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AN EDITORIAL COMMENT

This issue of the Atlanta Review of Journalism History focuses on American media coverage of a range of public issues, from spiritualism, to international law, to racial relations with Native-Americans and African-Americans. The historical essays complement each other in showing how the media mirrored prevailing views and stereotypes of mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth century Americans. In delving into authentic records of the past, the historians help us better understand the present.

We are delighted to welcome Dr. William Huntzicker to our pages. In addition to teaching at the University of Minnesota, Dr. Huntzicker is a recognized expert on the nineteenth century press, both in the cities and on the frontier. “Frontier editors at their hand-operated presses,” he wrote in an essay in The Media in America, “exerted an influence beyond the dusty towns in which they published….Colorful editors and their Wild West news stories are among the legends – and provide some of the myths – of the frontier.” In his essay here, Dr. Huntzicker examines how some of those frontier myths – specifically about the Native Americans – were generated by visual images and false assumptions published in the Eastern press in New York.

As with Dr. Huntzicker, all of our Georgia State University essayists delved into newspapers and magazines of the era about which they were writing. For Frances Masamba, this meant finding newspaper accounts of the Spiritualist Movement in the 1850s and 1860s. Sue B. Smith searched for U.S., Confederate and British news reports of the “Trent Affair,” and found as a delightful bonus reprinted reports from France, Spain and Germany. Michael Oby, working in the twentieth century, had the
advantage that some of the people about whom he was
writing were still alive. He tracked down and interviewed
three of these African-American airmen who were the focus
of press reports in World War II.

In sum, these writers clarify how public opinion
was both shaped and reflected by the media. While two
authors show how the media mirrored prevailing racial
stereotypes – of Native-Americans and of African-
Americans – the other two explore attitudes toward the
Confederacy and toward a belief system outside
mainstream religion.

If time travel is one of the benefits of serious
historical research, our essayists are expert travelers ready
to take you with them on a journey. They have been there
themselves, reading on microfilm or in the original the very
newspapers presented to those readers of long ago. We
offer you the ticket for time travel.

Leonard Ray Teel
Georgia State University
Spring 2002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This issue of the Atlanta Review of Journalism
History is the product of twelve months of devoted work.
We are thankful for all the writers, editors and professors
who took the time to make this publication possible.

The three student authors invested hundreds of hours
before crossing from research into publication. After
reviewing existing literature about their eras, searching out
and reading microfilmed newspapers and original documents
(and in one case interviewing participants), and then actually
writing the essays, they presented them at conferences.
Afterwards they persisted in revising their works after
having them critiqued by the Review’s national Editorial
Board. The result is the refined product, unalloyed history.

So, first we want to thank our Georgia State
University student authors who wrote these essays during
the History of News Media course in the Department of
Communication. One, Michael Oby, was an
undergraduate at the time, and now is planning to get his
master’s degree. As a member and former officer in the
GSU Journalism History Society, Michael has returned to
subsequent media history classes to coach and mentor
students. Frances Masamba and Sue B. Smith took the
same course on the graduate level when they wrote their
essays. Frances has also become an active mentor and
lecturer for students in subsequent classes.

All three students made the special effort to
compete on the national level, and subsequently presented
their papers at national conferences of historians. Ms.
Masamba and Ms. Smith, as graduate students, both
presented their research at the annual Symposium of the 19th
Century Press, The Civil War and Free Expression at the
University of Tennessee-Chattanooga. As an undergraduate,
Mr. Oby presented his research to the American Journalism Historians Association Southeast Colloquium in Panama City, Fla., to the National Council for Black Studies in Charlotte, N.C., and to the Southeast Regional Colloquium of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Columbia, S.C.

William Huntzicker, who contributed the invited essay, is a fine example of the caliber of nationally published historians on the Editorial Board of the Atlanta Review of Journalism History. Anyone writing about the mid-nineteenth century, as Frances and Sue have done, can rely on a critique by Dr. Huntzicker. In writing about the era of World War II, Michael had the advantage of critiques from two published scholars, Dr. Wallace Eberhard, professor emeritus of the University of Georgia, and Dr. Patrick Washburn of Ohio University. Dr. Eberhard also critiqued Frances’ and Sue’s essays.

The result, as we say thanks, is history.

Thanks are due also to the other members of our Editorial Board who have graciously assisted the muse of history, Clio, whose portrait graces the cover of our Review. They are Professors Shirley Biagi of California State University-Sacramento, John Coward of the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Joseph Mirando of Southeastern Louisiana University, Michael Salwen of the University of Miami, and Thomas Schwartz of Ohio State University.

Leonard Ray Teel
Atlanta, Spring 2002
Pictures Speak Louder than Words: Images from an Indian War

William E. Huntzicker

While covering the Reagan White House, CBS News reporter Lesley Stahl prepared a report for the evening news that pointed out how President Reagan used pictures to mislead the public about his policies in his 1984 campaign for re-election. For example, the President created photo opportunities at the Special Olympics and at the opening of a federally funded senior citizen high rise. Of course, he never mentioned that he had cut federal funds for people who participated in the Special Olympics and that the high rise was built in spite of him. He vetoed it, and Congress overrode the veto. Overall, the piece was rather tough and Stahl worried that she would get a complaint from either the White House, or her supervisors at CBS.

Sure enough! As soon as the report aired, she received a call from White House aide Michael Deaver. Rather than expressing anger, however, he thanked her for showing those pictures again. The Reagan Administration, he said, cared more about the pictures than what was said about them. On another occasion, President Reagan created a photo opportunity with workers in a Boston bar to provide what Deaver called, a “compensating image,” to cover the fact that on the same day the President proposed eliminating corporate income taxes on their bosses. In the television age, Reagan advisers found that pictures speak louder than words.1

Despite Stahl’s lesson, commentators in the 1988 presidential campaign again discovered the power of images when they discussed the ethics of a commercial aired by Vice President George H. W. Bush in his successful campaign to succeed Reagan. The commercial suggested a relationship
between the Democratic candidate, Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis, and a murderer released on a prison furlough when Dukakis was governor. A graphic flipped between a menacing photograph of the African-American murderer and the aspiring presidential candidate. The commercial ran in only a few markets before the Bush campaign, under pressure from a variety of sources, withdrew it and apologized. The ad played on irrational fears, including racism.²

Yet commentators, including those on television networks, repeated the commercials as they discussed campaign ethics. In the process, they gave the Bush commercial free coverage. With repetition of the offending images, the Bush campaign received free play of the commercial, and at the same time, received credit for having quickly withdrawn it from circulation.

These late 20th century examples illustrate a confrontation between words and pictures that media analysts and historians are only beginning to understand. Similarly, the nation’s first visual medium – the weekly news magazines – arguably had difficulty reconciling pictures with the words they published, even though most pictures were used to illustrate stories. A few examples from Harper’s Weekly, the major weekly through the 19th century, illustrate how this tension between words and pictures perpetuated images and stereotypes of American Indians.

Long before the halftone made photographic reproduction possible,³ Harper’s Weekly and other national publications showed what the “savages” looked like through cartoons and illustrations. As war heated up on the Plains after the Civil War, the illustrated newspapers exploited already familiar themes. In 1868, the magazine carried large illustrations of such events as a historical look at Indians attacking fur traders on the Missouri River, Sioux Indians in ambush preparing to attack settlers, and Indians attacking a wagon train. In these, and in countless other illustrations, the Native Americans share similar characteristics.⁴ Every school child today can name them: they wear some feathers, little clothing and sometimes carry tomahawks. Of course, their attacks were often in ambush or other situations that take unfair advantage of white folks. To be sure, these were occasionally balanced with studies of the “noble savage,” another popular 19th-century stereotype, and miscellaneous articles about the Indians’ relationship with nature, through scenes of buffalo hunts, villages and landscapes.⁵

If pictures were strong enough, text wasn’t even necessary. One full-page illustration called “The Last Shot” showed a white man on the ground pointing his gun at a nearly naked Indian wearing a headdress and charging him with a raised tomahawk. In the background, Indians encircle the fight, making the white man outnumbered and doomed. The illustration, described as a detail from a Currier and Ives print, was enlarged to fill an entire page. No words explained the picture or even made a claim to authenticity.⁶ Elsewhere, however, Harper’s criticized both the army and those seeking peaceful solutions to frontier conflict.

Besides copying lithographs and illustrating popular fiction, the illustrated newspapers sent “special artists” into the field to sketch and report from the scene. During the Civil War, these artists gained considerable fame for both the quality of their reporting and the risks they took.⁷ Harper’s Weekly special artist Theodore R. Davis explained the process that artists used to illustrate a battle. They often made rough sketches of an area in which they expected a battle, so they knew the landscape. In calm moments, they sketched people, equipment and horses that could be copied into action pictures. They often recreated the detailed battle scene by combining this earlier documentation with quick sketches made at the time of
the action.\textsuperscript{8}

After the war, Davis went west for *Harper’s Weekly* where he had to exercise his imagination to illustrate his first encounter with American Indians – also the first known published illustration of Indians attacking a stagecoach. Davis, who was inside the mule-drawn Concord coach, gave his readers a lasting picture of the scene when Indians attacked his coach in mid-afternoon on November 24, 1865. The account and sketch published five months later became the prototype for thousands of re-enactments in popular fiction. Wild West shows, motion pictures and television shows. At the time, the journalist was not a neutral bystander; he joined the other frightened passengers and colorful driver in fighting the attackers. Of course, the illustrator’s perspective was from inside the coach, but the viewer is invited to witness the scene from an imagined vantage point outside.\textsuperscript{9} The event apparently colored Davis’ subsequent coverage of Indian issues, but most of Davis’ sketches on his trip generally documented the development of the West.\textsuperscript{10}

Getting sketches to the New York office of the illustrated newspaper was only the beginning of the process of preparing a picture for publication. Using the artist’s sketch, a photograph or a word description as a starting point, a second artist in New York would draw the same scene on a hardwood block for use on the printing press. Engravers then carved the picture in line relief so the raised sections of the scene would collect ink for reproduction on the printing press. To expedite the process, Frank Leslie, publisher of *Harper’s* major competitor, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, invented a process of cutting the blocks into the sections and having different engravers carve different parts of the scene. The different sections were then bolted together for final reproduction. In this way, a full-page or a multipage, centerfold picture could be prepared for the press overnight.\textsuperscript{11} The white lines that can be seen in pictures, such as Davis’s stagecoach scene, are gaps showing where the blocks were bolted back together for printing.

In coverage of the West, words and pictures contributed to the same, sometimes implicit message, that progress represents the movement of white civilization. The subtitle under the flag at the top of *Harper’s Weekly* described it as “A Journal of Civilization.” By the end of the 19th century, American newspapers assumed a sharp contrast between “savage” and “civilized” ways of life. Ideas of progress had been in the culture for centuries, especially in the contrast between Europeans and the natives they encountered in North America. Their views had been made acceptable through other published writings, ranging from religious teaching to scientific studies of race to dime novels.\textsuperscript{12}

The weekly illustrated newspapers, primarily *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* begun in 1855 and *Harper’s Weekly* founded less than two years later, supplied most of the nation’s news pictures – images that made concrete the abstract ideas of progress and race. Major battles, such as the Little Bighorn in 1876, became flashpoints at which these attitudes appeared in the news. Images of those seeking to prevent this expansion had often appeared in the illustrated press by the time an alliance of determined Plains groups defeated George A. Custer and five companies of the U.S. 7th Cavalry. In response to Custer’s defeat, many politicians and newspaper editorial writers across the nation called for strong acts of vengeance.

For months, the nation’s newspapers reeked with calls for revenge, retaliation and even extermination of the natives of the Northern Plains after their victory over Lt. Col. Custer, whom the press called General Custer after his Civil War brevet title. When the news hit the streets, the reporters interrupted the nation’s Centennial celebration in Philadelphia in July 1876. Many of the nation’s newspapers reprinted accounts from the *New York Herald.*
which had a correspondent in Philadelphia where the top military brass – Secretary of War J.D. Cameron, Gen. William T. Sherman of Washington, and Gen. Phil H. Sheridan of Chicago — were attending the nation’s centennial celebration. Sheridan was in charge of the Indian campaign.\textsuperscript{13}

Even before the all facts of the battle became known, news and editorial writers revealed their assumptions about Indian warfare. In stories and headlines, they quickly jumped to the conclusion that U.S. soldiers had been “massacred” with “satanic ferocity” by “savages” of the plains.\textsuperscript{14} The July 6 New York Times, for example, proclaimed a “MASSACRE OF OUR TROOPS.” The two stories filled only part of the first column of the front page, but on the following day when more details were revealed, the entire front page was devoted to the battle and its political and military ramifications.\textsuperscript{15}

Editorial writers expressed frustration with the perennial “Indian problem.”\textsuperscript{16} The New York Herald, which had printed Custer’s own dispatches and those of Bismarck Tribune reporter Mark Kellogg killed with him, expressed outrage.\textsuperscript{17} Although the Herald admitted that advancing white civilization had wronged the original owners of the land, a July 9 editorial said:

Let us treat the Indian either as an enemy or as a friend — either as a savage or a human being. Let us exterminate or capture him. ... we have dealt with the Indian in a sentimental way; because we have had plenty of land and could spare it. ... We do not counsel any passionate policy of vengeance. Heaven knows how much we have wronged these Indians and how much we have provoked them. But all that is past. The one thing now to do is to take up this question and settle it. ... If the Indian will not submit to civilization, let us cage him as we would a tiger or a wolf.\textsuperscript{18}

The Helena Herald in Montana Territory said the government should give up the notion that Indians have any right to the soil.

They ought to be compelled to live within their reservations, the same as wild beasts are confined in cages. If they cannot be forced to work and earn their own living, they must be supported as national paupers, we suppose, until they naturally die out.\textsuperscript{19}

An analysis of seven newspapers during the month following the Little Bighorn found the native peoples called by a variety of names, including animals, savages, demons, devils, and vampires. Frequent analogies, like the Herald editorial, were made to animals.\textsuperscript{20} One newspaper, however, admitted that the Native Americans actually outsmarted the white men. “Gen. S. Bull, the Indian commander-in-chief, made his attack after the most approved white man’s style,” wrote the St. Louis Dispatch. The editorial continued:

Indian fighting is not what it was a quarter of a century ago. Then the untutored savage had the poorest arms to defend himself with, now he has the finest and most improved long-range rifles, and constant practice has enabled him to pick off his foe with ease at six hundred yards. The prospects for a long and expensive Indian war are inevitable.\textsuperscript{21}

Few articles mentioned that Custer was attacking a village in territory allowed as hunting grounds by the Treaty of 1868, but the New York Herald prominently displayed a letter from
reformer Wendell Phillips, who attacked government policies. “If any of the tribes are to-day liars, thieves and butchers, they may rightfully claim to have only copied, at humble distance, the example we have set them,” Phillips said. His letter continued:

Except the negro no race will lift up at the judgement seat such accusing hands against this nation as the Indian will. We have subjected him to agents who have systematically cheated him. We have made causeless war on him, merely as a pretext to steal his lands. Trampling under foot the rules of modern warfare we have made war on his women and children. We have cheated him out of one hunting ground by compelling him to accept another, and robbed him of this last by driving him to frenzy, and then punishing resistance by confiscation. Meanwhile neither pulpit nor press nor political party would listen to his complaint. Neither in Congress nor in any city of the Union could his advocate obtain a hearing.

Phillips criticized the press for referring to the Battle of the Little Bighorn as the Custer massacre.

What kind of war is it, where if we kill the enemy, it is death; if he kills us it is a massacre?” The reformer and former abolitionist called the 1868 Battle of Washita as a Custer massacre. At that time, Custer, “a disgrace to his uniform and the flag he bore, attacked a peaceful Cheyenne village ... whose inhabitants were either our prisoners or our guests, dwelling there by our order.”

Phillips indicated how the choice of words could affect perception of an event, but the words did not compete with pictures in the daily newspapers, which used few, if any, pictures of this breaking news. Newspapers, like the New York Herald, indicate the strong polarized reaction to the Little Bighorn within the mainstream press and the widespread calls for genocide, using the word extermination. The coverage reflects the manifest destiny ideology of savagism versus civilization and a public relations campaign designed to garner public support for a military solution.

Custer’s celebrity may have contributed to the sympathy his death evoked. Even before his fatal charge, Custer often made news, beginning with his flamboyant charges and rapid rise in the ranks during the Civil War followed by several years on the Plains. Regardless of the editorial content of articles, pictures supported the images of American Indians as aggressors against white settlers. Custer’s personality, controversial behavior and celebrity may have contributed to the attention that the Little Bighorn received during the nation’s centennial. Nevertheless, these issues were overshadowed by the ideological questions.

To put the conflict into historical perspective, Harper’s Weekly ran an article and picture that illustrates the possible tension between text and image. Under a dramatic illustration and a small heading “ATTACKED BY INDIANS,” the 566-word article preaches about the “Indian Problem” that began with the first settlement in North America by “fugitives from Old-World persecution” and continued through the recent defeat of the U.S. 7th Cavalry at the Little Bighorn in distant Montana Territory. Tracing the conflict’s origins to the first Europeans on the North American continent, the article begins sympathetically to the people who lived here first, but the illustration recreates the stereotype of a family of settlers attacked by aggressive Indians. Yet the article concludes that the native inhabitants are doomed to extinction.

Perhaps the illustration was deliberately provocative to
attract attention to the message of the text, but the image overpowers the words. The picture depicts a situation that the article declares is "the natural result of our Indian policy." Although Indians had a right to defend their land against American advance, the article states,

But we know from the records of those early times that the Indians received the whites in a friendly manner, sold them lands and were disposed to live at peace with them. Had the settlers recognized the rights of the Indians, treated them fairly, kept faith with them, and been as zealous to Christianize and civilize them as they were to wrest from them their hunting grounds, there would have been no desolating Indian wars, none of the massacres which ensanguine the pages of early New England history; nor would we, at this day, have been compelled to lament the death of the gallant Custer and his brave comrades, or to contemplate the extermination of the Western tribes as the only means of protecting the settlers in the far West, whither the Indians have been driven by the steady progress of the white races. It is undeniable that all our Indian wars have been provoked by the whites. Every treaty made with the Indians has been violated as soon as it was for the interest of the whites to break it. Despoiled of their lands, demoralized by whiskey, taught treachery and fraud by the "superior" race, it is but natural that they should fight for the possession of their lands, or that they should be cruel and vindictive in their methods of warfare.

Far different relationships would result from a more enlightened Indian policy, the article contended.

The exemption of Canada from Indian wars shows that when treated fairly and justly the aborigines will live peaceably side by side with the white settlers, and accustom themselves to the arts and industries of civilization. Nor are examples of the same kind wanting in our own country. ... several tribes of the West, who have had the good fortune to be fairly treated by the government agents, have become far advanced in civilization, possess well-cultivated lands, have established schools and churches, and that they are orderly, intelligent, and peaceable.

Such incidents as the one depicted in our double-page engraving are the natural result of our Indian policy. We have taught the Indians to regard the whites as enemies. We have cheated, despoiled, and demoralized them, and now affect to be surprised when they turn upon us, and defend the integrity of their lands with all the brutality and cruelty of savage warfare.

It is, perhaps, inevitable that the Indian races should disappear before the advance of the whites; but it is discreditable to Christianity and civilization that the settlement and development of the regions occupied by the tribes should be accomplished only by the extermination of these races.  

Even an article that professes sympathy for the natives' cause concludes that their extinction is inevitable. Taken together, the picture and text of September 16, 1876, illustrate the 19th-century conflict within the dominant political culture between philanthropy and extermination. While the text reflects the former, the picture screams for the latter. The picture shows a woman and child cowering in a covered wagon defended by hearty-looking men while fierce-looking savages attack. Yet
on this one page, *Harper's Weekly* sums up the popular ideology of an inevitable march of human progress from savagery to civilization.

While the picture shows the stereotypical pacific settlers attacked by stereotypical marauding barely clothed natives on horseback, the words accompanying the article attempt to impart a different message, even as the text tries to tie the picture to the words. The article concludes with the stereotypical view that the American Indians were a disappearing race. "It is, perhaps, inevitable that the Indian races should disappear before the advance of the whites; but it is discreditable to Christianity and civilization that the settlement and development of the regions occupied by the tribes should be accomplished only by the extermination of these races."26

In light of the lessons provided by political television in the 1980s, historians should revisit the impact of visual images in the 19th century to consider the extent to which pictures, as well as words and ideas, contributed to the popularization of ideological assumptions about race and manifest destiny.

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**Endnotes**

1 Stahl and Deaver were interviewed by Bill Moyers for "Illusions of News," the third in a four-part series called "The Public Mind" that aired on Public Broadcasting System in 1989. The program explores the emphasis on imagery in television news.

2 Ibid. Videos from this series are available from Films for the Humanities and Sciences PO Box 2053 · Princeton, NJ · 08543-2053

3 The halftone was invented in the 1880s and came into frequent use slowly over the subsequent decade. Before then, most newspaper illustrations were created by engravers copying photographs or sketches on hardwood blocks for use on the printing press.


9 "On the Plains—Indians Attacking Butterfield's Overland
Dispatch Coach.” – sketched by Theodore R. Davis – 
10 See, for example, illustrations from Davis’ trip, *Harper’s Weekly*, 27 January 1866.
13 *New York Herald*, 6 July 1876; 7 July 1876; 8 July 1876.
14 *Chicago Tribune*, 6 July 1876; 7 July 1876; *St. Louis Dispatch*, 6 July 1876; 7 July 1876; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 July 1876; 7 July 1876; *Minneapolis Tribune*, 6 July 1876; 7 July 1876.
16 A valuable long-term overview of newspaper editorials on the “Indian problem” is available in Robert G. Hays, *A Race at Bay: New York Times Editorials on “the Indian Problem, 1860-1900*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997). Hays organizes thematically many of the New York Times editorials on this subject. For most of this period, though, the Times was not the opinion leader that it is today.

18 *New York Herald*, 9 July 1876.
19 Ibid., July 13, 1876.
20 Newspapers examined for July 1876 were the *San Francisco Chronicle, Helena Herald, Chicago Tribune, St. Louis Dispatch, Minneapolis Tribune, New York Herald*, and *New York Times*.
21 *St. Louis Dispatch*, 7 July 1876.
23 At least one historian has argued that the nation was set up to support a military solution to the Plains war, regardless of the 1876 campaign’s outcome. See John S. Gray, *Centennial Campaign: The Sioux War of 1876* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988 [1976]).
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
The Spiritualist Movement Controversy: A Study of Media Coverage 1850-1868

Frances Masamba

The purpose of this research is to explore some of the prevailing nineteenth century views about the spiritualist movement as reported in the press. The National Spiritualist Association defines spiritualism as follows:

Spiritualism is the science, philosophy and religion of continuous life, based upon the demonstrated fact of communication, by means of mediumship, with those who live in the spirit world... Spiritualism is a science because it investigates, analyzes and classifies facts...a philosophy because it studies the laws of nature... a religion because it strives to understand ...the laws of God.

A medium is defined as, “One whose organism is sensitive to vibrations from the spirit world and through whose instrumentality, intelligences in that world are able to convey messages and produce the phenomena of Spiritualism.”

Some of the phenomena or manifestations of spiritualism produced by mediums are:

Teleportation, the moving of an object from one place to another: apports, the producing of an object out of thin air; levitation, the rising of an object, such as a table, or a person; rappings, such as those [knocking sounds] heard by the Fox sisters [who founded modern spiritualism]; automatic writing and painting, written messages or works of art produced by the artist or writer simply [by] holding a pen or brush; materialization, the method by which a substance called ectoplasm is
produced from a medium and then forms into a recognized spirit... Spirit world is defined as, the term used by spiritualists for the dwelling place for those who have died, or left their physical bodies.1

This study explores how modern spiritualism began and how the press chronicled its influence especially on the American upper classes that embraced it. The role played by children is discussed including that of the two young Fox sisters. Also newsworthy at the time was the spiritualists’ active role in advocating for the Anti-Slavery movement and other social concerns of that century.

This paper also highlights the growth of the spiritualist movement from Rochester, New York across the Atlantic and back again to the political seat in Washington. The study follows the movement from a cellar of decaying bones to the royal courts of Europe and even to this researcher’s family tree. Although the media exploration, at one point, spans two continents, it begins and rests, at the foot of Dungeon Rock in Lynn, Massachusetts. There, a believer by the name of Hiram Marble dedicated his life to attempting to prove the truth of the spiritualist movement.

Sources for this study were obtained from historical newspapers on microfilm as well as from books, magazines and manuscripts. Primary sources were also located online at Accessible Archives and the Library of Congress. In one instance, a historical society archives director was consulted and cited. Two interviews were conducted, one of which was the basis for beginning this paper. The Massachusetts resources were chosen because of an interest in Mary Elizabeth McCoy, an African American spiritualist, who settled there in the mid 1870s.

**Believers and the press**

During the 1850s and 1860s, spiritualism played a major role in the lives of believers, sometimes with profound effect. Although the media couldn’t foresee how tenaciously this movement would grip the fabric of American society, the newspapers of the era reflected both the claims of the believers and the doubts of the debunkers. Annoyed by critics, some believers attempted to prove, beyond a doubt, the existence of supernatural spirits. In 1868, *The Lynn Reporter* introduced one such convert whose life was becoming a legend. The article began, “Among the believers in spiritualism and its strange developments is a Mr. Hiram Marble....”4

In 1851, Marble envisioned the perfect way to prove the truth of spiritualism. He believed in a seventeenth century legend of hidden pirate’s gold buried in a wood-bound cave, swallowed by an avalanche of earthquake fury in Lynn, a city 11 miles northeast of Boston. “[The spirits told him] his long journey to the pirate’s cave, [was] for the purpose of advertising to the world this great project, and to make ...the triumph of spiritualism more glorious.”5 The mound created by the avalanche became known as Dungeon Rock and in 1851 it became Hiram Marble’s rock.

Through the assistance of spiritualist mediums, Marble intended to unearth the legendary treasure and at the same time vindicate the entire spiritualist movement.6 His grand endeavor may have been partly the reason spiritualists congregated in Lynn during this period. “By the 1850s Lynn was one of the centers for spiritualism in Massachusetts.”7

Marble was perhaps encouraged in his belief of this “experiment-science-religion”8 by the nineteenth century media reports about spiritualism and its social context. For example, the press reported on the Abolitionist movement as well as traditional religious views about spiritualism. One *New
York Times editorial stated, “It is the duty and privilege of all avowed friends of anti-slavery to dissolve connection with any church or state that will not take abolition as its fundamental basis.”

In 1855, the Times reported on a spiritualist meeting, held at the Stuyvesant Institute in New York. A Mr. Clark was one of the evening speakers and “was filled with abuse of all Christian sects now in existence.” In 1852, the Times also related how the Methodist Conference upheld a decision to expel Reverend Ezra Sprague on various charges including practices similar to spiritualism.

The media were diligent in their role to inform the public of this modern phenomenon and its social context. Frederick Douglass, editor and renowned abolitionist, wrote about not only the anti-slavery movement, but also critiqued literary reviews of the spiritualist movement, balancing criticism with praise. He also wrote about his spiritualist friends, the Hutchinson family, who were from Lynn. Perhaps Douglass met this family when he lived there.

The Hutchison Family Singers, neighbors and contemporaries of Hiram Marble, had members who were ardent spiritualists, and the large family built their homes at the foot of Dungeon Rock. They sang lyrics about temperance, women’s rights, abolition, the rights of working men and women and patriotic hymns of battle, issues that were also national concerns of the day. President Lincoln, with the Civil War brewing, reportedly was deeply moved when the Hutchinson Family sang at the White House during this period.

The Hutchisons also sang at anti-slavery meetings attended by Douglass. His report of one such meeting was vivid and poignant. “One of the most furious mobs that I ever saw,” he wrote, “confronted the American Anti-Slavery Society and determined that its speakers [and singers] should not be heard. It stamped, shouted, whistled, howled, hooted ... pushed and swayed the multitude to and fro in confusion and dismay...[However] the voices of this family came down from the gallery of the Old Tabernacle, like a message from the sky, and in an instant all was hushed and silent.”

The press was also diligent in reporting the experiences of believers. In a letter to the editor of Boston’s Daily Mail in September 1850, a man identified as Mr. S. wrote, “Mr. Editor: Perhaps it will interest your readers if you will allow me to recount...some of the wonders which I witnessed last week, in a series of interviews with ... ‘spirits’.” He then described a spiritualist meeting at the home of a friend, Mr. Roy Sutherland of Boston.

According to Sutherland, the group of invited men evidenced their skepticism by first examining every aspect of the room and its furnishings. They then formed a circle around a table. “I placed my hands upon the table—being the only person who touched it at all, and felt the vibrations corresponding to the raps.” After achieving a trance-like state, the men began calling the spirits of their departed loved ones. Mr. S. reported, “My daughter told me that the halo of light which filled the darkened room at the time of her death was spiritual manifestation.”

Other accounts of spiritualist phenomenon were reported in a variety of publications. In an 1851 pamphlet reporting on spiritualist manifestations, a more specific example of a circle or séance led by a medium was provided. At this session, another type of manifestation was mentioned besides rapping—the use of the alphabet to spell out a message:

Is there a spirit present that will communicate with me?
Rap
The alphabet was then called, and the following sentences spelled:
'I am your own child'
'The youngest?'
No answer

News reporters became witnesses to the heightened anticipation as believers waited to hear from a departed wife, husband, parent or child as in this cited meeting that continued to call out to the spirits.

'[Is it] The second [child, asked the participant]?'
No sound.
'The eldest?'
Rap
The alphabet was again called, and the following sentence spelled:
'I love you now and will as ever.'

Media coverage of the movement continued to increase, often revealing even more supernatural reports. In 1851 The Living Age described a Major Bockley, who demonstrated the authenticity of his powers by reading intricate inscriptions on the inside of bolt screws, without looking at them. In January of 1853, the New York Times covered a spiritualist conference where Mr. J. N. Spear represented himself as the voice of a committee of ten ghosts compelled to speak or write as they dictated.

Different publications referred to spiritualist mediums by different names. For example, mediums were called clairvoyant, spirit seer, and magnetizer. Spiritualist mediums were also seen as shamans fulfilling the role of practitioner with direct spirit contact through divine intervention. In other words, a medium was the channel through which spirits reached the earthly realm. Children as well as adults were identified as mediums. News reports and magazine articles described the young who succumbed to this phenomenon as having great imagination, trance-like states and marked introspection.

As the trend to cover the spiritualist movement increased, so did coverage of those cynical of the belief. Descriptions of such manifestations brought outcries of indignation, and became a foreshadowing of an increasingly vocal media backlash. On February 17, 1851, the Buffalo Commercial Advertiser printed the opinions of three medical doctors, Austin Flint, Charles A Lee, and C.B. Coventry, all from the University of Buffalo, who publicly challenged the validity of manifestations reported at spiritualist meetings or séances. "It is assumed, first that the manifestations are not to be regarded as spiritual, provided they can be physically or physiologically accounted for. Immaterial agencies are not to be invoked until material agencies fail. We are thus to exclude spiritual causation in this stage of the investigation."

In 1853, a New York Times reporter, who used the byline Ion, provided readers with insight and criticism concerning child mediums. He described the "mediumising" of a young girl who began having fits that imitated the illness of a deceased woman who reportedly was communicating through her. This reporter referred to these reports as "ridiculous narratives."

The Fox Sisters and other phenomena
In 1860 The Atlantic Monthly provided more information about young mediums. One writer discussed two sisters who had been role models for him when he first began his practice
as a medium. In fact, modern spiritualism began with these two children in the late 1840s. It was in Hydesville, New York, that nine-year-old Kate and her young sister Margaretta began hearing knocking sounds in their home, sounds which appeared to be intelligent signals. In addition, the signaling identified itself as the spirit of a missing peddler, murdered some five years before and claiming to be buried in the Fox family cellar.

On further investigation, human skeletal remains were found exactly where the signals had indicated, and the Fox sisters became known as mediums. By 1851 the sisters were in great demand and the family moved to Rochester, New York. In Rochester however, the sisters were greeted as frauds by a number of antagonists and a group from the educated classes was formed to investigate them further. Although the results of one investigation indicated that neither machinery nor imposture had been used, the Fox sisters were constantly being called imposters. The debate over their claims would continue well into the next four decades.

During the 1850s another former New York child medium, Daniel D. Home, was the “Medium to the Crowned Heads of Europe.” At the time, Home was the most internationally renowned medium, perhaps because his powers had been “open for examinations for at least twenty years.” In 1855, European royalty eagerly sought his services.

He was also seen in the company of such notaries as Robert Browning, who was reported to dislike him. However, like the spiritualist sentiment portrayed in the press, Robert Browning, along with his wife, Elizabeth, represented two extremes of a spectrum. Robert Browning ridiculed Home in the press as the fraudulent “Mr. Sludge, the Medium.” On the other hand, Elizabeth Browning was empathetic with Home and the spiritualist movement in general.

In spite of controversy, Home prospered in his role. He became so influential with Empress Eugenie that Napoleon III’s foreign minister threatened to banish him from Paris. In a few short decades, the status of medium had been elevated from a small village in upstate New York to the palaces of Europe.

Other sources indicated that the spiritualist movement encouraged a more equitable interaction between classes and gender. In 1853, Mrs. Mary Howitt, while vacationing in Europe, wrote the following to her husband William:

The great talk is of Mrs. [Harriet] Stowe [fresh from her literary triumph of Uncle Tom’s Cabin] and spirit rapping, both of which have arrived in England. A feeling seems pervading all classes, all sects, that the world stands upon the eve of some great spiritual revelation.

Three well-known English journals of the day, however, appeared to contradict this sentiment of total inclusion. The Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, The National Miscellany and The Leader did not welcome at least one American medium during her visit to England.

A Mrs. Heyden introduced modern spiritualism to England in 1852. She and another medium, a Mrs. Roberts, joined forces in this effort to create a tie between spiritualists in England and America. The British press however, suspicious of American cultural influences, had little positive coverage for either woman or the spiritualist movement. Nevertheless, acrimony did not stymie public interest in either the spiritualist medium or spiritualist manifestations and the press usually reflected this interest.

During the Civil War, spiritualism reached the apogee of American political power in President Lincoln’s White House. Spiritualism was practiced both downstairs and upstairs.
According to the *Lynn Daily Item*, one White House cook was a Maryland woman named Mary McCoy.\textsuperscript{47} McCoy developed a reputation as an ardent spiritualist \textsuperscript{48} who, after Lincoln’s assassination, moved to Hiram Marble’s town of Lynn.\textsuperscript{49} There, she conducted spiritualist meetings in her home.\textsuperscript{50} Upstairs at the White House, Mary Todd Lincoln was known to hold her own spiritualist meetings and on at least one occasion she introduced the practice to her husband.\textsuperscript{51}

In 1862 a medium known as Netti Colburn was visiting Washington, and Mrs. Lincoln, who was interested in spiritualism, had a sitting with her. She was so impressed with this session that she invited Colburn back to see the president. After the particulars with the president had concluded, a gentleman very humbly asked him about his impression of the session. Lincoln, who appeared to be pleased by the experience, “raised himself, as if shaking off his spell,” and eventually said to Ms. Colburn, “My child, you possess a very singular gift, but that it is of God I have no doubt.” He then thanked her for coming.\textsuperscript{52}

As the spiritualist movement continued to be more widely covered by the media, the reporting seemed to become more sensational and the media debate more polarized. A case in point can be seen with the coverage of New York Chief Justice John W. Edmonds. Edmonds, it seems, came to embrace spiritualism after the death of his wife.\textsuperscript{53} In 1853, he came under intense media scrutiny, accused of using spiritualism to make judicial decisions.\textsuperscript{54} Edmonds methodically and vehemently denied the allegations.\textsuperscript{55} In addition, the *New York Evening Mirror* reported, “John W. Edmonds, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of this district, is an able lawyer… no one can justly accuse him of a lack of ability, industry, honesty or fearlessness.”\textsuperscript{56}

When Dick Forse, who reported the following encounter in the *New York Times*, was invited by Edmonds to visit him, he was eager to see how spiritualism would be manifested in Edmond’s presence. His report, however, revealed a haunting tale. According to this *Times* writer, once in the magistrate’s drawing room, Judge Edmonds “waved his hand in the direction of the gilt cornice over the window and said: ‘Mr. Webster, [that is, the long deceased Mr. Daniel Webster], I have the pleasure of introducing to you Mr. O. Dick Forse’.”\textsuperscript{57} Webster reportedly lived wrapped in the drawing room curtains because he fancied himself a Roman senator.\textsuperscript{58} Next, by Forse’s report, he was introduced to Mozart who remained near the piano. Forse stated, “[I] flung myself at the feet of the piano, and kissed them [the feet of the piano].”\textsuperscript{59}

The editor of the *Rochester Daily News* had been incensed by similar reporting and had shown his fury early in the spiritualist media coverage. “In the months of January and February, 1850, a number of articles [began appearing] from the pen of John W. Hurn … in which he attacked the character of the media [for legitimizing spiritualist manifestation], and all persons who had any connection with them.”\textsuperscript{60}

Hurn believed that the rapping sounds described during spiritualist séances were electrical in nature and somehow were being assisted by the press. He believed that the reports of spirit rappings were being embellished by the media, if not actually controlled by them.\textsuperscript{61} Hurn subsequently embarked on what seemed like a moral media crusade. At one point he directed his interrogating anger at author W. E. Capron, a staunch supporter of the Fox sisters.

Hurn, in a letter to the editor of the *New York Tribune*, accused Capron, also a *Tribune* correspondent, of embracing “the mummeries of Heathen mythology, and the absurdities of modern witchcraft.”\textsuperscript{62} Hurn stated that he had investigated several spiritualist claims himself and found them to be false.
During one of his investigations, he traveled 90 miles out of his way to interview a child medium quoted by Capron. His name was Harmon Beaver. Hurn wrote unsympathetically of this meeting with the young man.

I pronounce and will undertake to prove, if he will show himself in public, that [Beaver] and his rapping are both unmitigated imposters. He could not produce the faintest sound while I was looking at his feet, and he even had the impertinence to ask me to look another way. 63

Concerning the Fox sisters, Hurn believed they could not create their rapping sounds when isolated from the floor. Other manifestations, he argued, could not be reproduced unless the room was completely dark. In response to Capron's comments supporting the Fox sisters, Hurn wrote: "Mr. Capron says the spirits rap contrary to the wishes of the [Fox] girls. How does he know?" 64

Although Hurn did concede that not all circumstances related to spiritualism could be explained by laws of physiology, even so, he admonished, "The great preponderance of facts goes to prove the whole affair, from beginning to end, the most miserable imposition ever attempted to be palmed off upon a civilized community." 65

The apex of spiritualist media debate, however, probably appeared when Judge Edmonds cried political and religious foul play and resigned from the district Supreme Court, partly blaming the press. After his re-nomination to the New York court was not forthcoming in a timely manner, he vacated his prestigious post. Rumor was that Edmonds was originally overlooked solely because of his involvement in the spiritualist movement. "I hear, indeed," he stated, "many personal regrets at losing my services from the Bench; but no where do I hear my condemnation of the occasion of my right to religious freedom, with which the press, the pulpit, and now the political arena have teamed." 66

Like Judge Edmonds, Hiram Marble understood the rights and privileges of religious freedom. He never did find his pirate's treasure before his death in 1868. Nor did he fulfill his life-long quest to vindicate spiritualism, which may have led his detractors to dismiss the entire movement. But neither Marble nor the spiritualists are easily dismissed. Although spiritualism began to decline in the early 1900s, the National Spiritualist Association of Churches had just over 100 churches as of 1991. In addition, there were some 3,000 members of the association in the United States as well as a number of smaller spiritualist organizations and independent churches. 67 The spiritualist movement has also continued its presence in the Lynn area.

The Swampscott Church of Spiritualism, not far from Lynn, still advertises weekly meetings. Mary Patricia Darby, an in-law descendant of Mary McCoy, the spiritualist cook at the Lincoln White House, described a reading she experienced at this church in the fall of 1990. 68

At that meeting in the Swampscott Church, Darby's reader, or medium, described a man who was very concerned about her. He said he could see the man's fingers scaling a piano keyboard. He also described a second man. This man also was playing the piano and both men, the reader told Darby, wanted her to know that they were together and well.

Darby was surprised. She recognized the first man as her deceased father, a well-known piano teacher before his death. The second man met the description of an uncle who had died more recently. He had been the pianist at the Methodist church in Lynn that Darby attended. However, when the reader
explained the process of spirit communication, Darby thought the practice to be contrary to her religious beliefs, and she never returned for another reading.69

Spiritualism has continued to be controversial into the twenty-first century as it was in the 1800s. In 1860, the Atlantic Monthly allotted several pages to a former medium who felt compelled to denounce his previous activities. He hoped those who read his story would reject spiritualism, which he believed affected the Will. “[Suspension of the God-given Will] for any length of time produces suspension of man’s inward consciousness of good and evil, …even when some appetite is buried in a crypt so deep that its existence is forgotten, let the warder [warden] be removed, and it will gradually work its way to the light.” 70

The roles that reporters played in covering this controversy were diverse. The media used its pages to inform and challenge the public as it documented the emergence of this growing phenomenon. The press informed by chronicling the manifestations of séances, observing and interviewing mediums, relating the events of conferences and the reactions of other religious clergy as well as by quoting believers.

The public was challenged by the media to examine the legitimacy of this movement. As the press reported the ongoing debate over the authenticity of mediums, like the Fox sisters and manifestation reports, such as rapping, the public had the opportunity to examine and weigh the information and make their own decisions.

The press also personalized this movement by documenting the conviction of converts. Whether reporting about the Hutchinson family who rallied against slavery or Judge Edmonds who confronted religious injustice or Hiram Marble whose belief was symbolized in Dungeon Rock, the stories of many believers were recorded for posterity.

Of course the last word on spiritualism may, or may not, rest with the recorded annals of media history. For a time, however, Marble and Dungeon Rock were in the news. As the Lynn Reporter chronicled: “The cave which Mr. Marble is making is as great a wonder as any he can ever hope to discover…an instance of the power of faith which proves itself by works—of astonishing perseverance in pursuit of an idea—of strong, persistent will, urging immense outlays of labor and money and energy, almost against hope, and in spite of great obstacles.”71 From such human substance are ordinary lives exalted to transcend legend and on such human substance does media controversy thrive.
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19 Ibid.
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47 “Lincoln’s Cook Died Today,” Lynn Daily Item, April 4, 1931, p.11. Resource provided by Mary Patricia Darby. Mary McCoy is the great grandmother of this writer. The cited article identifies the father of this writer as Mary McCoy’s only surviving relative and a grand nephew. However vital records and family reports indicate that Mary McCoy was his paternal grandmother.
48 “Ma Davis,” Interviewed by Frances Masamba, November 1976.
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On the Brink of Battle:
Newspaper Coverage of Charles Wilkes and
the Trent Affair, 1861-1862

Sue B. Smith

One of the least known clashes of American history occurred early in the Civil War. It pitted the North not against the South, but instead, against England. The dispute, known as the Trent Affair, questioned a possible breach of international maritime law, which almost resulted in the North fighting a separate war against England. This legal conflict revolved around the right to search a neutral vessel during war for contraband and what comprised contraband. Newspapers and other sources of the era documented the clash of opinions between the United States and England regarding these circumstances.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the manner and viewpoints in which the newspapers of the different regions and countries reported the Trent Affair. It is important to study the differing newspaper coverage for at least two reasons. First, one can see how closely the newspaper’s response to the dispute reflected the sentiments of the region. In the North and South, newspaper editorialists mainly echoed the sentiments of other newspapers in their locality. Second, one can see how the inflammatory nature of the affair fueled differences of opinion in the European press.

If the outcome of the Trent Affair had been different, so might be the current American state. The history of the United States could have taken a different path if a separate war between England and the North had ensued. Although the Trent Affair is obscured in history books, the relevance of the dispute is enormous.
From the beginning, many American newspapers staunchly supported the actions of Captain Charles Wilkes of the United States Navy in his capture of two Southern supporters. On their way to England and France on the British mail steamer, Trent, the Southern supporters were to argue in London and in Paris against the unfair practices of the northern maritime blockade. When Wilkes learned about the envoys' intentions, he captured and arrested them. “Their mission was adverse and criminal to the Union,” stated Wilkes, “and therefore became my duty to arrest their progress and to capture them.”

The New York Times agreed by noting that Wilkes “served his own Government, by arresting two rebels agents on a mission of deadly hostility.”

The Confederate envoys were ex-U.S. Senators James Mason of Virginia and John Slidell of Louisiana. The press regarded the capture of the Southern supporters with great enthusiasm. Mason was “a man of narrow and feeble intellect, of virulent temper and of insolent manners.”

On the discovery of Slidell’s capture, The New York Times reported, “We have undoubtedly caught the most accomplished scoundrel, and the ablest engineer of conspiracy in all of the South – Jeff Davis himself not excepted.”

Much of the press also defended how the envoys were apprehended. Sighting the Trent off the cost of the Bahamas on November 8, 1861, Captain Wilkes, on board the USS San Jacinto, hoisted the American flag and fired two shots towards the Trent to get her to halt. Once the British mail steamer stopped, Wilkes ordered his lieutenant, D. M. Fairfax, to board the Trent and capture the rebels and any of their enemy dispatches. Wilkes instructed Fairfax to “make (Mason and Slidell) prisoners and send them on board this ship immediately.” During the arrest, the prisoners “were all well treated.” Wilkes “took them without violence, and with only such a display of force as the case required.”

In order to substantiate the arrest of the envoys, Wilkes “carefully examined all authorities on internal law to which (he) had access.” He analyzed “various decisions...which bore upon the rights on neutrals and their responsibilities.” Wilkes also reasoned that since neither Mason nor Slidell had been received by France or Great Britain, they had no immunity from either of the neutral countries.

When The New York Times first announced the arrest of Mason and Slidell, they reported that the prisoners were taken at sea and how the city of “Washington was made joyful today.” Although the question arose whether the boarding of the Trent was illegal and a breach of international law because the ship was of a neutral country, the New York Times stated that “It is so clear – we are right in seizing Mason and Slidell, that we will go on proving the point.” The paper also upheld Wilkes’ actions by stating he never intended to insult the British flag and that it was legal to search neutral vessels in times of war.

After the arrest, Wilkes informed the United States Navy and government of his actions. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, commended Wilkes: “Your conduct in seizing these public enemies was marked by intelligence, ability, decision, and firmness, and has the emphatic approval of the department.”

The New York Times even reported that the “Government and the country have thanked Captain Wilkes for his energetic conduct.”

When the United States received word that England might declare war as a result of the arrest of the Confederate envoys, The New York Times asserted “nothing can be more absurd.” “Nothing but passion can induce England to make the act of Capt. Wilkes the occasion of war.” Even if the United States was wrong in its actions, “there is not one chance in ten of
rights involving war."\textsuperscript{17} "England can have no possible motive to become involved in a war with this country. England has suffered no injury by the act...except to her dignity."\textsuperscript{18}

Another argument involved a statement made at the beginning of the war by England's Queen Victoria. Along with declaring England's neutrality in the American Civil War, she also stated that no dispatches regarding war could be carried on English ships.\textsuperscript{19} If these were the original statements of the Queen, how could the British deny the breach of neutrality when the ships were clearly carrying Confederate envoys with Rebel dispatches?

In an article from The Washington Star, the newspaper declared "the British government should...return the thanks of her Majesty to the United States Government for its forbearance in not having seized the steamer Trent."\textsuperscript{20} Further comments impugned the English for their beliefs regarding international breach.

British ships, by their own principles of international law were bound under penalty of seizure and confiscation to abstain from carrying dispatches or doing any act that favored the Confederates, because in time of war such act would be noxious and hostile to this Government. But instead of observing such conduct, British vessels have become the daily vehicles of Confederate communications. It was time for an end to be put to this unequal conduct....\textsuperscript{21}

*The New York Times* also probed the desire in England for war by questioning their current supplies. Since England had limited supplies of food and raw materials due to its geography, the country always depended on other nations for its staples, unlike the United States which was mostly self-sustaining. If a war resulted between the two countries, the United States would not be as greatly affected regarding its supplies and necessities as England. England, on the other hand, would be in a more perilous condition.\textsuperscript{22}

*The New York Times* and *The New York Herald* published different views regarding the Trent Affair. The *Herald* "conceded that a government disavowal of Wilkes' act, reparation, even apology might become expedient."\textsuperscript{23} Furthermore, in an editorial comment from a Massachusetts resident, the article asserted that "if the United States government disagrees with England (and their demands), the United States should submit all to the Emperor of France and go by his rule."\textsuperscript{24}

Contrary to the majority of beliefs in the United States, the English, upon receipt of news of the capture of the Trent, condemned the arrest of the two Confederate envoys and the illegal search and boarding of the English vessel. The British officials on board the Trent declared "Why this looks devilish like mutiny. These Yankees will have to pay for this. This is the best thing for the South. England will open the blockade."\textsuperscript{25}

In England, the London Times reflected the sentiments of the British officials on board the Trent. The newspaper believed that the capture was an intolerable act of hostility and "universal piracy."\textsuperscript{26} "The English soon realized that the Union North accepted and agreed with the actions of Wilkes. Nothing "which so taxes our astonishment as the moral immensities that (America) has developed. The populace of New York was yet hugging the fond delusion that the seizure of the Trent would be passed over without resentment."\textsuperscript{27}

The English also pointed out that Wilkes did not keep the Trent as a prize of war. Wilkes, so as not to inconvenience any passengers, instead released the Trent so that she may continue
on her voyage to Great Britain. Since Wilkes released the Trent, an international court was unable to decide if the Trent was carrying contraband. The British upheld this claim with great contrition. The London Observer, as quoted in The New York Times affirmed, "The proper course was to take her into port and submit the question to the Prize Court, which would hear evidence and argument on both sides, and would have decided the case according to the precedent and authorities." 28 "The Trent had not been carried to an American port for adjudication as a prize and could not, under the circumstances be considered as having breached international law." 29 The London Times concurred by stating "that this proposition seems so clear." 30 "We have broken no blockade, we have endured without a murmur the inconveniences inflicted upon our trade, and we have tread the straight line of neutrality with scrupulous exactitude." 31

Editorials in the London Times during the Trent Affair greatly substantiated the atrocities of the incident. One reader stated "It is law to seize enemy's goods in neutral vessels, but not persons according to the Congress of Paris, April 16, 1856." 32 Another editorial suggested that "by simply submitting our cause to the public opinion of Europe, we should have gained the highest title to hold our place in the foremost ranks of civilization." 33

In addition, the London Times revealed the irony in the current American newspapers' arguments by duplicating a memo sent in 1804 from then United States Secretary of State James Madison to James Monroe, U.S. minister to Great Britain. The contents of the memo contradicted the popular sentiment that the majority of the American nation, press and government had towards the Trent Affair. The memo noted that "No person upon the high seas...be demanded or taken out of any ship or vessel belonging to the citizens or subjects of parties...We consider a neutral flag on the high seas as a safeguard to those sailing under it." 34

The English also perceived Wilkes to be receiving notoriety in the United States that was, to Americans, equivalent to fame. By capturing the Trent and the Confederate envoys, Wilkes attracted attention like he had done a dangerous deed or heroic act. Wilkes "commits an act of piracy on the high seas. The first impulse of the American public is to give him a testimonial." 35 The London Times was also astonished at the tone of the American newspapers had towards Wilkes. "How light the manner, how flippant the treatment, how utterly unworthy of the greatness of the occasion of the momentous issue." 36

The views of the British government reflected the sentiment of the media, especially those of the London Times. Although there was a willingness to believe that Wilkes' act was unauthorized or the misunderstanding of orders, the first response by Prime Minister Lord Palmerston was to support an embargo of arms to the United States. He also was ready to dispatch the Channel fleet to the American waters. 37 The British government declared that the seizure was an "act of violence which was an affront to the British flag and a violation of international law." 38 As a result, England demanded that the "only redress which could satisfy Her Majesty's Government and Her Majesty's people would be the immediate delivery of the prisoners...and a suitable apology." 39

The British government "lost no time in transmitting to America its demand of reparation" to U.S. Secretary of State William Seward through the British Ambassador Lord Lyons. 40 Along with the demand for the release of the Confederate envoys to England and an apology, Britain gave the United States only seven days to respond. If the American
government refused to respond within the time limit or denied England their reparations, Lord Lyons was instructed to leave immediately for England and plan for war. Furthermore, if the demands were not "complied with, the diplomatic relations will be at once suspended" with regards to the United States.  

A report from the Morning Post acknowledged Britain's right to retaliate if its demands were not met. Many British seemed passionate about their country's response to the Trent Affair:

[We] acknowledge the error, and surrender of the prisoners will be received with great joy; but if the Federal Government fails, no man in England will blind his eyes to the alternative that England must do her duty. Her rights and duties were never more completely blended than in the present case.  

In order to better secure their position if a war ignited, the British increased their strength in Canada. The British press noted that "the arrangements for increasing the force in Canada are not yet complete...but will soon be settled." Throughout the turbulent times of the Trent Affair, the Canadian enforcements steadily increased and "strong reinforcements of field artillery (were) dispatched." Both the London Times and the Post "call for energetic military preparations in Canada."  

In another report from the London Times, the paper declared that if the United States did not comply with the British demands for reparations the following would happen:

(1) The destruction of the Southern blockade  
(2) Complete blockade of the Northern ports, and  
(3) The recognition of the Southern Confederacy by France and England.  

The French were also quite astonished by the actions of Charles Wilkes. Edouard Thouvenel, pro-British minister of foreign affairs of France, stated that the Trent Affair "has produced in France, if not the same feeling as in England, at least a sensation of extreme astonishment...The responsibility," Thouvenel added, "seems to fall exclusively upon the commander [Wilkes] of the San Jacinto." 

In general, many French newspapers agreed with England's position that the United States breached international law based on the argument of neutrality. America violated the neutrality clause when Wilkes seized the Trent. The Paris Patrie, as quoted in The New York Times, even supported the British sending armaments to Canada:

The American government had no right to arrest the Southern Commissioners while on a British mail-steamer, and asserts that the British Government should be immediately prepared to send reinforcements to Canada.  

"The unanimity of the French press, in condemning the acts of Wilkes, was referred to, but it made clear that the interests and traditions of France traced for it the role of neutrality." The New York Times concluded that the "French journals agree with England that the arrest was an illegal act."  

In an effort to smooth over relations between the American, British, and French governments, U.S. General Winfield Scott, then touring Europe, issued a statement to the French papers that "there is no truth in the report that the Cabinet had ordered a seizure of the Southern commissioners, even under the protection of a neutral flag." Scott, who had headed U.S. armies in Washington until November 1861,
stated that Wilkes had acted on his own when he seized the Confederate envoys.

Other countries' newspapers expressed viewpoints on the Trent Affair. According to the German press, the Augsburg Gazette stated that the Southern envoys traveled upon a neutral British vessel and "could not lawfully be seized by the North." Spanish opinion reflected those of both Germany and France. The Diario de la Marina viewed the arrest of Mason and Slidell as "decidedly hostile... and was made in a neutral sea." The Diario supported its views by quoting Kent's Commentaries, a legal reference guide, "to the effect that: by a fiction of law vessels are considered part of the territories of the nation to which they belong." The Diario further substantiated its beliefs of the breach of maritime law:

The seizure of Mason and Slidell was an unjustifiable outrage, and hopes that the American Government will hasten to disavow the act, and place the prisoners on British soil as soon as possible.

The Trent Affair also impacted regional opinions. Just as the English and other Europeans concluded that Wilkes' actions were illegal, the South agreed that "Captain Wilkes had no right to take the contraband person from aboard, and release the prize." As a result of the question of international breach and the illegal boarding of the Trent, many Confederates were hoping for retaliation by England. The Washington Star reported that "the arrest of Mason and Slidell had caused great excitement among the rebels at Norfolk, with some rejoicing at the prospect of retaliation by England." "Now (England's) interest united with the vindication of her national honor...all insults...shall be avenged."

The South envisioned a potential war between the North and England which would have benefited the South economically as well as politically. England depended on cotton for its mills in Liverpool and Manchester. It was "the cotton of the South (that) kept the peace between the two nations (United States and England originally)," reminded the Richmond Daily Whig. Some English newspapers also affirmed how the British would benefit. "By breaking up the blockade of the Southern ports, at once set free our industry from the anxiety of a cotton famine...we shall open our trade to eight million in the Confederate States who desire nothing better than to be our customers."

The North did not escape the economic effects of the Trent Affair. "War panic in the world money markets and the onset of a crisis in the northern shipping industry alarmed commercial interests." Overseas agents refused to ship goods in American vessels. As a result, the price of imports greatly increased. Bankers also worried that the Trent Affair would sabotage efforts to raise loans for the Civil War.

Both the American and British stock markets were affected. The markets resembled a roller coaster, with The Washington Star noting that "the stock market was more heavy and unsettled than ever." The New York Times acknowledged that the Trent Affair "produced an undesirable effect." In England, the London Times reported that "this has been among the most painful days known to the present generation – rendered by the American news."

The announcement that the Law Officers of the Crown have given an opinion that the proceedings of the Captain of the American frigate San Jacinto were illegal caused Consols [sic] to open this morning at a further fall of three-quarters per cent.
Captain Charles Wilkes also asserted his opinions on the Trent Affair. “Since the government of Great Britain, France, and Spain issued proclamations that Confederates were viewed as belligerents,” Wilkes commented, “I felt no hesitation to board.” Wilkes knew he could capture written dispatches. He rationalized capturing the Confederate envoys by stating that they were the “embodiment of” the dispatches, and thus could be captured. Wilkes also believed that “he was legally justified in ridding her (Trent) of rebel envoys.” Wilkes even tried to preempt any dispute that the capture of the Rebel envoys might cause by “arming himself with written statements of his own subordinates” to detail the ordeal.

Wilkes knew that the captain of the Trent was aware of his actions because the British Consul-General at Havana, M. Crawford, had introduced Mason and Slidell to Wilkes “as ministers of Confederate States on the way to England and France,” and therefore negated their neutrality. Furthermore, Wilkes explained in his autobiography that the “British demands should have been ignored....The British granted belligerent rights and therefore were subject to capture.”

The reaction of the American government reflected the popular reaction expressed in U.S. newspapers. The Secretary of the Navy’s applause for Wilkes was followed by the praise of the United States House of Representatives. In an excerpt from proceedings of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Clement Vallandigham, congressman of Ohio, praised Wilkes for his duties. When addressing the Foreign Affairs Committee, Vallandigham even criticized the government for the eventual release of the Confederate envoys to the British.

For six weeks, [the prisoners] were held in close custody as traitors, in a fortress of the United States, by order of the Secretary of State, and with the approval and applause of the Press, of the public men, of the Navy Department, of this House, and of the people of the United States, with a full knowledge of the manner and all the circumstances of their capture, and yet in six days after the imperious and peremptory demand of Great Britain, they were abjectly surrendered upon the mere rumor even of the approach of a hostile fleet, and thus for the first time in our national history have we strutted insolently into a quarrel without right, and then barely crept out of it without honor, and thus for the first time has the American Eagle been made to cower before the British Lion.

When the British learned that the House of Representatives approved of the actions of Wilkes, they were offended. “The House of Representatives has deliberately offered a vote of thanks to the pirate Wilkes. ...The House of Representatives express the sentiments of those who are permitted to engross the political power.”

President Lincoln insisted that Wilkes’ actions were appropriate and to be commended. With the government’s approval of the capture, Wilkes noted that one of the main reasons that the United States did not stand its ground on the Trent Affair was due to the Secretary of State Seward. “Seward was a coward and unfit for the position,” argued Wilkes.

In addition, other figures and dignitaries supported the capture of the Trent and the actions of Captain Wilkes. Michele Costi of Venice, an eminent publicist and authority in international law during the nineteenth century agreed with Wilkes. “Wilkes,” stated Costi, “was in the right. He was acting in the strictest course of duty.”
Just as American government officials supported Wilkes, the British government supported the British response to the Trent Affair. Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador to the United States, upheld Britain's claim of neutrality. Lyons defended Britain's option to communicate with the Confederate government through consuls. The North, on the other hand, was not fond of Lyons, due the fact that he was interested in communicating with the South and that he refused to have Canada sell the Union arms.

During the midst of the Trent Affair, the American government conceded that a resolution had to be formulated or war was imminent. Upon much deliberation, President Lincoln and the United States government delivered an apology and released the Confederate envoys to British authorities. Although the American government gave in to the demands of the British, it did maintain, however, that Wilkes had acted legally, and "justified the capture of neutral vessels that carried enemy agents." The New York Times reported the release of the captured Rebels with mixed emotions. Although editors believed that Wilkes was correct, they were also grateful that the rumors of war with England subsided. "How great was the fear of war and how much it is relieved," reported The New York Times. The newspaper even accepted some responsibility in hyping the expectations of war with England. In the same article of The New York Times, the paper acknowledged that Britain must feel some gratitude in "escaping from what a reckless Press-represented as an inevitable war. When the news of the actual surrender of Mason and Slidell reaches England, we may expect to witness an outburst of delight.

Indeed, the British reacted enthusiastically upon hearing about the status of their demands. When England received word that the United States delivered an apology and released the Confederate envoys to British authorities, the London Times replied that there was "a restoration of the tarnished luster of the British Crown." In the end, the British agreed that "the act of the American government was graceful..." This was partially due to Secretary of State Seward's proposal to the Cabinet and then to the British. The resolution "brought peace, saved northern face, and won political successes." Overall, the reparations of the Trent Affair allowed the Civil War to continue. If the Americans had not conceded to the British demands or if Britain had not accepted the American apology, history might have been different. As stated by George, Duke of Cambridge, the British military commander and cousin of Queen Victoria, "It will be a valuable lesson to the Americans, and to the world at large, and will prove to all what England can and will do, when the necessity for doing so arises."
Endnotes


4 Ibid.

5 “Operations of the Cruisers,” p. 132.


7 “The Mason and Slidell Affair.”


13 “The Mason and Slidell Affair.”


15 “Wilkes on Mason and Slidell,” p. 2.

16 “The Mason and Slidell Affair.”


18 “The Mason and Slidell Affair.”


21 Ibid.


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37 Crook, pp. 47-48.

38 “Operations of the Cruisers,” p. 159.

39 Ibid. p. 171.


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The Tuskegee Airmen and the Black Press: How They Proved That Blacks Could be Successful Fighter Pilots During World War

Michael Oby

The Tuskegee Airmen earned a significant place in American history as the 99th Fighter Squadron. The African-American group of flyers was formed during World War II as a segregated experimental Air Corp pursuit unit. It was the job of pursuit squadrons to protect slow flying bombers during combat missions. Even after these black pilots were expertly trained, they were allowed to go into combat only after civil rights leaders, with the support of the black press, put pressure on the government. One of the Airmen, Lt. Col. Charles Dryden, recalled that “initially the government did not believe that black men had the mental capacity to be fighter pilots.”

These African-American soldiers proved to be doubly courageous as they faced not only a battle overseas, but also a battle against racism in America. In early 1943, this group of well-trained flyers was excluded from combat although the country was engaged in the war. At the very top of the corps, the commanding general, Henry “Hap” Arnold, expressed the view that “it would take too long to train pilots and ground crews to be of any use in the war.” Col. Dryden, one of the first Airmen who was affected, remembered that “Arnold originally wanted to send them to the Caribbean, even though the war was raging in Europe. Finally because of the pressure from the black press and black leaders, they were sent to North Africa.”

Despite having to face tremendous adversity, the Tuskegee Airmen proved to be a formidable force. Nine hundred ninety-six of the Airmen won their wings as trained pilots, and another
1,000 graduated from the program with various support skills. When they were finally allowed to fight, some 450 pilots flew combat missions in North Africa and Europe. The segregated black 332nd Fight Group was formed, which comprised four fighter squadrons, the 99th, the 100th, 301st, and 302nd. Their fighter planes escorted bombers en route to Europe. In 1,578 missions and 15,552 sorties they never lost a bomber. They destroyed or damaged 409 enemy planes. In Trieste harbor they actually sank a German destroyer, a feat which had never been accomplished simply by machine-gun fire. By the war’s end, the Fighter Group had lost 66 men, and had been awarded numerous medals.

By the early 1940s, Tuskegee Institute, founded in 1881, had become a famous institution of higher learning. The school that had been so closely associated with Booker T. Washington was well known in the black community and in mainstream America. When the site was chosen not only as the training center for the first all-black pursuit squadron but also for a Civil Elementary Flying School, it was front-page news in the *Atlanta Daily World.*

As the young cadets became a part of the “experiment” at Tuskegee, black newspapers treated it as big news. These soldiers became famous in their hometowns as the black press regarded them as celebrities. Long before they even knew if they would go into combat, they were treated as heroes just for being accepted into the flying school.

Most black newspapers covered the story from the initial Defense Department announcement establishing an all-black flying school. One paper, the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* actually sent a correspondent-photographer, Tom Young Sr., to report on black servicemen during the war. He was the son of P.B. Young, the newspaper’s publisher. Black newspapers and individual leaders had fought for several years to have Negro units in the armed forces. At a time in American history when racism did not allow African-Americans to serve in such capacities, even the possibility of an all-black flying school was front-page news in the African-American press.

When the Airmen finally went into combat, Tom Young was with them. He played a key role for the Airmen who needed him to tell their story. There were no white correspondents with the Airmen and few white publications wrote about them. Young wrote stories about their victories and tragedies. His human-interest stories kept African-Americans at home up to date.

Young gained a special place in history along side the Tuskegee Airmen. During his time there, many of his stories were listed as being from “Somewhere in North Africa.” He described his role in the war in one feature as “being a witness to the final destruction of Axis forces and reporting the parts played by Negro soldiers.” His writing style was personable as he attempted to paint a brilliant picture for African-Americans at home. Excerpts like the following one in June 1943 read more like a personal journal than war correspondence.

Since my last communication I have seen German and Italian prisoners until my eyes were tired looking at them. There were thousands upon thousands. I must have seen most of those captured. I talked to some of them—those who could speak English—and they pretended to be a cocky lot, but I think that underneath their feigned bravado was real happiness at being captured.

Young’s photography is almost as famous as his war correspondence. As he traveled with the Airmen, he captured much of their history in photographs. Most of the pictures that accompanied Young’s articles in the *Norfolk Journal and...*
that the black press in America played an important role as the Tuskegee Airmen made history. Historian Lee Finkle noted that, “The wartime position of the black press was determined by the belief among black editors and leaders that blacks would have to serve as equals in the armed forces in order to gain eventual equality” in America. In the eyes of the black press, the success of the Airmen could help in attaining that equality.

While the Airmen were important to the black press, the African-American newspapers boosted the morale of the Airmen. Newspapers such as the Norfolk Journal and Guide, the Atlanta Daily World, the Pittsburgh Courier and the Chicago Defender reported not only the triumphs, but also the challenges and tragedies of the unit. The Airmen referred to these publications as their “Black Dispatch” newspapers.10

The Tuskegee Airmen’s success or failure in the fight against American racism represented a metaphor for the success or failure of the entire black race. As Lt. Col. Dryden recalled, “We could not fail because whites could say, ‘We gave you the opportunity, you sent your best, and you failed.' The Airmen were determined to prove them wrong by being the best that they could be. They were determined to prove that black men could fly airplanes.”11 Dryden stated, “Our success was the success of the entire black race.” 12

Black newspapers lionized the young cadets. According to Dryden, “The Airmen enjoyed the attention they received from the African-American public and the African-American press.”13 Papers like the Chicago Defender featured front-page articles that informed blacks at home about which new pilots graduated from the program.14 Every graduating class was spotlighted and hometown newspapers applauded their heroes as they won their wings.15 Promotions of Airmen were also widely publicized. Almost every issue of these newspapers featured articles about them and their wartime experiences.

The white press largely ignored the Airmen in its coverage of World War II. According to Dryden, Airmen coverage was non-existent in the mainstream white press.16 Leroy Bowman17 and Clayton Lawrence, two other Tuskegee pilots, repeated this sentiment.18 Extensive research in the New York Times and the Atlanta Journal and Constitution proved that their assessments were correct for these newspapers. Among magazines, research revealed three articles in mainstream publications: Life magazine carried two articles and Time magazine featured one.

The Time magazine coverage of the Airmen was not favorable. According to Bowman, “the white press printed what was given to them by people who did not want African-Americans in the Air Corps.”19 One vocal white opponent of the 99th Fighter Squadron was the commander of the 33rd Fighter Squadron, Colonel William Momyer. Momyer was particularly vocal about the lack of victories scored by the 99th, making unfair comparisons to his more successful squadron. He suggested that the squadron lacked air discipline and the ability to work as a team or respond aggressively when threatened by enemy fire. Momyer omitted the fact that at the time of his assessment of the 99th, they were not a part of the invasion force but were working in support roles several hundreds of miles from the battle front.

Additionally, members of the 99th had reported incidents when Momyer excluded them from briefing sessions for missions they were expected to fly with the 33rd. Dryden remembered, “The only thing Momyer said was ya’ll boys keep up and we did, outshining his squad.”20 This obvious prejudicial tactic held life-threatening implications for the 99th as they were flying missions uninformed of battle
strategies. Momyer's criticism was published in the *Time* magazine article entitled "Experiment Proved?" published on September 20, 1943. The article suggested that the top air command was not altogether satisfied with the 99th's performance. It even reported that there was a plan to attach the squadron to the Coastal Air Command. The following passage provides an example of negative attitudes toward the Tuskegee Airmen:

In any case, the question of the 99th is only a single facet of one of the Army's biggest headaches: how to train and use Negro troops. No theatre commander wants them in considerable numbers; the high command has trouble finding combat jobs for them.

The article suggested a solution: keep blacks laboring on the ground.

There is no lack of work to be done by Negroes as labor and engineering troops—the Army's dirty work. But the American spirit of fair play, which occasionally devotes some attention to Negro problems, would be offended by a policy of confining Negroes to such duty and the Negro press has campaigned against it.

*Time* magazine printed not only the opinion of Momyer but also a more favorable one held by West Pointer Benjamin O. Davis Jr., the African-American commander who had led the 99th in Tunisia and Sicily. Davis said, "Negro pilots had made the grade, and training them should no longer be regarded as an experiment."

The Army's publicity force had difficulty attracting attention to the Airmen. Lawrence recalled that, "Even on occasions when public relations officers on base sent press releases about news that involved our pilots to white newspapers like the *New York Times*, very few were printed. The black press was our only means of communication to the community."

Even though the *Life* magazine coverage was not negative, it lacked substance. The first article dated March 23, 1942 reported on the first pilots to get their wings at Tuskegee. The following story dated August 9, 1943, informed *Life* readers that the 93rd "had reached a state of training where it was ready to move out of the country at a moment's notice." Perfectly posed pictorials of the Tuskegee Airmen accompanied both pieces. These articles, though historically important, completely ignored the problems the Tuskegee pilots faced daily.

The black newspapers also carried the burden of bringing the news of tragedy as it struck the Airmen. When Lieutenant Earl Eugene King of Bessemer, Alabama, was killed during a training mission, accounts of the story were carried in several black newspapers. King crashed his P-40 airplane into Martin Lake, 30 miles northwest of the Tuskegee Airfield. The *Norfolk Journal and Guide* ran the story of the crash and covered it until King's body was recovered several days later. The newspaper gave similar prominent coverage when Lieutenant Sidney James Moseley Jr. was killed in a plane crash on May 10, 1943 at the training school. Because Moseley was from Norfolk, the coverage of his death and funeral was extensive. Large photographs of the funeral accompanied the front-page story.

The black press also worked with black leaders to keep pressure on the United States government. These publications printed articles that in no uncertain terms brought attention to racial discrimination at the new Tuskegee Air Base.
In early February 1943, The *Norfolk Journal and Guide* printed a front-page story entitled, "Tuskegee Air Base Hotbed of Race Bias—Cadets Trained Only as Pilots." This article and others like it highlighted the racist practices at the flying school and the negative effects it had on the morale of the young cadets in training. The unknown writer of the article went on to call the attitudes of Southern white officers intolerant and patronizing. One section of the article brought attention to segregationist Jim Crow signs being placed on toilets and other facilities at the base, and squarely placed the blame on Colonel Frederic von Kimble, the commanding officer of the operation. These practices were against Army regulations of the time.  

Black newspapers printed these articles unceasingly. In the early months of 1943, The *Atlanta Daily World*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* gave them front-page prominence. This pressure may have led to the eventual transfer of Colonel von Kimble to a wing command division in Macon, Georgia. Even though this transfer removed him from direct command of the Air Base to an administrative position, he still wielded considerable influence in the shaping of policies and practices at Tuskegee.  

The black newspapers influenced as well as recorded the pilots’ significant historical progress. According to Bowman, the initiative to get African-Americans into the Army Air Corp was publicized by black newspapers. "Papers such as the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Amsterdam News*, and Baltimore’s *Afro-American* followed the Airmen’s progress from ground level until the war was over. They pressed the politically powerful to get African-Americans into the Corp and to give them the chance that they deserved. They went on to tell the many stories of the ‘Lonely Eagles’ as they occurred."  

The experimental stage of the 99th squadron officially ended in early September 1943 when a German offensive in Italy forced the Allies to retreat. All available personnel, including the Tuskegee pilots, rushed to respond to the German show of offensive power. Because of the urgency, the 99th squadron’s combat inexperience was overlooked.  

The black press did not overlook the success of those initial combat missions. The *Chicago Defender* printed a front-page article hailing the success of the Tuskegee Airmen. The *Norfolk Journal and Guide* went further to print this profound question posed by Commander Davis upon his return to the United States, "If colored and white soldiers can work and fight together on a battle front, why can they not be trained together in this country?"  

The “Black Dispatch” publications provided prominent coverage as the Airmen scored victories. When Captain Charles B. Hall became the first Airman to shoot down an enemy airplane in combat, it was big news in the black press. The *Atlanta Daily World*’s coverage featured a headline which read “99th Pilot Downs Nazi Plane; Praised by the Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight Eisenhower.” The article referred to Hall as “the first Negro Ace of air;” The *Norfolk Journal and Guide* printed the story along with a picture of Hall with General Eisenhower. The *Chicago Defender* featured Hall’s personal description of the dogfight in its front-page coverage of the victory.  

As the 99th faced misfortune in combat with the loss of two planes in a battle over Sicily, the *Chicago Defender* headlined the story on its front page. Even in the face of tragedy, the article stressed the positive:  

Although outnumbered, the Negro flyers got credit for positively bagging one Nazi, and probably damaging
and destroying two others. 37

Black newspapers also covered the disappointments of the Tuskegee Airmen. When Dryden was court-martialed for “buzzing” or flying very low at Waterboro Army Base in South Carolina, it was headline news in the black press. The Baltimore Afro-American printed the story along with a photograph of Dryden on its front page. 38

Tom Young followed the fliers away from the war zone as well. African-American readers were delighted as they read Young’s stories about the African-American dancer from Paris, Josephine Baker, entertaining American and British troops at the sultan’s palace in Fez, Morocco. Young’s stories and photographs of the performance and the after party held in her honor were featured in the Norfolk Journal and Guide. 39 Dryden described the beautiful star’s performance as “magnificent and exciting.” 40

As time passed, attitudes about the black pilots slowly began to change. While attending a Chicago social event, the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, a long-time advocate of integration of the armed forces, made remarks that showed the direction toward which the country was headed. When a Chicago Defender reporter asked her if Negroes should be admitted to the air corps without segregation, she responded, “I think that Negroes should be admitted anywhere any other Americans are admitted.” When asked if the Negro’s insistence for democratic rights impede the war effort, she answered with an emphatic “No.” 41

Mrs. Roosevelt had first-hand knowledge that blacks could fly airplanes. She had traveled to Tuskegee long before the “experiment” to visit a polio treatment center there. On her visit, Mrs. Roosevelt had witnessed blacks flying airplanes in the skies over Tuskegee. Having been led to believe that “Negroes could not fly,” Mrs. Roosevelt questioned what she saw. What she did see was Charles Anderson, also known as the “granddaddy of black aviation” and other blacks flying small airplanes. Anderson had actually taught himself to fly in 1926 when no white instructor would teach him. He had also taught flying to the other blacks whom the First Lady had observed. Mrs. Roosevelt actually flew with Anderson against the advice of her secret service entourage. Upon her return to Washington, Mrs. Roosevelt urged the president to remove the barriers against Negroes in the Army Air Corps. 42 This encounter may have led to the formation of the Tuskegee Flying School. 43

The Tuskegee Airmen earned an elevated place in American history. With the staunch support of the African-American press, they went from being a race-based experiment to a highly respected group of fighter pilots. Despite having to face racism, they proved that African-Americans could perform efficiently in the Army Air Corps.

Tom Young Sr. heroically earned a special historical place alongside the Airmen. If “Young had not attached himself to the black soldiers of World War II,” 44 many of the Airmen’s stories would have been lost forever. These stories are now forever a part of American history. He also deserves credit for his amazing photographs of the Tuskegee Airmen.

Ultimately, the success of the Tuskegee Airmen was a contributory factor in President Harry Truman’s signing of Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948, which mandated the desegregation of the U.S. armed forces. 45 Their triumphs were the triumphs not only of a race but also of a nation.
Endnotes

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