

Historiography

in Mass Communication



Volume 2 (2016). Number 6

Historiography in Mass Communication

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Contents

From the Editor: "The Curious Case of JMC History Textbooks"	page 1
Debra van Tuyll, "In the New Millennium: Historiography and the Press of the Old South, Part II"	page 7
Bernell E. Tripp, "Stepping Outside the Margins: Seeking African-American Women's Voices in Media History"	page 25
Kobre Award Interview: Hazel Dicken-Garcia	page 34
Book Award Interview: Robert Miraldi	page 45

After you download the pdf of this issue, you can go directly to an article by clicking on its title.

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The Curious Case of JMC History Textbooks

By Wm. David Sloan ©



Sloan

A strange thing has happened with JMC history textbooks over the last several years. While the number of schools offering JMC history courses has declined, the number of textbooks has increased.

To try to find a niche for their books, authors and publishers have tried a variety of approaches. We have textbooks that use primary sources, and others that rely completely on secondary sources.

We have some that are chronological in structure, and others that include only topical essays. A few that are thick, and others that are thin. Some written by historians, and a few by dabbling Jacks-of-all-trades.

Add to that the fact that the college textbook market is undergoing significant changes, and the case becomes almost chaotic. In fact, it is not unlikely that textbooks as they have existed for more than a century will have disappeared within a decade.

The reason for the increase in the number of textbook titles is mainly that computer technology and digital printing have made it easier to publish books than ever before. Of course, the fact that a book can be produced cheaply does not mean that anyone will buy it. The only

Wm. David Sloan, a professor emeritus from the University of Alabama, is the author/ editor of a number of books and is a recipient of the American Journalism Historians Association's Kobre Award for lifetime achievement.

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people who have adopted some textbooks are their authors.

At the same time that we've seen a proliferation of titles, the number of copies that publishers sell is going down. Used books in campus stores, Internet used sales, rental copies — all these factors have taken a huge bite out of the publishers' market. So declining sales of new copies of textbooks, especially in markets that are small, such as JMC history, make publishing books a hit-and-miss affair.

Used and rental copies have also been greatly responsible for the spiraling costs of books, and higher costs have affected textbook use. In part because of costs, some course instructors are abandoning textbooks and creating their own course packets. A few of our better historians were doing that years ago. Now, though, even young instructors who have only dabbled in history are not timid about jerry-rigging packets. The paradoxical situation thus is that some of the instructors who are least qualified are the ones who are creating packets.

Good historians know that teaching history is not simple and that it is difficult to put together a course packet of material that does an adequate job. In general history, for example, where nearly every teacher is trained in history, one rarely finds course packets substituting for textbooks. In JMC history, on the other hand, the old maxim that "Ignorance is bliss" means that quite a number of dabbling teachers are happy in their work.

The situation makes especially pertinent the question of what we should expect in JMC history textbooks (and course packets, for that matter). — *Here I must give a disclaimer: I've written and edited several textbooks.* What I have to say about textbook expectations reflects my approach to them.

My personal philosophy is that textbooks must be true to history and to the historian's craft. Fortunately — and I hope for that reason — a few of mine have done tolerably well. To answer the question about what textbooks should do, though, let's look at it from the perspective

of students.

We historians automatically assume that the study of history is valuable. If, however, students are to gain the full value of studying history, it must be studied properly. Let's make a brief review of how good historians do their job — and of how students are affected by how well their textbook authors do it.

Imagine that one wishes to come to the best understanding possible of how, for example, journalists in a former time approached their profession. What would be the best way to gain such an understanding? Let's draw an analogy.

Imagine that, rather than wanting to understand the past, students wanted to come to a full knowledge of a place they have never been, a far country. The best way to do that would be to go there and spend as much time as one needed getting to know the country and its people. If one were unable to travel there, the next best thing would be to talk by phone to the people, read emails or letters from them, watch television programs they have produced about themselves, read their magazines and newspapers and blogs, and examine any other material or records they have created. Such items are known, in historical terminology, as primary sources.

If we wanted to understand the past in its truest sense, we would do the same thing. Obviously, we couldn't physically travel to the past — but we could examine the records that people have left. We could attempt to learn all that is possible to know about life at a specific time and place in the past. We could try to become so thoroughly familiar with them that we might have the sense that we had actually lived then and there. If one did that, s/he would be a historian.

Let's take another look at the study of history but from a different perspective. Assume that over a semester the demands of the classes students are taking absorb all their time and they are not be able to do the work of a career historian — yet in those circumstances their

teacher still would want them to gain a true understanding of the past. If students cannot do the work of the historian, the next best thing is to have a good historian doing the work and then sharing it with them.

We would expect the textbook author to perform according to certain fundamental principles. We would want our author to be free of ideological and other bias. We would expect that s/he have a true appreciation of the people of the past and be interested in them on their own terms. We would not want the author, for example, evaluating journalists of 1800 according to rules of journalistic conduct that only developed later — rules that may be appropriate for today but that did not exist two centuries ago. (That error sometimes shows up in textbooks and is known as present-mindedness.) We also would want our author to be judicious in dealing with historical material and fair-minded in dealing with people. If we could get an author who would do all those things and would be rigorous and thorough besides, we probably would have confidence in what s/he told students, for good history must reflect the fundamental fairness of the historian who created it.

That being the case, we still can ask, What processes should we expect textbook authors to undertake when producing an account of the past?

In its simplest form, the question can be answered in four words: (1) understanding, (2) sources, (3) extrapolation, and (4) explanation.

First, a historian (and, by extension, a textbook author) must gain a basic understanding of the subject at hand from what others have said about it or from materials available about it. In most cases, this learning stage involves a consideration of historiography.

Second, an adequate selection of pertinent sources relating to the subject must be located, collected, and evaluated. This phase of the historical process involves gaining an appreciation of and an ability to analyze the various types of sources that are applicable to the inquiry.

Third, meaning must be extrapolated from those sources. Extrapo-

The Curious Case of JMC History Textbooks

lation might involve probes into contextual matters or an unraveling of details of content. Historians — and again, by extension, textbook authors — might also use a variety of interpretations or theoretical perspectives to see if, without bending the facts, their own account can be illuminated by them.

Finally, historians must explain the material they have collected and examined. They perform this task by addressing certain propositions — causation, generalization, interpretation, and the establishing of significance. In this matter, history is an ongoing process. In studying history, it is well to bear in mind the words of the renowned historian Frederick Jackson Turner, who once explained: “Each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time.... History ... is ever becoming — never completed.” History is a continuing interpretative effort to understand oneself and society.

Those processes necessarily mean that it is not easy to write a good JMC history textbook. Anyone who tries to write a textbook, though, should adhere to them. And teachers should expect no less.

Good textbooks are indispensable to the health of an academic area. At one time in JMC historiography, textbooks were so dominant that other books played only a small role in shaping the field. Today it is still a common practice for authors of journal articles and conference research papers to cite textbooks, and most students gain most of their knowledge of JMC history from textbooks. But today the field has more historians — and more good ones — than it has ever had at any other time. They contribute to the contours of the field as much as textbooks do. In the first essay in this issue of our journal, one can get a sense of just how much vitality they are bringing to JMC historiography. The essay is the second part of Debbie van Tuyll’s historiography of works about the southern press during the Antebellum and Civil War eras. In the first part, which you can find in Volume 2 #5 of our journal, she

wrote about historians of the 20th century. In the present essay, she assesses the work of historians in the last twenty years. As she points out, there have never been so many historians at one time writing about the Antebellum and Civil War press. And it bears adding that those historians bring a level of sophistication to their work that bodes well for the health of our field. One of the historians who has been interested in the Antebellum press is Bernell Tripp. For two decades she has been a leading scholar in the study of the African-American press of the 19th century. She contributes the second essay in this issue. In it she provides personal reflections about her work in researching the lives of African-American women. Prof. Tripp is one the most reflective historians in our field — and even though she writes with a great deal of modesty, she brings unsurpassed sophistication to the study of history. Finally, for our Q&As, we have interviews with Kobre Award winner Hazel Dicken-Garcia and book award author Robert Miraldi. As you read them, it will be clear that, even as textbooks play a smaller role, the study of JMC history is in good hands.

[CLICK HERE
TO RETURN
TO TABLE OF
CONTENTS](#)

In the New Millennium: Historiography and the Press of the Old South, Part II

By Debra van Tuyll ©



van Tuyll

EDITOR'S NOTE: This historiographical essay is the second in a two-part series. We published the first part in the July issue of this journal (Volume 2, Number 5).

About twenty years ago, a confluence of events occurred that changed the course of Civil War-era journalism history for the foreseeable future.

In Gainesville, Florida, Ph.D. student Ford Risley toiled under Les Smith to understand the role of Georgia newspapers during the “late unpleasantness,” as some unreconstructed Southerners still refer to the Civil War.¹ Risley was among the first of a cohort of new scholars to take an interest in Civil War-era journalism, and the others soon would follow.

In New York City, David Mindich was writing a dissertation, supervised by Mitchell Stephens, on the evolution of journalistic objectivity and argued that the Civil War dispatches of Lincoln’s Secretary of War Edward Stanton were the genesis of the inverted pyramid style of journalistic writing.²

A few years later, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, under the direction of Gene Wiggins, doctoral student Nancy McKenzie Dupont pored over

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Mississippi newspapers from the secession crisis that wracked that state and its politicians in early 1861.³

In Gainesville, Florida, another doctoral student, David Bulla, worked with Bernell Tripp to untangle the seemingly contradictory experience of the Copperhead press in “the great emancipator’s” administration. Greg Borchard, also at Florida and mentored by William McKeen, looked at the political machinations of Horace Greeley, Thurlow Weed, and William H. Seward, the latter of whom would become Abraham Lincoln’s secretary of state.⁴

And in Columbia, South Carolina, while debate raged over the Confederate flag that flew atop the Statehouse dome, just down the street at the USC journalism school, another graduate student slogged her way through a 504-page structural-functional history of the Confederate press. She was working for Ron Farrar.⁵

More recently, Dianne Bragg and Erika Pribanic-Smith have continued the scholarly interest in the Civil War-era press, completing dissertations at the University of Alabama. Both looked at the role of newspapers in bringing about the Civil War, though Pribanic-Smith went all the way back to the Nullification Crisis and South Carolina’s newspapers, while Bragg looked at how newspapers across the country covered the most impactful sectional issues to arise throughout the Antebellum period.⁶

And, across the years from the late 1990s to today, these scholars, and others, have all met up annually at the most famous crossroads in the South — metaphorical as well as literal: Chattanooga, Tennessee. They met there to attend the annual Symposium on the 19th Century Press, Civil War, and Free Expression, a conference that began just as the first of the cohort were entering graduate school. The conference was the brainchild of David B. Sachsman, West Chair of Excellence at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, who had been tasked with stimulating research productivity among the school’s journalism facul-

ty. Having been the military crossroads of the western theater, and still the crossroads where important Southern travel routes transect, Chattanooga was a likely spot for such a conference — or, at least a logical one, given the city’s Civil War-era military and journalism history. After all, the feistiest paper published outside of Charleston, *The Rebel*, had been founded and published in Chattanooga before invading Union armies forced it to flee to Atlanta.⁷

In all likelihood, there had never before, and probably never will be again, such a perfect scholarly storm: so many graduate students working independently yet on linked topics; a university and an endowed chair willing to offer the intellectual and financial resources necessary to build scholarship in a field; and support in terms of presentation and publication opportunities from professional organizations such as the American Journalism Historians Association for a topic that, given the events of the times, was something of a hot potato. Because of the flag debate in South Carolina, studies of anything Confederate were likely to bring raised eyebrows and occasional scathing reviews.

Mentors beyond dissertation directors were also an important component of this perfect storm. David Copeland, then a young, up-and-coming faculty member at Emory and Henry (later an endowed chair at Elon), was an early AJHA leader in stimulating publishing in this area. Copeland in the late 1990s headed the AJHA “non-20th century” historians committee — so called because only a handful of members worked outside the 20th century and so banded together into a single interest small group. At the time, he was working on a series of primary document collections for Greenwood Press, and that series spawned a collection of Civil War newspaper articles by Risley as well as an impressive series of eight volumes of American war reporting, one of which was devoted to the Civil War.⁸

This is not to claim that Civil War journalism history scholarship began in the 1990s. Certainly scholarship existed in the field prior to

the late 1990s, and new scholars will find their way to it in the future. Some, such as Mary Cronin of New Mexico State University, were among what might be referred to as the second wave of journalism historians to choose to till in the field of Civil War journalism history.

And just as certainly, Risley, Borchard, Bulla, Dupont, and I were not the only journalism history graduate students to till that field in the late 1990s. The scholars I've singled out are included primarily because they have been the shapers of the field in the last 20 years, and they have taken the history of the Civil War-era press in directions it had not gone previously.

In this article, I will review the book-length works of these most recent scholars of Civil War-era journalism. The reason I am only looking at books is that scholarship in the field exploded from the late 1990s forward. Journal articles appeared by the dozens, but, for the first time, so did books. To try to cover both would be unwieldy. Consequently, this article will primarily consider books — with the mention of an occasional important journal article — done from the late 1990s forward.

First, though, it is necessary to acknowledge that the contemporary scholarship is grounded in the work of earlier scholars who dug into the topic in the days before online databases made access to newspapers and archival sources available at the push of a button. These scholars included J. Cutler Andrews, author of the 1955 classic, *The North Reports the Civil War*, which he followed up in 1970 with *The South Reports the Civil War*. These two books so clearly lay out the important events, innovations, and people that no new project can — or should — begin without first reading through them.⁹ For those scholars who have worked in the area of causes of the Civil War, Donald Reynolds' *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* would be the equivalent starting point, just as for historians of journalistic practice Emmet Crozier's *Yankee Reporters, 1861-1865* would be invaluable.¹⁰

Contemporary research on the Civil War press falls into the same categories as the earlier scholarship — reporting and journalistic practices; effects of the press on the war and vice versa; journalist and newspaper biographies; censorship and First Amendment issues — with some new additions. For example, over the last 20 years, publications of primary sources have appeared in great numbers. Also, the variety of approaches to interpreting Civil War journalism history has also expanded. A good example would be my own history of the Confederate press, which is written from a structural-functional perspective and thus focuses on where the press fit into the social, economic, and political life of the Confederacy. The growth in collections of primary documents may have been spurred not only because of their value to historians but also because of their appeal to history aficionados, particularly with the recent celebration of the war's sesquicentennial.

Reporting and Journalistic Practices

The best-known works in this area have been more the product of popular history than scholarly work, and many suffer from lack of academic rigor as a result. Probably the most popularly known books in this category are James M. Perry's *A Bohemian Brigade* and Brayton Harris's *Blue and Gray in Black and White*. Perry, a former journalist, and Harris, a former Navy officer-turned-freelance-writer, have each produced creditable popular works, but works that are not nuanced. Both works claim to deal with how the press covered the Civil War, but each focuses almost solely on Union war correspondents and newspapers. The few paragraphs the works devote to the Confederate press are neither insightful nor entirely accurate. Despite their flaws, these works do offer useful information and facts about many of the important Union journalists and the hardships they had to deal with to get their stories and get them into print.¹¹

In that same popular genre, Harry Maihafer's *The General and the Journalists* traces the relationships among General Ulysses Grant, Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*, and Charles Dana, Greeley's newspaper assistant and Lincoln's assistant secretary of war. Maihafer, a West Point graduate and retired Army colonel, has written a well-researched, thematic work that delves into the long-term relationships that connected these three giants before, during, and after the Civil War. The work is particularly helpful for understanding how politics and the press, as well as generalship, influenced the conduct of the war on the Union side.¹²

More scholarly works include those by David Bulla and Ford Risley, both of whom have contributed survey histories of Civil War journalism, both of which do a better job of giving a more balanced vision of the press, its people, and its work during the Civil War. Risley's book, *Civil War Journalism*, published nearly 20 years after he completed his dissertation, is the work of a mature scholar who has had time to amass a complex understanding of his subject matter based on years of study. For this work, Risley examined magazines, the illustrated press, and newspapers to create a compelling integrated history of American journalism during the war and one of the better and more complete survey histories. Bulla works from more of an effects perspective — effects of the press on the war and vice versa, but it still serves as an excellent introduction to the topic of Civil War journalism history.¹³

Effects of the War on the Press and Vice Versa

The first book to come out of the 19th century symposium was, in large measure, the first modern book to deal with the effects of the war on the press and vice versa. It included some of the earliest work by then-graduate students who have gone on to become the most important scholars of the Civil War-era press. David Mindich published a pared-

down version of his *Journalism Monograph* dealing with Stanton and the inverted pyramid style of journalistic writing. Nancy McKenzie Dupont published one of her first articles about Mississippi's pro-secession newspapers and editors in the book. Ford Risley looked specifically at how the war influenced the *Albany (Ga.) Patriot's* efforts to remain in publication and to keep up its spirits and those of its readers, while I examined how two Georgia editors covered Sherman's infamous March to the Sea.¹⁴

The book began with an examination of the question posed at the first Chattanooga conference in 1993: Did the press set the agenda for the war or did the public set the agenda for the press? Kit Rushing addressed the question head-on in a quantitative study. He concluded that in East Tennessee, at least, the press followed rather than led public opinion.¹⁵ The other two sections looked at the influence of the wartime press on different sectors of society, including women and Jews, and different social practices, including press freedom and the rise of pictorial journalism. The third section focused on the press in the aftermath of the war. For a first book that served as the vanguard of this new wave of interest in the Civil War press, the book was a decent effort that covered much relevant scholarly ground and foreshadowed even more important work to come as these scholars and their scholarship matured.¹⁶

One of the more recent books from the 19th century symposium also offers a synthesized view of the wartime press in an anthology that examines the role of the press in secession, journalistic practices (including photography), and how the Union and the Confederate governments dealt with free expression issues. This book is more limited in the topics it covers. Still, there is a sort of power in anthologies because of the multitude of perspectives represented. The varying viewpoints and topics covered blend together to offer valuable insights into press roles.¹⁷

Much of my own work falls into this category in that my research objective has been to apply James Carey's and Benedict Anderson's theories regarding the relationship of the press to society. I've been interested in exploring the role of the Southern press in the creation and failure of Confederate nationalism as well as exploring how an American press coped with being on the front lines of a domestic war. The Northern press, with the exception of the newspaper in Gettysburg, has never experienced a hostile invasion or its home territory becoming a battleground. In my own book, *The Confederate Press in the Crucible of the American Civil War*, my objective was to examine the political, economic, and social roles of the Southern press while also considering how the press was viewed and regulated by its society. I also wanted to refute the arguments made by so many historians that Southern journalists never criticized slavery because of planter hegemony, which, as my book clearly demonstrates, is a bunch of bunk. Confederate journalists did not criticize slavery because they were slave owners, aspired to be slave owners, or were from slave owning families in larger numbers than the general population.¹⁸

Journalistic Biographies

Biographers have not been as prolific in the last 20 years as in earlier times, but still several important and entertaining ones should be mentioned. For example, Carman Cumming's Civil War biography of Charles A. Dunham presents the vastly entertaining story of a New York lawyer who worked as both a spy and a journalist who faked stories, identities, and witnesses for post-war trials and hearings. If nothing else, this is a great read that rekindles the swash-buckling journalist myth.¹⁹

My own contribution in this area was to build a demographic database of every Confederate editor and newspaper editor I could identify as part of my doctoral dissertation. I did similar work on correspon-

dents, but it offers few insights because only a handful of Confederate correspondents had ever been identified — mostly by J. Cutler Andrews for his book *The South Reports the Civil War*. With so few actual names available, too little information is available to offer the same sorts of insights about correspondents that were found regarding owners and editors. That project showed that journalism was a young man's profession, and rarely was it his only profession. Many Confederate editors were professionals — lawyers and physicians — with bachelors' degrees, and many of those also had advanced degrees or the equivalent. Further, a higher proportion of Confederate newsmen owned slaves than the general population, which explains rather succinctly why there are so few criticisms of the peculiar institution in Southern newspapers. One does not criticize a social institution to which one belongs or aspires to belong.²⁰

To address the dearth of information about correspondents, Patricia McNeely of the University of South Carolina, USC retiree Henry Schulte, and I embarked on a massive undertaking — a book that would delve into the lives of those correspondents we could identify as well some we could not. We put together a team of the best historians available and spent the next several years creating a massive tome called *Knights of the Quill*. The name was taken from a story written by a Virginia correspondent, James B. Sener, who referred to himself and his fellow correspondents as knights of the quill.²¹

This work was exhaustively researched. The contributors left few stones unturned — and if they did, McNeely, Schulte, or I followed behind them and looked underneath them. The end result was a book that offered chapter-length biographies of 29 Confederate war correspondents. In some cases, the only materials available were the stories these journalists had written, but even then, they were remarkably revealing about the character and motivations of the individual journalists.

Censorship and First Amendment Issues

Freedom of expression and censorship issues are always hot topics for journalists, academic or practicing. Freedom of the press, after all, is what makes their work possible. This is perhaps one reason so many journalism historians have focused their attention on the regulation of speech and press. As Fred Siebert theorized, there is a much greater likelihood of suppression of speech during times of government instability, which almost guarantees infringements will occur during times of war.

The most recent book to deal with this issue is a more general survey history of press freedom, Mary Lamonica's *An Indispensable Liberty*. Three of the book's chapters deal with freedom of expression during the Civil War. David Bulla, the leading expert on freedom of expression in the North, wrote the chapter that focuses on the suppression of the Copperhead press. My chapter on the Confederate press proposes that the South's heavy emphasis on freedom of expression grew out of Southerners' daily exposure to slavery. The third chapter, co-authored by Nancy McKenzie Dupont, Joseph R. Hayden, and me, details the experiences of Southern journalists who published in Union-occupied areas of the Confederacy. Often, these journalists were Unionists, which made surviving easier. Some, though, refused to give up their Southern sympathies and suffered unspeakable fates — such as being used as a human shield on trains carrying Union troops to the Virginia front. This chapter is based on work we did for our jointly authored book, *Journalism in the Fallen Confederacy*.²²

Book-length treatments of free press issues tend to focus either on generals and their uneasy relations with journalists or on how hated ideas played out in the press. Bulla is probably the best-known authority on freedom of the press in the North. His book *Lincoln's Censor: Milo Hascall and Freedom of the Press in Civil War Indiana*, examines Union

Historiography and the Press of the Old South, Part II

suppression of Democratic newspapers in Indiana. According to Bulla, Hascall's General Order No. 9, in combination with General Order No. 38 from Hascall's commanding general, Ambrose Burnside, treated any speech critical of the government or the war as tantamount to treason. Other works in this vein include John F. Marszalek's *Sherman's Other War: The General and the Civil War Press*, which detailed Sherman's exceedingly poor relations with journalists and his reasons for excluding them from the March to the Sea.²³

Hazel Dicken-Garcia and her then-graduate student Giovanna Dell'Orto took a novel approach and examined how journalists treated "hated ideas." They found that the Civil War was influential in teaching journalists their responsibilities for presenting "hated ideas" to the public and enduring the consequences. Another volume, one of the anthologies to come out of the 19th century symposium, includes a section that deals with free press issues in both the North and the South.²⁴

Sachsman's *A Press Divided* also includes a lengthy section that deals with freedom of expression issues during the war. Bulla and I wrote our requisite North-South pieces for the work, but the book also includes chapters that provide in-depth examinations of how soldier correspondence regarding the 1863 gubernatorial election in Connecticut helped stir up political unrest and violence in an acrimonious campaign that pitted incumbent William Buckingham, a Republican, against Thomas Seymour, a peace Democrat. Soldiers were not permitted to vote, but they made their opinions known by writing letters to the state's newspapers. One of the most interesting essays in the book is Byron Andreasen's piece that examined the unpleasant consequences of comingling religion and politics during the war.²⁵

Collections of Primary Sources

Multitudes of primary source collections have been published in the

last 20 years, and they have included not just American newspapers and journalists but foreign correspondents and publications as well. In addition to the efforts David Copeland has led, Ilana Miller's collection of William Howard Russell's work for the *Times* of London gives valuable insight into how the father of war correspondence framed issues in America for his audience back home in Great Britain. Charles Adams presents a similar work, though it includes views from a multitude of British and European journals that were looking at the Civil War from across the Atlantic. Articles included come from well-known European publications such as *The Economist*, *La Presse*, and *La Iberia*.²⁶

One of the most important works within this genre is Donald Yacovone's collection of articles from George E. Stephens, one of the few black correspondents to cover the Civil War. Stephens, like so many correspondents in the conflict, was actually a soldier, a member of the famed 54th Massachusetts. He survived the assault on Battery Wagner in Charleston, and wrote throughout the war for the *Anglo-African* in New York. Yacovone has arranged this book thematically rather than chronologically, so it is quite easy to delve into Stephens' thinking on issues such as emancipation, military life, and the place of blacks in post-war society.²⁷

Most of the collections of newspaper articles focus on the Northern press, but William B. Style has put together a collection of *Savannah Republican* correspondent Peter W. Alexander's letters written for the several newspapers for which he corresponded. This is an invaluable collection — Alexander was one of only a handful of professional correspondents from the South, and he was easily one of the top two. The *Charleston Courier* referred to him as "the prince of correspondents," and he was, indeed, a gifted writer and an insightful journalist. The problem with this work is that Style gives only the date Alexander wrote his letters but not the name of the publication that ran them or the date when they were published.²⁸

Historiography and the Press of the Old South, Part II

Collections from single newspapers, or across several newspapers, are also common. In 2005, two collections were published, one that focused on how the *New York Times* reported the war and one that included articles from dozens of newspapers. The latter was similar to the Civil War volume in the Copeland series mentioned earlier, the major difference being the lavish use of illustrations in the 2005 volume collected by Andrew S. Coopersmith. Noted Civil War historian James McPherson put together the *New York Times* collection. The major difference in the two works is that Coopersmith makes a stronger attempt to interpret what the articles meant than McPherson, whose work is intended to illustrate coverage rather than analyze it.²⁹

Lincoln and the Press

With the approach of the Civil War sesquicentennial as well as Lincoln's 200th birthday, scholars have created a veritable cottage industry of publishing about Abraham Lincoln and the press. David Bulla and Gregory Borchard have been among the most prolific contemporary writers to take up the Lincoln story. Their most recent offering is Borchard's and Bulla's *Lincoln Mediated: The President and the Press Through Nineteenth Century Media*. In this work, they present Lincoln as a master at press relations who avidly read and used newspapers to accomplish his aims. Harold Holzer, who served as chair of the Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation, reached many of the same conclusions in his study of Lincoln and his press relations. Maihafer's work on Grant, Greeley, and Dana could also fit into this category, for Lincoln's role in working with these men certainly speaks to the president's relationship with the press.³⁰

Borchard has also contributed his own work that focuses on the relationship between Lincoln and Greeley. Borchard's work is more akin to intellectual history, for its focus is on how the two men thought,

and how what each thought influenced the other. This is a unique approach and one that is invaluable, for it brings intellectual history out of the macro and into the micro. David Herbert Donald and Harold Holzer have also contributed a work that blends collected newspaper articles from the *New York Times* with their own commentary to tell the president's story from a contemporary perspective.³¹

Gary L. Bunker took a different approach and moved away from what the press wrote about Lincoln to examine how the illustrated press depicted the president in visuals. Bunker is a bit taken with his subject, and so he is far more critical of those who were critical of Lincoln that might be warranted. Still, the collection of prints he has amassed is valuable in and of itself, for it clearly shows in how press opinion of Lincoln shifted across time.³²

Conclusion

The past 20 years have seen an explosion of scholarship dealing with the Civil War-era press. How much of that was spawned by the approaching sesquicentennial or simply by graduate students looking for under-studied areas or new fields to plow is not entirely clear. I cannot speak for other scholars, but in my case, my interest in Civil War journalism history was entirely unanticipated and spurred by discrepancies between what I read about the Confederate press in secondary sources and what I discovered in the newspapers themselves. Being a journalist at heart, discrepancies demand resolution; it was not something I could just let go.

The number of younger scholars today who are toiling in the field of Civil War journalism history does not seem to be as large as 20 years ago. So whether interest will be sustained is uncertain. New questions press themselves on historians, and those discrepancies must be explored as well. I can easily see young scholars begin drawn to new

fields developing in the history of “new” media now that it is no longer new, or histories of the demise of the daily printed newspaper. The latter topic would provide an important cautionary tale for future journalists that could be useful in rebuilding what used to be.

However, the story of the Civil War press could be useful here as well, particularly the Confederate press. By the end of the Civil War, the Southern press had been decimated. When the war began, somewhere around 1,000 newspapers were being published in the South. About 200 survived. Yet, those 200 pulled themselves together and carried on as best they could. They rebuilt their industry, and they contributed to the rebuilding of their region. Perhaps the next generation of historians should move on to the Reconstruction and study that rebuilding process. Such a project has the potential to be vastly important to the profession in coming years.

NOTES

¹ J. Ford Risley, “Georgia’s Civil War Newspapers: Partisan, Sanguine, Enterprising” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1995).

² David Mindich, “Building the Pyramid: A Cultural History of ‘Objectivity’ in American Journalism, 1832-1894” (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1996).

³ Nancy McKenzie Dupont, “The Gathering Tempest: The Role of Mississippi Newspapers in the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi, 1997).

⁴ David Williams Bulla, “Milo Hascall and the Suppression of Democratic Newspapers in Civil War Indiana” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 2004); Gregory Alan Borchard, “The Firm of Greeley, Weed, and Seward: New York Partisanship and the Press, 1840-1860” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 2003).

⁵ Debra Reddin van Tuyl, “Gray Ladies of the Press: Newspaper Culture in the Old South, 1860-1865” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2000). Others toiled in the field, but their work does not seem to have moved into the mainstream of journalism history. At least, they have not been active in presenting or publishing their work in the usual venues. These would include

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⁶ Erika Pribanic-Smith, "Sowing the Seeds of Disunion: South Carolina's Partisan Newspapers and the Nullification Crisis" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 2010); Dianne M. Bragg, "Causes of the Civil War: A Newspaper Analysis" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama 2013).

⁷ J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 41; Patricia G. McNeely, "Henry Watterson: Reconstructed Rebel With Too Many Causes," in Patricia G. McNeely, Debra Reddin van Tuyll, and Henry S. Schulte, *Knights of the Quill: Confederate Correspondents and Their Civil War Reporting* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2010), 585.

⁸ J. Ford Risley, *The Civil War: Primary Documents on Events from 1860 to 1865* (Greenwood Press, 2004); Amy Reynolds and Debra Reddin van Tuyll, *The Civil War North; The Civil War South* (Greenwood Press, 2005).

⁹ J. Cutler Andrews, *The North Reports the Civil War* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955); J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

¹⁰ Donald Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966); Emmet Crozier, *Yankee Reporters, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

¹¹ James M. Perry, *A Bohemian Brigade: the Civil War Correspondents, Mostly Rough Sometimes Ready* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2000).

¹² Harry J. Maihafer, *The General and the Journalists: Ulysses S. Grant, Horace Greeley, and Charles Dana* (Washington: Brassey's, 1998).

¹³ David Bulla, *Journalism in the Civil War Era* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010); J. Ford Risley, *Civil War Journalism* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012).

¹⁴ David T. Z. Mindich, "Edwin M. Stanton, the Inverted Pyramid, and Information Control," in David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Debra Reddin van Tuyll, eds., *The Civil War and the Press* (New Brunswick: Transaction Pub-

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¹⁵ S. Kittrell Rushing, "Agenda-Setting in Antebellum East Tennessee," in Sachsman, Rushing, and van Tuyll, 245-256; Debra Reddin van Tuyll, 147-160.

¹⁶ David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Debra Reddin van Tuyll, eds., *The Civil War and the Press* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000).

¹⁷ David B. Sachsman, ed., *A Press Divided: Newspaper Coverage of the Civil War* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2014).

¹⁸ Debra Reddin van Tuyll, *The Confederate Press in the Crucible of the American Civil War* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2013).

¹⁹ Carman Cuming, *Devils Game: The Civil War Intrigues of Charles A Dunham* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

²⁰ Van Tuyll, *The Confederate Press in the Crucible of the American Civil War*.

²¹ Patricia G. McNeely, Debra Reddin van Tuyll, and Henry H. Schulte, *Knights of the Quill: Confederate Correspondents and Their Civil War Reporting* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2010).

²² Mary Lamonica, ed., *An Indispensable Liberty: The Fight for Freedom of Expression in the Nineteenth Century* (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 2015); Debra Reddin van Tuyll, Nancy McKenzie Dupont, and Joseph R. Hayden, *Journalism in the Fallen Confederacy* (New York: Palgrave, 2015).

²³ David Bulla, *Lincoln's Censor: Milo Hascall and Freedom of the Press in Civil War Indiana* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008); John F. Marszalek, *Sherman's Other War: The General and the Civil War Press* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1999).

²⁴ David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Roy Morris, Jr., *Words at War: The Civil War and American Journalism* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008); Hazel Dicken-Garcia and Giovanna Dell'Orto, *Hated Ideas and the American Civil War Press* (Spokane: Marquette Books, 2007).

²⁵ David Bulla, "The Suppression of the Mid-Atlantic Copperhead Press," in David B. Sachsman, *A Press Divided* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2014); Debra Reddin van Tuyll, "'We Have Spoken for Public Liberty': The Press, Dissent, and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism," in Sachsman, A

Press Divided, 307-333; Laura Lawfer Orr, "Do Not Place Us Between Two Fires': Connecticut Soldiers, Connecticut Newspapers, and the Gubernatorial Election of 1863," in Sachsman, 293-306; Byron Andreasen, "Copperhead Christians and the Press," in Sachsman, 269-278.

²⁶ Ilana Miller, *Reports from America: William Howard Russell and the Civil War* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2001); Charles Adams, *Slavery, Secession and Civil War: Views from the United Kingdom and Europe* (Lanham, Md.: Scare Crow Press, 2007).

²⁷ Donald Yacovone, *Voice of Thunder: The Civil War Letters of George E. Stephens* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

²⁸ William B. Styple, ed., *Writing and Fighting the Confederate War: The Letters of Peter Wellington Alexander* (Keamy, N. J.: Belle Grove Publishing, 2002).

²⁹ Andrew S. Coopersmith, *Fighting Words: An Illustrated History of Newspaper Accounts of the Civil War* (New York: The New Press, 2004); James M. McPherson, *The Most Fearful Ordeal: Original Coverage of the Civil War by Writers and Reporters of the New York Times* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004).

³⁰ Gregory A. Borchard and David W. Bulla, *Lincoln Mediated: The President and the Press Through Nineteenth Century Media* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2015); Harold Holzer, *Lincoln and the Power of the Press: The War for Public Opinion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014); Henry J. Maihafer, *War of Words: Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War Press* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2001).

³¹ Gregory A. Borchard, *Abraham Lincoln and Horace Greeley* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011); David Herbert Donald and Harold Holzer, *Lincoln in the Times: The Life of Abraham Lincoln as Reported in the New York Times* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005).

³² Gary L. Bunker, *From Rail Splitter to Icon: Lincoln's Image in Illustrated Periodicals, 1860-1865* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2001).

[CLICK HERE
TO RETURN
TO TABLE OF
CONTENTS](#)

Stepping Outside the Margins: Seeking African-American Women's Voices in Media History

By Bernell E. Tripp ©



Tripp

“Do you have any idea who this woman is?” I stared blankly at the words on the letter, as well as at the accompanying image in my hand. I was a lowly doctoral student halfway into the data-collecting stage of my dissertation. What did I know? I wasn’t a “real” historian! So, I did what any self-respecting graduate student would do in that situation — I panicked! The woman’s delicate features looked vaguely familiar, but I didn’t have a clue to her identity.

Maybe the letter-writer had provided me with some hints? Re-reading the letter more thoroughly, I discovered more pieces to the puzzle. The man asking the question was a librarian and curator in Ontario, Canada, and he had recently purchased a farm that had belonged to Amelia Shadd Williamson, sister of *Provincial Freeman* publisher Mary Ann Shadd, as well as the paper’s associate editor. The image was part of the collection at his work, and he was curious to know if it might be Amelia or some other female member of the Shadd family. Relieved, I realized that this was not a *pop quiz* on my knowledge of the Shadd family, but merely an invitation to join in the mutual quest for answers

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to the many mysteries still remaining in the study of African-American history.

While momentarily disconcerting, this experience inspired the first of several epiphanies about researching 19th-century African-American women journalists. First, despite being a highly visible presence in American society, African-American women had been virtually invisible to early chroniclers of U.S. history. Second, while the stories of renowned women activists, such as Mary Ann Shadd, are often well-documented, the journalistic accomplishments of lesser-known women remain unrecorded. (At the exact moment of this epiphany, my subconscious mind dredged up the prompting voice of my esteemed dissertation advisor: “What does the research topic add to the current pool of historical knowledge?” The prompts from both occurrences made me feel more confident in my defense of the historical value in the mysteries of this under-researched subject.)

My next two revelations came in the form of additional affirmations of my choice of topic. The third epiphany resulted from further consideration of the content and operating standards of the existing media outlets during the Antebellum period. At previous conferences, many historians had already questioned the validity of research on the 19th-century black press because its content did not mimic that of mainstream newspapers. Countless times during the Q-and-A sessions of my paper presentations as a master’s student, I was put on the spot to explain how I could call the eloquent essays, poetry, and fictionalized prose truly “journalistic writing.” Throughout history, the media have often been touted for their ability to provide a voice for the voiceless, I argued, so, wouldn’t that voice take the form most familiar in the lives of its audience? Antebellum African-American culture was rife with rhythmic, impassioned rhetoric and other outlets of self-expression — from the singsong qualities of religious sermons, to the cadence of childhood games, to the pulsing ebb and flow of compelling poetry.

These items in the pages of black-owned newspapers were reminiscent of similar writing styles in abolitionist papers of the same period. So, a poem detailing the anguish of a slave mother separated from her child was no less worthy of a researcher's time than a speech by abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison or on-site coverage of an antislavery rally or a political campaign speech. Whether African-American correspondent, abolitionist editor, or mainstream reporter, each journalist spoke to his or her readers in words and intonations that would have the most meaning. Were words of personal pain, self-reflection, discrimination, and hope any less newsworthy than James Gordon Bennett's florid details of the crime scene and trial drama of Helen Jewett's murder? "Not to the readers of those stories," I thought, as I answered my own question, so who was I (or any media history researcher, for that matter) to discount the words or the validity of any underrepresented group intelligent enough to produce an outlet for expression.

This awareness of purpose led me to my final revelation. How would I bring these stories into the light and these historical characters to life? As I had learned during my previous research ventures for my master's thesis, early literature on the history of the black press was often incomplete, inaccurate, and contradictory. These discrepancies, along with the uncertainties surrounding access to copies of black newspapers, have made a thorough examination of the 19th-century black press difficult. Historically, the journalistic offerings of African Americans had been neglected or underrepresented in archival collections, or at least until the appearance of historian Armistead Pride's 1950 dissertation, "A Register and History of Negro Newspapers in the United States: 1927-50." Pride, an African-American journalist whose career included work with the *Boston Guardian*, *St. Louis Argus*, *Louisville Defender*, *Lamar (Colo.) Daily News*, and the Associated Press, opened historians' eyes to the necessity of the press in reconstructing the lives and moral fiber of past African-American media entities.¹

However, Pride's work did little toward broadening historians' understandings of the contributions of the African-American woman. Moreover, early African-American women journalists were unique in that they occupied an intersection point of two marginalized groups, women and African Americans. Despite this ability to provide a peculiar perspective on American society in areas ranging from politics to academics, experiences of women, at times, continued to remain hidden. For years, women in America had been burdened by a cultural tradition of inferiority and the societal stigma of second-class citizenship. The sense of bondage was twofold for black women in 19th-century America, inferior status based on race as well as on gender. The class position of the women, historian Bettina Aptheker wrote, provided a foundation for a life terrorized by racism and male supremacy.²

Thus, by using the words of the black male to express the history, the struggles, and the feelings of the black community, historians have given the impression that black women did not move out of the shadows and into the societal limelight until the turn of the 20th century. Because of this, many black women were never discovered, and they remain in the shadows of anonymity or obscured by the history and accomplishments of their husbands and fathers. Journalist Fannie Barrier Williams wrote:

The Negro Woman in the United States has had a difficult task in her efforts to earn for herself a chair in the social life of this country. By a sort of national common consent, she has had no place in the Republic of free and independent womanhood of America. Slavery left her in social darkness, and freedom has been slow in leading her into the daylight of the virtues, the refinements and the blessed influences that center in and radiate from the life of American free women. With individual exceptions, the colored woman, as the mother of a distinctive race in America, has been unknown.

Seeking African-American Women's Voices in Media History

She has exacted neither pity nor hope. The domestic routine of her household or cabin duties seemed to be her fixed status. She has been looked upon as a being without romance, incapable of exacting any of the sweet sentiments of femininity, any of the poetry of heart, or any of those delightful votaries that have glorified with song and chivalry the relationships of men and women.³

However, some black women managed to transcribe their ideas and philosophies into words and eventually into print, and many of them completed this task well before the start of the Civil War. They were literate, articulate, and valued members of the community, and they spoke as blacks, as women, and as individuals. Therefore, who better than media historians are more capable at offering insight into the lives of overlooked and forgotten journalists?

However, that dual position of societal restrictions based on race, as well as gender, continues to pose difficulties for the researcher. Success in researching African-American ancestry in the years prior to the Civil War depends largely on the person's free or slave status, especially when researching personal details. For women, there is also the challenge of tracking a professional career. Most pre-Civil War black women journalists did not serve as editors, nor did many of the black women who wrote for journals and newspapers in the 19th century consider themselves journalists. By 1890, only five black females listed their occupations as journalists, while 7,864 considered teaching to be their primary profession.⁴ The early black women journalists were teachers who chose to use their hard-earned education in a variety of ways for the good of the race as a whole, but as journalists, most were virtually obscure, even in their own communities. The instability of the black press during this period also forced black women to seek other vehicles for expression, such as abolitionist newspapers and church bulletins, of which only the largest were usually preserved. Therefore,

the task of discovering the writings of black women journalists is more laborious than attempting to uncover the works of mainstream journalists. Their lives must be documented through records in such areas as education, literature, and oratory.

In the past, the long-standing tradition of American media historians had been to make no mention of black women journalists or to include only Ida Wells-Barnett, editor of the *Memphis Free Speech* in the late 1800s.⁵ Consequently, until the last couple of decades, little information existed that was directly connected with the study of African-American women's journalistic accomplishments. Despite this shortcoming, the complexity of the topic lends itself to scrutiny of several components, in addition to access to their original works. Literature and research strategies that serve to help understand the subject of black women journalists can be divided into three categories: biographical information, the struggle for professionalization, and the socialization process.

Biographical information provides a starting point in understanding the various backgrounds these women brought to the field of journalism. Although in most cases the biographies were intended to inspire future generations rather than to serve as historical studies, the brief biographies offer insight into the lifestyles of the individuals, providing clues to the development of their personal philosophies. Many provide at least basic background data on the women, such as birthplace, parents, education history, professional career, and marriages.

Likewise, the development of professionalism among these women in their chosen careers sheds light on how seriously they viewed their responsibilities of giving voice to the concerns of many who were rendered silent by a variety of circumstances. Many historians were more interested in the struggles in which women engaged in order to succeed as journalists, rather than in the women themselves. However, they analyzed the environmental factors that not only compelled women

into the nontraditional role of journalist, but also those factors that dictated how the women journalists conducted their careers and what methods they used. In an effort to determine how their personal lives affected their professional careers, several past historians provide background information from and about parents, siblings, teachers, husbands, friends, and mentors.

Of special significance to the study of early black female journalists is the process by which black women carved a niche for themselves in 19th-century American society and attempted to earn the respect of their own race, as well as the white community. Within the process lies an understanding of what motivated women to defy public resistance and to speak out against injustices to their race, their sex, and their country. Explanations of the relationship between women and 19th-century society, especially black women's civic activism, illustrate many of the struggles the women faced in order to achieve acceptance. Consequently, black women who opposed societal restrictions viewed themselves not as heroes but as victims who had decided to put an end to the cycle of victimization for their race and their gender. They risked opposition from representatives of both races and genders, and their voices were not always welcomed into the public arena. Declaring their thoughts and opinions in public violated "all manner of Victorian procedure for women to assume a public stance on any issue, much less speak, petition, or organize in defense of it."⁶

With their words and actions, early African-American women strove to create a society that reflected truly free status, that prohibited violence against blacks, that encouraged equality among the races, and that accepted blacks into the dominant culture. Because of their courage and eagerness to advance their race, these women set the stage for black women journalists who would seek acceptance well after the Civil War. Mary Ann Shadd even pointed out that because of her struggles, black women would have more opportunities as writers and as

editors.⁷ Through pen and voice, these black women journalists struggled to create a place for themselves, to shape the lives of their families and communities, and to establish a better lifestyle for future generations.

Simultaneously impressed and humbled by their actions, I have worked diligently to unearth these women's voices, buried by racial and gender discriminations, as well as time. Digitalization of newspapers and manuscripts, searchable databases, and expanding genealogical resources have allowed me, as well as a growing number of other media historians and cultural anthropologists, to reconstruct the lives and works of many women previously relegated to anonymity. For example, after years of searching, I recently discovered the first name of a woman whose entire journalistic portfolio was completed using her married courtesy title and her husband's name as her byline. (I had eliminated her from the list of women in my dissertation because I had no way of tracing her background.) Yet, still others remain undiscovered and unheralded.

Did I ever discover the name of the woman in the image from the librarian? Unfortunately, no. Deciphering early visual depictions of African-American women requires an entirely different set of research skills that I have yet to master. Nevertheless, after finally discovering their voices, I am hopeful that I, and others like me, will then be able to attach a "face" to each distinctive "voice." If these women were willing to brave public ridicule, degradation, and hostile, often violent, opposition to express themselves freely for the good of their families, for themselves, and for their race, they have earned the right to a little of my research time to add their names and contributions to the current pool of historical knowledge.

Seeking African-American Women's Voices in Media History

NOTES

¹ Since Pride's efforts to encourage research into black-owned newspapers, numerous projects over the last 65 years have catalogued, digitalized, and/or excerpted extant issues of these newspapers and periodicals from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

² Bettina Aptheker, *Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex, and Class in American History* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 3.

³ Fannie Barrier Williams, "Club Movement Among Negro Women," Chap. IX, in John William Gibson, *Progress of a Race, or The Remarkable Advancement of the American Negro* (Naperville, Ill.: J.L. Nichols & Co., 1905), 197.

⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 526.

⁵ See for example, Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984); Jean Folkerts and Dwight Teeter, *Voices of a Nation: A History of the Media in the United States* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1989); and Roland E. Wolseley, *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, 2nd ed. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990).

⁶ Aptheker, *Woman's Legacy*, 15.

⁷ *Provincial Freeman*, 30 June 1855.

[CLICK HERE
TO RETURN
TO TABLE OF
CONTENTS](#)

Kobre Award Interview: Hazel Dicken-Garcia



Dicken-Garcia

Hazel Dicken-Garcia received the American Journalism Historians Association's Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2006. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin and taught for many years at the University of Minnesota, where she is a professor emerita. She has written four books (two as co-author) and in 1989 received the Frank Luther Mott-Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award for *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America*.

Q: Tell us a little about your family background — where you were born and grew up, your education, and so forth.

Dicken-Garcia: I grew up in southern Kentucky, near the Cumberland River, where the family farmed creek-bottom land and brambly hill-sides. The two-mile-plus route to a one-room school led first up a hill on an old trail pounded into the earth by buffaloes and other large animals long ago visiting the salt lick below, according to local lore. From the hilltop, the trail gradually widened along an overgrown, sparsely populated ridge. I loved the colors, especially as seasons changed, and fruit from wild trees and bushes along the way.

There was no road for a bus to my home. So I lived away from home for four years at Clinton County High School in Albany (named for DeWitt Clinton and the New York capital) and then left for Berea College. I graduated as an English major (1961), received the MA degree in journalism at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (1969), and

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the Ph.D. degree in mass communication at the University of Wisconsin, Madison (1977).

Q: What did you do professionally before going into teaching?

Dicken-Garcia: I worked at various part-time jobs through high school and Berea College, where a no-tuition policy and student-labor program made possible the education to become a teacher. I earned a secondary education certificate but deferred a high school job for two years to teach in a Gandhian institution in India, where I volunteered with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

Returning from India, I declined the high school job to work as an AFSC youth-program director responsible for developing, coordinating and supervising projects to assist specific communities across four states. I recruited, screened, and selected diverse groups of young people nationally to assist communities up to seven weeks (in summers) and weekend urban projects year-round. An annual week-long conference focused on a social issue, such as poverty, race, mental illness.

After three years of this work, I began graduate study at the University of Michigan, supported by part-time jobs (at the university and at the *Ann Arbor News*), which I continued beyond the MA degree in 1969 until I moved to Madison, Wis., in 1972 for Ph.D. study.

Q: Where, and what courses, have you taught?

Dicken-Garcia: In India, I taught English (1961-63) and then journalism and mass communication at the University of Wisconsin, Waukesha County campus (lecturer, 1972-74); University of Wisconsin, Madison (TA, 1974-75); University of Iowa, Iowa City (asst. professor, 1975-76); (lecturer, 1976-77) University of Maryland, College Park, American University in D.C., and University of Michigan (1977-78); University of

Massachusetts-Amherst (asst. professor, 1978-79).

I taught introduction to mass communication, mass media, news editing, news writing, journalism history and mass media law before moving in 1979 to the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis). There, I taught the survey history course and history of the press in 1) Jacksonian America, 2) the Progressive Era and 3) the Civil War, as well as graduate seminars in methods; models and theories; journalism/ communication history literature. I also I taught a pro-seminar emphasizing qualitative and humanistic approaches — one third on media history. Prof. Phil Tichenor (now emeritus) and I co-developed and briefly team-taught this course, one of a set (the other emphasized quantitative methods) to introduce entering SJMC graduate students to the discipline and its fields. I taught news editing for several years, a media ethics honors course, and co-taught a year with Prof. Kathleen Hansen the innovative information-gathering course she and Prof. Jean Ward (now emerita) developed.

Q: Tell us about your background in history — When did you first get interested in historical research? How did your education prepare you to be a historian?

Dicken-Garcia: The area where I grew up shaped my interests. From earliest memories, I heard local history lore — of the log house in which I was born, our creek community, the old salt lick and buffalo trail. Finding countless arrow flints and pottery shards throughout the community nurtured awareness of history. Pre-Revolution, Revolution, and Civil War events marked the region. Near my home, where the Long Hunters explored, one of Kentucky's earliest churches (Clear Fork, established before 1805) continues services adjacent to a replica of the original building. History of Daniel Boone's Wilderness Trail was common knowledge.

Kobre Award Interview

My family often visited the nearby site of the Battle of Mill Springs, the North's first significant Civil War victory, which gave Union troops entrance to Tennessee. Burnside, a nearby town, marks Gen. Ambrose Burnside's Civil War campsite. Growing up, I heard stories about Confederate guerrilla Champ Ferguson, who fought in this (predominantly Unionist) area. One of my first research papers focused on the history of Berea College, which John G. Fee founded in 1855 for educating African Americans and whites together.

Formal education ultimately prepared me for my work, but I began reading history early. Our one-room school had no library. So I read books for all eight grades before becoming an eighth grader. The history books showed the significance of my surroundings, which stayed with me.

Early on, I planned to write young people's books about this area, so rich in history, beauty, and humble people of inimitable values. But research raised questions that overshadowed those plans and culminated in my dissertation about development of a communication system in the early migration across the Appalachian Mountains. I never wrote those books but fervently believe they are still needed because knowledge of such a heritage positively affects confidence, character and outlook while nurturing aspirations.

So, my preparation came through childhood experiences in a history-rich environment, reading about the exceptional heritage of an area known at the time for its poverty, and opportunities to study American history through coursework, especially during Ph.D. studies, and a Smithsonian fellowship to study American history for a year in the Library of Congress and National Archives.

Q: Who or what have been the major influences on your historical outlook and work?

Dicken-Garcia: Elementary, high school, and graduate teachers are most responsible for anything I have achieved. Scholarship most influencing my work addresses, reveals and explicates major social, political, economic problems and how people approached them. How did people confront and solve (or fail to solve) societal and other problems in the past? What problems evolved from group to group (in political cycles) or generation to generation? What did successive groups keep from previous efforts, and what “new” solutions did they try — with what effect?

Some problems seem never solved — yet. For example, despite a founding principle that all are created equal, the nation is still working out the meaning, truth, and reality of equality. What is the history of that effort?

Q: What are the main areas or ideas on which you concentrate your historical work?

The first of two broad categories is the recurring human story of how people make choices, especially about “right” and “wrong.” Thus, much of my research broadly involves ideas related to ethics — that is, concepts of the moral in society and standards people use to develop and judge character, moral conviction and behavior. Ethics is always a human story because it involves the core of character. Inequality, at the heart of so many problems — including racism, sexism, class, marginalization, victimization, powerlessness, unequal respect for efficacy across individuals and ethnicity — is a profound ethical issue.

The second category includes First Amendment freedoms, especially of speech, press and religion, and how well those are respected, accorded and enjoyed by whom for whom.

In short, I’m interested in the evolution of ethical, social and political issues and how people have approached those at the core of the

human condition. Are unresolved problems perpetuated by being, at root, systemic, or by simple human frailties? What hinders resolving continuing national issues — for example, about religious freedom?

Q: Summarize for us the body of work — books, journal articles, and so forth — that you have done related to history.

Dicken-Garcia: A few conference papers and articles concern technology issues. More concern women's and African Americans' activities, media portrayals and their rights and standing in society. My comments here focus on books.

People's struggles for a better life for themselves and descendants led me to study development of a communication system during the early Westward Movement. Migrations mean massive loss and disruption. Those who first moved "over the mountain" likely would not see loved ones again. How did they express the abrupt loss and resulting chasms among friends and family? What do we know about effects on psyches and rational goals during such migrations? What forms of communications were available, and how effective were they in maintaining connection and community at vast distances? What communication forms did migrants create and what propelled those? What roles did economics, politics, and social ties and organization play in formation of a communication system? And what did that mean for both the system's nature and lives affected by it?

Comments about other books appear below.

Q: Of the books you have written, from which ones did you get the most satisfaction?

Dicken-Garcia: Each book satisfies for different reasons. Requests continue for copies of *Communication History*, co-authored with the late

John D. Stevens and long out of print. Stevens' co-authorship generates much of this interest, of course, but I am gratified that the book expresses some abiding research concerns.

My effort to understand what people across time thought and did about what they saw as "right" and "wrong" journalism led to the book about journalism standards in 19th century America, probably the most cited of my work. This gives great satisfaction, of course. The Frank Luther Mott Award it received would have been satisfying enough.

I felt driven to write *To Western Woods*, a version of the human story about my home region. It focuses on a family unrelated to mine, but nothing I have done put me so deeply in touch with my "roots." From a culture stained with embedded slavery and violations of Native Americans, those who led East-to-West nation-building sacrificed much to determination and raw courage.

Co-authoring with Prof. Giovanna Dell'Orto the book on "hated ideas" during the Civil War nurtured an abiding interest in how people with "hated ideas" fare in a country founded on beliefs in freedom to express all ideas. A 1960s paper dealt with court cases on the subject in a different context.

Q: As you look back over your career, if you could do anything differently, what would it be?

Dicken-Garcia: A lot. To address only one area here, I would try earlier to incorporate the diversity of voices in all my work. My teaching materials reflected diversity long before my research. When I tried to recover voices of the powerless, I too often felt I was "tacking" something passing faintly for diversity or "multiculturalism" onto white male-centered accounts. The book on journalistic standards deals only with the traditional press, due in part, at least, to seemingly set conven-

tional sources at the time. Today, I would search out lesser known resources and incorporate standards discussed, created and used by “non-traditional” journalists.

Q: Tell us about your “philosophy of history” or what you think are the most important principles for studying history.

Dicken-Garcia: While I claim no philosophy of history or formal principles for studying it, I believe we learn more about the present and ourselves from history than perhaps any other subject. We absorb powerful lessons that we are able to call up (perhaps subconsciously) for guidance at decision-points and trying times. Studying history, we continuously learn about the human condition and problem solving (what worked and what did not). We learn from real, struggling human beings who, despite flaws and human frailties, worked to overcome difficulties and to persist in doing their best. We learn of great gifts given the world through people’s sheer dedication to life-purpose, how to fulfill it and leave the world a better place. Despite the massive problems the past also reveals, the attentive history student can gain endless empowering inspiration.

Interest in history develops in discovering the past through innate or cultivated interests in some phenomenon. This may be an issue, event, problem, movement, trend, viewpoint, behavior or activity, particular person, group, discovery, uprising. Such interests raise questions that impel further study, creating a process of seeking deeper to complete the “stories,” thereby expanding understanding of subjects and (at least something of) the past.

Investigating what others have written and concluded about a subject of study is vital. What information have others already told us about the subject? The degree to which this process informs the true scholar cannot be over-stated for it enables one to perceive, access, as-

sess, digest, and dissect intellectual trends and ways of approaching subjects — and their various contributions to understanding. It spurs an intellectual growth, depth and vision achievable only through engaging with deeply considered work of great (historian) thinkers.

Q: How would you evaluate the quality of work being done today in JMC history — its strengths and weaknesses?

Dicken-Garcia: I've been out of touch too long to fully address this. I have read some brilliant work published since I retired and sense that work being done is impressive as a whole. The growth, diversity, depth, range, scope, creativity, quality, and volume of productivity for nearly four decades exceed that in any given period since recording of the field's history began. Historians of journalism and mass communication constantly find and explore new sources. Never have so many studied the field's history, devoted so many conferences to it, presented so many papers and produced so many books about it.

I sense similar development in current thinking about history and research — in ideas and questions pursued, approaches to subjects and value of findings.

Q: What do you think we in JMC history need to be doing to improve the status of JMC history in (1) JMC education and (2) the wider field of history in general.

Dicken-Garcia: I am unaware of all current efforts. So answering this is also presumptuous. The first question is harder because of dropped history courses and reduced offerings for awhile for reasons not easily eradicated. Poor understanding by faculty of work in other disciplines and within programs impedes curriculum improvement, which requires colleagues' support. More interaction with colleagues across the

hall or on the next floor could help. Brief, occasional chats about projects underway is a good start, and journalism and mass communication historians can initiate those. Assuring ample history courses, especially for graduate students, would build foundations for stronger JMC education now and later.

Regarding question two, ties among historians across all disciplines are essential to improved status to “the wider field of history in general.” Current interactions can be increased; that is, continue and expand participation in wider history conferences by presenting papers and informing about one’s own field of history study. Valuable, too, are mini (or larger) history conferences that involve colleagues from across campus. One such conference annually (or every second or third year) could strengthen ties on one’s own campus and beyond. Collaborating on projects across fields, including research grant applications, are productive common goals.

Q: What challenges do you think JMC history faces in the future?

Dicken-Garcia: More work is needed to assure that students learn from very early (continuously with increasing depth) about the nation’s history, particularly constitutional and democratic principles. Responses of passers-by asked to identify documents like the Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights and Constitution over the years have been alarming. Recent generations, who know less about basic U.S. history, face greater challenges to uphold and sustain the nation’s fundamental principles. All historians face this challenge, but those in journalism and mass communication bear particular responsibility for disseminating knowledge about the documents and their value to citizens, meaning to the country — its foundation and principles — and significance in a global society.

Other challenges involve assuring that technology use: 1) sustains

and advances civilization, nurturing civil society through mutual consideration, respect, good taste, and cooperation toward beneficial goals; 2) upholds in positive ways — and does not diminish and limit — principles secured by the U. S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

A viable code of ethics for online activities is overdue. It took more than two hundred years for U.S. journalists to create ethics codes for conventional media, but we cannot afford to leave the “wild, wild west” of the Internet so long without some effective conduct code.

A mode of communication hardly conceivable when I began taking history courses constitutes unprecedented challenges for historians. People are likely working on these issues, but how to archive what is needed to preserve Internet history? How to preserve primary sources for writing histories using email correspondence? For histories of social media, impacts on communication/journalism and virtually all elements of society, including education and learning processes?

Q: Any other comments to add, issues you want to address???

Dicken-Garcia: I want to express deep indebtedness to students for what I learned from them and end with a statement by Karen Cotton McDaniel, co-editor, *The Kentucky African American Encyclopedia*: “Any time you bring to light something that’s hidden and give people credit for what they’ve done, that’s a powerful thing.”

[CLICK HERE
TO RETURN
TO TABLE OF
CONTENTS](#)

Book Award Interview: Robert Miraldi



Robert Miraldi won the 2003 Frank Luther Mott-Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award for the year's outstanding book for *The Pen is Mightier: The Muckraking Life of Charles Edward Russell*. Dr. Miraldi is a professor emeritus at the State University of New York at New Paltz.

Q: Give us a brief summary of your book.

Miraldi

Miraldi: *The Pen Is Mightier* is an in-depth look at the work of Russell (1860-1941), a journalist and public figure who has faded from public view, even though he was one of the most well known and popular of the so-called “muckraking” journalists at the turn of twentieth century. He was the most prolific of the muckrakers and wrote exposé articles for a longer time than any of the other dozen or so muckrakers. His most active period of work was from the turn of the twentieth century to the onset of World War I. The book traces his growing up in Iowa, the grandson of a fiery Baptist preacher, the son of a crusading newspaper editor; to his reporting adventures in New York City, culminating in his becoming editor of metropolitan news for Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and then publisher for William Randolph Hearst's third newspaper, the *Chicago American*. When he left daily newspapering, Russell turned to magazine and book-length investigations and exposé, writing significant articles on a variety of topics that aided the cause of Progressivism. He became a Socialist in 1904 and ran for the U.S. Senate. He would have been the Socialist Party's Presidential nominee in 1916, but he supported U.S. entry into

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World War I and split with the Party. He won the Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1927.

Q: How did you get the idea for your book?

Miraldi: My PhD dissertation was about the journalism of David Graham Phillips, also a famous muckraking journalist and author. Russell was Phillips' close confidante. I learned about Russell from my work on Phillips and I always eyed him because no biography had ever been written about him, despite his fabulous career and accomplishments.

Q: Tell us about the research you did for your book — What were your sources, how did you research your book, how long did you spend, and so forth?

Miraldi: Russell was close to a perfect research target. His papers were meticulously stored in the Library of Congress. His wife had collected many of his articles, including unbylined newspaper stories from his early days, to the voluminous journals he kept during World War I. It was a treasure trove of primary source material. But my toughest task was to find a way to re-create his six years as editor and publisher of America's most famous newspapers of Pulitzer and Hearst. To accomplish this I had to dig into months and months of microfilm to read these newspapers and get the feel for the kind of publications that Russell oversaw. It was painstaking and tedious work that, in the end, produced rich detail and material for a momentous period in his career — and in journalism history. Lastly, the secondary sources — on the muckrakers, on Progressivism and on Socialism — were rich with context and background. I was teaching full-time during the period of my work, so it took me nearly eight years to produce this book.

Book Award Interview

Q: Besides the sources you used, were there any others you wish you had been able to examine?

Miraldi: I spoke with only one person who had known and encountered Russell, and that when he was a young man. I always wanted to speak with peers or colleagues but it was just too late. Also, I was never able to trace Russell's family. He had one son, who had a daughter. But when the daughter married, I lost the trail. I never spoke with family members, and lived in fear that after publication someone would come up with a trove of personal letters that would reveal the side of Russell I could never quite find — the personal side of the man.

Q. Based on your research for the book, what would you advise other historians in our field about working with sources?

A: Exhaust your primary sources first. Find letters, diaries, journals, every scrap of writing, and then read everything written about your topic. If you are lucky, there will be people alive to interview. But primarily look at the primary sources to draw your own conclusions. Too many people write about newspapers, for example, but never read the newspapers themselves. In Russell's case, his newspaper work so reflected his personality and ideology, and they were filled with surprises and gems.

Miraldi: What were the challenges you faced in researching your book?

A: As is true with any biography, locating the real person is always a challenge. Russell kept journals and wrote letters, but they were rarely if ever personal. Even when his first wife died in 1901, hardly a letter could be found on the subject. Either those letters perished or Russell was a more formal man who wrote diaries for posterity about public

policy more than about his personal life. My challenge was to get beyond his work, but I rarely succeeded. Luckily, the work was fascinating and exciting, and it is possible that there was little personal about Russell — it was always about the work. But this was a real challenge for me, to personalize Russell beyond his prolific journalism.

Q: Is it possible to get too close to a research subject? How do historians maintain their neutrality of viewpoint when conducting and interpreting research?

Miraldi: Choosing a subject who you admire or like is not always a necessity. But in my case I gravitated to Russell — this was my third book — because I did admire his work and because there was such a vacuum about his life. Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, Phillips — there were multiple biographies on these other muckrakers. But nothing but a PhD dissertation existed on Russell; so, it was time. Still, I kept myself arms-length, looking for holes in his arguments, flaws in his approaches, and contradictions in what he wrote and how he conducted his life. I found some flaws — but actually not that many. He was an almost religious and heroic figure, dedicated to Progressive causes till the day he died. A bigger challenge was trying to figure out why he had so faded from popular view.

Q: What new insights does your book provide?

Miraldi: Russell's life story provides a variety of insights that back up what has often been said about Progressivism and reform: that its currents date back to the Civil War anti-slavery movement; that the Gilded Age set in motion many of the ideals that pushed Progressivism; that the newspaper moguls who made so much money in journalism also were key early Progressive forces; and that the muckrakers often

Book Award Interview

worked with reform advocates and currents to bring about major changes in the American landscape. Russell's life fits into all of these axioms about American history.

Q: What findings most surprised you?

Miraldi: Russell's crowning achievement, somewhat overlooked, came in 1908-9 when in three national magazine articles he exposed the fact that the world's richest church, Trinity Church in New York City, was also the city's biggest slum landlord. At first the church balked and denied, but then it completely caved to his exposé and made a turn-around in its handling of church properties. It was a huge national success for Russell — and forces of tenement reform. It has largely been overlooked and should rightly rank with Tarbell's exposé of Rockefeller and Steffens' revelations of "the shame of the cities."

Q: What advice would you give to people in our field who are considering doing a book in JMC history?

Miraldi: There is so much out there to explore that it makes me want very much to be at the beginning, not the back end, of my career as a journalism historian. For example, when I completed my most recent book, *Seymour Hersh: Scoop Artist*, about the famous contemporary investigative reporter, I wrote about the close relationship between Hersh and his *New York Times* editor, A.M. Rosenthal. There are rich materials on Rosenthal and the *Times* in his papers at the New York Public Library. It is an archive just waiting for an eager historian to dig through.

Q: Why is your biography of Charles Edward Russell important?

Miraldi

Miraldi: Although he worked in a media era very different from today's, Russell's journalistic experience makes an important point: a journalist with a passion (and a point of view) can have a lasting and important impact on society. Russell combined the marshaling of important fact with a burning passion to make improvements — and he often succeeded. No matter the platform, that formula still has a chance today to bring about important changes in our world. As Russell once commented when his critical brand of journalism was attacked, "The best way to abolish the muckraker is to abolish the muck."

[CLICK HERE
TO RETURN
TO TABLE OF
CONTENTS](#)