

Historiography

in Mass Communication



Volume 2 (2016). Number 5

Historiography in Mass Communication

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This journal invites historians to submit essays. They may be original ones written specifically for this journal, or they may be from material that the authors already have (such as classroom lectures, AJHA presidential addresses, etc.).

Essay length may vary from 500 to 5,000 words.

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An Apology for JMC History

By Wm. David Sloan ©



Sloan

In 1731 Benjamin Franklin published in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* a short essay titled “An Apology for Printers.” “Being frequently censur’d and condemn’d,” he began, “by different Persons for printing things which they say ought not to be printed, I have sometimes thought it might be necessary to make a standing Apology for my self, and publish it once a Year.”

Of course, he used the word “apology” not because he was remorseful for anything he had published. He employed it in the theological sense of a defense or a justification for beliefs.

JMC historians should be just as bold. When other scholars suggest that history is somehow inferior to fields such as those in social and behavioral science, historians should not cower. Most of the criticisms are poorly informed.

A few years ago a professor teaching at a second-tier JMC school posted somewhere on the Internet a complaint that his school should stop teaching history because it is no longer relevant. His understanding of history was as deep as coffee sloshed in a saucer. Yet JMC historians for a few days wrung their hands and wondered if the sky was

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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falling.

Instead, they should have taken a page from Franklin.

Certainly, the field of JMC history has enough dubious sorts to give it a bad name. Some got into it for the wrong reasons. As graduate students they weren't good at math, or they thought historical research would be easy. It has others who only dabble at history. In fact, there are some who have been able to make successful careers as dabblers. So it is not surprising that other researchers sometimes criticize it — and, unfortunately, we have enough dabblers and default historians that our field merits some of the criticism.

As, however, one recognizes the rigor of the methods used in history and the analytical ability that it requires, one comes to realize that historical study is neither simple nor easy. It insists on much from the historian, considerably more than is normally expected from other communication researchers. The requirements of method and the amount of work necessary cannot be overstated. History demands unsurpassed rigor. That's a point that both dabblers and critics fail to recognize.

Foremost, historical study demands an absolute desire to find the truth. Commitment to a philosophy, an ideology, an ism, a political doctrine, or a theoretical framework must take a backseat. The notion of whether we can know the "truth" has come under fire from postmodernists and others in the last several decades, but in historical study a commitment to anything other than an honest desire to discover the truth conflicts with history's proper role.

Furthermore, it must be founded on rigorous, proven methodological procedures. Historical research cannot be based on vague, haphazard, lackadaisical method. Historians must bring thoroughness and tirelessness to the effort of collecting and analyzing source material. The task may sometimes require hour upon hour of research to find even the minutest detail.

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While unstintingly rigorous and harshly analytical in their research, historians must be judicious in their treatment of the material and the people whom they study. The search for historical truth requires that they deal openly and fairly with their subjects.

Historians also must have or must develop an acute thinking ability. Unlike communication researchers who use social and behavioral research methods, historians rarely have mathematical formulae and statistical systems on which to rely. In analyzing and evaluating research material, they must depend on their own mature judgment, critical mind, and incisive analytical ability.

In the requirement to offer sound analysis, historians must have a power of imagination. The cold facts of history standing alone are nothing more than cold facts. They remain dead unless subjected to the thoughtful, imaginative mind of the historian who can perceive relationships among the materials and meaning in them. It is the task of the historian to breathe life into them. Piling data upon data is not enough. As the historian Page Smith, winner of the Bancroft prize for his biography of John Adams, commented in regard to researchers who amass research but never bring life to it, "Research is too often a substitute for thought, for bold speculation, for enlightening generalization."¹

But historians are not allowed the loose judgments that communication researchers in such fields as cultural and critical studies sometimes employ. They may not simplistically impose their values on the past. Imaginative explanation requires a solid grounding in the methods of historical research.

Thus, the best historians eschew, on the one hand, the vague "philosophical" and "theoretical" and "grand theory" recommendations that have at times been faddish with some JMC historians and, on the other hand, a slavish devotion to the quantitative methods drilled into graduate students in theoretical communication programs. While understanding big ideas and quantitative methods, good historians keep

them in perspective as only a limited part of the knowledge necessary in history.

It is incumbent on historians to abide by such expectations, and if they don't then they are something other than historians. If, though, they work as real historians, they have no need to apologize.

The articles in this issue of *Historiography* reveal the historical mind at work. They are written by some of the best historians in our field. The issue opens with an essay by Jim Startt that surveys the broad landscape of historical study as it changed during the 20th century. We follow his essay with one by Debbie van Tuyll that analyzes how historians in the 20th century attempted to explain the press of the American South during the Civil War era. For our Q&A with a recipient of the Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement, Leonard Teel graciously agreed to submit to an interview. Finally, our interviewee for a book award is Greg Lisby, who won the American Journalism Historians Association's award in 2003 for his biography of Julian LaRose Harris. As always, we think you will find that the essays and interviews in this issue of our journal offer a great deal of insight into the study of JMC history.

NOTE

¹Page Smith, *The Historian and History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 145.

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The Historiographical Tradition in 20th Century America

By James D. Startt ©



Startt

Reports of the death of history, to paraphrase Mark Twain, are greatly exaggerated.¹ Evidence to the contrary is overwhelming. Consider the public reaction to the Smithsonian's exhibit on the *Enola Gay* and the end of World War II, or to the recent report of the National Council for History Standards.² In fact, we encounter proof every day that history lives. "The Constitution says this," or "our Founding Fathers believed that," or, moving farther back in time, "Rome fell because of this." How often have we heard such statements? Or how often have we heard Mr. Everyman say, "History proves that...." As Gerda Lerner comments: "All human beings are practicing historians."³

There is, of course, no reason to think that ordinary references to history are always wrong or that references by scholars are always cor-

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Editor's Note: This essay is a reprint of Prof. Startt's presidential address to the national convention of the American Journalism Historians Association in 1998. Despite the passage of almost two decades, his explanation of the main currents of historical interpretation remains just as incisive as when he presented it.

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rect. Nevertheless, myths about the past and history, invented for purposes either innocent or ill, seem to acquire a reality of their own. Misconceptions about the past abound, and knowledge about it is far from complete. Considering the vastness of human experience, it could not be otherwise, but that is no reason to think that one version of history is as good as another. The state of present knowledge about the past and adherence to the standards that assure each generation the opportunity of knowing it make the difference. Historiography, used here to mean the practice and principles of history, is about making that difference.⁴

As historians we think seriously about history more than most people do, but not more than we should. The same is true of historiography, for few people pause to consider all that constitutes the practice of history. That is an involved topic, but by restricting it to mean the practice and principles associated with the doing of history, we reduce it to manageable dimensions. Moreover, that limited meaning makes it difficult to refute the claim that historians are “almost always historiographers.”⁵

We work at the current edge of an old historiographical tradition with modern roots in this country going back to the late 19th century and perhaps earlier. Since it influences our conscious effort to engage our subject, consideration of that tradition is always pertinent for historians. Where to start? Colonial Americans wrote a number of histories, but they were mostly of the “saintly” or promotional variety. The idea of mission that flourished in those histories would not be lost on a later generation of American writers. Nevertheless, the modern historiographical tradition had its origin elsewhere.

Historiography's Roots in Greece

Its roots are traceable to ancient Greece. They reach back to Herodotus

and his famous history, *The Persian Wars*, which he wrote to preserve “the remembrance of what men have done.”⁶ In modern times, Renaissance and Enlightenment scholars broke the hold religion had gained over history in subsequent centuries and put into place elements that would endure in its modern shape. We find, for instance, an Enlightenment historian like David Hume beginning his famous *History of England* with the promise that he would disregard “fables” and concentrate on those parts of history that can be “well ascertained.”⁷ Hume’s great contemporary, Edward Gibbon, concurred with that sentiment and declared in his *Autobiography* that “Truth — naked, unblushing truth” must be “the first virtue of ... serious history.”⁸ Gibbon’s monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, one of the greatest historical works in the English language, took him 20 years to research and write, and it proves that the Age of Reason, which he personified, was also an age of elegant style. His great work exploring how institutions change over time, included multiple causation, and offered interpretation.⁹ Consequently, by the 19th century, an historiographical tradition began to acquire some of the elements familiar to us — focus on the object, and the separation of history from philosophy, religion and fable, the search for truth about the past, the presentation of history as a time conditioned inquiry, and history as an interpretative but documented subject.

The European influence on the writing of American history has continued to this day, and it was present in the 19th century, “The Golden Age of History.”¹⁰ American history flourished during the “Golden Age,” and while not discounting the European influence, it manifested a genius of its own. Historians like George Bancroft and Francis Parkman elevated history in this country to unprecedented levels. These romantic-nationalist, patrician historians allowed current concepts about nation and national mission to frame their historical consciousness, and their works had powerful appeal. They reflected rigorous research

and skilled literary artistry and have lasting appeal, but were they objective? Toward the end of the century, a new group of historians gained ascendancy and answered that question with a resounding “No.”

Scientific History

These historians rejected the specious, dramatic history of their patrician predecessors in favor of a more scientific explanation of the past. Writing at a time when industry and urbanization were transforming the nation and when the country was rising as a young power in the community of states, these scholars sought to make history one of the growing number of professionalizing inquiries. Moreover, the great expansion of education at that time, especially in colleges and graduate schools, afforded them the opportunity to do so. Like so much else at the time, education acquired the prefix “new,” and “new” meant scientific. To be modern was to be scientific, and in education this impulse extended into non scientific areas.

The new, “professional” or scientific historians, in contrast to the “amateurs” of previous generations, found in the expanding graduate schools an opportunity to devote themselves to full-time teaching and writing, and under the banner of science they guided history into a more narrow, in-depth, record and archive based enterprise. They introduced the graduate seminar in history; in 1884 they inaugurated the American Historical Association; in 1895, the *American Historical Review*.¹¹ Influenced by a number of European historians such as Henry Thomas Buckle, Jacob Burckhardt, and mainly Leopold von Ranke, they became preoccupied with objectivity, preferred dealing with institutions rather than individuals, and chose to write specific monographs rather than the sweeping historical narratives of the Parkman type.

The scientific historians thought of their work in contrast to that of the older (or “old-fashioned”) writers. Now historians examined a wide

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variety of original sources in which they attempted to separate truthful from questionable evidence. They claimed to march in step with the “scientific and realistic spirit of the age in which” they lived.¹² In their works, a progressive national theme can be detected, and with the passing of years their scope became somewhat wider than later critics would acknowledge.¹³ It should also be noted that some of the historians who wrote major works at the end of the century (e. g., James Ford Rhodes and Theodore Roosevelt) cannot be considered members of the professional guild. It is, therefore, easy to exaggerate the exclusiveness of any school of historians and the history written at the time it flourished. The same can be said of Ranke, whom the early scientific historians so admired. Latter day historians have often portrayed him in too narrow terms. His greatest works were much broader than they allowed.

Having established history as an autonomous academic field, the scientific historians discovered that they could not agree about its proper identity. Some preferred to identify themselves as social scientists and to pursue a focused and presentist study of “the State at rest” and “the State in action.”¹⁴ They formed the American Political Science Association in 1904. Others, though a minority, resisted departure but considered themselves social scientists within history’s ranks with a mission to ally history to the social sciences.¹⁵ James Harvey Robinson was their vanguard. In 1912, he published *The New History* in which he argued that historians should approach the past in a selective way that would allow it to serve the present, that rather than concentrating on political events they should broaden the scope of their inquiries, and that they should “utilize the tools and concepts of the social scientists.”¹⁶ Like their more conservative associates, they did not question the scientific base of history, nor did they think that the incompleteness and relativity of the historical record made history less than scientific. In fact, it had only been scientific if the word “science” was softened.

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Scientific history was more of a common sense, realistic approach to the past, and at a time when libraries and archives were growing, it was based on comprehensively gathered and examined material. As one of its founders put it, history was “truth about Conditions and Causes under which and because of any person, institution, custom, or what-you-please originated, developed, attained maturity, decayed...”¹⁷ Once the historians tried to depart from the quasi-scientific persuasions of their elders, they were in trouble. Searching for specific laws, for scientific uniformities, in history, they pushed the claims of scientific history too far. Moreover, the contradiction between probing for history’s regularities while subordinating the past to the present confused their cause.¹⁸

The New History

Their plight worsened as the relativist persuasion of Carl Becker gained credence. Already in 1910 he began to turn his skepticism on the foundation of scientific history and later made it the subject of his well known 1931 Presidential Address to the American Historical Association (AHA), “Everyman His Own Historian.”¹⁹ The cultural disillusionment following World War I, confusions emanating from the Great Depression, and the misuse of science practiced in Nazi Germany, called into question confidence in scientific approaches to history, and stimulated interest in a more relativist probing of the past.

Even the powerful spokesman of progressive history, Charles Beard, came to bemoan the cause of the scientific history he had once championed. Now he insisted that the Rankean historical method was bankrupt. “Slowly it dawns” upon the practitioners of that method, he said, that “the human mind and the method employed were not competent to the appointed task ... that if all human affairs were reduced to law ... a chief end of the quest, that is, human control over human occur-

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rences and actions, would itself become meaningless. Should mankind discover the law of its total historical unfolding, then it would be imprisoned in its own fate...."²⁰

The New History, with its stress on relativism, present-mindedness, and discovering the deeper forces that caused political and social change, did enliven the debate about the shape of history. It also distorted that debate. Objectivity versus subjectivity, the real past versus the presentist past, and other such pairings of opposites exaggerated positions. All such terms rest on definition. Few of the historians Beard attacked had the positivist views of history that he suggested.

In retrospect, it is easy to overstate the place of controversies about the methodology of the New History in shaping the practice of history in this country during the first half of the 20th century. First of all, there is the term the New History to question. Its origins can be found among historians writing before Robinson, and it might be more accurate to label most of his renowned contemporaries "progressive historians." Among them were scholars like Frederick Jackson Turner, Charles A. Beard, and Vernon Louis Parrington who did for the historiographical tradition, as Richard Hofstadter argued, what the muckrakers did for journalism.²¹ In the case of history, however, their progressive spirit remained predominant. The retreat from idealism and the widespread materialism of the 1920s and the great economic travail of the 1930s encouraged the reformist bent of their writing until the eve of World War II.

Ironically, at the very time that the progressives' fondness for stressing economic and political conflict in history became increasingly unrealistic, it was Beard who demonstrated the limits of relativism by his intemperate attacks on the Roosevelt administration, his failure to understand that Hitlerian aggression in Europe was a concern of the United States, and by his severe defense of isolationism. Thus, the New History and progressive history, if a separation of terms is preferred,

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ground to a halt with the return of world war. Some historians, moreover, never did fit well into either category. Allan Nevins, for example, the classic case of a journalist becoming an historian, emerged as a leading figure among historians in the 1930s and wrote about business and political leaders in an appreciative way uncommon to the progressive writers.

There are other historiographical developments of this half century that deserve recognition. There is the obvious expanding of the scope of American history to acknowledge. During this 50-year period, for instance, political, diplomatic, and economic history flourished and gained broader definition while fields like intellectual, social, and labor history experienced significant growth. Important work contributed to the growing maturity of black history and women's history. Biographies were numerous and popular. New scholarship stimulated interest in fields like journalism history.²² Did the work of the great systematizers of history like Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee, which gained influence in Europe after World War I, have a transatlantic impact? No. They may have attracted interest, but most American historians resisted the determinism and reductionism implicit in those grand theories.

The case of the influence of Marxism was different due to economic conditions that begged for explanation and to the progressive historians' fondness for economic and conflict interpretations. Marxism did have some influence, mostly indirect and not in its complete form. Some American scholars used parts of his theories in their interpretations and responded to his emphasis on economics. But they shied away from his dialectic materialism and the timeless, universal, and revolutionary contentions of full-blown Marxism. As Carl Becker put it, "I have no faith in the infallibility of any man, or any group of men, or of the doctrines or dogmas of any man or group of men, except in so far as they can stand the test of free criticism and analysis."²³ Even Charles

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Beard, renowned for his *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*, denied that his work was based on Marx.²⁴ The great portion of the expanding American history occurred with the help of orthodox methodology.

Another development apparent by 1950 deserving of attention was the fate of the historical narrative. Although the great narrative historians wrote until the end of the 19th century, their style of writing failed to last in the 20th. The early scientific historians, moreover, had a dulling effect on history as literature. In 1912, Theodore Roosevelt addressed this trend in his AHA Presidential Address. He deplored the way science was deadening history and stated that the great appeal of a work of history was “as a masterpiece of literature.”²⁵ While it is fair to say that a pedantic trend had appeared and would continue in historical writing, some of the leaders of the discipline resisted it. Without trying to emulate the Bancrofts and Parkmans, they insisted that good literary quality be a standard of historical literature. Thomas A. Bailey, Samuel Eliot Morison, Allan Nevins, the young Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Walter Prescott Webb, and C. Vann Woodward were among the historians writing at this time who exemplified that idea.

Moreover, after World War I, a new audience of “middlebrow” readers who appreciated nonfiction emerged. This afforded historians a wonderful opportunity to widen their outreach. Some did, but it was journalists who led in responding to this opportunity. Their production of history and biography in the decades after World War I was remarkable. The name Carl Sandburg, of course, comes to mind, for his biography of Lincoln is a modern classic. Among others were: Frederick Lewis Allen, Claude Bowers, Wilbur J. Cash, Douglas Southall Freeman, Marquis James, Walter Millis, George Fort Milton, and Henry Pringle. They all wrote outstanding history or biography while holding responsible positions in journalism — a tribute to their industry and to their passion for history.²⁶

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It is apparent that by mid-century history had acquired its modern 20th century shape. Having assumed a secure place in academe, it also appealed to a wide public audience. World War I may have been the formative event of the century and did stimulate interest in history, but World War II popularized it far more. Curiosity about that war and its causes, the country's assumption of greater international responsibilities, and the opening of the Cold War helped history to resonate among the informed public. As college enrollments surged thanks to postwar prosperity and the GI Bill, the size and number of history classes mounted. Their place in college curricula reflected their acquired shape. Except as a matter of convenience, they were listed neither as humanities nor social sciences.

Post World War II History

Practice proved that history was more method than science, more interpretative than theoretical, more inductive than deductive in its reasoning, and more factual than creative in its narration — though it enjoyed kinship with all of these opposites.²⁷ If historians now questioned the belief in progress of their predecessors, they remained optimistic in their writing. And, in the spirit of Edward Gibbon, they still believed in truth as a guide and object of history. “No person without an inherent loyalty to truth, a high degree of intellectual honesty, and a sense of balance, can be a great or even a good historian. Truth about the past is the essence of history and historical biography...,” Samuel Eliot Morison told the American Historical Association in 1950.²⁸

All considered, history's place in American society and culture appeared settled and secure in the postwar years. Its content, moreover, seemed to reflect the current mood of the country as its prewar progressive spirit waned. The belief grew among historians that progressive history with its prevailing theme of internal conflict had ill-pre-

pared the nation to grasp the significance of the totalitarian movements of the 1920s and 1930s. The belief that the present needed a different historical grounding led Samuel Eliot Morison to declare: "The age of 'debunking' has passed, ... a new generation both here and in Europe is sounding and elucidating national and sectional traditions. But much harm was done, and little good."²⁹ Although a liberal historian himself, Morison claimed that balance should be a hallmark of history, that the liberal interpretation had too long guided history, and that the country now needed a "sanely conservative" but not "nostalgic" writing of history.³⁰

Perhaps ideas do have a history of their own and pass out of fashion; perhaps the prewar progressives' association with isolationism discredited their cause; perhaps the idea of national unity needed to be stressed as the Cold War continued; perhaps after all they had experienced in the last 20 years, Americans needed to rediscover past traditions suggesting unity, continuity, and consensus rather than discord. Thus there occurred an historiographical turn toward a more positive view of the past, personified by historians like Daniel Boorstin and Clinton Rossiter. It had been prefigured earlier.³¹ Of course, no single idea represents historical thought of any time no more than a single idea expresses the thought of any decade or generation, but a conservative or "consensus" view of history ascended to redirect its basic shape. That ascendancy would be challenged.

Consensus history fit the first period of postwar American life, from 1945 into the early 1950s, but it encountered stormy times during the ensuing years. Between the mid 1950s and the mid 1970s, new forces emerged to challenge and divide the national mood that consensus history reflected.³² A spirit of reform with a rebellious edge grew and became more radical as the 1960s proceeded. If the Cold War was the central international event for Americans at that time, the civil rights movement was its domestic equivalent. It occupied a pivotal

position in the nation's thought and action, and as it struck against segregation, it vitalized or revitalized other reform movements. By the end of the 1960s a strong women's liberation movement appeared that would soon produce dramatic social changes. Peace, poverty and the environment all became targets of reform and often inspired protest demonstrations. As the Vietnam conflict escalated, politics became more confrontational and a "counterculture" youth movement that attacked many traditional values gathered momentum.

Much of the temperament of the '60s appeared in the practice of history as it did in other disciplines. Between the early years of the century when the New History appeared with its progressive thrust until World War II, discord and insurgency had been a major part of the nation's history, but the post World War II consensus historians deemphasized it. Now a group of New Left historians emerged who wanted to restore themes of conflict, struggle, and exploitation to American history. These historians, William Appleman Williams, Walter La Feber, Staughton Lynd and others, probed into diplomatic as well as domestic history, and in some cases they searched for a usable, radical past to serve as a political weapon against present maladjustments of society.

Never a homogeneous group, the New Left declined as a group in time, but their passion and spirit can be detected in later causes historians championed. Unlike historians who promoted other causes, most of the New Left historians remained traditional in terms of methodology. Historians involved in black history and especially women's history were more willing to experiment with new techniques and approaches to history. While the expanding social interests associated with the '60s broadened the scope of history, the sequence of new approaches emerging threatened to change its character.

Judging from the number of fields of history that acquired the adjective "new" to their name, a wave of newness appeared to be sweeping through the inquiry. In part, this can be explained by the nature of

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the generational feeling widespread among the youth of that time, and in part it can be seen as a response to recent historical events. Already in 1953, Hannah Arendt went so far as to pronounce that history was unable to provide understanding of the then present evil of totalitarianism since it was a world movement without precedent that exposed to ruin traditional “categories of thought and standards of judgment.”³³ Although extreme, her statement captured the turn of mind a number of historians were experiencing.³⁴

New Methodologies

In pursuit of new problems in history or new answers to old ones, many historians were attracted to new methodologies and approaches being advanced by other disciplines. Acceptance of these practices, however, was far from complete and would occasion debates among historians for the next several decades. Specifically, the debate turned on three sequential but overlapping developments: 1) certain practices gaining currency in the social sciences; 2) the expansion of the new social history; and 3) a composite development that I shall refer to, for lack of a better term, as “postmodernism.”

Regarding the first item in the sequence, it should be pointed out that the question was not the old one regarding whether or not history was a social science. Long before, it had been resolved by most historians that history was not a social science as such but rather a study that could have much in common with social sciences.³⁵ The new social history might call that assumption into question, but at the start of the renewed debate regarding the social sciences attention was focused on particular practices. For example, as social scientists applied their techniques to human behavior and sought to perfect their understanding of specialized and often small units of research, they seemed to part company with historians, who, however specified their research might be,

were expected to relate it to larger categories of knowledge. Consequently, the generalizations they reached were not as sharply defined as those of the social scientists.

Richard Hofstadter explained the difference in this way. As the historian moves beyond the small units of his research to engage the larger questions of the past, he “confronts the precariousness of human effort, sees the passing not only of great states and powerful institutions but of militant faiths and, most pertinent for him, of the very historical perspectives that were identified with them. At this point he is persuaded to accept the imaginative as well as the cognitive side of his own work ... and he realizes more fully than before how much history is akin to literature.”³⁶ Many other historians continued to consider narrative a defining characteristic of history.³⁷

In fact, orthodox historians questioned that a number of social science techniques, which had gained currency since World War II, had great applicability to history — “model building” for one, quantification for another. Moreover, devotees of these methods sometimes angered historians by referring to history as only a descriptive and impressionistic exercise. At times historians responded with little tact to such inferences. It was, for instance, the president of the AHA, Carl Bridenbaugh, who countered: “The finest historians will not be those who succumb to the dehumanizing methods of social sciences, whatever their uses and values, which I hasten to acknowledge. Nor will the historian worship at the shrine of the Bitchgoddess, quantification. History offers radically different values and methods.”³⁸

While other historians criticized quantification, they admitted that when carefully used it had a place in history.³⁹ After all, historians had counted for ages. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. probably struck the proper balance when he summed up the case of quantification in history in this manner. “As an humanist, I am bound to reply that almost all important questions are important precisely because they are not susceptible to

quantitative answers. The humanist ... does not deny the value of the quantitative method. What he denies is that it can handle everything which the humanist must take into account; what he condemns is the assumption that things which quantitative methods can't handle don't matter."⁴⁰

The case of using psychological methods as tools of history requires more explanation. Already in 1958 William Langer in his AHA Presidential Address urged historians to use the concepts of modern psychology to perceive "collective mentalities" related to historical inquiries. He used the psychological effects of a traumatic event, the Black Death, to make his point.⁴¹ Langer, like Preserved Smith long before, also expressed an interest in psychoanalytical biography.⁴² That interest, in fact, had been growing for sometime, not surprising given the impact that Sigmund Freud had on twentieth century thought. When handled with care and kept within reasonable boundaries, it appeared to have much to offer.⁴³ Erik Erikson's contributions to the field stimulated even more interest in it. However, his *Young Man Luther* attracted some sharp criticism by historians as did a popular study of Woodrow Wilson by Sigmund Freud and William Bullitt.⁴⁴

The skeptics worried that the psychoanalyzing of historical figures produced claims that could not be proven since these people were no longer alive and the possible cure that would prove the analysis was no longer possible. Some complained that appropriate evidence for such conclusions was missing, or that such evidence when found was not time conditioned. Others, like Jacques Barzun wondered if the process placed too much emphasis on "fixations," "deep attachments," and on characteristics of adulthood dredged up from speculations, or even facts, about one's youth. Or, it might encourage an old historical error, allowing an event to define cause. "Chain smoking," he reasoned, "may well express a regressive desire to suck the breast, but sucking the breast does not lead to lung cancer, and our hero's death has to be ex-

plained by chain-smoking.”⁴⁵ More recently, as they discover more about the biological makeup of the brain and the relationship between a person’s genetic history and human behavior, scientists are questioning the emphasis Freud placed on the irrational processes of individual thought.⁴⁶

As for the broader, cultural implications of Freud’s theories, they too occasioned skepticism among historians. Freud’s claim, for instance, that private religion was an obsessional neurosis and that religion itself was a mass obsessional neurosis, was bound to disturb historians. It was as reductionistic as Marxism. If Marx traced human behavior to economic forces and considered the “personal” or “private” factor only as a manifestation of those forces, Freud traced it to psychological roots. In both cases, historians had reason to question the devaluation of culture, politics, and various social realities in such grand schemes.⁴⁷

For a variety of reasons, then, orthodox historians were uneasy about the viability of certain social science methodologies for history unless they were properly qualified. Nevertheless, by the 1960s the old tension between history and the social sciences appeared to be waning. Orthodox historians often acknowledge that advances in the social sciences must be considered for their possible enhancement of historical accuracy and for their use in probing into undeveloped areas of the historical past.⁴⁸ The social sciences, moreover, were acquiring a renewed appreciation of historical perspective. The rapprochement had been long in coming but would prove illusory. A new challenge to historical orthodoxy was already mounting. Although quite diverse, the challenge can be appreciated by observing the rise of the new social history.

Social History

As in the case of so many of the “new” histories that appeared in the

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1960s and 1970s, the new social history had significant antecedents.⁴⁹ Major historians in the 19th and early 20th centuries had advanced the cause — especially J. R. Green and G. M. Trevelyan, two English historians who influenced their American counterparts, and John Back McMaster and Arthur Schlesinger Sr. in this country. It was Trevelyan who described this brand of history as “the history of a people with politics left out.”⁵⁰

Moreover, the New History that James Harvey Robinson and Charles A Beard championed two generations before had a social component. Social history, however, only became a separate field in the 1950s.⁵¹ The rising interest of historians in quantification and other current social science methodologies provided the tools that, in many cases, would be needed to explore various subjects of this “new” inquiry. It is also worth remembering that it was cast against the backdrop of one of the momentous transformations of modern centuries, the decolonization of Africa and Asia, the corresponding successful national movements in those areas, and the relative reduction of Western Europe’s political world position.

An even more immediate context for this new history can be found in the temper of the ‘60s noted previously in relation to the growth of the New Left. The spirit of tension and rebelliousness associated with that decade and its attachment to anti-institutional causes reverberated among groups of other historians who, as a result both of their frustration and idealism, became dissatisfied with many aspects of the social and intellectual order, including consensus history. They rejected its portrayal of unity in history when so many people were omitted from consideration. They questioned the habit of understanding politics through the study of political elites when grassroots movements like the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and the antiwar protest of their time were proving the contrary.

Transatlantic influences also inspired the new social history. A re-

newed interest in Marxism was part of this inspiration as was the work of some distinguished British and French contemporary historians. Among the British were several scholars who had been attracted to Marxism (e. g., Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawn, and E. P. Thompson), whose reputation among American intellectuals was great.

The influence of the Annales school of historians in France may have been even greater.⁵² According to Fernand Braudel, whose efforts to spread the influence of the school far beyond France cannot be overstated, Annales historians rejected specialized history and sought a “science of history” that would keep the entire social spectrum and all levels of consciousness within its domain.”⁵³ No wonder its influence was inspiring. Furthermore, in the hands of a Braudel, with his interest in geography, demography, and economics, the new history could even be an expansive exploration of entire societies, empires, and civilizations. It was exciting. However, he had few imitators among American historians.

The new social history again illustrates the risks involved in efforts to define historical schools or labels. In some respects, however, references to it as “history from below” and as “populist history” are helpful, because they make the distinction between this history and “history from above” or “elitist” history. Whereas orthodox history stressed political, diplomatic, and military studies, focused on events, and was narrative in style, the “new” history moved away from the political to embrace every field of human activity and contended that reality was a social and cultural phenomenon. Instead of great ideas, it explored collective mentalities, and in terms of style tended toward the analytical rather than the narrative.⁵⁴

The new social historians studied topics usually absent in mainstream historical writing — topics such as: illiteracy, ethnicity, gender, criminality, sexuality, overlooked protest movements, and the family. They insisted that the historical experience of women be taken serious-

ly, that previously overlooked people who were “disinherited from American heritage” be accorded their due place in history, that ethnic groups be recognized in the American past, and that the lives of ordinary people be brought into the fabric of history.⁵⁵ Historians writing black history and the history of women, fields that were rapidly changing at the time, were drawn to the openness as well as to the current social science techniques of the new social history.⁵⁶ “Without the growing sophistication of contemporary social history,” one of the new women historians explained, “the history of the New Women’s History could not be written.”⁵⁷

The achievement of the new social history in its heyday was considerable. It helped to democratize history, to explore hitherto overlooked private sectors of the past, to explore social conflicts, and more. Some of our foremost contemporary historians (e. g., David Hackett Fischer and Eugene Genovese) produced major works writing in this genre. Yet, while it still retains a position in historiography and has its devotees, uncertainty can be detected in its ranks and its sometimes implied or even expressed intent to replace orthodox history has given way to a search for more ways to interact with the mainstream of history.⁵⁸ There are several explanations for its present status.

First of all, at the peak of the field’s popularity in the 1970s, some of its practitioners made excessive claims about its potential and displayed irritating, short-sighted arrogance in the manner in which they advanced their cause. Social history was superior history, the only really meaningful history, the only one that dealt with “deeper realities” and could, therefore, be comprehensive. Older history was devalued as “archaic,” “narrative” (implying a lack of analysis), or “failed sociology,” or as “traditional.”⁵⁹ The last term is a curious code word to use in a disparaging way in reference to historians! Such charges appeared ill fitted to reality since they were made at a time when Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Soviet Union were fresh in memory and when China was

reeling under the direction of Chairman Mao. It could be argued that World War II, an historical-military event, shaped attitudes alive in the Cold War. Moreover, despite the enthusiasm associated with the new social history, political history persisted — even in France, the home of the Annates school. That school, in fact, has experienced fragmentation and introspective doubts.⁶⁰ The same can be said of the “new” history in this country.

As numerous historians have commented, fragmentation became a basic problem for the new social history. Given the proliferation of its subfields and their bent toward over-specialized focus, their use of narrow quantification analysis, their propensity for theorizing, and their use of problem-solving techniques of the social sciences, fragmentation was unavoidable. “Most of the new social historians,” Alice Kessler-Harris observes, “have chosen to elaborate the microcosm [of particular aspects of history] in the hope that their own tiny contribution to the jigsaw puzzle will ultimately help to construct a new interpretation of our past.”⁶¹ A fine hope, but it has not been realized except in particular cases. There were too many pieces with edges that did not match, and some pieces were not entirely part of the puzzle.

It can also be argued that, while women’s history expanded social history, many new social historians have ignored questions germane to women’s history.⁶² Unlike numerous other subfields of social history, women’s history intersects with general history at so many points that it might well qualify as a field of its own rather than as a subfield of social history. But, compared to the abundance of quantitative sources available for the related subfield of family history, those available for the study of women’s history are limited. Practitioners of women’s history, therefore, turned to and found literary evidence to inform their research.⁶³ In many respects, the same can be said of black history. A rich array of traditional historical sources beyond statistics exist for it. Should subfields such as these really be subfields or, contrary to the

centrifugal drift of some of the other categories of social history, do they have a natural connection with the historical mainstream in terms of both content and methodology?

Equally troublesome for social history was its deliberate disassociation with the political content characteristic of orthodox historiography. Thus it tended toward a particularism that resisted assimilation with larger historical patterns, not only with their universalist norm that, notwithstanding its shortcomings, had shaped American history but also with their encompassing interpretations of political persuasion, polity, and power. In the spirited language of Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, writing already in 1976, "as admirable as much of the recent social history has been and as valuable as much of the description of the life of the lower classes may eventually prove, the subject as a whole is steadily sinking into a neoantiquarian swamp..."⁶⁴ Writing from a Marxist perception, they were lamenting the lack of class confrontation in current social history, but their comment addresses a central problem of the rubric.

It can be acknowledged that in their sometimes over emotional reaction to the new history that its public critics made some viable arguments. They protested that the new history neglected important, especially political, aspects of the American past. Where was the national narrative? Was proper attention given to "the individual" or to the progressive force (or hope) that previously had been a part of our history?⁶⁵ The new social history had, in fact, placed the "group" over the individual and did not manifest much of the old progressive spirit. By stressing "history from the bottom up" it appeared to overlook the salient fact, that much of history, as in much of life in its social-political setting, is influenced from the top down. As Leon Trotsky once said, "While you may not be interested in the State, the State is interested in you."⁶⁶

The fragmentation and inwardness found in the new social history

are clues that take us to the edge of the third source of debate among contemporary historians — that associated with the ill-defined term, “postmodernism.” As various historians point out, postmodernism is “a notoriously slippery label.”⁶⁷ Indeed it is. Is it synonymous with structuralism, with post-structuralism, or with deconstruction? Is it the same as “the new historicism” or “the new cultural history?” Some authorities on postmodernism claim it defies precise definition. It appears at least as a case of what Winston Churchill once referred to as “terminological inexactitude.”⁶⁸

Nevertheless, postmodernism represents a critique of the historiographical tradition, one that has occasioned emphatic responses from historians. The roots of this critique reach back at least to the 19th century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and have grown amid those 20th century forces manifesting cultural disillusionment alluded to earlier.⁶⁹ Once again the influence of transatlantic thought was of major consequence, most notably that of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Their reputation in this country spread after the Vietnam War, with the waning of the Cold War, and with the rise of the multicultural questioning of the norms of national identity, which at times became associated with political action.⁷⁰

Notwithstanding the complexity of their theories, certain elements in them are striking. Foucault saw discontinuity rather than continuity in history, rejected the idea that knowledge grew through time, and targeted submerged communities and marginalized groups rather than larger ones like the state to study. He was concerned with the heterogeneity of life and with the techniques of power that he detected in it. Contrary to the humanist idea of the individual as a rational being, he claimed that the mind was not free, that it was controlled by the structure of language. Regarding Derrida, he advanced a “deconstructionist” approach to language in which a “text” has endless meanings, none of which explains what the author meant.⁷¹ As a form of literary criticism,

deconstruction overturned the traditional value attached to literature, but its influence extended to other studies as well. In history it represented a “linguistic turn” that was hardly what the orthodox champions of historical narrative expected.

Postmodernism

Postmodernist theories strike at the core of history. Its extreme cultural relativism negates history’s pursuit of objective truth, the validity of historical evidence, and the idea of discovering reality beyond discourse. They deny that the historical narrative describes an actual past.⁷² Hayden White, an advocate of these theories, claims that historical narratives are as much “invented as found,” that they are “verbal fictions.”⁷³ Although much is left unsaid in this brief introduction of postmodernism as it relates to history, and while it is only fair to mention that postmodernists are not all of one mind, the challenge the movement poses for history is unmistakable. With its extreme references to the presentist meaning of texts and with its dismissal of historical truth, as well as historical causation, context, and continuity, it appears to be incompatible with the historiographical tradition.⁷⁴

While some social and some feminist historians have found postmodernist theories congenial to their inquiries, the bulk of practicing historians reject them, indeed, with greater vigor than they used in references to other departures from orthodoxy. Joyce Appleby, G. R. Elton, and Lawrence Stone are among the better known historians whose criticism could be cited.⁷⁵ One example, offered by the preeminent Eric Hobsbawm, will have to suffice. He argues that historians are duty-bound to oppose “the rise of ‘postmodernist’ intellectual fashions ... which imply that all ‘facts’ claiming objective existence are simply intellectual constructions — in short, that there is no clear difference between fact and fiction.... There is ... for instance, even for the most mili-

tantly anti-positivist ones among us, the ability to distinguish between the two. ... We cannot invent our facts. Either Elvis Presley is dead or he isn't."⁷⁶

That the postmodernist thrust challenges the historiographical tradition at its core, is hard to deny. Unlike other challenges covered in these comments, if its extreme claims are taken seriously, they would repudiate history as it is known.⁷⁷ With some exception, its influence, which was never widespread among most practicing historians, appears to be waning.⁷⁸ This does not mean that the historiographical tradition can expect to proceed unfettered in the future. As we have seen, at every turn in the unfolding of the tradition, problems appeared, and no doubt that will continue to be the case.

Since the 1950s, there has been the problem of "sprawl" of content. Until the 1960s, there was a coherence or a unity (sometimes referred to as grand narrative) in American history. That has passed and historians are at present discussing the impact this has on the perceived significance of history.⁷⁹ The recent popularity of "microhistory" only worsens the problem. Regardless, the search for some type of new larger framework proceeds. It is worth noting that throughout the century the narrative element never disappeared from the historiographical tradition; in fact, it remained quite alive and retains the potential for broadening. How far, no one can say at this time.

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As it stands, however, the historiographical tradition reveals a great deal about historians and the study of history. Historians, for instance, do reflect what Carl Becker labeled "the climate of opinion" of their time in their writing. They have demonstrated a willingness to experiment with new methodologies and principles in their work, and the substance of history has benefited from that experimentation. With their emphasis on the scientific pursuit of history, however qualified that term needs to be, the late 19th century historians made history a

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major subject in American education, saved it from romantic flights from reality, and provided incentive for historians to exploit the great expansion of the sources, particularly the archival sources, of knowledge of their time.

The progressive historians broadened the inquiry and restored spirit and vision to it. Consensus historians distanced history from the crusading impulses of the 1930s and sought to address the needs of a generation seeking, in the words of J. Rogers Hollingsworth, to understand “the uniqueness and essence” of America.⁸⁰ For all of their radicalism, New Left historians redirected historical inquiry to the quite real conflict in the American past that consensus historians had deemphasized. New social historians and historians working in the fields of black history and women’s history have corrected many older ideas about race, gender, age, and much more. As a result of their efforts, we are considerably more aware of cultural diversity in our past. Even in the case of postmodernist historians, it can be argued that they will sharpen the practices of verification and credibility in historical criticism and will lead historians toward a deeper examination of their rhetoric and their interaction with their subject. Consequently, it is apparent that in their practice of history, 20th century historians have enriched the historiographical tradition.

They also shaped that tradition by their resistance to various approaches to history. For instance, they have treated applying theory to history with caution. I find it interesting that Herbert Butterfield, whose *The Whig Interpretation of History* has influenced historians to this day, liked to compare his preferred historical methodology to the methods that Sherlock Holmes employed.⁸¹ How often we discover Holmes telling the good Dr. Watson, “It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment.”⁸² More than to theory, however, historians have been adverse to reductionism and determinism, notwithstanding the presence of some notable Marxists

in their ranks. They have also been cautious in their association with the social sciences. Although some historians prefer that label, most do not. History's relationship with the social sciences, in the main, has been of an almost-but-not-quite type and can be described best as symbiotic. It appears, moreover, to proceed through time in a cyclical fashion.

At its core, the historiographical tradition is a moderate and open one that resists extreme positions in terms of either content or methodology. If the goal of complete objectivity that historians once pursued now seems unreachable, that of plausibility does not. Belief in it, in fact, leads historians to reject the idea that texts have no relation to reality in favor of the idea that through a critical examination of source materials, historical reality can be reconstructed. It is moderate, too, in the manner in which it establishes causal relationships, in the inferences it draws from evidence, and in the restraints it places on presentist persuasions. Its broadening of content shows it is far from being iconoclastic while the appeal it has to a great variety of scholars illustrates its openness. At universities today, scholars practicing history can be found in various academic departments. Furthermore, it is only necessary to recall Barbara Tuchman's many excellent books to know that independent historians continue to produce outstanding works. That fact not only attests to the great appeal of history as an exploration of the human past but also to the viability of the narrative component of the historiographical tradition.

Finally, it can be seen that the historiographical tradition is capable of engaging us in a personal way. What is there in the practice and principles of history that fascinate you the most? Perhaps it is the sense of discovery; perhaps, the satisfaction of carefully exploring a human problem. Perhaps it is, as John Hope Franklin believes, knowing that history pursued honestly can provide people the basis for making sound judgments.⁸³ Perhaps its fascination is due to Gerda Lerner's

simple observation, “history matters” in “life and thought.”⁸⁴ The question is worth our best attention, and it is one that elicits an individual response.

In my own case, the narrative element in history has particular appeal. Veronica Wedgwood once reflected that the style of narration is “an index to the mind.”⁸⁵ Quite right. In expressing history, we give form and structure to our particular subjects. The art of narration tests our capacity to be honest in dealing with the men and women who enter our stories, and it forces us, as much as possible, to discern the difference between objectivity and subjectivity, between opinion and bias. In constructing narrative, we know that history must argue from evidence, but we know, too, that such evidence must be, to our best knowledge, truthful. Composing an historical narrative vitalizes self-awareness; it leads us to look into and beyond ourselves. It forces considerations of the full range of conditions that shaped past life. In short, creating historical narrative encourages the search for truth — past and present.

NOTES

¹ The idea of a dead past was popularized by the British historian J. L. Plumb, who actually wrote about the past as it was conceived for centuries before our time. See his *The Death of the Past* (1969; reprint, Harmondsworth, Eng: Macmillan & Co., Penguin Books) 1969. Also, in 1989 Francis Fukuyama’s article announcing history’s end received widespread attention. With the end of the Cold War, he argued, “we may be witnessing ... the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” What would replace it? He found it plausible to reason “that there is some larger process at work, a process that gives coherence and order to the daily headlines, “The End of History?” First published in *National Interest* 9 (Summer 1989): 3-18. Fukuyama’s thesis, through which runs a suggestive if democratized Hegelian dialectical reasoning, appears to be disproven by events in the 1990s. See also Georg G. Iggers, “The ‘Linguistic Turn’: The End of History as a Scholarly Discipline,” in *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, N. H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 118-33.

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² Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 188-258.

³ Gerda Lerner, *Why History Matters: Life and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 199.

⁴ Historiography can also mean the writing of history, topical interpretation in history, philosophical approaches to history, or the whole body of historical literature.

⁵ Bert James Lowenberg, *American History in American Thought: Christopher Columbus to Henry Adams* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 11.

⁶ Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, The Modern Library (1942), 3. Although it is sometimes claimed that the origins of history should be located either with the ancient Hebrews or perhaps with the even more ancient Sumerians, I believe it should be placed with the Greeks. The modern historical tradition includes critical thought not just thought about the past. Hebrew history (i. e., the Old Testament) contains too much uncriticized content, too many things like the creation story for which no evidence is provided, and repeatedly refers to God or God's will as explanation for cause or motivation. This is not to say that verifiable data cannot be found in the Old Testament or that it failed to offer vision that many future historians would adopt. The point is discussed in Peter Gay and Gerald J. Cavanaugh, eds., *Historians at Work*, 4 vols. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972-75), 1: XV. As for the Sumerians, they wrote no history as we think of it in its modern form, but they did begin the gathering of historical materials and the production of records to be kept — mainly for religious or political purposes. (Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963], 33-39).

⁷ David Hume, *The History of England*, vol. 1 (1754; reprint, Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1976), 25-6.

⁸ *The Autobiography of Edward Gibbon*, ed. Dero A. Saunders (1794; reprint, New York: Meridian Books, 1967), 27.

⁹ Peter Gay and Victor G. Wexler, eds., *Historians at Work*, 4 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 2: 353.

¹⁰ In the course of this essay, the influence of European historians on American scholars will be apparent. This influence was never more obvious than in the nineteenth century when German philosophers and historians (e. g., Johann G. Fichte, Arnold Heeren, G. W. F. Hegel, Johann G. Herder, and Immanuel Kant) affected American romantic and national historians such as John L. Motley, Francis Parkman and especially George Bancroft. Later in the century, Leopold von Ranke's influence on historical scholarship in this country would become legend. Meanwhile, English historians such as Thomas Babington Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle, Henry Thomas Buckle, and J. R. Green and French historians such as Jules Michelet and Alex de Tocqueville exerted a transatlantic influence. Though a nineteenth century figure, Karl Marx's influence was mainly of consequence after the turn of the century. He did, however, have an impact on a few

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nineteenth century American historians such as Henry Adams.

¹¹ Herbert Baxter Adams was the real founder of the American Historical Association and was its secretary for its first 16 years. As director of historical studies at Johns Hopkins, his Seminary in Historical and Political Science introduced German seminary practices of fact-finding in original sources and rigorous textual analysis. One of his assistants was John Franklin Jameson, who would become an outstanding early “professional” historian, and among his early students were Woodrow Wilson and Albert Shaw, the future editor of the *American Review of Reviews* from 1891 to 1937. The term “amateurs” refers to the well-educated but nonprofessional historians who wrote in the early and mid nineteenth century and who worked at some other professions or livelihood (e. g., as clergymen, lawyers, physicians, journalists). The term “professional historians” is not entirely satisfactory since it implies that those historians who were not in their academic ranks were a lesser breed of historians. It is, however, a commonly used designation for this group. Also, I have chosen not to use the term “historicism” in reference to this group. Although it is sometimes used to identify them, it has acquired too many meanings and has lost whatever precision it may have had.

¹² John Fiske, *Essays Historical and Literary*, 2 vols. (1902; reprint, New York: Macmillan Company, 1925), 2: 6 and 16.

¹³ Consider, for instance, Albert Bushnell Hart’s American Nation Series, published in 26 individually authored volumes between 1904 and 1906. The volumes were divided into five groups: Group I, “Foundations of the Nation;” Group II, “Transformation Into a Nation;” Group III, “Development of the Nation;” Group IV, “Trial of Nationality;” and Group V, “National Expansion.” In the first volume this definition of history appears. “The purpose of the historian is to tell what has been done and, quite as much, what has been purposed by thinking, working, and producing people who make public opinion.... This is not intended to be simply a political or constitutional history: it must include their social life, and their schools. It must include their economic life, occupations, labor systems, and organizations of capital....” True history, Hart continued, must include “dramatic episodes” that “inspired the imagination of contemporaries, and stir the blood of their descendants.” And, regarding the “condensed” citations, they represented a “constant reference to authorities, a salutary check on the writer; and a safeguard to the reader.” The Scientific school was pushing out its borders: Albert Bushnell Hart, ed., Edward Potts Cheyney, *European Background of American History: 1300-1600* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1904), XVII-XVIII.

¹⁴ Frank J. Goodnow, “The Work of the American Political Science Association,” *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 1 (1905): 37. See also, Albert Shaw, “Presidential Address,” *American Political Science Review* 1 (Feb. 1907): 184.

¹⁵ John Higham, Leonard Krieger, and Felix Gilbert, *History* (Englewood Cliffs,

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N. J.: 1965), 1 10-113.

¹⁶ "James Harvey Robinson, *The New History* (1912; reprint, New York: The Free Press, 1965), XV.

¹⁷ Quoted in Dorothy Ross, "On the Misunderstanding of Ranke and the Origins of the Historical Profession in America," *Syracuse Scholar* 9 (1988): 38.

¹⁸ Higham, Krieger, and Gilbert, *History*, 111 and 116.

¹⁹ "Carl Becker, "Everyman his own Historian," *American Historical Review* 37 (Jan. 1932): 221-36.

²⁰ Quoted in Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 308.

²¹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), XII.

²² Exemplifying the rich variety in historical writing in these years was the work of Howard K. Beale (political history), Thomas A Bailey (diplomatic history), Charles Beard (economic history), Perry Miller and Vernon Louis Parrington (intellectual history), John R. Commons (labor history), W. E. B. Dubois and Carter Woodson (black history), Mary Beard (women's history), and Lucy Salmon and Willard Bleyer (journalism history).

²³ Quoted in Harvey Wish, *The American Historian: A Social-Intellectual History of the Writing of the American Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 313.

²⁴ Charles A. Beard, "That Noble Dream," *American Historical Review* 41 (1935): 85. Regarding Marx's limited influences on American historians at this time, see Oscar Handlin, *Truth in History* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), 70 and 73.

²⁵ Quoted in Higham, Krieger, and Gilbert, *History*, 104-5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 73-77.

²⁷ The elements of the practice of history are apparent in the standard works on historical method in use at that time. See, for example, Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer on Historical Method* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950); and Joseph R. Strayer, ed., *The Interpretation of History* (1943; reprint, New York: Peter Smith, 1950).

²⁸ Harvey Wish, ed., *American Historians, A Selection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 380.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 391.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 393.

³¹ See, for example, Henry Osborn Taylor, "Continuities In History," *American Historical Review* 44 (Oct. 1938): 1-19.

³² William H. Chafe, "America Since 1945," in *The New American History*, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 144-46.

³³ Hannah Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," *Partisan Review* 20 (July-

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Aug. 1953): 388 and 380-94. Considering the rich historical accounts about the background and rise of Nazism published since she made this statement, it appears she was mistaken.

³⁴ See, for example, C. Vann Woodward, "The Age of Reinterpretation," *American Historical Review* 66 (Oct. 1960): 1-2; and H. Stuart Hughes, "The Historian and the Social Scientist," in *Generalizations in Historical Writing*, eds. Alexander V. Riasanovsky and Barnes Riznik (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), 20-21.

³⁵ See, for example, representative historiographic studies such as Gottschalk, *Understanding History*, 33-37, Allan Nevins, *The Gateway to History*, rev. ed. (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Anchor Books, 1962), 332-35; and Page Smith, *The Historian and History* (1960; reprint, New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1966), 136-37.

³⁶ Richard Hofstadter, "History and Social Science," in *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*, ed. Fritz Stern (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, Meridian Books, 1956), 371.

³⁷ See, for example, Catherine Drinker Bowen, "Biography, History, and the Writing of Books," and Allan Nevins "The Old History and the New," *The Art of History* (Washington: The Library of Congress, 1967), 15-19, and 29; Gabriel Jackson, *Historian's Quest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 25; and Louis O. Mink, "Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument," in *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, eds. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 129-49.

³⁸ Carl Bridenbaugh, "The Great Mutation," *American Historical Review* 68 (Jan. 1963), 326. Bridenbaugh was criticized for the anti-Jewish implications of some of his other comments in this address. See, Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity' Question and the American Historical Profession* (1988; reprint, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 339. For a critique of quantification see, Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Political Crisis of Social History: A Marxian Perspective," *Journal of Social History* 10 (Winter 1976): 210-11. In this article the authors speak of the "disastrously short-lived cliometric revolution." Indeed, by 1976, the rush to quantification had passed its peak.

³⁹ See, for example, Handlin, *Truth in History*, 223-26; Paul K. Conkin and Roland N. Stromberg, *The Heritage and Challenge of History* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1971), 111-12; Hughes, "The Historian and the Social Scientist," 42; and Jerome M. Clubb and Howard Allen, "Computers and Historical Statics" *Journal of American History* 54 (Dec. 1967): 599-607.

⁴⁰ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Humanist Looks at Empirical Social Research," *American Sociological Review* 27 (Dec. 1962): 770.

⁴¹ William L. Langer, "The Next Assignment," *American Historical Review* 63 (Jan. 1958): 290-95.

⁴² In 1913 Preserved Smith published an article, "Luther's Early Develop-

ment," in which he attempted a psychoanalytical study of Martin Luther, whom he considered a "highly neurotic personality." Jacques Barzun, *Clio and the Doctors: Psycho-History, Quanto-History and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 7.

⁴³ Higham, Krieger, and Gilbert, *History*, 228-32.

⁴⁴ Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958), and Sigmund Freud and William Bullitt, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson: Twenty-Eighth President of the United States, A Psychological Study* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967). Both books are seriously flawed, and both received abundant response from historians. See, for example, Roland Bainton, "Psychiatry and History: An Examination of Erikson's *Young Man Luther*," in *Psychohistory and Religion: The Case of "Young Man Luther"* ed. Roger A. Johnson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 19-56; and Barbara Tuchman, "Can History Use Freud? The Case of Woodrow Wilson," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1967, pp. 39-44.

⁴⁵ Barzun, *Clio and the Doctor*. 72-73.

⁴⁶ Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 254-297.

⁴⁷ Philp Rieff, "Psychoanalysis," in *American History and the Social Sciences*, ed. Edward N. Saveth (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 112 and 118-19.

⁴⁸ Higham, Krieger, and Gilbert, *History*, 139. See also, Edward N. Saveth, "The Conceptualization of American History," in *American History and the Social Sciences*, 3-24; Thomas C. Cochran, "The Social Sciences and the Problem of Historical Synthesis," in Pendleton Herring, ed., *The Social Sciences in Historical Study*, Bulletin 64 (New York: Social Science, Research Council, 1954, 157-71; and Hughes, "The Historian and the Social Scientist," 18-59.

⁴⁹ I decided to examine the new social history rather than the other "new" histories because it was the most comprehensive of the lot, and because it was trying to replace political history as the mainstream of history. For the same reason, I chose to pursue it rather than black history or the history of women.

⁵⁰ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The New History and the Old: Critical Essays and Reappraisals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Belknap Press, 1982), 15.

⁵¹ Two of the landmark books in the new social history, Peter Laslett's, *The World We Have Lost* and Lawrence Stone's *The Crisis in Aristocracy*, were published in 1965. Also, Peter N. Stearns began publication of the *Journal of Social History* in 1967. There was an unmistakable attitude among social historians at this time that their history was different from social history as it was previously written. Sometimes they referred to the latter, rather unfairly, as "pots and pans" history or in some other belittling way. They did, of course, recognize the individual prestigious historians like Marc Block who preceded them.

⁵² The Annales school is the historical writing associated with the publication

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of the journal *Les Annales: Economics, societe's, civilisations*. Marc Block and Lucien Febvre founded the journal with a slightly different title in 1929. The editors dropped the reference to economics in the title in the 1950s and focused exclusively on the social element. The Annales approach rejected the centrality of politics in history as it did narrative history and progress in history. These historians were interested in structuralism and drew from Karl Marx's study of economic forces in history and from Emile Durkheim's work on collective behavior. Fernand Braudel, the editor of the journal from 1956-1972, claimed the real founder of the school was Henri Barr, a French intellectual whose work can be traced back to 1890. See, Fernand Braudel, "Personal Testimony," *Journal of Modern History* 44 (June 1972): 454-5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 462, and Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols., 3d ed., trans. Siin Reynolds (1946; reprint, New York: Harper & C Row, 1972). In his monumental study, Braudel covers geography, economics, empires, societies, war, and events, politics and people — in that order. It is interesting to note, that in Part Three, when he turns to discussing events, politics and people, he opens with this observation: "It [this section] has strong affinities with frankly traditional historiography Leopold von Ranke, if he were alive today, would find much that was familiar, both in subject matter and treatment, in the following pages." (Vol. 2: 901).

⁵⁴ Himmelfarb, *New History and the Old*, 14.

⁵⁵ Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 154-55.

⁵⁶ John Hope Franklin, "The New Negro History," *Journal of Negro History* 42 (April 1957): 89, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman and the New History," *Feminist Studies* 3 (Fall 1975): 185.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁵⁸ Alice Kessler-Harris, "Social History," in Foner, *The New American History*, 178-9. John Higham observes, "The new social history produced a mighty outpouring of social description and analysis; but the gain in concreteness did not yield a greater coherence. An enormous fragmentation ensued.... Each network developed its own scholarly journal, its own energizing question, its own agenda.... Often these groups were entirely out of touch with one another; concepts that interested one set of scholars were rarely articulated with the problems that interested other sets.... Somehow social historians would have to find a subject ... large enough to embrace ... the confusing multiplicity of groups and identities standing before us...." Higham, "From Process to Structure: Formulations of American Immigration History," in *American Immigrants and Their Generations: Studies and Commentaries on the Hansen Thesis after Fifty Years*, eds. Peter Kivisto and Dag Blanck (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 13. Peter Burke was even more explicit. "... There are some encouraging signs of rapprochement, if not of synthesis.... It is now possible to observe a ... search for the centre.... Most important of all, perhaps, the long-standing opposition between political and non-political historians is finally dissolving."

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Burke, "Overture: the New History," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Burke (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 19. In 1996, Peter Stearns, one of the pioneers in the field wrote of the need for reconciliation with other branches of history. "Clio, a muse of balance and perspective, deserves the broader vision," he stated. "A Cease-fire for History?" *The History Teacher* 30 (Nov. 1996): 81.

⁵⁹ Social historians' disparaging comments about orthodox history were, in fact, quite common. See, Himmelfarb, *The New History and the Old*, 27; Joyce Appleby, "The Power of History," *American Historical Review* 103 (Feb. 1998): 6; Charles Tilly, *As Sociology Meets History* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 5-6; and Lawrence Stone, *The Past and the Present* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 30.

⁶⁰ Lynn Hunt, "French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the Annales Paradigm," *Journal of Contemporary History* 21 (1986): 213-14, and Theodore Zeldin, "Social History and Total History," *Journal of Social History* 10 (Winter 1976): 240.

⁶¹ Alice Kessler-Harris, "Social History," in Foner, *New American History*, 178.

⁶² Carroll Smith-Rosenberg points out that "despite its [contemporary social history] emphasis on institutions and events of greatest concern to women, the New Social Historians, with few exceptions, have ignored women.... contemporary social historians have also ignored one of the most basic forms of human interaction — that between sexes." "The New Woman and the New History," 189.

⁶³ Carl N. Degler, "Women and the Family," in *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*, ed. Michael Kammen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 310.

⁶⁴ Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Political Crisis of Social History," 214. Among the other one-time enthusiasts of the new social history who later lamented its failures are two of its founders, Lawrence Stone and Peter Stearns. See Stone's oft cited comments in *The Past and the Present*, 30-44, and Stearns' "A Cease-fire for History?" 73-81.

⁶⁵ Nash, et al., *History on Trial*, 5, 16, 26, 76, 82.

⁶⁶ Quoted in, William E. Leuchtenburg, "The Pertinence of Political History: Reflections on the Significance of the State in America," *Journal of American History*, 73 (Dec. 1986): 600.

⁶⁷ Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History*, 200.

⁶⁸ Churchill coined the term in 1906 when he rose in parliament to say that his own Liberal party's reference to "Chinese Slavery" (a reference to Chinese labor in South Africa) had been overstated. The term "slavery," he said, could apply to Unionist policy in South Africa only at the risk of "terminological inexactitude."

⁶⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. Peter Preuss (1874; reprint, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company,

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1980), 21 and 35.

⁷⁰ Richard Rorty, "Deconstruction," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 8, *From Formalism to Poststructuralism*, ed. Raman Selden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 193-96.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 166-74; Christopher Falzon, *Foucault and Dialogue: Beyond Fragmentation* (London: Routledge, 1998), 36-46; Sidney Monas, "Introduction: Contemporary Historiography: Some Kicks in the Old Coffin," 3 and 5; and Georg G. Iggers, "Rationality and History," 35, in *Developments in Modern Historiography*, ed. Henry Kozicki (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); and John M. Ellis, *Against Deconstruction* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 52, 65-66, and 113-21.

⁷² Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History*, 204; and Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 118.

⁷³ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 82.

⁷⁴ Gerald N. Izenberg, "Text, Context, and Psychology in Intellectual History," in Kozicki, *Developments in Modern Historiography*, 4 1 .

⁷⁵ Appleby, Hunt, Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, 197-237; G. R. Elton, *Return to Essentials: Some Reflections on the Present State of Historical Study* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 27-49; and Lawrence Stone, "History and Post-Modernism," *Past and Present* (Aug. 1991): 217-18. See also, Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists Are Murdering Our Past* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 132-54.

⁷⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 195; Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, 227 and 233; and Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 100.

⁷⁸ Elton, *Return to Essentials*, 13, and Richard Rorty, "Deconstruction," 167, n. 2; and Bryan Palmer, "The Condition of the Poststructuralist Challenge to Political Meaning," *The Maryland Historian* 24 (Spring/Summer 1993): 67.

⁷⁹ Thomas Bender, "Wholes and Parts: The Need for Synthesis in American History," *American Historical Review* 73 (June 1986): 120-36; John Higham, "The Future of American History," *Journal of American History* 81 (March 1994): 1286-1307; Leuchtenburg, *ibid.*, 73 (Dec. 1986): 585-600; and Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 141-44.

⁸⁰ J. Rogers Hollingsworth, "Commentary on 'Consensus and Continuity' in Post-War Historical Interpretation," in *The Historian and the Climate of Opinion*, ed. Robert Allen Skotheim (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), 95.

⁸¹ Adam Watson, ed., *Herbert Butterfield: The Origins of History* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 8.

⁸² Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet in The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, ed. Christopher Morley (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1930), 27.

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Many such references can be found in the Sherlock Holmes stories.

⁸³ John Hope Franklin, "The Historian and Public Policy," in *The Vital Past: Writings on the Uses of History*, ed. Stephen Vaughn (Athens, GA.: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 359.

⁸⁴ Gerda Lerner, *Why History Matters*, title page.

⁸⁵ C. V. Wedgwood, *The Sense of the Past: Thirteen Studies in the Theory and Practice of History* (New York: Macmillan Company, Collier Books, 1967), 81.

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In the Beginning: Historiography of Civil War-era Southern Journalism, Part I

By Debra van Tuyll ©



van Tuyll

EDITOR'S NOTE: This historiographical essay is the first in a two-part series. We will publish the second part in the September issue of this journal.

Scholarly interest in the military history of the American Civil War began even before that war ended. The same is not true for the social history of the war. Histories of the home front, politics, and social institutions such as journalism did not really come to scholarly attention until the 20th century and, in the case of journalism, not until World War II opened new questions about censorship and the role of the press in wartime.

Those early studies opened topics that were mainstays in studies of war and the press — censorship; reporting under harsh conditions; and biographies of editors, reporters, and their newspapers. However, those early studies suffered from having been done when the Developmental school of thought was at its ascendancy. This school of thought is simplistic; it seeks to trace the history of the development of journalism according to pre-conceived norms that exclude rather than include. Scholarship done from the Developmental perspective would find little of value among niche and small-audience media, media that emphasize

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content other than straight news, or media that espouse a particular political or other perspective.¹

While Southern journalism had adopted some of the prevailing practices and standards — reporters had appeared in the offices of the larger newspapers, editors cherished and defended editorial freedom despite their political entanglements, and steam presses were the norm, even for many weekly papers — it was targeted to small, elite audiences; it emphasized political commentary; and it was overwhelmingly Democratic and pro-slavery. The Southern press of the Civil War era cannot be dismissed as lacking in all value, however. It was a product of a particular place at a particular time, both of which were dramatically influenced by their intertwining with a labor system based on slavery. At the very least, it is worth studying the press of such a time and place to understand how journalism functions and contributes to the creation and maintenance of a slave society. Equally important, the only time in modern America when the press has experienced war on its home turf was in the South during the Civil War. That is what should make the Southern press of the Civil War era particularly interesting to scholars.

However, many have rejected its value out of hand because it was so different from the norm — the metropolitan press of places like New York City, Philadelphia, and Boston. The result is that much of the early scholarship on the press of Civil War-era looks backward from contemporary standards and practices and finds Southern journalism and journalists lacking. This article has put those works aside to focus on 20th century works that opened serious lines of inquiry into studies of the Southern press of the Civil War era.² This scholarship focused on four broad themes: 1) censorship and regulation, 2) professional roles and practices, 3) social and political effects (particularly effects on Confederate civilian morale), and 4) individual newspaper histories and biographies of individual journalists.

Most 20th century scholarship was in the form of articles. Publication venues ranged from the unlikely *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* to the more standard *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* (and its previous incarnation, *Journalism Quarterly*), *Journalism Monographs*, *Journalism History*, *Journal of Southern History*, *American Journalism*, and *Civil War History*. Only a handful of serious book-length studies were published in this period, the most important of which was J. Cutler Andrews' *The South Reports the Civil War*.

Censorship

The biggest take-away from the work on censorship during the Civil War is that scholars could not agree on the extent to which Southern newspapers were censored. Some argued that censorship was tight in the beginning of the war but gradually loosened. Others argued that there was little censorship at the beginning of the war but that changed as Southern armies floundered. Still others argued, correctly, that the Southern press endured virtually no direct censorship by the Confederate government.³ Robert N. Mathis and Patricia Towery contributed two of the more interesting perspectives on this argument. Mathis discerned correctly and definitively that Jefferson Davis was the reason so little official censorship occurred in the Confederacy. Davis did not believe in government interference with the press, and neither he, his cabinet, nor the Confederate Congress ever sanctioned any form of censorship legislation. Towery's 1975 study of censorship in South Carolina found that any hint of infringements on press freedom "brought quick reprisals from journalists in the form of editorials, pleas for public support and warnings of a possible military bureaucracy within the Confederacy."⁴

Hodding Carter and L. Edward Carter also waded into this debate. Hodding Carter, a Mississippi newspaperman rather than a scholar, be-

lieved the Confederate press made important contributions that expanded the meaning of press freedom in America, but that in doing so hastened the Confederacy's downfall by their vicious criticism of Southern leaders. Journalists' insistence on their right to criticize helped strengthen press freedoms in America generally.⁵ L. Edward Carter disagreed. He argued that the Southern press did have freedom of a sort, but not complete freedom since it was not allowed to criticize slavery.⁶ He was presuming, of course, that Southern editors wanted to criticize slavery.

While there was not much government censorship in the South, scholars have found that many journalists engaged in self-censorship. America's entry into World War II spurred Quintus C. Wilson, a master's student at the University of Minnesota in the 1940s and news editor at the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, to look at the history of censorship.⁷ Wilson's first article set out to examine self-censorship by both Union and Confederate editors, but his focus was on Union newspapers. Wilson argued that the Civil War was the first time in American history that press censorship was much of an issue because it was the first time news moved swiftly enough, and from close enough proximity, to influence military affairs.

Writing more than 50 years later, Richard Kielbowicz seconded Wilson's contention that Civil War censorship was both necessary and feasible — necessary because of the speed with which the telegraph allowed news to move and feasible because the Confederate government could, and did, take control of the wires.⁸ Kielbowicz's study explained *why* censorship occurred in the Civil War; Wilson's explained *how* it occurred.

Others who wrote about censorship in the South focused on self-censorship rather than government censorship, and they found Confederates were far more willing to withhold stories for the good of the war effort.⁹ This was certainly true of some journalists; however, other

newspapers such as the *Charleston Mercury*, the *Raleigh Standard*, or the *Augusta Chronicle* (after 1862) felt no such compunction. In fact, the Raleigh paper proclaimed loudly and often that a newspaper's responsibility was to keep the public informed about what the government was up to, and the *Mercury* and its ilk were only slightly less insistent about their freedom to publish.¹⁰

Wilson's master's thesis also dealt with Civil War-era censorship.¹¹ He argued that censorship in the South went back to the 1830s when Postmaster General Amos Kendall allowed abolitionist materials to be banned from Southern mails and when several Southern states put a price on William Lloyd Garrison's head. Garrison was editor of the abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*. Wilson wrongly concluded that the Southern people were uninformed about the issues leading up to the Civil War because they had been deprived of abolitionist literature. Not only were abolitionist newspapers published in the early antebellum South, Southern editors often republished and commented derisively on pro-abolition articles from Northern papers. Further, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* circulated widely in the South — and was thoroughly denounced from pulpits, in print, and in conversation. Writing for the *Southern Quarterly Review*, South Carolinian Louisa McCord dismissed Stowe's novel as nothing more than drivel. She observed that the "literary taste of our day (i.e., the second-rate literary taste, the fashionable novel-reading taste) demands excitement. Nothing can be spiced too high. Incident, incident and that of the vilest kind, crowds the pages of those novels which are now unfortunately all the vogue.... For such tastes, Mrs. Stowe has catered well."¹²

Wilson's third work, a history of the Confederate Press Association, argued that censorship eased in the South in the second half of the war when this new press association hired John S. Thrasher as its superintendent.¹³ Wilson documented Thrasher's work to contact all Confederate commanders and ask for their cooperation in getting war news

from the battle field into newspapers. In return, he promised that his correspondents would not reveal Confederate troop movements but would report any information they gained regarding Union plans. He also promised to send each day's report to the generals who cooperated with him. Further, he imposed a strict ethical code on his correspondents that required them to report only well-verified, accurate information.¹⁴

In truth, the Jefferson Davis' commitment to press freedom was probably the most important censorship prophylactic. With one exception, both the president and Congress stood up for press freedom every time a military leader asked for government constraints on journalists.¹⁵ Southern editors had never been cowed by either political authorities or social elites, and they no doubt took note of the mood of Congress on the issue of censorship, particularly those involved with the Confederate peace movement.¹⁶

The one exception was particularly interesting. In a November 1864 speech to Congress, Davis proposed two things. First, he proposed that slaves be accepted into the army to remedy the South's military manpower shortage. Second, he recommended removing the exemptions to conscription that had been granted to certain professions, including journalists. Philip D. Dillard found that four southern newspapers — the *Macon Telegraph*, *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, *Augusta Constitutionalist*, and *Christian Index* — opposed arming slaves. Most others took the same position. The most interesting response was from the *Augusta Chronicle's* editor, Nathan Morse. Radically anti-Davis, he said not a word on the slave issue. He focused all his vitriol on what most Southern journalists perceived as Davis' proposal to conscript editors. Morse believed Davis' proposal was an attempt to silence opposition editors. Dillard's article was significant because it showed that the Confederacy was more than just a war machine. It was a nation struggling with political and social issues, including censorship.¹⁷

Professional Roles and Practices

Studies of newspaper roles and practices varied in approach from an analysis of how a particular newspaper covered a particular event or issue, such as the 1974 study of how one Atlanta newspaper covered Sherman's March to the Sea, to more complex studies that link newspaper coverage to other events in Confederate society.¹⁸ J. Cutler Andrews wrote probably the best book to consider the professional roles and practices of the Confederate press. Written at the behest of Frank Luther Mott, Andrews' book blended an account of Southern war correspondence with the story of the war itself. Andrews considered issues and events that influenced the Southern press' ability to report the war, including the shortages of printers, news print, and ink, and he concluded that because it had fewer material and monetary resources, the Southern press provided less war coverage than the Northern press. However, qualitatively, Andrews found that the South's best journalists compared favorably with the North's. He based his evaluation on criteria such as reliability, readability, descriptive qualities of stories and the reporter's ability to grasp the larger significance of the events he observed.¹⁹

Andrew's book works in tandem with Donald E. Reynold's study of Southern newspapers during the secession crisis, and Carl Osthaus' work on Southern editorial opinion during the 19th century to offer a long view of the Southern press during the mid-19th century.²⁰ Osthaus and Reynolds showed that Southern newspapers were similar to Northern newspapers up until the 1850s. However, in the 1850s, according to Osthaus, Northern newspapers began to outstrip Southern newspapers in their development toward contemporary standards and practices. Osthaus was both right and wrong. The Southern press continued to focus on politics, but it adopted many of the practices and standards of the metropolitan press, including reporters and a growing

focus on news.²¹

Many writers who have addressed the standards and practices of Southern journalism have dealt with the hardships posed by the war. Rabun Lee Brantley and Cal M. Logue, Eugene F. Miller and Christopher J. Schroll examined the difficulties Georgia newspapers had in remaining profitable, gathering and disseminating the news due to shortages and soaring costs, and dealing with censorship. They found printer and paper shortages were among the most serious problems.²²

Catherine Patricia Oliver produced essentially the same sort of study about the press of South Carolina.²³ In her truly excellent master's thesis, Oliver found, for example, that shortages of newsprint forced many South Carolina newspapers to print on half-sized sheets by 1864. The newsprint shortage was so acute that newspapers in other parts of the Confederacy, such as Vicksburg, Mississippi, were forced to print on whatever they could find, including wallpaper, wrapping paper, tissue paper, and blue ledger paper.²⁴

In addition to shortages and censorship, newspapers suffered when essential government services failed. Mail disruptions, for example, were a major problem. The *Charleston Mercury* became so disgruntled by the South's poor mail service that it did an investigation on the Post Office and found that there was a 2-to-1 chance a piece of mail would go astray on the trains. The *Mercury* also argued that it should only take 30 hours to move mail from Richmond to Charleston instead of the more typical two-and-a-half to four days.²⁵

Editors also had trouble with the telegraph companies that went beyond censorship, the biggest one being that the Confederacy did not have enough telegraph operators to handle all the business. A large number of operators joined the Confederate army, and many who were Northern by birth returned home when the war began.²⁶ One telegraph company did yeoman's work, though, during Sherman's March to the Sea. The Augusta Southern Telegraph office kept its offices open day

and night and even sent messages by courier when the lines were down or not working.²⁷

Money was an enduring problem. Newspaper publishing had never been particularly lucrative even before the war. It became even less lucrative during the war when demand for newspapers increased but willingness to pay for them decreased. Advertisers also wiggled out of paying for their ads. The *Charleston Mercury* offers an example. By the end of the war, advertisers owed the paper \$20,000. Subscribers owed it \$17,000.²⁸

One of the most comprehensive works dealing with the standards and practices of the political antebellum press was a doctoral dissertation that never found its way into print.²⁹ John Calhoun Ellen, Jr., a doctoral student at the University of South Carolina, examined the political press of the Carolina Piedmont in the 1850s. He addressed not only the politics of the period but also the impact of developments in transportation and printing technology, business matters, postal service rates, and the waxing and waning of political parties in the 1850s. The rise and fall of political parties in the 1850s spurred the growth of Piedmont newspapers, according to Ellen, and that brought many new journalists into the area. Regrettably, he added, the Civil War brought an end to journalistic expansion, not only because of declining finances, but also because so many of the young, energetic editors went away to the war.³⁰ However, they had had their effect. Newspapers in this period moved beyond political commentary to include news topics such as economics, society, religion, disasters, weather and crime. Further, papers also began experimenting with departmentalizing news through the use of standing headlines such as "Agriculture," "Medical Intelligence," "Ladies," "Humor," or "Arrivals at Local Hotels."³¹

David J. Russo also found news outstripping commentary in Southern papers. He focused on the growth of local news coverage and found great numbers of news stories that dealt with social events, pol-

itics, agriculture, and spot news. Russo concluded that competition from urban dailies led many country weeklies to pick up the local news they had previously eschewed.³²

L. Edward Carter claimed that while all aspects of newspapers changed due to the Civil War, the greatest change was in how news was defined. He pointed to telegraphs and railways as largely responsible for the change in news standards because of the speed with which they could move information. The downside was that fast-moving information could interfere with military operations. The war also changed newspaper makeup through the use of larger and more prominent headlines, according to Carter.³³

While many studies of the antebellum press have examined how politics and political involvement influenced journalistic standards and practices of the day, few have examined the inverse question — how did journalistic standards and practices influence the politics. Only David Porter addressed this important topic in an examination of the influence of editorial endorsements on the 1860 election.³⁴ Porter examined the endorsements of 118 Southern newspapers and the voting records for their communities. He found a strong correlation between the endorsements and community voting patterns, which supports the claims by editors that they led public opinion.

One “fluke” of Confederate journalism was that not all Southern newspapers were published within its borders. The Confederate government established an organ in London to assist in gaining British support. The *Confederate Index* was established in London on May 1, 1862 by Alabama journalist Henry Hotze. Confederate Secretary of State Robert M. T. Hunter sent Hotze to London as the South’s special agent there, and one of his assignments was to establish a newspaper. Hotze ran the paper until August 1864 when he turned the day-to-day editing chores over to John George Witt. Hotze wrote a letter to Witt that explained exactly what was involved in running a newspaper.³⁵

Hortz placed his emphasis on news. He told Witt that news was what sold newspapers, and he defined news as whatever the readers wanted to know about.³⁶ Hotze also argued that a newspaper should have something it wants to accomplish. Further, he wrote that a paper should be cosmopolitan but have a country, tolerant but not indifferent, moderate but have strong convictions, instructive but not dull, entertaining but not frivolous. Hotze's picture of the ideal paper was quite modern. He described a newspaper with a world view but that is representative of its community, that respects diversity but still is not bland or silly, that is willing to take a principled but reasoned position on the issues of the day, that offers useful information but still has passion. Hotze knew that such balanced and wise journalism was impossible, yet he argued that it was an objective to be worked toward.³⁷

Social and Political Effects

Questions of effects are difficult to deal with retrospectively, but that has not stopped historians from trying in a few instances. Many authors have conjectured that the press must have had considerable influence, given that it was the sole news medium of the day. However, other authors have argued that Southern newspaper circulations were too small to have any great effect on the overwhelming mass of people. Several studies deal with this question, though only two did so directly. Other studies in this category examine the question of Southern morale through the prism of press/government relations and propaganda.

Peter Langley addressed the question of effects the most directly via a quantitative study of how optimistic or pessimistic news was.³⁸ He did a content analysis of the *Richmond Dispatch* and the *New York Times* that covered 22 months. He focused on how the newspapers covered the destruction of the Confederacy. He anticipated finding that as the *Richmond Dispatch* grew more optimistic in its coverage, the *New*

York Times would grow more pessimistic, and vice versa. Instead, he found that during lulls in the fighting, when there was little news, the *Dispatch* became more optimistic about the Confederacy's chances of winning, but the *Times* became more neutral. Langley also anticipated finding that Southern optimism began to fail after the fall of Vicksburg in July 1863. Instead, he found that Southern optimism was not broken until a year later with the fall of Atlanta.³⁹ The South's editorial optimism never really vanished entirely, though, according to J. Cutler Andrews who authored another study of Confederate morale. Many Southern editors engaged in wishful thinking during Sherman's March to the Sea.⁴⁰ In fact, even after Appomattox, some Southerners were still confident they could beat the North.

Public morale was a concern for editors and politicians alike during the Civil War, just as it has been for historians since, according to James W. Silver.⁴¹ As early as December 1860, John M. Daniel, editor of the *Richmond Enquirer*, was predicting that munitions and other materiel of war might hold out long enough for a victory over the North, but he was uncertain public morale could be maintained.⁴² Silver claimed that there never was any real governmental attempt to manipulate public opinion, but John Paul Jones contradicted him in a study that found the Confederate government did a better job of supporting public morale than the Northern.⁴³ Silver agreed that the Confederate Congress and president did often appeal to the public to keep up its fighting spirit, but he argued even Davis' attempts to propagandize via speeches and proclamations were unsuccessful. Religious leaders were more important in bolstering public morale than politicians, Silver argued.⁴⁴ Southern editors, he said, were also important in fomenting support for the war through atrocity stories and exaggeration.

An 1989 study looks beyond the propaganda issue to address the question of effects. It examines whether the Civil War press promoted unity or was neutral.⁴⁵ Author Thomas Andrew Hughes considered

whether journalists can be detached and objective in wars. The value of Hughes' work is that it considered the motives behind the way information was presented and interpreted.

Individual Stories of Journalists and Newspapers

The stories of individual Southern journalists and newspapers are less common than those of Northern journalists. Few Southern editors left papers or diaries, though a handful left pseudo-memoirs or collections of stories that have been published. Following the war, for example, Felix De Fontaine, used the Columbia *South Carolinian's* print shop to publish several collections of his own writings. He even briefly published a short-lived Civil War magazine.⁴⁶ Also, in 1868, Frederick Daniel, brother of *Richmond Examiner* editor John M. Daniel, published a collection of his sibling's war-time writings. Frederick's contribution offered an insight into the daily workings of the newspaper and his brother's political involvements.⁴⁷

With the exception of a handful of memoirs and writings collected at the time, though, the South's Civil War journalists left behind few primary sources beyond their newspapers. What biographical work has been done has primarily relied upon the public writings of editors and correspondents. J. Ford Risley used newspapers to reveal useful insights into the life and work of Connecticut-Yankee-turned-Confederate editor Nathan Morse of the *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*.⁴⁸ Risley dealt with Morse's editorial support for Georgia Governor Joseph Brown's opposition to Jefferson Davis, but he had to base his conclusions about Morse and his motivations for supporting Brown solely from what Morse had written in his newspaper. Consequently, Risley presented what Morse *said*, not what he *thought*. While this is a useful sort of story, it is not nearly so rich as it would be had Morse left materials behind which would give us a sort of "inner view." Risley, in a pre-

vious publication, wrote essentially the same sort of piece on Peter Alexander, a Thomaston, Ga., lawyer who was a correspondent for the *Savannah Republican* and other papers, during the war.⁴⁹

Two Southern journalists have stood out as notable exceptions to this rule, however. One was William Gilmore Simms. Because of his literary contributions, there has been more interest in his life and more effort to preserve knowledge about him.⁵⁰ Sufficient materials were available for Maurice Cullen, Jr. to produce a biography of Simms that focused on his work as a journalist.⁵¹ Much of the work on Simms has had its genesis, however, in literary, rather than journalistic, scholarship.

The other was William Woods Holden. Holden was North Carolina's opposition editor who became provisional governor of that state following the war. He was also the first governor in the United States to be impeached. Because of his governorship and long involvement with North Carolina party politics, Holden left a collection of papers that have been widely used as the basis of at least two doctoral dissertations as well as other works. In 1934, Edgar Estes Folk wrote a doctoral dissertation at George Peabody College for Teachers about Holden's work as a political journalist. Nearly 20 years later, H. W. Rapier examined Holden's political career.⁵²

Richard Reid wrote about Holden and his "disloyalty" to the Confederacy.⁵³ Holden, like Morse and Brown, was skeptical of Jefferson Davis' state-making activities and his execution of the war — so skeptical, in fact, that he became involved in a secret peace movement. Like Morse and Brown, many authors have accused Holden of being disloyal. At least some degree of these accusations can be laid at the door of Southern apologists who remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Civil War. The accusations against Holden, Reid pointed out, were for his belief that secession would not aid the Southern cause but would instead bring dissention and military despotism. The result was accusa-

tions of disloyalty, yet Holden really was guilty only of seeing the situation more clearly and less emotionally than his peers.

Studies of individual newspapers are valuable, even though they generally are survey histories, because they contextualize media across time. They examine how newspapers functioned at the community level and offer insights into editorial personalities and local journalistic standards and practices. Works within this genre include studies of the *Columbus (Ga.) Enquirer*, the *Raleigh Register*, the *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, the *Charleston Courier*, and the *Atlanta Intelligencer*.⁵⁴ A study of the *Charleston Mercury* focused on its role as the antebellum political organ for John C. Calhoun and Robert Barnwell Rhett, two of the primary fomenters of secession.⁵⁵ This is a particularly useful study since most work on the partisan press has been done in terms of newspapers as party organs and their roles in helping to achieve party objectives.

State- and community-level studies have dealt mostly with staffing issues, standards and practices, and content. Examples of these sorts of state-level studies include William L. King's history of Charleston newspapers, Louis Turner Griffith and John Erwin Talmadge's history of Georgia newspapers, Than Stem's study of the North Carolina Press, and Pat McNeely's history of the South Carolina media. These are typically survey histories and so provide only brief overviews of the Civil War period.⁵⁶

Community, or city, level studies have focused on newspapers in both large cities and smaller villages. Their utility can be great or small, depending on the nature of the study. Thomas McAlpin Stubbs published a study of the Sumter, S.C., press in 1953 that has limited utility as anything other than a reference book.⁵⁷ The work was essentially an inventory of newspapers that were published, when they were published, who their editors were, and where file copies might be found. Henry T. Malone's study of Atlanta newspapers during the Civil War

also inventoried the newspapers of that community, but additionally, he looked into how the press functioned during that period.⁵⁸ One of the interesting aspects of this study was his discussion of the refugee newspapers that fled to Atlanta when their home communities were captured by the Union. Not nearly enough is known about how these papers functioned once they left their home territory or what advertisers and audiences they served. Malone did not address these questions, but he did offer a starting point by documenting when the newspapers arrived in Atlanta and a little of what they wrote about being refugees.

Of all these works, perhaps the most original in its approach, and the most valuable for its contribution to understanding not only the media of the time but the readers as well, was an early 1980s study of newspaper and periodical readership in a small North Carolina village, Rocky Mount.⁵⁹ This account was based on a postmaster's account book that included a list of all the newspapers and periodicals delivered in his district. More importantly, this particular postmaster not only kept a record of which publications circulated in his community, but also the names of individual subscribers. The author of this study, a freelance researcher named Helen Watson, combined the contents of this account book, which covers the years 1859 and 1860, with 1860 census data to create a picture of readership in a single Southern community on the cusp of war.

Conclusion

It would be easy to be critical of the first historians to delve into studies of the Southern Press in the Civil War era. The Developmental perspective from which they worked limited the scope of their investigations to the very standard issues of censorship, press practices and standards, effects, and biographies of individual newspapers and journalists. Those are the important issues for Developmental studies. Yet,

the early studies discussed here opened the doors and pointed the way for future historians who would work from more expansive perspectives that would allow them to delve more deeply into the history of the Southern press in the Civil War era. Further, these studies showed that the Confederate press did influence public opinion and morale, a point some historians have mistakenly disputed.⁶⁰

The value of these early studies was as much in the doors they opened as it was in the topics they covered. Andrew's extensive history of how the Confederate press covered the Civil War was particularly important, for it identified the topics future historians would need to dig into to tell the complete history of the Southern press in the Civil War era: business practices; labor issues; news acquisition and distribution practices; audiences; and data-driven biographies of individual journalists. Taken together, these early studies show that the press was an integral part of Southern society, helping to build and shape attitudes during some of the most turbulent times in American history. This work was limited in scope and perspective, but its value to future historians was unmistakable, as will be illustrated in a later article that will deal with more recent scholarship regarding the Civil War-era press.

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² Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966), 6-9.

³ Debra Reddin van Tuyl, *The Confederate Press in the Crucible of the American Civil War* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 260.

⁴ Robert N. Mathis, "Freedom of the Press in the Confederacy: A Reality," *The Historian* 37:4 (August 1975): 633-648; Jefferson Davis, Second Inaugural Address, *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, Richmond, Va., February 22, 1862 (<https://jeffersondavis.rice.edu/Content.aspx?id=1071> Accessed May 16,

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⁵ Hodding Carter, *Their Words were Bullets: The Southern Press in War, Reconstruction and Peace*, Mercer University Lamar Memorial Lectures No. 12 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1969).

⁶ L. Edward Carter, "The Revolution in Journalism During the Civil War," *Lincoln Herald* 73 (Winter 1971): 229-241.

⁷ Quintus C. Wilson, "Voluntary Press Censorship During the Civil War," *Journalism Quarterly* 19 (1942): 251-261.

⁸ Richard B. Kielbowicz, "The Telegraph, Censorship and Politics at the Outset of the Civil War," *Civil War History* 40 (1994): 95.

⁹ James G. Randall, "The Newspaper Problem in its Bearing Upon Military Secrecy During the Civil War," *Journal of Southern History* 23 (January 1918): 303-323; Brayton Harris, *Blue and Gray in Black and White* (London: Brassey's, 1999). Because Harris' book deals mostly with issues of how the press covered the war, it is not included in the count of works dealing primarily with censorship.

¹⁰ Van Tuyll, *The Confederate Press in the Crucible of the American Civil War*, 264-265.

¹¹ Quintus C. Wilson, "A Study and Evaluation of the Military Censorship in the Civil War" (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Minnesota, 1945).

¹² Richard C. Lounsbury, ed., *Louisa A. McCord: Selected Writings* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997).

¹³ Quintus C. Wilson, "Confederate Press Association: A Pioneer News Agency," *Journalism Quarterly* 26 (June 1949): 160-166. Another reason for the formation of the PA, as it was referred to, was the high rates of the Southern Telegraph Company. Newspapers had tried to complain about the high rates, but the company ignored the complaints. Newspaper editors believed they would have greater bargaining power if they negotiated as a unit rather than as single papers (J. Cutler Andrews, "The Southern Telegraph Company, 1861-1865: A Chapter in the History of Wartime Communications," *Journal of Southern History* 30:3 [1964]: 319-344).

¹⁴ Wilson, "Confederate Press Association," 163.

¹⁵ Wilson, "Study and Evaluation," 215.

¹⁶ *Proceedings of the Second Congress of the Confederate States of America, First Session*, new series — No. 13; Whole No. 51, 98-99; Donna Lee Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance: Freedom of the Press in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 190-91; John Paul Jones, "The Confederate Press and the Government," *Americana* (January 1943): 7-27; van

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Tuyll, *The Confederate Press in the Crucible of the American Civil War*, 266-269.

¹⁷ Philip D. Dillard, "The Confederate Debate Over Arming Slaves: Views from Macon and Augusta Newspapers," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 89:1 (Spring 1995): 117-146.

¹⁸ Alan Bussel, "The *Atlanta Daily Intelligencer* Covers Sherman's March," *Journalism Quarterly* 51 (Summer 1974): 405-410.

¹⁹ Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War*, 536.

²⁰ Reynolds, *Editors Make War*, 3.

²¹ Carl R. Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press: Editorial Spokesmen of the 19th Century* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994).

²² Cal M. Logue, Eugene F. Miller and Christopher J. Schroll, "The Press Under Pressure: How Georgia's Newspapers Responded to Civil War Constraints," *American Journalism* 15 (Winter 1998): 13-34; Rabun Lee Brantley, "A Southern Paper in the Civil War," *Journalism Bulletin* 2 (1925): 23-28.

²³ Catherine Patricia Oliver, "Problems of South Carolina Editors Who Reported the War" (Unpublished master's thesis, University of South Carolina, 1968).

²⁴ Susan Champion, "Wallpaper Newspapers of the American Civil War," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 34:2 (1995): 132.

²⁵ Oliver, "Problems of South Carolina Editors," 22-23.

²⁶ Andrews, "Southern Telegraph Company," 336.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 341.

²⁸ Oliver, "Problems of South Carolina Editors Who Reported the War," 64.

²⁹ John Calhoun Ellen, "Political Newspapers in the Piedmont Carolinas in the 1850s" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1958).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 58-62, 74.

³² David J. Russo, "The Origins of Local News in the U.S. Country Press, 1840s-1870s," *Journalism Monographs* 65 (February 1980):11.

³³ Carter, "The Revolution in Journalism...."

³⁴ David Porter, "The Southern Press and the Presidential Election of 1860," *West Virginia History* 33:1 (1971): 1-13.

³⁵ Richard Barksdale Harwell, "The Creed of a Propagandist: Letter from a Confederate Editor," *Journalism Quarterly* 28 (1951): 213-318.

³⁶ Harwell, "Creed of a Propagandist," 218.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.

³⁸ Peter Langley III, "Pessimism-Optimism of Civil War Military News: June 1863-May 1865," *Journalism Quarterly* 49 (1972): 74-78.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁰ J. Cutler Andrews, "The Confederate Press and Public Morale," *Journal of Southern History* 32 (November 1966): 445-465.

⁴¹ James W. Silver, "Propaganda in the Confederacy," *Journal of Southern History* (1945): 487-503.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 486.

⁴³ John Paul Jones, "The Confederate Press and the Government," *Americana* (January 1943): 7-27

⁴⁴ Silver, "Propaganda in the Confederacy," 495.

⁴⁵ Thomas Andrew Hughes, "The Civil War Press: Promoter of Unity or Neutral Reporter?" *American Journalism* 6:3 (1989): 179-199.

⁴⁶ See, for example, De Fontaine's *Marginalia, or Gleanings from an Army Notebook*, published under his war correspondent's pen name, Personne. It was published in Columbia in 1864 with "F. G. DeFontaine and Co." listed as the publisher. Sometime after the war ended, DeFontaine returned to New York and remained there until the late 1890s, when he returned to Columbia and began publishing a magazine titled *Army Letters of Personne, 1861-1865*. It is unclear exactly how long the magazine survived, but it appears to have been short-lived. Copies of *Marginalia* and one edition of *Army Letters* are available at the Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. They are in the DeFontaine Papers collection.

⁴⁷ John M. Daniel, *The Richmond Examiner During the War: or, the Writings of John M. Daniel*, with memoir by his brother Frederick S. Daniel (New York, 1868).

⁴⁸ J. Ford Risley, "Georgia's Controversial Civil War Editor: Nathan S. Morse and the Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 83:2 (Summer 1999): 221-241.

⁴⁹ J. Ford Risley, "Peter W. Alexander: Confederate Chronicler and Conscience," *American Journalism* 15:1 (Winter 1998): 35-49.

⁵⁰ In fact, there is even a William Gilmore Simms Society that is based in Charleston and holds occasional conferences about Simms and his work.

⁵¹ Maurice R. Cullen, Jr. "William Gilmore Simms, Southern Journalist," *Journalism Quarterly* 38 (1961): 298-302, 412.

⁵² Edgar Estes Folk, "W. W. Holden, Political Journalist: Editor of North Carolina Standard, 1843-1865" (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tenn., 1934), and H. W. Rapier, "W. W. Holden, A Political Biography" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1951).

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⁵⁵ John Stanford Coussons, "Thirty Years with Calhoun, Rhett and the Charleston Mercury: A Chapter in South Carolina Politics" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1971).

⁵⁶ William L. King, *The Newspaper Press of Charleston, S.C.: A Chronological and Biographical History, Embracing a Period of One Hundred and Forty Years* (Charleston: Edward Perry Bood Press, 1872); Louis Turner Griffith and John Erwin Talmadge, *Georgia Journalism, 1763-1950* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1951); Than Stem Jr., *The Tar Heel Press* (Charlotte: North Carolina Press Association, Inc., 1973); Patricia McNeely, *Fighting Words: The History of the Media in South Carolina* (Columbia: South Carolina Press Association), 1998.

⁵⁷ Thomas McAlpin Stubbs, "The Fourth Estate of Sumter South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 54:4 (October 1953): 185-200.

⁵⁸ Henry T. Malone, "Atlanta Journalism During the Confederacy," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* (September 1953): 210-219.

⁵⁹ Helen R. Watson, "A Journalistic Medley: Newspapers and Periodicals in a Small North Carolina Community, 1859-1860," *North Carolina Historical Review* 60:4 (October 1983): 437-485.

⁶⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

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Kobre Award Interview: Leonard Ray Teel



Teel

Leonard Ray Teel received the American Journalism Historians Association's Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2014. Along with the Kobre Award, he has received a variety of other honors. In 2002 his book *Ralph Emerson McGill: Voice of the Southern Conscience* won the Kappa Tau Alpha-Frank Luther Mott Award for the year's best book, and in 2016 his book *Reporting the Cuban Revolution: How Castro Manipulated American Journalists* won the AEJMC's award for the best book about Latin

America. He served as national president of the AJHA in 1990-1991. He taught journalism and mass communication at Georgia State University from 1982 until retiring in 2015.

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

Teel: I am descended on my mother's side from Pennsylvania Dutch farmers whose hilltop graveyard in Washington Borough dates back to the 1600s, and from Kentucky settlers on my father's side. From both sides early on I developed a blend what I now can call unflinching optimism balanced by healthy skepticism. Born in suburban Lancaster, Pennsylvania, I attended public schools there through 9th grade; then moved with my family to suburban Miami. In high school I won a journalism scholarship to the University of Miami from the Miami chapter of Sigma Delta Chi. I majored in history, minored in journalism, became editor of our college weekly newspaper, *The Hurricane*, and worked in

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internships at two daily newspapers, leading to reporting jobs at both papers.

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

Teel: I wrote hundreds of news and feature stories, some of them scoops and prize-winners, as a staff reporter and writer for 20 years at five daily newspapers, in Lancaster, Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Washington and finally Atlanta. Meanwhile I earned the MA and Ph.D. degrees in British and European history, just in time to apply for a tenure-track assistant professorship at Georgia State University in Atlanta.

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

Teel: I taught basic and advanced reporting courses and feature writing. When Professor Harold Davis, one of the AJHA's first members, retired, he bequeathed to me his media history class. Eventually the undergraduates and graduate students produced such good work that they were able to present it at conferences. Next we organized a Journalism History Society and published an annual peer-reviewed *Atlanta Review of Journalism History*. Along the way, I developed and taught international communication and editorial and critical writing.

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?

Teel: Early on, I was fascinated by factual stories (rather than fairy tales and fiction). I especially liked biographies as guides for living. Serious study of history began early in my first semester at the University of Miami during Professor Patsovos' lectures on the Greeks. I soon

changed my major to history; my journalism scholarship permitted me to make journalism my minor.

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

Teel: Journalism developed my ability to investigate and write with accuracy. And biography led me into the other aspects of serious historical research and writing. As a daily journalist I developed a style of writing for mass audiences and a knack for identifying and documenting untold stories. While still a journalist, I went back to school and finished my MA in history (University of Miami, 1974) and completed the Ph.D. in history (Georgia State University, 1984). Meanwhile, I wrote my first biographical book, *Erma: A Black Woman Remembers* (Random House, 1981).

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

Teel: I remain fascinated by the biographical approach to history. I concentrate on characters and situations and extrapolate from those the context and meaning. I have tried to discover and understand how the people I write about have acted in important situations and, where possible, explain why they acted in such a way. My latest book on U.S. journalists' reporting of Castro's revolutionary war in Cuba (2015) documented how in revolutionary situations the journalists were vulnerable to manipulation, accepting at face value Castro's promises to restore democracy. My biography of *Atlanta Constitution* editor Ralph Emerson McGill (2001) demonstrated how his journalism and commentary — at the national and local level — aimed to prepare Southerners for the extension to African-Americans of full citizenship and civil rights.

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

Teel: Generalizing from my published books and journal articles, I have been aptly called a journalism historian. My book-in-progress also fits that description, an exploration of exporting American journalistic practices to journalists across the Arab world during 1997-2004, an historic period of expanding press freedom that ended abruptly with the Arab revolutions in 2011 and subsequent counter-revolutions. The impetus for the book came an empirical research project I directed.

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

Teel: My first book *Erma: A Black Woman Remembers* naturally was a thrill to publish because it was the first and because my editor at Random House, Toni Morrison, who had just published her third novel, *Song of Solomon*, gave me such good advice. For professional reasons, the timely publication of my second book *Into the Newsroom: An Introduction to Journalism* helped me get my tenure-track position at Georgia State University. Perhaps the most satisfaction came from the biography of Ralph McGill, my first prize-winner; that effort tested my resolve over sixteen years of archival searches and interviews.

Q: We realize that it is difficult to judge one's own work — and that the most accomplished people are often the most modest — but if you had to summarize your most important contributions to the field of JMC history, what would they be?

Teel: All four books dealing with journalism, its practice and history,

have given a realistic scenario of the practice and significance of American journalism at home and overseas during the 20th Century.

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

Teel: In my career, nothing. The movement through journalism to history was almost seamless, thanks to dozens of scholars who raised my sights time and again, often through my associations in AJHA.

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

Teel: If I have a “philosophy” of history, the closest to that would involve pragmatism. In practice, I am a searcher, suspending disbelief and seeking to learn enough about my subject so that I can ask the right questions and discover what I might otherwise not have known. I am often surprised by unfolding stories and evolving discoveries that reveal more than I imagined. One of the Greeks I studied long ago, Polybius, seemed on the right track in theorizing that historical developments are cyclical. As Voltaire is quoted as saying, history doesn’t repeat itself, but men always do.

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

Teel: The quality of today’s journalism history constantly informs my own work. I am amazed at what historians are discovering and explaining.

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?

Teel: My wife, Katherine, insists that history needs to be taught earlier than college for it to be understood as an important factor in citizenship. I agree. At Georgia State University I found that a professor's insistence could secure curriculum changes to favor journalism history, and I managed to get the History of News Media course moved to the 4000/6000 level and made one of the required Critical Thinking and Writing (CTW) courses. As for the wider field of history, today's historians have increasing opportunities — with many more sources that are much more accessible, and with expanding media platforms.

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

Teel: We recognize that one major challenge in teaching journalism /communication comes from an increasing emphasis on practical courses related to production of news, notably via social media. Students must learn to write “across the platform” including twitter feeds. I faced this challenge by emphasizing the importance of history in teaching two fundamental values for journalists and other mass communicators: in-depth research and persuasive writing.

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Book Award Interview: Greg Lisby



Lisby

Greg Lisby, along with co-author Bill Mogleston, won the 2003 American Journalism Historians Association's award for the year's outstanding book for *Someone Had to be Hated: Julian LaRose Harris, A Biography*. Dr. Lisby is a professor of communication at Georgia State University.

Q: Give us a brief summary of your book.

Lisby: The social progress and post-war economic prosperity that characterized the South during the “Roaring Twenties” had a dark underside typified by racial hatred, legal chicanery, political cronyism, illiteracy, and religious extremism. To best serve Georgia and the South, to make a real difference, Julian LaRose Harris dedicated his newspaper, the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, to shouting the distasteful truth from the rooftops to create a fierce discontent with public conditions and a determined intent to change them.

The oldest of nine children of noted journalist and folklorist Joel Chandler Harris, Julian Harris (1874-1963) struggled all his life to carve his own niche in the world and to emerge from the shadow of his famous father, and to disprove the old adage that the sons of famous men rarely amounted to much. It was a fear that directed his determination to succeed in journalism. He even marshaled evidence in support of his intent, reading about the lives of Roman statesmen Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger, and William Pitt the Elder and William Pitt the Younger, both of whom served as prime minister of Great Britain.

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Harris thus took the perfect entrée into Southern journalism — his father’s success and reputation — and as editor and publisher of the *Enquirer-Sun* found both his own voice and soapbox. With his equally talented wife, journalist Julia Collier Harris (1875-1967), he spent the 1920s in Columbus fighting the Ku Klux Klan, racism, lynching, anti-evolution laws, religious intolerance, Prohibition, corruption in state government, and substandard public education. It took uncommon courage to push a progressive agenda in a provincial cotton-mill town like Columbus during the 1920s and Harris, more than any other person, deserves credit for freeing Georgia from the grip of the Klan. For his efforts, he and his newspaper won the 1926 Pulitzer Prize for public service. He was the first Georgian to be so honored.

But his self-reflective nature made him very aware of his many personality quirks: courageous, yet insecure; debonair, yet sarcastic; gracious, yet combative; sentimental, yet cynical; kind, yet belligerent; and a loving, family man who was also a social and political maverick. He understood perfectly the point of one letter-writer: “I am thoroughly persuaded that someone will have to be willing to be hated in order to serve Georgia to the fullest measure.” And he later came to appreciate the remark by a fellow Southern editor: “The antics and attitudes you assail afflict us down here, too, and we do our best to damn them but the frontal-attack-stink-bomb method you use would get us in endless trouble.”

Harris’ continuing circulation, advertising, and business “trouble” finally forced him to sell his newspaper in 1929 and leave Columbus.

Later, looking back on his life, Harris wrote, “I think I see, if in outline somewhat shadowy, a young man who, from time to time, sought to discover causes. And if he had no conscious philosophy, I am sure that out of his ideals in life and literature came beliefs and ambitions which crystalized in a zeal for a free press and a hatred of every form of oppression.”

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

Lisby: I grew up in Columbus, Georgia. My father was a long-time editor of the *Columbus Ledger*, the afternoon newspaper, there. For years I had seen and admired the framed certificate on the newsroom's walls of the *Ledger's* 1955 Pulitzer Prize for public service that it received for its coverage of the civic corruption investigation and clean-up in neighboring Phenix City, Ala. One day he asked me if I knew that the *Columbus Enquirer*, the morning newspaper, had also won the Pulitzer Prize for public service. I did not know that, and then and there determined I'd learn more about it. The research proved to be so fascinating that I used it as the basis for the M.A. thesis I wrote at the University of Mississippi in 1977. Subsequently, I turned the thesis into a monograph in *Journalism Monographs* in 1988, and then with more research into the biography in 2002.

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?

Lisby: Overwhelmingly, my sources were primary ones — newspaper stories and editorials written either by Julian or Julia Harris, letters and other correspondence to and from either of the HARRISES, interviews with and letters to and from individuals who knew them in Columbus, and other materials the HARRISES collected and donated to be part of the Harris Papers at Emory University. Secondary sources primarily included books and articles about the history of Columbus, Georgia, politics, the Pulitzer Prizes, the Ku Klux Klan in the South, the "Roaring Twenties," post-World War I progressivism, and religion and Prohibition in the South, to name just a few of the topics I included in the breadth of my research.

Book Award Interview

To conduct the research for my book, after I read every secondary source I could find relating to my topic, I next scheduled interviews with all those I could find (and who were willing to talk to me) who knew the Harrises either personally or professionally, though I did not include any interviews with any members of their extended family. Finally, I identified every library or other research repository (such as the Pulitzer Prize files at Columbia University) I wished to visit and began scheduling my time there. The total research time required for my book was about a year of full-time work.

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

Lisby: My earliest research on this topic started in 1974. Bill's research into the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia started a few years before that. Had either of us had the idea a couple of years earlier, before their deaths in the 1960s, I really wish I could have had the opportunity to interview Julian and Julia Harris in person and not had to rely only on their writings.

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

Lisby: Take your time. Be scrupulously organized. Pay close attention to details. Don't assume that librarians (who themselves may have spent a lot of time organizing a person's papers) fully understand the parameters of the story you're trying to tell. They may have some insight, but you are the historian, not them. In addition, always, always, always make certain your notes are in a readable (and understandable) format for your later use. Even when I took notes by hand (a very poor choice for me since my handwriting is so bad), I always retyped them at

the end of each day. When interviewing someone, record it and always make a transcript of the interview available to the person for correction to assure factual accuracy. And always, always follow up with a thank-you letter (yes, a letter and not an email) expressing your gratitude for your source's time and insight.

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

Lisby: The three biggest procedural challenges I faced were finding time for the research, finding money to pay for the travel, and forcing myself to keep an open mind and not jump to conclusions (the problem of acting like a deliberate historian vs. a journalist on deadline) as I read and pondered the source materials. The biggest substantive challenge I faced came when I realized just how much the Harrises had culled and edited/interpreted (usually with a hand-written annotation in the margin) the materials they gave to Emory University. They were very, very conscious of their reputations, of how they wanted history to understand them and their work, much more than I would have expected of someone of that generation and era. This meant that I had to do more research to understand both sides of any "spin" I found in their papers.

Q: What new insights does your book provide?

Lisby: One reviewer of the biography called it "a valuable, and brutally honest, study of southern prejudice, institutional hatred, ignorance, and political corruption during the 1920s." So while my biography does offer new factual information about Julian and Julia Harris, as well as insights into their historical time and place, it is most importantly the first work to evaluate the Harrises using their own measures of self-worth and success. It's the first study to examine how the Harrises regarded themselves and then to compare that with how others viewed

them.

Q: What findings most surprised you?

Lisby: I was most surprised to learn the extent and depth of Julian Harris' introspective nature — at times introspective to the point that he doubted the wisdom of some of his actions. That introspection of course did not stop him but it did somewhat serve as an internal counter-balance to most of his journalistic practices and achievements. And at times it worked to bolster his convictions to the point that he was unable to see any validity in others' concerns about his journalistic tactics. And if anyone might have expected his wife to temper his attitudes and actions, in Julia Harris he found a person so much like himself and so convicted in a belief of their importance to progressive ideals and change that each failed to help the other see any different perspective.

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

Lisby: First, I would say that all research is personal. You want to find out something and so you go looking. You want to learn more about something and that desire alone is enough to motivate you. That characteristic is the essence of both historians and journalists. And that in and of itself would be reason enough for me to want to research something. Second, we research to understand context better. Nothing happens in a vacuum; everything is connected to everything else. Thus, historians are “generalists” in the best sense of the term in that we help create a cultural narrative. Third, I believe the adage that those who fail to learn from their mistakes (and from history) are destined to repeat them, which is why historical research is so very important. Modern progress depends upon our learning and applying the lessons of the

past. But, from me to anyone considering research in JMC history, don't hesitate; do it. As you look back on it years later, I believe you will find it to have been most rewarding. 2016, for example, is the 100th anniversary of the Pulitzer Prizes; and with renewed scholarly and journalistic interest in the story of Julian Harris and the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, I am finding a most pleasant contentment in research well done.

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?

Lisby: It is indeed possible to become little more than an apologist for a cause or historical subject, even one long deceased. Just like journalists are supposed to do, historians also should strive for balance by seeking (and, yes, also evaluating) opposing viewpoints and interpretations. I think there should always be at least a little something about your research subject that you find troubling or disagreeable or out-of-the-ordinary to remind you again and again to double-check your facts and to question your interpretation and understanding of everything. This will help you be fair-minded and enhance the credibility and meaning of your research findings.

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