controversy in 1827 and 1828 also targeted Jackson’s stance on slavery and the slave trade. The Telegraph made sure that The Pennsylvania Gazette, the Intelligencer, and the Maryland Journal, received news correspondence “antagonistic to the claims of Mr. Henry Clay trading Negroes.” When Clay accused “General Jackson as a Negro trader,” the Telegraph immediately responded with reports that condemned Clay and his family for participating in the African slave trade. An alleged statement from a friend of Clay, implicated Clay of buying slaves in the past from those unauthorized to sell slaves. The Telegraph claimed that a friend of Clay’s “is guilty of having purchased a free man for $125 and placing him in bondage.” The newspaper also claimed that Clay bought a man who was “entitled to his freedom.” According to the Telegraph, Clay participated in moving the slaves from Kentucky to Tennessee which was illegal in 1825, without the proper license.

Green’s investigative reporting made these statements credible. He received the slave trading information from a friend of Clay. In breaking this story, Green announced that the Telegraph had uncovered evidence and also parole testimony. The Telegraph also obtained the free man’s name as being Jerry, a twenty-five year old. Green lashed out in bold headlines in his article on the irony of Clay ridiculing Jackson owning slaves when the Vice President of the American Colonization Society ignores liberty and is insensitive to a man’s rights. This article demonstrated Green’s ability to research the facts and expose hypocritical criticism toward Jackson. The articles revealing these charges portrayed them as serious even though slavery was widespread throughout the established states. The editor came to a conclusion that these charges “merit serious investigation and should concern every free man in the whole nation.” If true, Green states, “Henry Clay ought to be compelled to restore the man despoiled of his liberty to his native state.”

During the summer of 1828, the Telegraph was also defending

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39 U.S. Telegraph, October 6, 1828, p. 2.
40 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
47 Ibid., p. 3.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
its candidate because of the cotton scandal. Witnesses claimed that during the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, Jackson bought bails of cotton for completion of defensive work, at a rate of 8 cents a bail. After the "enemy was beaten, he took the cotton of several years' crops," they claimed, "and sold it for 30 cents a bail."

The Telegraph addressed this matter through correspondence with Jackson and published daily, explaining his military situation in New Orleans, and why they used cotton for defensive fortification to protect his soldiers from artillery. Green used this type of editor's correspondence with political competing newspapers to create the opportunity for the public to give Jackson a chance to respond to the charges. Jackson publicly claimed that he gave the money to the quartermaster and that, "It shall go to the benefit of the United States..."

When it came to slanderous stories, Green was unique in getting his message across to influence public perception toward Jackson and Calhoun. Calhoun was the Democratic candidate running for Vice President alongside Jackson for President. John C. Calhoun's reputation as a statesman and his distinguished career in government won a large number of wealthy, educated and socially prominent male voters for the Democratic ticket. Calhoun's strong political connections in Congress made it possible to play havoc with the opposition to Jackson's programs during his presidency. As Secretary of War under James Monroe, Calhoun supported and approved Jackson's invasion of Florida in his pursuit to eradicate the Seminole Indians and Spanish from the territory. Jackson admired Monroe because of his beliefs in the South being in danger because of the Spanish inability to control the Indians in the Florida territories. Green made sure that the "Republican Ticket" and their names would be the bold headline on the second page. This article followed on the same page by large blocked ads featuring various meetings around the country of the "Friends of Andrew Jackson." The ads read, "The Indiana Friends of Andrew Jackson...," where each state named separately gave the perception that the entire state was totally behind Jackson for President.

As the election intensified in October, Green started to incorporate songs, poems, and art work depicting Jackson as not being a "spontaneous military bulldog" but a heroic leader of the people, for the people. One of the articles that cultivated this favorable image was the ad that appeared on the front page of the Telegraph called "A Biography of the Campaign of 1781." This ad for a book, available only by subscription, appeared repeatedly on the front page of the newspaper for a month. This biography by Henry Lee explains that

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50 "General Jackson and the Cotton," U.S. Telegraph, (Editor's Correspondence from the Pennsylvania Examiner), October 4, 1828, p. 2.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Latne, 14.
55 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
Jackson’s work depicted the truth of all his military campaigns and established facts that explained any misunderstandings of his conduct. This ad defended the unauthorized war against the Spanish in Florida, in 1818. This biography stated that the opportunity existed to protect the “citizens of America and he could not wait for return correspondence approving his plan from President James Monroe.” This ad placed strategically on the front page of the newspaper counteracted statements depicting Jackson as a ruthless frontiersman.

The Telegraph editor used a unique technique of directing the readers’ attention to important scandalous statements by moving more advertisements to the back page of the newspaper and using a drawing of a hand pointing at certain important sentences in the paragraphs. The advertisements were strategically positioned either at the bottom of the front page or in the very back section of the newspaper.

Advertisements that were fortunate to get front page exposure with Jackson’s articles were either specially selected advertisements that complimented Jackson or ads that required that position because of their size and the amount paid for the exposure. The hand-pointing technique was used by strategically placing a pointing finger within the articles to give the reader the ability to skip through the rhetoric of competing candidates’ claims and go straight to the message the Telegraph was trying to convey. The pointing finger technique was used abundantly in the “More Disclosures” article of the six militia men and “Clay, the Traitor.”

Green published the National Journal accusations that Jackson acted too aggressively when he approved the sentence ordering the execution of six militia men during the Creek War in 1813. Jackson’s military career took abuse from the article’s statement of the “Blood deeds of General Jackson.” Six militia men were sentenced to die by Jackson because it was believed they were deserters after leaving camp without informing anyone. The Telegraph used excerpts from the National Journal to describe how the six men wanted to return to their homes during the Creek War of 1813 at the conclusion of their enlistment. The National Journal dramatized this story by having the six militia men’s names printed on a “Coffin Handbill” with a poem attached called “Mournful Tragedy.”

The Telegraph answered this story, by strategically placing pointing fingers to the paragraphs stating that “General Jackson was the defender of New Orleans against the British with a loss of only six lives.” The pointing fingers artwork directed the readers’ attention to the report that General Jackson responded appropriately to the execution of the six militia men. Green stated that “Mr. Adams’

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58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 “Republican Ticket—More Disclosures,” U.S. Telegraph, October 14, 1828, p. 3.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid, p. 2.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
hired press charges the execution of deserters and mutineers as an unpardonable offense against General Jackson.”-68 While Jackson was defending the frontier, Green stated, Adams sanctioned the execution of six pirates.69 Green’s article did not focus on the identification and details pertaining to the pirates. He merely compared Adam’s sanctioning of an execution with the bad press Jackson received from the execution of the six militia men. The hypocritical actions of Adams became the focus of Green’s disclosure to the public.

Mere disclosure articles by Green turned attention away from Jackson by explaining that the “friends of Gen. Jackson distilled himself from any accusations against Adams’ execution sentence of the six pirates and that the partisans of the coalition might become the apologist of mutiny and desertion.”70

The article about the six militia men was a classic example of how Green used his finger-pointing graphics and reporting skills to obtain attention and direct the right information to counteract any claims against his candidates. The graphic finger-pointing articles appeared in every Telegraph article that supported the cause against Adams’ nomination for president. The finger-pointing graphics were used in an offensive political attack against any accusations by political candidates that opposed Jackson’s election for the presidency. The Telegraph’s finger-pointing article boldly read, “HENRY CLAY A TRAITOR.” Green’s article put Clay under suspicion as Aaron Burr’s secret agent. The article accused Clay as an accomplice to the plan in the plot to establish a personal empire at the expense of both the Spanish and American territory.71 Jackson publicly explained that he was really the original consultant of Burr because he admired his intelligence.72

The Telegraph explained that Jackson was not present during Burr’s plot for Spanish territory in Florida, that he was in Richmond at the time of the attempted conspiracy. In reality, Burr knew that Jackson’s strong nationalism and intense hatred for Spain made him an easy target for recruitment of his plan to eliminate Spanish influence in North America and establish his own government. Burr paid Jackson, $1725.62 to deliver two boats and provisions to a designated spot on an island in the Ohio River.73 General James Wilkinson was recruited into the plan as a double agent spy for the Spanish.74 Wilkinson was having doubts about the success of Burr’s schemes and was fearful of the outcome, so he informed President Jefferson of the conspiracy.75 The Burr conspiracy to seize New Orleans, revolutionize the Louisiana Territory, and invade Mexico was a direct threat to the United States security.76 On January 1, 1807,

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Remini, p. 55.
72 Ibid., p. 56.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., p. 57.
76 Ibid.
Jefferson ordered Jackson to launch an expedition to arrest Burr.\textsuperscript{77} Although Jackson helped launch Burr’s expedition, now he prepared to stop it.

The Telegraph did not explain these facts about Jackson’s true involvement but continually tried to link Secretary of State, Clay, as a conspirator. The Telegraph reportedly connected this link that as a young lawyer, Clay represented Burr during his arrest in Kentucky for organizing troops for illegal purposes.\textsuperscript{78} The ruling based on lack of evidence dismissed the Burr case, but the Telegraph made sure the associations of the two stayed in the minds of the public continuously throughout the 1828 campaign.

Green’s vigorous and straightforward approach to journalism helped Jackson win the newspaper battle for president of the United States in 1828. His imaginative techniques in political affairs news editing played a central role in building a favorable public opinion toward the Democratic party.

However, Jackson personally met with Amos Kendall, editor of the Argus of Western America, more than Green. Green still managed to direct the Washington Central Committee of twenty-four top politicians across the nation.\textsuperscript{79} Despite the service Green gave, Jackson still focused his attention on building a more professional relationship with Kendall. Jackson’s personal relationship led to Kendall’s appointment as the first Press Secretary of the United States.\textsuperscript{80} Jackson identified that Kendall had a more professional integrity with the media than Green had displayed. This appointment was the first time that public relations was an integral part of political policy-making and management.\textsuperscript{81} Jackson’s campaign and presidency in 1828 marked the first attempt in American politics to achieve a broad base public support for a presidential candidate.\textsuperscript{82} Kendall sampled public opinion on issues, advised Jackson, interpreted rough ideas putting them into speeches and news releases.\textsuperscript{83} Kendall served as Jackson’s public relations agent on trips, and wrote glowing articles that he sent to their party newspaper.\textsuperscript{84}

Jackson’s relationship with Kendall finally drove a wedge between Green and himself. Despite the loyal service he gave Jackson, Jackson did not incorporate Green in the political scheme of the President’s new administration. Green’s jealousy of Kendall’s position in the cabinet became clear in some of the articles he wrote at the beginning of the new Jackson administration. Green announced in the Telegraph that the new cabinet was uniformly second-rate, with the single exception of Martin Van Buren.\textsuperscript{85} The cabinet surely ranked among the worst cabinets in the nineteenth century. This list of executive officers hardly inspired confidence and that collapsed within

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{78} "Henry Clay Traitor," U.S. Telegraph, October 14, 1828, p. 2.
\item\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{85} "State Telegraph," U.S. Telegraph, March 1828, p. 2.
\end{itemize}
two years.86 This statement proved to be the sign that Green was distraught over not being a part of the presidential staff.

Soon after the 1828 presidential election, Green defected to support Vice President John Calhoun for office under presidential candidate John Quincy Adams in the 1832 election. Green liked representing Calhoun through the press because they shared the same political philosophy on the nullification movement that asserted the rights of individuals to disobey federal laws. Green and Calhoun’s doctrine of nullification disturbed Jackson. What angered Jackson the most was their denouncement of the tariff laws. Eventually their stance on the tariff laws lead Jackson to create the Force Act of 1833, which authorized the president to use the army and navy to enforce the tariff laws.

Jackson realized that Green’s support for Calhoun meant a threat to his reelection campaign. Green’s inability to reflect and agree on Jackson’s views on tariff reforms and nullification provided a “rallying point for the administration that ultimately brought him down.”87 Jackson’s advisors suggested they needed to invest in a new editor and party newspaper because they desired complete dedication from the political party’s weapon against misrepresentation. The new political organ in 1830 for the Jackson political machine “would be the Washington Globe edited by Francis Preston Blair.”88 Considering

86 Ibid.
87 Latner, p. 75.
88 Ibid., p. 76.
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William Cullen Bryant’s Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860
Greg MacDonald

William Cullen Bryant’s poetic merits have been well documented. His poems *Thanatopsis* and *To A Waterfowl* have become part of America’s literary heritage, but Bryant’s historical significance extends beyond the poetry that the bulk of his fame rests upon.

He was an inveterate traveler, an attorney, and as Editor of *The New York Evening Post* from 1829 to 1878, he was Gotham’s foremost crusader of individual rights. Bryant regarded a newspaper as an educational, moral force designed to diffuse practical information and entice prudence in the common man. He defined prudence as “wisdom applied to the ordinary affairs of life.”¹ He used his paper as a moral force to educate the public mind and “advocate views of political and social subjects which he believed to be correct.”²

Bryant espoused the doctrines of free trade and free expression. It is therefore not surprising that he was vehemently opposed to slavery. Whenever the chance arose for Bryant to speak of slavery, he condemned the practice as a violation of the principle of individual rights. His masterful condemnation of the slave trade in the pages of *The Evening Post* has been called, by one twentieth century historian, “one of the genuine journalistic landmarks of the nineteenth century.”³

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² Symington, p. 111.
This manuscript examines Bryant’s motivations and endeavors toward the abolition of slavery from 1830—when he espoused his power and intentions as an editor—to 1860, when, with the help and support of Bryant, Republican nominee Abraham Lincoln won the Presidency.

Bryant felt that as a journalist, he was able to mold opinion and influence the events that his generation would one day be known by. He did not believe journalism an unworthy or undignified occupation, which was a commonly held belief of the time. In The Evening Post of July 30, 1830 he voiced his philosophy:

In combating error in all shapes and disguises, [satisfaction comes to an editor in the ability] to perceive that you are understood by the intelligent, and appreciated by the candid, and that truth and correct principles are gradually extending their sway through your efforts.4

Bryant arrived in New York in 1825, two years before the city’s final emancipation of slaves on July 4, 1827. Disillusioned with the life of an attorney, he began working at The Evening Post as an editorial assistant. By 1829, Bryant became Editor-In-Chief and acquired a financial interest in the paper. The Evening Post prior to Bryant’s editorship in 1829 had not changed much from its original 1801 party organ format, although it had switched allegiances from Federalist to Democrat. Bryant’s original share in the paper as editor was one-eighth of the net profits. In 1830, it became one-fourth and by 1833 it was one-third.

Bryant’s management of The Evening Post greatly enhanced profits and brought the paper “into a position of influence for its honesty, ability, and high clean methods.”5 By 1834, the paper boasted that it “had never been in a more prosperous condition.”6 Bryant’s steady opposition to protective tariffs, monopolies, and the extension of slavery however, often found him at odds with his party.

As a young boy, Bryant was taught by his father, a surgeon who served in the Massachusetts Legislature, to question conventional ideas and speak his mind unwaveringly when he was convinced that the convention was not right.7 This unwavering integrity was often met by opposition within the Democratic Party and in 1935, The Post was formally disowned by the Democratic administration’s organ, The Washington Globe.

Despite philosophical differences with other Democrats, Bryant’s adept management of The Post enabled him to finance his avocation of traveling. On June 24th, 1834, he took his family on a tour of Western Europe for two years. It was on this tour abroad that he was able to see how the United States was perceived from the outside. In a letter to The Evening Post staff from Heidelberg, Germany, dated December 9, 1835, Bryant stated:

7 Symington, p. 30.

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It is a source of constant vexation to Americans residing in Europe to see in the Publick [sic] prints, and hear reported in conversation, exaggerated stories of riots, lynch trials and violence of various kinds committed in the United States.\(^8\)

Bryant alluded here to an incident in New York City on July 7, 1834, when "a white mob tried to prevent a group of Negroes from using the Chatham Street Chapel for a belated Fourth of July celebration."\(^9\) Similar riots occurred in other eastern American cities while Bryant was abroad. He was shocked and abashed to discover that these atrocities were so well publicized in Europe and were, for the most part, factually correct. In another of his letters, Bryant remarked:

[T]he injury to the American character abroad, and to the cause of freedom in general, is great. The misfortune is, that a part of what is laid to our charge is true, and that disorders have been perpetuated in America, which can neither be denied or excused.\(^10\)

Upon his return to The Evening Post in March, 1836, Bryant immediately began investigating the Negro issue. On April 21, he wrote an editorial called "How Abolitionists Are Made." In it, he chided Senator John H. Calhoun of South Carolina and New York

Senator Nathaniel P. Tallmadge for trying to effect a summary dismissal of a petition to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. His European experience is made evident in his language:

[Mr. Tallmadge] should have condemned those acts of violence and tumult which made the friends of despotism abroad to exult, and which covered with shame the faces of those who were looking to our country as a glorious example of the certainty which with good order and respect for personal rights are the fruits of free political institutions.\(^11\)

On May 18 of that same year, a "gag-rule" was proposed to the House of Representatives by a committee headed by South Carolina Representative Henry Pinckney. It proposed that all anti-slavery petitions be tabled without discussion as "foul slander on nearly one-half of the states of the Union."\(^12\) In his May 20 editorial, Bryant retorted:

That they wished to gag the mouths of those who desired the abolition of slavery in that district we well knew; but we had no idea, 'til now, that they denied even to the resolute enemies of abolitionism the right of being less violent and fanatical than themselves.\(^13\)

To Bryant, this was a deliberate effort to break down the fundamental liberties of the constitution:

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\(^11\) \textit{How Abolitionists Are Made"}, \textit{Post}, April 21, 1836.

\(^12\) \textit{Petitions Against Slavery"}, \textit{Post}, May 20, 1836.

\(^13\) \textit{Ibid.}
We feel it the more of our duty to notice these indications of intolerance ... because they form part of a plan for breaking down the liberty of speech and of the press by a most odious, tyrannical and intolerable censorship.\textsuperscript{14}

Bryant eventually associated slavery with these types of government restrictions and with dangerous social and political pressures within the North. "This double-barreled threat aimed at the heart of free society was the ‘Slave Power’ that he vigorously attacked in the future."\textsuperscript{15} He refused to consider the ‘Slave Power’ as an exclusive southern phenomenon. According to Historian Howard R. Floan, "In respect to the place of the Negro in American Society, The Post directed the attention of its readers, not to the South, but to the North where it pointed to many examples of prejudice."\textsuperscript{16}

Bryant believed that individual freedom, free speech and freedom of the press were universal rights. On August 10, 1836, he was faced with a situation in which these beliefs conflicted with one another. The Evening Post and Bryant were lambasted by the abolitionist paper The Emancipator for printing an advertisement which offered a reward for the return of the escaped slave boy. The Emancipator went on to ask whether "The Post was going to turn slave-catchers."\textsuperscript{17} Bryant replied that although the practice of slavery was "contrary to natural rights and pernicious in its consequences,"\textsuperscript{18} the right to advertise was a universal one inasmuch as it did not transgress the law.

The New York State Constitution of 1821 required free Negroes to have a much higher property qualification for the right to vote than did whites. On February 7, 1837, Bryant commented on the rejection of a petition that would allow blacks the same voting rights as whites. The rejection was based on the assertion that it was an abolitionist issue and therefore would upset the South:

\begin{quote}
[I]t is very unwise to connect this question with that of the principal object of the abolitionists, which is to do away with slavery ... The great objection ... hitherto, has been that they were intermeddling with a matter with which they had no concerns ... The moment we allow ourselves to be restrained in legislating on this subject, by a regard to what is or may be said at the South, or anywhere else, we submit to external interference. ... The law, as it now stands, is pregnant with absurdities.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Although it always had insisted on the right of the Abolitionist to speak, The Post was not in accord with the incendiary rhetoric of the abolitionist.\textsuperscript{20} Bryant was opposed to slavery; but, largely because of his recognition of the legal right of a state to maintain slavery under the constitution, his opposition to slavery expressed itself consistently in his tireless support of the free-soil principle, and therefore it was related not primarily to the South itself but to the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Spann, p. 158.
\textsuperscript{16} Post, April 2; May 14; August 15, 16, 1833.
\textsuperscript{17} Slave Catching,” Post, August 10, 1836.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Negro Suffrage,” Post, February 7, 1837, p. 1.
On August 4, 1837, the self-proclaimed Republic of Texas petitioned the United States government for annexation to the Union. This action was seen by Bryant as a major strike against the abolition of slavery. He knew that slaveholding states were allowed a number of representative votes in the House of Representatives because of their slave populations. If annexed, Texas would be a gigantic slaveholding state. He rallied against the move in his editorial of the same day.

The project is to annex to the Union a territory in which slavery is an established political institution—a territory so ample that half a dozen states as large as Kentucky might be carved out of it . . . The slaveholding states, by the Constitution of the Union, are disproportionately represented in Congress . . . [because they are] . . . allowed an additional number of representatives for a certain species of their property . . .

Bryant used the issue to voice his feelings about the institution of slavery as a whole:

Holding, as we do, it's existence among us to be a great evil, a great misfortune, and a monstrous anomaly in our institutions, we cannot but regard with the strongest alarm the project of adding to the nation a vast territory which holds that evil within its bosom. 23

The petition was denied three weeks later by President Martin Van Buren.

By 1838, Bryant's outspoken and unpopular stance against slavery and his advocacy of the right of abolitionists to publish and petition had ostracized him. According to William Cullen Bryant II, he was cast aside by "most of the New York Press, as well as the Tammany Hall leadership of his own party." 24 That year, in a letter to a friend, Bryant wrote:

Let me counsel you against excessive sensitivity to what people say of you . . . I know very well that I am much railed at and that I pass with a very large class of well-meaning persons as a man of no moral principles. I hear frequent intimations of the injustice that is done me. 25

1839 was an eventful year for Bryant. A new edition of his Poems was released; his assistant editor, fellow poet, and friend William Legget died, and the Armistad Affair occurred. The Armistad was a Cuban schooner sailing from Cuba with a number of African slaves on board. These slaves took control of the ship and attempted to sail it to Africa. Instead, they landed in Long Island Sound, New York, and the slaves were seized as criminals. A court sentenced them to slave labor. 26

25 Letters, (v.2, p.99)
26 Nevins, p. 172.
The importation of slaves from Africa had been outlawed in America since 1808. Bryant asked his friend Theodore Sedgwick Jr. (an attorney) to investigate the law, and the latter came to the conclusion, which he expounded at length in *The Evening Post*, that the blacks could not be held. They were released two years later when the court upheld Sedgwick's view.

In March of 1843, Bryant traveled to the South for the first time. The letters he sent during his travels surprisingly "spoke easily and uncritically about the place of the Negro in the South." In a letter to *The Evening Post* from South Carolina, dated March 29th, Bryant says of slaves: "The blacks of this region are a cheerful, careless, dirty race, not hard worked, and in many respects indulgently treated." For the most part, the letters published in *The Post* during his travel painted a picture of the southern Negro as a "docile occupant of his peculiar niche in the social structure."

In November, Bryant encouraged the re-nomination of ex-President Van Buren. He did this after hearing "rumors that Southern Democrats, in cooperation with President Tyler, were planning to revive the (Texas) annexation scheme . . ." His effort failed and his party instead named James Polk, a slave-holder himself. Polk won the Presidency in January of 1844.

On March 22, 1844, Bryant warned against the admission of Texas, which was imminent under Polk. The Texas issue would increase dissension between the North and the South, "keeping alive 'a war more formidable than any to which we are exposed from Great Britain or any other foreign power.'" In April, Bryant published six articles written by his friend, attorney Theodore Sedgwick. Sedgwick asked, "should Texas, equal to one-sixth of the present U.S., be added as a slave-holding territory from which five or six states could be formed?"

Bryant also led a committee of "antiannexationists." In early April of the same year, they met at the Broadway Tabernacle in New York city. On April 27, "Bryant devoted the whole of the front page and five columns on page four to the draft of the treaty with Texas and the government's correspondence, none of which had been made public." He never revealed his source of the information.

Bryant's determination had become vehement and unrelenting. In a July editorial, he made his position clear:

As soon as the just claims of Mexico can be disposed of—as soon as the question of slavery can be got out of the way, we abandon our opposition to the annexation of Texas.

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27 Ellis, p. 116.
28 Nevins, p. 172.
29 Ibid.
30 Floan, p. 248.
32 Floan, p. 247.
33 Spann, p. 160.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
For all his determination and vigor, however, the opposition triumphed. In November of 1845, Texas was annexed to the United States.

In April of 1846, the United States declared war on Mexico. Soon after, Congressman David Wilmot of Pennsylvania proposed “The Wilmot Proviso” which prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude in any new acquisition of territory resulting from the war. “The Wilmot Proviso became the rallying point about which the opponents of slavery gathered.”38 Bryant gave his wholehearted support to the cause as a “Barnburner Democrat” who accepted the free-soil principles of the Proviso.

In 1848, at the war’s end, Bryant switched political parties. He had said of the Democrats just before the transfer:

Talk of an acquisition of territory, and you are met with a demand that it shall be open to the introduction of slavery. Propose a scheme of finance, and you will find it opposed because it is feared that it may affect the interests of slavery.39

Bryant joined the fledgling Free-Soiler Party. Their slogan: “Free soil, free speech, free labor and free men.”40 The Free-Soilers tried to close the slavery issue by committing the party to the principles of the Wilmot Proviso. To maintain free-soil principles in the face of the territorial expansion of slavery, The Post’s strategy lay in pointing out continually to its readers the frightening effectiveness of Southern political power, it pictured the slaveholders as a group of determined men lashing the timid and granting favors to the venal until they had bullied and intrigued their way into political control of the entire nation.41 Again however, Bryant’s altruistic efforts were in vain. The Wilmot Proviso was defeated by the United States Senate.

On March 4, 1850, Senator Calhoun of South Carolina proposed to the Senate that the South be given an equal share of the territory acquired from Mexico as a result of the war.42 On March 7, Senator and famous orator Daniel Webster “urged passage of a compromise allowing the organization of territory ceded by Mexico without restriction on slavery, except in California.”43 In his editorial of March 9, Bryant described the folly of Senator Webster’s alliance with Senator Calhoun:

Mr. Calhoun sees clearly what Mr. Webster does not see . . . that the slave states should never be left in a minority in Congress, and who will consent to no policy on the part of the federal government which does not look to the maintenance of their political power.44

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38 Johnson, p. 99.
39 Spann, p. 166.
40 Johnson, p.98.
41 Floan, p.249-250.
43 Ibid.
44 “A Recipe For The Extension Of Slavery,” Post, March 9, 1850.
Bryant insinuates that Senator Webster has caused great harm in supporting the whims of the wily Senator Calhoun:

Mr. Calhoun, therefore, very properly realizes the plan of Mr. Webster as meeting the wishes of those who desire the extension of slavery, and as removing the principal barrier to its introduction into our new possessions.\(^4\)

In the Summer of 1850, Congress enacted a compromise which was accepted by moderates of the North and South. It called for:

1. the organization of New Mexico and Utah into territories without reference to the slave issue.
2. the admittance of California...as a free state.
3. the payment of $10,000,000 to Texas for separating New Mexico from its bounds.
4. the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia.
5. the more assured and speedy return of fugitive slaves.\(^6\)

Bryant did not care for the compromise and opposed the abandonment of any principle.

Bryant felt like William H. Seward quoting Edmund Burke in the "great debate" during the first session of the 31st Congress—that "half virtue, which, like the ambiguous animal that flies about in the twilight of a compromise between day and night, is, to a just man's eye, an odious and disgusting thing."\(^7\) He never wavered from this conviction or his unrelenting determination to voice it, regardless of how unpopular his stance may have been.

He called the compromise a blanket poultice, to heal five wounds at once, when the common sense method was to dress every sore separately.\(^8\) And just as he opposed the notion of compromising his principles, he opposed any effort to coax the free states into abandonment of a single principle. Bryant wrote that the question of slavery must be settled by "principles alone and not through compromise."\(^9\)

The Evening Post urged its readers to petition Congress against the compromise. Bryant was especially opposed to the fugitive slave act (provision 5). In his editorial of October 4, 1851, he blasted the unnaturalness of a neighbor being made to shackle a member of his own community:

Its operation is revolting. The people feel it to be an impeachement of their manhood, to be asked to assist in manacling for the purpose of reducing to slavery, one who has lived among them the life of an industrious and honest citizen.\(^10\)

In 1854, Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. This bill repealed the Missouri Compromise, which had prohibited slavery north of the parallel 36 30' in the old Louisiana purchase territory. The Post labored to show that the South was not, as its spokesmen

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\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^6\) Johnson, p.100.

\(^7\) Appendix, *Congressional Globe*, XXII, Part 1, 1st session, 31st Congress, 1849-50, pp. 262-263.

\(^8\) Nevins, p. 245.


\(^10\) Fugitive Slave Riots," *Post*, October 4, 1851.
affirmed, unanimously in favor of the bill and was diligent to the last in its effort to prevent the difference from becoming purely geographical.\textsuperscript{51} Bryant helped launch a public crusade against its Northern supporters, most of whom were Democrats. The \textit{Evening Post}, itself a once prominent Democratic party organ, never again supported Democratic candidates so long as William Cullen Bryant remained at the helm of the newspaper.\textsuperscript{52}

In July 1855, Bryant committed himself to the burgeoning Republican Party whose main platform was the abolition of slavery. \textit{The Post} kept the attention of its readers focused on the issue of free-soil and made clear that any hostility toward the South was caused by its determination of making the spread of slavery a political program.\textsuperscript{53} The Republicans held their first national convention in 1856.

The Dred Scott decision, which denied citizenship to Negroes descended from slaves, was handed down by Chief Justice Taney in 1857. After this, according to Alan Nevins, "\textit{The Evening Post} treated slavery as a serpent upon which the nation must set its heel."\textsuperscript{54} With Bryant at the fore, the Republicans nominated a candidate and organized an election to be held in 1860. Historian Edward K. Spann remarks of this period:

For Bryant now, the old party differences over the basic political and economic issues were to be suspended until the influence of slavery had been contained within its old limits...Little did [Bryant] and other Republicans realize that they had set in motion forces which, far from restoring the old order, were to radically change the nature of American society.\textsuperscript{55}

Bryant's personal travels within the South and his interaction with both slave and slaveholder alike gave his editorials an objectivity and complexity that did not oversimplify the problem of slavery but instead exposed it for the political program that it tried so desperately to become. Bryant wrote in an editorial of January, 1861:

A majority of the people of the slaveholding states originally became allies of Jeffersonian republicanism, not because it promised federal guarantees to slavery, but because it respected state rights, and thus based their safety upon principle, and not upon favor.\textsuperscript{56}

According to Historian Howard Floan, "Bryant's natural optimism of spirit led him to hope that slavery would gradually give way of its own innate weakness before the advance of free labor.\textsuperscript{57} This optimism blended with his states-rights sympathies to form his free-soil ideal. It became one of the major editorial policies of \textit{The Evening Post}\textsuperscript{58} and one of the "genuine journalistic landmarks of the nineteenth century."\textsuperscript{59}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51} Floan, p. 249.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Johnson, p. 102.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Post, April 5, 1859.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Nevins, p. 249.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Spann, p. 180.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Post, January 14, 1861.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Floan, p.250.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Floan, p.248.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Johnson, p.91.
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From Culture To Combat: The Progression of the Writings of George Wilkins Kendall in the Mexican War, 1846-1847

Barry Parks

The advent of the Mexican War had a profound impact on American journalism. Perhaps in no other publication is this seen as profoundly as in the New Orleans Daily Picayune. A fledgling organization at the onset of the war, the Picayune had barely reached a decade in publication by 1846.\(^1\) However, this newspaper became the most reputable and quoted source of information by the time the war ended only two years later.\(^2\) There were legitimate reasons why this happened.

War reporting was a new realm for journalism in the 1840's. News had consisted primarily of what was going on domestically, with less reporting of international affairs. But the Mexican War provided the Picayune with the opportunity to delve more deeply into such reporting and to discern quicker and more efficient ways of securing international war news. The aspect of the Picayune that established it as the forerunner in reporting the Mexican War was not necessarily organizational foresight or technological advancement. This aspect was simply the work of George Wilkins Kendall.

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\(^1\) Thomas Ewing Dabney, One Hundred Great Years: The Story of the Times-Picayune From its Founding to 1940, Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1944, p. 41.

As co-founder of the publication, Kendall gave life to the *Picayune*. He had already gone to great lengths to cover the news for New Orleans. It was his capacity as war correspondent, however, wherein he truly breathed life into the newspaper. Kendall’s insight, writing ability, sense of adventure, and willingness to go the distance to cover the war formed a winning combination for the *Picayune*. It was he who employed radical and progressive tactics of covering the war, becoming as much a soldier as he was a war correspondent. In the process, he established himself, in the eyes of some historians, as “the most celebrated correspondent of the Mexican War.”

A reporter such as Kendall who was willing to place himself into harm’s way and possibly endanger his life for the sake of quality news coverage was perhaps worthy of such a title. A synopsis of the correspondence of Kendall during this time demonstrates the extremes he endured to feed his own wanderlust and, in the process, report the news.

Perhaps a more profound realization that arises upon considering the work Kendall wrought during the Mexican War, however, was the change his writing exemplified throughout the war. Depending on the particular situation in which he found himself, Kendall’s letters to the *Picayune* changed drastically from his initial correspondences to his last reports. Because he was miles away from the action in Texas at the onset of the Mexican War, Kendall’s early reports spoke mostly of weather, terrain conditions, and entertainment-oriented aspects of the various locales through which he traveled. But as he gradually arrived in the heart of turmoil, he considered these topics less than he did detailed infantry movements and casualty counts. Indeed, over the course of the war, Kendall’s writing exemplified an obvious progression from culture reports to combat updates and descriptions.

The preliminary fighting of the Mexican War found Kendall far away from the war activity in Texas. He was on his way to the “Comanche Indian country. . .to report the confection of a treaty with the white government.” He constantly filed letters to the *Picayune* to report his progress on the way through Texas to cover the event. Among other things, Kendall reported on the weather and conditions that the group with which he was traveling had to face. He also kept the newspaper’s readership abreast of where he and his party were going.

Stories of the first Mexican-American clash at Matamoros on the Rio Grande reached Kendall. He wrote to the *Picayune*, “[r]umors are afloat that skirmishes have taken place; but they are doubtless without foundation.” Consequently, he continued on his journey to

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5 Dabney, p. 69
6 Ibid.
7 George Wilkins Kendall, “Correspondence of the Picayune–Houston, April 14, 1846,” *The Daily Picayune*, April 14, 1846, p. 2
8 George Wilkins Kendall, “Editorial Correspondence of the Picayune–Galveston, April 2, 1846,” *The Daily Picayune*, April 17, 1846, p. 2

his planned destination in Texas, always hearing more rumors about the impending war with Mexico (which he had anticipated).  

The Picayune received its reports of the actual events brewing on the border from military personnel and other private letters. The paper's editor and soon-to-be chief correspondent could not supply this news; he was detained in Texas. Therefore, the paper utilized these other letters, all the while keeping informed approximately two weeks ahead of Kendall. He conceded this in a letter he wrote from San Antonio. He referred again to the rumors of the skirmishes:

They have no news here from the Rio Grande, and the movements of Gen. Taylor are unknown, except from rumor. They talk here as though the Mexicans would certainly fight, but of this you obtain more correct information at New Orleans.  

Nevertheless, Kendall continued on his journey in Texas, at the very least keeping Picayune readers informed of occurrences during his excursion to the Indian council.

The rumors Kendall heard while he trekked through Texas were true—the Mexicans certainly were ready to fight. On April 25, 1846, they proved this by crossing the Rio Grande and ambushing a small band of Gen. Zachary Taylor's dragoons.  

The Picayune's headline read “WAR!! To Arms!! To Arms!! . . . the United States Army under General Taylor is completely surrounded . . .”  

Mexico made the first hostile move; of course, the United States retaliated. Congress and President Polk approved a force of 50,000 men to go to battle and designated $10,000,000 in assistance to the war effort.  

The Picayune encouraged volunteers to join the effort, remarking that “[i]t is a mortifying reflection that an American army should be beleagured [sic] on our own soil, by a Mexican force.”  

The American response was more than adequate; Taylor's troops defeated the Mexicans at Matamoros and took possession of the city on May 8, 1846.  

A letter from Kendall printed in the Picayune on May 22 indicated that he had finally heard of the hostilities and that he was immediately headed to the Rio Grande to cover the events for his newspaper. In this letter and in his subsequent correspondence to the paper, Kendall demonstrated his sincere desire to be where the

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9 George Wilkins Kendall, The War Between the United States and Mexico, Illustrated, Austin, TX: Texas State Historical Association, 1994, p. 10.

10 George Wilkins Kendall, “Editorial Correspondence of the Picayune—San Antonio, April 15, 1846,” The Daily Picayune, May 1, 1846, p. 2.


12 WAR!! To Arms!! To Arms!!, The Daily Picayune, May 3, 1846, p. 1.

13 Dabney, p. 70.


action was, and to employ whatever measures necessary to do so. Thomas Dabney explained his opinion about Kendall’s motivation in his history of the *Picayune*. He writes, “Kendall was the eager seeker for new ideas and new methods.” Referring to the days when Kendall and cohort Francis Lumsden constituted the *Picayune*, Dabney remarked that Kendall “found new interests for the reading public which had long suffered under the stodgy journalism of the time.”

Other historians have agreed with Dabney’s idea that Kendall was a curious and energetic reporter. John Hohenberg goes as far as to say that “[Kendall] couldn’t stay in one place for very long, even the charming Crescent City with its many distractions.” In his introduction to Kendall’s definitive book on the Mexican War, Ron Tyler cited many examples of Kendall’s early visions and progressive manners of reporting, many of which came to fruition during Kendall’s time in the Mexican battlefield.

Kendall had the innate motivation to endure difficult circumstances, not only for the joy of the adventure but also for success in filing his stories. But this didn’t mean that he wasn’t justified in complaining occasionally on his hurried seventeen-day journey to the Rio Grande. He often did. In one instance Kendall wrote, “I like water well enough, but this thing of crossing deep and swift-running streams on horseback is a species of navigation I do not affect to any remarkable extent.”

Kendall’s letters to the *Picayune* were at best sketchy and sparse during this time. The territory that he and the company of men with whom he traveled had to traverse was treacherous. Full of Mexican banditos and miserable environmental conditions, Kendall found few opportunities to submit his correspondence while traveling back through Texas. The banditos killed some of those with whom he sent back his reports. The water-soaked ground made travel difficult for man and beast. And the journey was a long one. Kendall wrote, “the distance is in the neighborhood of five hundred miles, and the longest kind of English miles, at that you may rest assured.” Certainly, he was physically exhausted. He was willing to admit this. He explained very plainly that “one does not feel, after riding thirty or thirty-five miles, altogether so much like writing as he might, and this I must offer as an excuse for not sending you a letter from Gonzalez or Seguin.”

But when his reports did reach the newspaper, they were top quality. Full of descriptive imagery while demonstrating a keen sense of humor, Kendall’s reports were able to draw a mental picture of the situation for his readers. He reported about the deplorable amounts

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17 Dabney, p. 19.
18 Ibid.
19 Hohenberg, p. 39.
23 George Wilkins Kendall, “Editorial Correspondence of the *Picayune*—San Antonio, April 15, 1846;” *The Daily Picayune*, May 1, 1846, p. 2.
of mud and water and the hordes of flies the animals were forced to endure, "more numerous than the locusts of Egypt, if I have any idea of mathematics."²⁵

As Kendall and his entourage entered the first areas of battle, his reports were all the more frequent and descriptive of the atrocities of war that had occurred wherever they went. He was eyewitness to the aftermath of the bloody preliminary battles, and gave detailed accounts of the situation. Not only was the weather "dreadfully hot and extremely hard upon [their] horses"²⁶ during this time, but they encountered extremely macabre scenes. Kendall described the camp on Arroyo Colorado for the newspaper.

Five skeletons... were lying upon the banks, where they drifted after their throats had been cut; two others were discovered near the wagons... Many a deep threat of vengeance was uttered by the Texan volunteers as they looked upon the remains of their countrymen.²⁷

The party, however jaded, plodded on to their ultimate goal of Matamoros.

During the time that Kendall was making his way across Texas to join the war effort, the Picayune relied on various other sources to report current events of the war. Indeed, Matamoros had already been conquered on May 17,²⁸ so timely news accounts in the interim were necessary. Various reporters and soldiers already in the field supplied this information, who, if they signed their correspondence, did so with only one initial or with pseudonyms.²⁹ The Picayune also relied on some of the Spanish-language newspapers, such as El Locomotor and the Matamoros Reveille.³⁰

After Kendall finally arrived in the battlefield, his reports overshadowed information from all other sources. He and Christopher Haile joined journalistic forces to provide somewhat comprehensive coverage of the war. Haile was a graduate of West Point who had been the Picayune's designated army correspondent.³¹ Under the direction of Kendall, these two men "followed different units of the expeditionary force"³² so that the Picayune could literally be everywhere at once in covering the war. Kendall then went to Matamoros, once again arriving in the aftermath of war, and joined with General Taylor's forces.

²⁹ The Daily Picayune, June 20, 1846, p. 2. The writer who signed as "H" surfaced repeatedly during this time and throughout the war; these letters were official correspondence of Christopher Haile, another Mexican War correspondent of the Picayune who worked in collaboration with Kendall.
³⁰ Specific references found in The Daily Picayune, May-June 1846. Eventually, the correspondents sent copies of these and various other Spanish-language newspapers to corroborate their accounts. The Picayune used information in these newspapers extensively toward the end of the war.
³² Ibid.
As reflected in the dates on the correspondence Kendall sent to the *Picayune*, he and the American forces stayed in Matamoros for almost a month. Indeed, Taylor and his troops were stranded there because of the lack of any kind of transportation. Kendall expressed the frustration about this circumstance in a letter dated June 30, 1846. He said, “I cannot conceive a situation more trying to the patience and more mortifying to the feelings of the commander-in-chief than the one he is now placed in. With men enough to march to any quarter he has not the means to move them an inch.” So they stayed there until help from the United States government in the form of steamboats arrived.

The Americans literally settled into Matamoros during this time; Kendall’s writing clearly indicated this. Some of the most extensive culture reporting he submitted to the newspaper concerned events that transpired in Matamoros. He wrote of the opening of the Washington Ball Room, “admittance 50 cents,” the operation of gambling rooms, bar rooms and the existence of a large number of bored American troops. He found himself interested in and somewhat empathetic with the bands of Mexicans who appointed themselves to entertain the soldiers by performing in make-shift acrobatic shows in the searing noonday sun. And he occupied himself to a great extent with the theater in Matamoros. He had heard discussion of its opening with an American company. Kendall thought that a “well-organized corps of players could do a thriving business just now, but how long it would last [he] could not say.”

Kendall also wrote of the slow and careful return of some of the Mexicans to their homes in Matamoros. Of this, he wrote, “[t]hey find some of their houses better ventilated than when they left them; for your cannon ball walks in without knocking, and enters without so much as desiring you to open a door—cutting a road through roof or wall as may best suit its convention.” This sample of Kendall’s thoughts and writing during the time at Matamoros was perhaps as representative as any that demonstrated his ability to describe grim circumstances with humor and profound imagery. He practiced this talent throughout the war, but to a lesser extent later as he described the live action of the war farther into the interior of the country.

Many of Kendall’s correspondences during the layover at Matamoros actually contained no war information at all. They did not include even as much as a rumor that he had heard of events occurring in the interior of Mexico. Interestingly, one letter was simply the retelling of the story of a man named Bill Dean that Kendall had heard. The story revealed on a metaphoric level the difficulty the men were having with cooking in Mexico. Dean was trying to cook a chunk of horse meat. With no wood to build a fire, he chased fire in

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36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
the burning prairie grass on the open plain. This story was quite humorous. It spoke volumes about the troops’ way of life as well as the type of reporting Kendall was doing at Matamoros. 38

The Fourth of July holiday arrived while the troops were still stationed in Matamoros. This was a big event even considering the less than ideal circumstances. Kendall reported the affairs extensively. He expressed his excitement over the events, writing “[n]ever has the glorious Fourth been ushered in with such a shower of salutes as resounded in camp this morning. . . .The beauty of it is that these salutes were fired with Mexican powder—some that was captured.” 39 Kendall wrote that the company thought that they would be able to celebrate the holiday farther into Mexico in Monterey, but due to the lack of transportation and “[. . .] weather bad enough to make the Grand Turk himself curse his prophet . . . .” 40 they had to remain for nearly a month in Matamoros. Eventually, the extensive flooding which that part of Mexico was enduring subsided, steamboats from the United States arrived, and the troops moved onward to Monterey. Kendall moved along with them, having joined Capt. Ben McCulloch’s Texas Rangers. 41

Still not in the thick of battle, Kendall continued to concern himself with factors of his environment in his writing. He again faced another long, arduous journey from Matamoros to Monterey, stopping at many small Mexican towns on the way. He spared no detail in describing these hamlets, their people and their way of life. Much of the area was in shambles, having been inundated by the recent flooding as well as partially or mostly destroyed by the onslaught of the American troops that were just ahead of Kendall and his group. Kendall was concerned that the floods had destroyed much of the crops in the area of Reynosa, writing that it could become trouble for General Zachary Taylor’s troops and their subsistence. 42 He found it amazing, also, to see the types of objects that were adrift in the Rio Grande, comparing the watermelons and dead horses floating there to the few small trees and heaps of light brush he had seen in the Mississippi. 43 But he was most concerned at the sinking of the steamboat Neva in the river due to the heavy flooding and difficult navigation—not for the loss of the ship, but for the loss of the band instruments of the 8th infantry that went down with the boat. 44

In spite of all this information that he included, it was at this

41 Dabney, p. 70.
42 George Wilkins Kendall, “Editorial Correspondence of the Picayune—Reynosa, Mexico, July 5, 1846,” The Daily Picayune, July 19, 1846, p. 2.
43 Ibid.
44 George Wilkins Kendall, “Editorial Correspondence of the Picayune—Camargo, July 29, 1846,” The Daily Picayune, August 16, 1846, p. 2. In the same issue of the paper (“On Board Steamer Aid, Foot of a Reef on the Rio Grande, July 29, 1846”), Kendall included a story of the Steamer Aid, which ran aground on the way to Mier. He was on board, and recorded an account of the curious Mexicans on the shore that Dabney described as being “as good as anything Mark Twain wrote in his book on the Mississippi.” (Dabney, p. 71.).
point that Kendall began to include more pertinent information to the war. In the August 1st edition of the Picayune, he filed a list of the names of the different officers of the American force and indicated that his group was readying to move toward Monterey, about 150 miles away. This was some of the first reporting he filed concerning movements of troops. He had first-hand knowledge at that point, because he was suddenly a part of the troops.

He discussed the living conditions of those involved in the war effort as well. Expressing some discontent at having to endure such bad conditions himself, he wrote that “[b]ivouacking and all that sort of thing may sound very well in ballads, but when it comes down to the stern reality of the thing it is a distinctly different matter.” Regardless of his adventuresome nature and free spirit, the trials of war were taking their toll on him. He had actually just begun to experience this.

When Kendall and McCulloch’s Rangers reached Mier, Mexico at the end of July, it was then that he saw his first full-fledged battle. It was also at that point when his writing changed more drastically. Although he still communicated humorous anecdotes, he much less discussed the theater, floating watermelons or traveling Mexican acrobats. He turned his attention to infantry moves, the numbers of men fighting as well as those killed, explicit locations of battle and the appearance and tyranny of Comanche Indians from Texas. But he usually maintained his characteristic dry wit and panache in his writing. The following report was an example.

According to Kendall, the battle at Mier was an easy victory for the Americans; there were at least four thousand residents of the town, but “it was still entered and taken possession of by ninety-three men only—eighty-five regulars and eight of McCulloch’s Rangers…” Interesting to note was Kendall’s opinion as to why such few numbers of American troops were able to easily defeat the much larger numbers of Mexicans.

It is because [the Mexicans] are too lazy in the first place, and too timid in the second. So far as I can see, the men here spend one-third of the day in sleeping, one-third in bathing, and the other third in doing nothing… Kendall was not afraid to assert his own opinion in his writing, whether right or wrong.

Kendall continued to interject his opinions about the impending battle of Monterey according to the rumors he received en route. He always conceded that the rumors may not be true, but usually indicated that he felt they were from legitimate sources. For example, he reported that “[t]he news from Monterey leads every one to suppose

45 George Wilkins Kendall, “Editorial Correspondence of the Picayune—Camargo, Mexico, July 17, 1846,” The Daily Picayune, August 1, 1846, p. 2.
46 George Wilkins Kendall, “Editorial Correspondence of the Picayune—Camargo, Mexico, July 16, 1846,” The Daily Picayune, August 1, 1846, p. 2.
47 George Wilkins Kendall, “Editorial Correspondence of the Picayune—Mier, Mexico, July 31, 1846,” The Daily Picayune, August 15, 1846, p. 2.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
that the Mexicans intend making a bold stand there, and offering every resistance to Gen. Taylor in their power." This rumor was right. The skirmishes that preceded this battle at Matamoros, Camargo and Marin paled in comparison to the intensity of the fight at Monterey. It was at this battle that Kendall became the complete war correspondent. He now was eyewitness to, as well as participant in, the battle. All the events leading up to this point had only prepared him for the reality in which he existed for the duration of the war, culminating in his coverage of the fall of Mexico City. His writing proved that he was ready to report the battles.

As a part of the infantry at Monterey, Kendall closely chronicled the events of the battle; he had no choice but to see and experience exactly what transpired. At the beginning of the clash at a camp outside the city, he reported that "a 9-pound shot, as it came bouncing along through the bush close by us, stampeded a pack animal to the great danger and disarrangement of the baggage—this was all the loss so far." In the same letter, he indicated that he had "just returned from a visit to the works of the enemy, a party of us going almost within point blank range of their guns, but scattering about so that they never could get more than a single man to fire at." Kendall reported that he even marched in the group that escorted Mexico's General Ampudia out of Monterey after the defeat. His description of the charges and retreats were copious throughout this battle, including the loss of life for both the Mexicans and the Americans.

The following excerpt from Kendall's exhaustive account of the victory at Monterey demonstrated the detail with which he reported, all the while maintaining his inimitable style.

From the barricades and other works of the Mexicans the loud booming of cannon thundered upon the ear, while rattling peals of musketry from every house top told that the contest was a close and severe one.

In the heat of the battle, he left off his cultural input and adhered closely to the events of the battle. Only after this battle was over did he wax somewhat poetically in retrospect. In his summary of the event, he wrote, "[t]hese are but part of the achievements performed by men who toiled incessantly, day after day and amid storm and rain, without sleep, without food, and without murmuring." Several days later, after the tallies had been counted, the Picayune reported

50 George Wilkins Kendall, "Editorial Correspondence—Camargo, August 17, 1846," The Daily Picayune, August 26, 1846, p. 2.
52 Lande, p. 52.
53 George Wilkins Kendall, "Editorial Correspondence of the Picayune—Camp Near Monterey, Sep. 19, 12 o'clock. M."
The Daily Picayune, October 4, 1846, p. 2.
54 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
that the total dead, wounded and missing was 490 by General Taylor’s account, copied from the Washington Union newspaper.⁵⁸

At this point, Kendall returned to New Orleans. He took this opportunity to return home briefly after the defeat of Monterey, “when military operations marked time while the United States gave Mexico a chance to sign a peace.”⁵⁹ Interesting developments took place in the Picayune during this time.

Speed of reporting the war events was at a remarkable rate. As the newspaper’s headline began to read, reports were printed twenty-four hours ahead of the mails. The expense incurred was great in doing so.⁶⁰ Therefore, the Picayune increased its cost to ten cents per copy due to its top-notch and expedient reporting of the war.

Another change in the paper was the appearance of the writing of Francis Lumsden, Kendall’s co-founder of the Picayune. About the time that Kendall turned toward New Orleans, Lumsden began his journey to the interior of Mexico. Lumsden’s writing filled the void left by Kendall’s and also complemented the letters that Haile continually submitted. Lumsden wrote similarly to Kendall, but with less finesse in his expression. The similarity could be attributed to the fact that the two men basically began their newspaper careers together at the National Intelligencer in Washington, D.C. When they met, the two “liked each other from the first; and when the land of opportunity beckoned, they went together to New Orleans.”⁶¹ After about a year of separate endeavors, the two joined forces and spawned the Daily Picayune in 1837.

With Kendall in New Orleans, conflict resumed deep in Mexico. The country’s leaders refused to concede to the United States and sign the proposed peace treaty. Therefore, battles sprang up at Buena Vista and Vera Cruz. Kendall was back in Mexico immediately, having “become impatient with the office routine.”⁶² He covered the battles at Buena Vista, Vera Cruz and Puebla in the same exacting detailed he used while he was in Monterey. Concerning Vera Cruz, he reported accounts of some of the enemy killed, related the troops’ marches in specific numbers and described the abhorrent army conditions (“marching...without water, under a broiling sun during the day, and sleeping out without tents or bedding during the heavy dews which have fallen at night—exposed, too, to a continual fire from the batteries from the enemy”).⁶³ By this time, the Mexican revolution was in full swing, and Kendall kept readers informed of those events as well.⁶⁴

Much like the several smaller battles before Monterey did, these

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⁵⁹ Dabney, p. 72.
⁶¹ Dabney, p. 19.
⁶² George Wilkins Kendall, The War Between the United States and Mexico, Illustrated, introduction by Ron Tyler, p. 11.
⁶³ George Wilkins Kendall, “Editorial Correspondence of the Picayune—Camp Near Vera Cruz, March 11, 1847,” The Daily Picayune, March 26, 1847, p. 2.
⁶⁴ George Wilkins Kendall, “Editorial Correspondence of the Picayune—Camp Before Vera Cruz, March 19, 1847—5 o’clock, P.M.,” The Daily Picayune, March 31, 1847, p. 2.
battles and others like Contreras, Churubusco and Cerro Gordo continued to lay the groundwork for the battle at Mexico City in Kendall’s writing. His articles became longer. The detail became more extensive. And he never mentioned any cultural aspects of the surrounding areas. There was simply no time. In the midst of the battle, he “acted as an aide-de-camp, official courier, or staff officer as the occasion demanded, and fought as readily as anyone.”

Kendall had already proved himself in these previous battles. But he made greater strides when the fight came down to Mexico City. It was at this point that he signed on as voluntary aide to General Winfield Scott and “participated in all the fighting.” During this time he was even wounded in action, getting shot in the knee by a stray enemy bullet.

Nevertheless, he plugged onward to the culmination of the war, which was the final clinching victory wherein the United States conquered the fortress Chapultepec and took possession of Mexico City. Kendall filed his reports of action the entire distance. He commented on hardships in strategy, in that in one clash there were only 3000 American soldiers against the estimated 12,000 Mexican soldiers. The American force “was obliged to approach on an open plain and without the least cover.” Kendall wrote to the newspaper concerning the defeat of Mexico City on September 14, 1847. In classic style, he submitted the following words.

[T]he proud capital of Mexico has fallen into the power of a mere handful of men compared with the immense odds arrayed against them, and Santa Anna, instead of shedding his blood as he had promised, is wandering with the remnant of his army no one knows whither.

Thus, the war was over. The successes of the Picayune in reporting the war as well as the great strides by Kendall, Haile, Lumsden and others in gathering the news were indeed established.

The extensive reporting of Kendall throughout the battle period of the Mexican War demonstrated that he was a reporter that did not care to go to the extreme to cover news. Although he did experience times that he wanted to complain, he persevered until the end of the war. He even remained in Mexico for a few weeks until the Mexicans signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which officially ended the war. “[H]is greatest coup came at the war’s end, when he raced a copy of [the treaty] to American shores by chartered steamboat—ahead of his competitors and even the government’s official

65 Mathews, p. 55.
66 Lande, p. 52.
67 George Wilkins Kendall, The War Between the United States and Mexico, illustrated, introduction by Ron Tyler, p.15.
dispatch.\textsuperscript{70} Kendall was no stranger to swift reporting; it was he that installed typesetting machines on steamboats off the coast of New Orleans so that by the time the boat docked the newly received news was set up ready for print.\textsuperscript{71} Indeed, he was a visionary and an excellent reporter.

But beyond the obvious, Kendall demonstrated a very human approach in his writing. He always maintained consideration of his readers in the back of his mind, and mailed appropriate correspondence to keep the readers informed as well as entertained. He likely informed and entertained himself in the process. Throughout the war, his determination to cover as many activities as possible that he encountered in Mexico caused his focus to change. Initially, when there was little war action and he found himself in the aftermath of the struggle, he found other interesting things to report. Whether it was the theater, the antics of his cohorts or the disposition of the horses, he described it for the Picayune’s readers. But when there was action, he reported it concisely and professionally as well. Thus, for the various situations and activities in which he found himself involved during the Mexican War, Kendall’s writing exemplified a distinct progression from the coverage of culture to the coverage of combat.

\textsuperscript{70} Lande, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{71} Mathews, p. 56.

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Samuel Chester Reid, Jr., Confederate Correspondent: 1861-1864
Lisa Varisco

When the Civil War started in 1861, Southern newspapers covered events substantially, providing opportunities for journalists to become field correspondents. Following the Northern or Southern armies for usually one or two newspapers, these men risked their lives to report everything they witnessed. In the South, one such traveling correspondent was Samuel Chester Reid, Jr. He was employed by seven different newspapers throughout the War, an unusual accomplishment. Reid, older than his fellow colleagues, established a reputation as a successful, yet troublesome, reporter for the Southern cause. This reporter, still virtually unknown today, made a solid contribution to the field of journalism by writing enthusiastic and entertaining articles for his readers both at home and in the field.

Reporting the Civil War: Sam Who?

Southern newspapers were popular in 1860, but they did not have the same circulation as their Northern counterparts. "Alabama’s annual per capita circulation in 1860 was fourteen [%]...Georgia’s, twenty-three [%]...Tennessee’s, twelve [%]...;" Northern papers in New York had eighty-four and Pennsylvania, forty-one.¹ The daily

edition of the Richmond Dispatch, one of the most successful Southern papers, had a circulation of approximately 3,000, and its neighbor, the Mercury, had only 550 paid subscriptions. No Southern paper ever sold as many as 10,000 copies of any single edition; the great majority numbered their readers by the hundreds rather than the thousands. Southern newspapers rose in popularity after the War started, for they provided vital accounts of events. “Despite their limited circulation, Southern journals were extremely important sources of information.” This increasing popularity provided greater opportunities for the field correspondent looking to make a career in journalism, in both the North and the South.

Nearly every Southern newspaper of any size used volunteer correspondents, including officers and enlisted men, to report news from the army and the battlefield. The larger newspapers also employed “special correspondents” of their own. Samuel C. Reid, Jr. was a “special correspondent,” working for seven different Southern newspapers throughout the War.

Reid was already 43 years old when the War started, which made him older than most of his fellow colleagues. Few field reporters had the “staying power to follow the armies throughout the War. If bullets, illness, or ennui did not get them, they were expelled, captured, drafted, or simply worn out.” Reid was one of these few who had the stamina and perseverance to stay with his chosen career until 1864, when illness finally caused his retirement.

Field correspondents of the Civil War weathered hard conditions along with the soldiers. Often the reporters had a “ragamuffin appearance” from their hardships. Reid was no exception. Aside from the obvious problems a reporter would face following an army into battle, there were usually difficulties with sending in reports as well. On numerous occasions Reid reported the telegraph lines being down or that he was unable to get his dispatches out for lack of sufficient services.

Reid Begins

Reporters during this time were not honored for their work. “It often seemed that appreciation for the correspondent’s trade and their daring was confined to the pages of the newspapers themselves.” Their dedication to their craft and the subsequent satisfaction their work brought them, not money or fame, was their reward for their accomplishments, especially within the South.

The compensation for reporting was meager. Yet due to his popularity and determination, Reid managed to make more than a modest living. For his correspondence to the New Orleans Picayune

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2 Ibid p. 4.
3 Ibid p. 5.
6 Reid later died, from tuberculosis, in 1865.
8 Ibid.
in 1862, Reid received twenty five dollars a week, which was a common fee. By 1863, Reid was receiving four times that amount from the Mobile Tribune, which included a supplementary allowance for horse feed. His payments from three newspapers amounted to approximately $12,000 during the first two and a half years of the War.  

Correspondents generally did not work for more than two papers at once; in 1862, Reid was reporting for three papers. He had been working of the New Orleans Daily Picayune before the War started, and when the first shots were fired, Reid decided to continue his work with the Picayune as a roving correspondent. While working for that paper, he also reported for the Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register and the Memphis Daily Appeal. He did not submit the same letters to all three papers, but wrote separate wires and letters for each paper from the battlefront. In contrast, some reporters would send the same dispatches to each paper they were working for, if they were covering the same events for more than one newspaper at the same time.

After New Orleans fell to Union troops, Reid subsequently quit working for the Picayune. By 1863, he was sending dispatches to the Chattanooga Daily Rebel and the Montgomery Daily Advertiser. After leaving the Mobile Advertiser that same year, he started working for its competitor, the Mobile Daily Tribune. At the end of 1863, he was also corresponding for the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer. Not only did Reid continue to submit different wires to all these papers, he used different pseudonyms in each paper.

While working for either Southern or Northern newspapers, it was customary for correspondents to use pseudonyms in lieu of their names. In 1861, Reid was known to the Picayune as “Ora;” starting on March 28, 1862, Reid changed to writing as “Sparta” in that paper. For his reports to the Montgomery Advertiser he kept writing as “Ora,” and for the Atlanta Intelligencer he used “290.” Before 1862, he usually signed his letters with either “S.C.R.” at times or used simply an “R” or an “S.” Other letters or telegrams, presumably written in haste, were left unsigned.

First Excitement

Throughout his career, Reid enjoyed the freedom of his job. Many of his letters or telegrams detailed his enthusiasm. While traveling to Memphis, Tennessee in 1861, he sent one of his very first letters to the Picayune that stated: “The woods and green fields once more! What a cheering and refreshing sight to a denizen of New Orleans, who has been cooped up by the surrounding of brick walls!” It is evident in this letter that Reid was looking forward to becoming a roaming correspondent. His letters in 1862 retained this initial excitement, elaborating on his experiences while traveling with the Tennessee army:

I expect my tour will be full of adventure and incident... We shall have a fine moon to cross the mountains by, and as we

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid. p. 49.
are just entering the glorious autumnal month of October, when the rich foliage of varied green changes to all the variegated exquisite hues of the rainbow, I anticipate enjoying some glorious landscape views of woodland and mountain scenery. East Tennessee is the Switzerland of America, and presents views of river, mountain and valley scenery not excelled by any in the world.12

Throughout the War, despite the atrocities he witnessed, he retained in each letter both his love for the countryside he traveled through and his passion for his work.

Entertaining Anecdotes

Reid frequently used humor to entertain his readers. He usually made the Northern armies and President Lincoln the subjects of his jests. In one letter to the Picayune, he included “a good story on Old Abe, which is too good to keep, and is no doubt true, as it comes from a very high authority.”13 This story gives an account of how a Mr. Abe Enlow, “a sharp, wirey chap, always up to mean tricks,” presumed to be Abraham Lincoln, pilfered a saddle that did not belong to him. This Enlow fellow then ran away from Kentucky to a log cabin in Illinois, where he changed his name in order to escape justice. This story continues, illustrating Reid’s feelings for Lincoln:

There is no one who has become lower since Abe Enlow has become a traitor President, under the stolen name Abe Lincoln. But we all said at the time that the boy who stole Jim

Craycroft’s saddle would never come to any good end....There can be no doubt, after this authority, as to who Abe Lincoln is.14

Reid usually included a humorous story, much like this one, in his letters.

Reid attributed a number of these anecdotes and facts to “high authority.” This “authority” might have been a “gentleman” that had passed through where he had been staying, or, as in the Lincoln story, to “a highly respectable old lady of this county.”15 In his letters, he would attribute facts whenever possible, yet these attributions did not usually have names attached to them:

A gentleman who came through from Clarksville, Tenn., reports that all the Federal troops had left there two weeks ago, being the rear of Buell’s column. When they left the citizens gave three cheers, which so exasperated the Feds that they threatened to shell the town if the indignity was repeated.16

Reid frequently attributed his stories, anecdotes, and most of the facts that he had not seen personally. Yet these attributions were usually nameless people he presumably came into contact with during his travels.

Reid was not only critical of the Northern army and its government; he was critical of all “Yankees,” even if they were found as far south as Atlanta, Georgia. For example, in 1862, Reid went to

12 “Our Army Correspondence,” Memphis Daily Advertiser and Register, October 3, 1862, p.1.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
Atlanta to confer with Editor J. Henly Smith of the Atlanta Daily Confederacy about the possibility of corresponding for that paper. Smith did not hire Reid; Reid found he did not care for the city. He detected a “slight perceptible odor of Yankeedom” within it. He was obsessed by the fear that the “Gate City” was “alive with Yankee spies.” Reid subsequently did not work for an Atlanta paper until his correspondence with the Intelligencer in the fall of 1863. Interesting to note, his dispatches to this paper were not as consistent, nor as detailed, as those letters and telegrams he sent to other newspapers.

The Patriot

Reid’s letters were often optimistic, showing the solid Southern spirit of the time. In 1861, he traveled to Kentucky to cover their then possible secession from the Union. His letters described his perception of the people and their “general uprising.” He found that “secession fever” was “at its height.” He described the events in his usual eloquent detail, showing both their fervor and his own:

The true men of Kentucky are rising, and are determined to free themselves from the Lincoln oligarchy. A spirit of true patriotism and the wildest enthusiasm is spreading itself all over the Southern portion of the State.

This style of writing, which was detailed but did not attempt to cover his own enthusiasm or opinions, was a permanent feature in Reid’s articles throughout his writing career.

In another letter to the Memphis Daily Appeal, for example, he further describes Kentucky’s Southern patriotism, and subsequently his own:

I have been several days in this so called neutral city, that is, if neutrality means to be all on one side. The Union flag, as they call it, alone floats over the market places and Main Street. It is not the old form of the American flag with the stars running in parallel lines, but with the stars forming a circle, making them link hands...as children do in the play of “Oats, sweet beans, and barley grow,” and to my mind pretty much on the same principle. In the old flag....the lines themselves plainly demand “State Rights.”....There is no question of the fact but that a large majority of the true general people of Kentucky are in favor of the Southern Confederacy, and when the revolution takes place, which may be daily looked for, it will prove it.

Letters like these, in which this reporter’s opinions were clearly defined, were common in both Southern and Northern newspapers. Many reporters did not mask their true feelings in their writings, and Reid was not different from his fellow colleagues.

In most of his letters, Reid rarely hid his patriotism of, and belief in, the South and its causes. One critic notes that the “Southern press chose to accentuate the negative opinions” of Southerners towards

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17 Andrews, p. 234.
18 “News By Telegraph,” Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register, September 13, 1862, p.2.
20 Ibid.
the North. However, Southern patriotism in Southern newspapers reflected the sentiment not only of their reporters, but of their readers. Only when reporting failures by the Southern army did Reid’s strong beliefs make his accounts questionable. In every instance of this kind, the Southern army “fell back,” or used “retrograde movement;” hardly ever were Southern troops “retreating.” Yet, Reid was reflecting the opinions of his readers as well as his own opinions.

Countless journals of citizens and soldiers alike describe their loyalty to the South and also their fears of the North. An example of Southern patriotism can be found in the letters of a woman to the Mobile Register: “We have left our families, friends and relatives to come here for the purpose of defending our country...I will just say that our boys are Dixie’s own children and are now waiting and praying for marching orders.” Support for the Southern cause in the South was not hard to find.

According to Reid, even Northern soldiers were supportive of the Southern cause:

In a conversations with a number of prisoners from Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois, whom I brought in from the battle-field of Shiloh, they admitted that they had been deceived — said that so far as they were personally concerned they had fought their last battle against us, and that they would never take up arms again against a people fighting for the liberties of their institutions and their independence.

Granted, prisoners of war would support their captors in most cases; yet, Reid, in his accounts, was not only reflecting his own opinions of the War, but also of those of his readers. His readers, Southerners, did support the Southern side of the War. Those at home read the papers to keep abreast of the happenings of the War. He did not only keep these readers at home in mind, but also wrote for the soldier in the field, for their morale was one of his main concerns.

Reid’s letters often showed this staunch support of the Southern army. In one report, he contrasted the “just” goals of the Southern soldier and the “tyranny” of their Northern opponents:

When the weared soldier, at the tap of the drum, stretches himself at night upon his blanket on the tented field, it is but natural that he should ponder on the issues of the war which has induced him to take up arms in his country’s cause. When he reflects that the terrible resort to a bloody strife is forced upon us in defense of our national security and honor; for the preservation of our precious institutions; in the sacred cause of public security, which makes all wars defensive — then it is he becomes nerved for the conflict, and free is a firm reliance in the triumphant (?) of its justice and holiness. Then it is that he feels each morning’s reveille is but the overture of our onward daily march towards the accomplishment of a glorious independence.

22 Reynolds, p.157.

In the following paragraph, he continues with a telling portrait of the North:

On the other hand, no enthusiasm, no fire of patriotism, no glow of the great principle of justice stirs the breast of the brutal hired mercenary who enlists under a tyrant to enslave and subjugate millions of people, to violate their rights, and destroy their institutions secured to them under the common constitution of their country. In justice, fraud and falsehood marked the very threshold of the abolition Government. When Lincoln prevaricated with our commissioners, who went to Washington for the preservation of the peace of the land; when in violation of his word and honor he reinforced Fort Sumter, he determined on a bloody, cruel war. From that moment, a military despotism was established over civil authority, and made to triumph over the constitution of the land.  

His contrasts here of the Southern and Northern soldier delineate a common Southern belief about both the Southern army and the War. Reid used his words to bolster his own feelings, but he also kept his readers in mind, no matter which side of the War his readers may have been on. He was attempting to support both the soldier in the field and those left at home.

Support for the Mothers and the Soldiers

As mentioned, Reid supported the South's desire for independence and individual state's rights. His opinions, however, were not only confined to exclusive Southern motives or cares. Often, he reminded his Southern readers exactly why their boys were fighting in this war:

Justice was denied our citizens at home and abroad. Corruption crept into the national councils, sharpened party animosity, and stifled the rights and liberties of the people. Ambitious political leaders seized upon the favorable moment to usurp the powers of Government, and overturn our institutions. The spirit of the South, irritated to madness, rushed with a wild enthusiasm to the defense of their rights, and civil war has followed.  

In many of his dispatches, Reid repeated why the South was fighting against the North, reminding his readers why their sons were dying, and why they must keep the faith in their cause. In doing this, he sustained his support of both those at home and the soldier on the battlefield.

Like many Southern correspondents, Reid was angered by some conditions the Southern army, and especially its lower ranking soldiers and thus himself, were forced to bear. While traveling with these soldiers, he remarked on the inadequacies he witnessed:

I left Corinth this afternoon...in an ambulance of the 4th Louisiana, having been disappointed in the horse promised me, and it being impossible to obtain another at any price....The road is very rough..., with numerous mud holes, and occasional swamps. To make the trip interesting and diversified, we had a miserable, windbroken, balky, spavined C. S. horse, which some speculating horse jockey had swindled the Government to pay no doubt $250 for. If the

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.
villain, and others of the same kidney, had thought for a moment that such a horse was to be used for hauling wounded men from the battlefield, and knowing that he was unfit for service, his conscience would have been troubled with a severe attack of neuralgia. We broke down several times... 28

Adequate transportation was important to Reid, for he believed it was absolutely necessary in order to report the war. However, he did not usually find sufficient means to get from battle to battle.

While Reid was unhappy with the conditions forced upon the soldiers and himself, he praised the medical care for soldiers:

I visited the hospital of this regiment...to see how the sick were cared for...I must confess I was rather unprepared to see the cleanliness, comfort, neatness and care which attended the building throughout. 29

This comment was uncommon in reports from the War; most correspondents, especially Southern reporters, wrote of the inadequate medical treatment soldiers received. Yet Reid usually did find some small “good” to include in his reports from the field, even if it was only a brief mention of the weather. His positive support shined through in most of his writings.

**Reid vs. Rumor**

Reid despised rumors and tried to dispel them in his writings whenever possible. Circulating camp rumors were common, and he would try to break them by showing either the humor in them or their inaccuracy. For example, in one letter to the *Picayune*, he states:

There are any quantity of rumors in camp this morning, made up to suit inquiries, of whome there are always a large stock on hand, and the least pretence for a report from the enemy is magnified into immense and exaggerated proportions. For instance, it was a current report that our advance forces had captured yesterday at Monterey,...six of the enemy’s artillery pieces, and any quantity of mules — all of which was entirely false. Again, it was said the enemy had advanced last night with a force of 15,000 on Pea Ridge, on the road from Hambury, to this point, and that an engagement would take place to-day. To those who are posted, these rumors afford much amusement, in watching the thermometer of expectation rise and fall with our troops. 30

Reid believed that rumors were detrimental to the reporting of the War. He thought that they would always prove to be false, “as all camp rumors generally do.” 31 When made aware of a rumor, he reported what he knew as the truth, doing his best to do so as accurately as possible. Yet his opinions of these truths, at times, showed more of his personal opinions than accuracy. Reid also believed the circulation of any rumor was bad for morale and therefore bad for the soldier.

Whereas Reid supported the soldiers and their trials, he faulted the higher ranking officers. He did not like the “political jugglery and wire working” by which he saw ambitious soldiers using to obtain

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higher rank within the army.\textsuperscript{32} He felt this had a demoralizing effect on the men.

Unlike some of his fellow correspondents, Reid had prior military experience, having served as a Deputy Marshal and as a member of the Texas Rangers during the Mexican War.\textsuperscript{33} This prior experience gave him an understanding of battles from a military point of view and an edge over his colleagues. It did not, however, give him an innate ability to get along well with his military colleagues of high rank.

Reid had problems when dealing with the higher ranking officers, especially with General Bragg. Reid had a good relationship with the General until he reported on the battle of Shiloh. Bragg did not agree with Reid’s dispatch. Reid discovered this a few days after his report was published, when he went to see the General. Bragg stated his displeasure quite adamantly. His complaint was that his name was not in the reports of the battle, “...it would seem, so far as the newspapers were concerned, that I was not in the battle at all!”\textsuperscript{34} Reid professed that he had done justice to Bragg in his reports, and he had. Reid did mention General Bragg’s name in his accounts, when it was appropriate to do so.

**Continuing Troubles with the Generals**

Beginning March 25th, 1862, Reid wrote two columns from Corinth. One entitled “From the Seat of War” for the New Orleans *Picayune*, and another for the Mobile Daily *Advertiser and Register* entitled the “Latest from Corinth.” It was within these columns that Reid’s troubles with military officials increased: “It was whispered about the camp that the misbehavior of a single correspondent, Sam Reid...had provoked Beauregard’s wrath.”\textsuperscript{35} Apparently, Beauregard was angered by a dispatch by Reid that was sent to the *Appeal*, which stated: “a general engagement is expected tomorrow. Our whole army marched out this evening.”\textsuperscript{36} Reid’s report also alluded to Beauregard’s abortive advance of that day, which failed to defeat Pope’s corps at Farmington. This report angered Beauregard quite a bit.

In his accounts from Corinth, Reid did not try to appease General Bragg or Beauregard, or any other high ranking officials, by including them often in his reports. Reid did include General Bragg when it was possible, and when it was necessary to his story.\textsuperscript{37} His accounts were similar to each other, and Reid did not leave Bragg out of an event he was involved in:

This movement of the enemy is for the purpose of flanking Chattanooga, and compelling General Bragg to abandon that almost impregnable position. Whether he will be successful or not, cannot yet be determined.\textsuperscript{38}

However, Reid’s hostility towards Bragg, and his personal disapproval of Bragg’s actions, was also included in his accounts as well:

\textsuperscript{32} “From the Seat of War,” *New Orleans Picayune*, March 30, 1862. p.2.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. pp. 137-138.

\textsuperscript{34} Andrews. pp. 146-147.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. p.156.


\textsuperscript{37} see the *New Orleans Picayune* and the *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register* from March through May, 1863.

Little doubt can be entertained that the enemy have Chattanooga. That strong and important position was evacuated without a blow from Gen. Bragg; because it is said Rosecrans had again “flanked” him, and he was compelled to make a further retreat into Georgia, or fight in a position where complete victory alone could save his army from destruction or captivity. 39

Reid reported what he witnessed, and did not cover his opinions, even when discretion may have been better advised.

Due to Reid’s growing dislike for Bragg, Mobile Register editor John Forsyth directed that none of his letters or dispatches should go to press until Forsyth himself had inspected them. 40 Forsyth and Bragg were close friends. Reid did not agree with this new policy, and in March accepted an offer of new employment with the Register’s competitor, the Mobile Daily Tribune. 41 That following June, one of Bragg’s officers arrested Reid in Tennessee for going into Shelbyville without a pass. Reid was ordered to leave town by two the next afternoon. A cavalry commander of Bragg’s, Major General Joseph Wheeler, interceded with Bragg for Reid’s sake, and he was allowed to stay with the army. He continued with the army in Tennessee until August. His reports in the newspapers made no comment of this close call nor any other personal events with other officers until the fall of 1862.

41 Ibid.

At the end of August, 1862, Reid applied for permission to accompany Bragg’s invasion march into Kentucky. Reid discovered that Bragg had issued a general order on August 20th stating that “no person not properly connected with this army will be permitted to accompany it—whenever found within the lines, they will be arrested and confined.” 42 Reid, curious to know whether this order applied directly to him, wrote Bragg a personal letter on August 22nd. No written reply was issued. On August 25th, Reid was notified that Bragg had ordered him personally to leave the army and Chattanooga. Reid printed an expose of Bragg’s personal discrimination against him to the Charleston Mercury, and it appeared in the September 26th issue. Reid did not try to publish this appeal in the Mobile Advertiser, for, as was noted, the editor, John Forsyth, was a close friend of Bragg’s. 43

The Question of Accuracy

Reid’s retellings of the actual battles have been criticized as well as praised. One critic states that in his telegrams, Reid made no attempts to identify any of the Union corps or division commanders. 44 In most of his telegrams, Reid did not give incredibly detailed accounts, but he did report Northern losses, captured prisoners, and the identities of Northern commanders, when that information was available to him:

42 Andrews. p. 236.
Lieutenant Colonel [name’s] cavalry, belonging to Col. J. Smith’s Georgia Legion, have just returned from the Cumberland mountains. They encountered Colonel Cliff’s brigade of renegade Tennesseans near Jamestown, when a desperate fight took place. Fifty of the enemy were killed outright, and we took twenty prisoners and thirty horses, without loss on our side.

Col. Cliff is among the prisoners. Ora.  

Unlike his telegrams, his letters were more descriptive of the battles, and included more information concerning both sides:

I leave here to-morrow morning for the celebrated Cumberland Gap, en route for the “dark and bloody ground.” It appears.... that on the day previous, Gen. Bragg had demanded the surrender of Louisville, Bull Nelson being in command; Nelson refused, and gave notice to all the women and children to leave.... Gen. Kerby Smith’s column had taken position so as to hold Buell’s forces in check, whose advance had reached Glasgow, where, it is reported, a small force of our troops had been captured. If this be true, it cannot be long before Kentucky’s soil shall once again become reddened by the carnage of the battlefield.

Reid was intending to speak to Southern readers about the state of the Southern army; therefore his articles focused on the Southern rather than the Northern army.

In reporting the battle of Chickamauga in 1863, Reid did make some mistakes. He incorrectly gave the time of the breakup of the enemy’s right and center as “about 5 o’clock” and presented a rather confused version of what happened after that. He also misrepresented the direction of the enemy’s troop movement. The statistics Reid used in reporting the battle were in some instances approximately correct, but in others considerably wide off the mark. Yet, he quoted from General Bragg’s own reports of the battle. The first news of the battle to pass over the wires was an official dispatch from General Bragg himself, telegraphed from Ringgold.

Much of the information that was misrepresented about Chickamauga was a product of the telegraphic reporting of the battle. Reid was not the only one who made mistakes; others like the Press Association, who first reported that battle took place on Peavine Creek rather than the Chickamauga, and fellow correspondent Peter Alexander, who asserted that the Confederates had captured forty thousand prisoners, were also to blame for misrepresentations regarding the battle.

Despite telegraphic inaccuracies, Reid reported the battle of Chickamauga with objectivity and care. He researched his story, taking details from battle accounts released by the army and from personal accounts of soldiers present at the battle. His battle story was approximately 10,000 words and has been regarded as the “most complete and informing Confederate newspaper account.”

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46 “Our Army Correspondence: Letter From East Tennesseee,” Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register, October 3, 1862, p.1.
50 Ibid.
to create this account, Reid had to overcome many trials, not only with army officials; yet he created an admirable account of the battle.

Most of problems Reid surpassed were traveling concerns, common to many roving correspondents. For example, on his way to Chickamauga, Reid stopped in Savannah and had trouble finding transportation to Ringold. Unable to buy a horse for less than $1,000, he was still in Tunnel Hill on Sunday, and was unable to locate transportation or anyone to approve his dispatches. He finally reached Chickamauga the next evening, after walking nine miles from the railroad station at Ringold. His account of the battle of Chickamauga, “which he worked on for nearly two weeks,” and which first appeared in print in the Mobile Tribune, was later published in pamphlet form ("The Great Battle of Chickamauga") in November, 1863.  

**Censorship and the Roving Reporter**

Despite his problems with the military, and his subsequent problems surrounding the censorship of his dispatches by Forsyth, Reid did believe that censorship was acceptable when reporting actual occurrences or concerns during the War. For example, he felt that reporting the specific movements of troops was absolutely unacceptable:

> Great dissatisfaction is produced at headquarters by imprudent correspondents and others, mentioning the movements of our Generals and other matters, there-by giving the cue to the enemy for obtaining information of our movements and designs. It cannot be repeated too often, and should be kept before the people, that in the present revolutionary struggle, every man of the Confederacy should act as if the whole responsibility of achieving our independence rested upon him. Let every one be governed by this principle, exert every means in his power to effect it, use reflection, prudence and caution, and keep up eternal vigilance.  

Yet Reid did not always follow his own eloquent advice. On numerous occasions, he would report the Southern army’s exact activities, if not their whereabouts:

> For the last few days, there has been the greatest activity prevailing in all the departments of our army, and especially in the medical department, which is the surest indication that a battle is at hand.

In many instances, he also reported the army’s location, but not only the Southern army’s: “Our army advanced to within five miles of the enemy’s lines. Their camp is three miles from the Tennessee river, at Pittsburg.” However, he did give hints as to what was next in the Southern army’s plans:

> ...the battle must certainly take place to-morrow by the advancing of one or the other party. Most probably it will be commenced by us.

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52 Andrews, p.354.
54 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
These descriptions were usually found in Reid’s letters, which were published several days after the actual events had occurred and thus created no danger, but in a few instances, he did include details like the previously mentioned, in his immediate telegrams.

In either letters or, at times in telegrams, Reid did not only give hints to the Southern army’s possible plans, but would also report what he thought the enemy’s plans were going to be:

The enemy is still coquetting on the Tennessee river, making a demonstration at one point to-day, and another to-morrow. It is evident from their movements that they are trying to surprise us at some point, from which they wish to call off our attention from the fact that the enemy is making every possible effort to cross from the Missouri side to the Tennessee side of the Mississippi river, would indicate their intention of trying to effect a junction with the Tennessee river column of their troops in their assault on Memphis, while their Nashville column, the head of which is now within striking distance at Columbia, would be ready to attack us in the rear, and get possession, if possible, of the Charleston road.⁵⁷

In one telegraphed account, Reid even went so far as to tell how the enemy should attack, if they meant to be successful:

Their only hope is — when they shall attempt this point — to attack us in the rear by the Blandville and Mayfield roads, and attempt to outflank us. The road to Blandville is a little east of it, about eighteen miles from Columbus and 8 miles east-south-east from Cairo. Mayfield is about twenty-eight miles east-north-east from here ant two to five miles east-south-east from Cairo.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, despite these few questionable dispatches, Reid’s accounts were accurate and detailed, even if they at times contradicted his own beliefs in moderate censorship. He gave accounts of what he saw and felt, all of which were strong, if opinionated and slanted.

Samuel Chester Reid, Jr. was a dedicated reporter, showing the Southern side of the Civil War with great conviction and care. Some of his reports may not have been completely accurate, nor unbiased, but they were accounts that clearly gave definition to the Southern voice in the newspapers that employed him. His was a strong voice, intended to speak to the reader fighting in the field or waiting at home. He reached more readers than many of his colleagues by reporting for seven different papers throughout the course of the War. Unlike some associates, he took the time to create different, although similar, letters to each newspaper. Like most journalists, he angered some and pleased others. Yet his work entertained and informed his public, during a time of war and atrocity, thus making a solid contribution to the field of journalism history.

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