

THE FRONTIER PRESS OF MINNESOTA

As the spokesman for the editors of Minnesota's newspapers, permit me to congratulate the authorities of our great state university upon launching this series of convocations.¹ We of the press welcome the opportunity to join with you in honoring the pioneers who laid the foundations of the North Star State. We appreciate the compliment that you pay our profession in receiving us as the guests of honor at the first of these convocations. May we infer that such recognition carries the implication that educators still salute the "power of the press"? Or is it a recognition of the close bond between the editor and the educator, the press and the school, in the building of the state and in rendering unselfish service to society?

In June, 1927, the National Editorial Association, holding its annual convention in Los Angeles, at my suggestion sent to the members of the National Education Association, meeting the same week in Philadelphia, a greeting that read in part:

With memberships directing two vitally important unifying agencies in our country's life — the press and the school — with common interests and aims, with common responsibilities in moulding public opinion and in shaping the mind of the youth of today for leadership tomorrow that challenge our best effort, we express the hope that the two N.E.A.'s will in the future cultivate a closer acquaintance and coöperation.

Shortly after drafting this message I had an experience that caused me to doubt the editor's right to consider him-

¹This address was presented by Mr. Roe at a convocation held at Northrop Memorial Auditorium on the campus of the University of Minnesota on October 26. It commemorated the Minnesota Diamond Jubilee and was the first of a series of annual convocations to be devoted to the contributions of various professional groups to the development of the state. On this occasion the contribution of Minnesota's pioneer editors and their newspapers to the building of the state was emphasized. *Ed.*

self an educator. I was introduced to the Rotary Club of Portland, Oregon, as an "educator." The introducer, detecting that he had made what we editors would call a typographical error, proceeded to make a correction. "I beg your pardon," he said, "this gentleman is not an educator. He is an editor." The salvo of laughter that greeted the apology demonstrated to an editor who for over twenty years has enjoyed daily contacts with educators in a college community that the two classifications are not identical.

Let it be noted, however, that one of Minnesota's pioneer editors, Russell H. Conwell, achieved fame and distinction as an educator. Following a brief career as a pioneer editor in Minnesota in the sixties, Conwell went east, founded Temple University in Philadelphia, and acquired nationwide fame as an author, educator, and lecturer. His famous lecture, "Acres of Diamonds," was reputed to have been delivered a greater number of times than any other lecture—on more than 5,700 occasions, in all sections of the United States. Conwell, who in his youth waged a bitter struggle to get an education, unselfishly devoted all the receipts from this lecture to helping more than three thousand young men through college—a striking example of the spirit of unselfish service to constituents, community, and state which is characteristic of the editor and the educator who live up to the highest ideals of their professions.

In February, 1867, as editor of the *Minneapolis Chronicle*, Conwell was one of the thirty-eight pioneer editors who assembled in St. Paul and organized the Minnesota Editorial Association. Fifty years later, when the association celebrated its golden jubilee and marked a half century of service to the building of the state, Conwell was present as one of the eight surviving charter members, all of whom were well-known figures in Minnesota's newspaper hall of fame. The others were Captain Henry A. Castle of St. Paul, F. E. DuToit of Chaska, J. C. Devereaux of St. Paul,

W. B. Mitchell of St. Cloud, Granville S. Pease of Anoka, Fred L. Smith of Minneapolis, and Irving Todd of Hastings. Captain Castle prepared for the golden jubilee an illuminating historical paper, which contained the following tribute to the charter members:²

You need not be ashamed of your founders. Fortunate as Minnesota has been in the character of her pioneers as represented in all walks of business, profession, and achievement, the editorial organization will hold rank with the highest, and to these men is due not only the subsequent success of the association, but a large share of the wonderful progress which has been made by the state, educationally, financially, industrially, and in every other creditable aspect, during the past half century.

In the lecture, "Acres of Diamonds," Conwell extolled the opportunities offered to citizens of our great state, with its lavish resources of soil and minerals and timber and rivers and lakes. For evidence of how ably, aggressively, and persistently the editors of Minnesota have preached through their news and editorial columns the same theme, we need but ask the historian in this diamond jubilee year to search through the files of Minnesota newspapers in the library of the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul. In its editors, our state has been blessed with as loyal and devoted a band of "boosters" and builders as has any state in the Union—the golden state of California not excepted. Indian raids, grasshopper plagues that devastated growing crops, frigid winters, blizzards that at times crippled not only all avenues of transportation but our Michael Dowlings as well, financial panics and depressions that temporarily brought hard times—none of these trials and tribulations could quench the indomitable spirit of the pioneer nor the optimism of the editor. Both continued to predict a bright future for the citizen who cast his lot with the residents of the North Star State!

² This paper was read on February 17, 1916, in Castle's absence, by the present writer, in his official capacity as secretary of the Minnesota Editorial Association.

Those who were discouraged by the temporary distress and setbacks caused by these infrequent visitations, and who were tempted to follow the example of Al Hafed in the Persian fable and seek their fortunes elsewhere, were admonished by the press of the state to seek the "acres of diamonds" to be found right here at home in Minnesota. We do well to pause in this diamond jubilee year to honor the builders of our state—these "Giants in the Earth."

We cannot here embark on a history of Minnesota journalism or single out the many members of the newspaper fraternity in this state who richly deserve recognition, and we can make only passing reference to the outstanding achievements of Minnesota editors in fields of service other than journalism. The roll call of newspaper men who have won distinction and have made a genuine contribution to the state in public office would be long and would contain names enshrined in the chronicles of the state. In proportion to its numerical strength, the profession of journalism in this state has furnished more than its share of representatives who have graced the governor's chair, filled other state offices, provided leadership in the halls of Congress and of the state legislature, and served on state commissions. We who are privates in the ranks of Minnesota journalism may be pardoned for pointing with some degree of pride to that record of public service.

A study of the newspaper record of Minnesota's territorial days reveals that the life of a newspaper was then perhaps even more precarious than it is today, when increased costs, economic depression, and NRA codes are decimating our newspaper population through mergers, consolidations, and suspensions.³ During the territorial period, from 1849 to 1858, about ninety newspapers were

³The writer wishes to acknowledge the services of members of the staff of the Minnesota Historical Society, especially Mr. Arthur J. Larsen, head of the newspaper department, in supplying much of the material relating to the early history of the Minnesota press.

established, the majority of which had a brief existence. Twelve newspapers of the pioneer period have survived to the present day. These papers were launched in a time when the population was small, subscribers were few in number, advertising volume was light, and cash was scarcer than it is today. Several were established before the panic of 1857 struck the struggling territory, and they withstood that shock. The roll call of the twelve oldest newspapers in Minnesota, with the dates when they were established, follows: *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 1849; *Minnehaha*, 1855; *Winona Republican-Herald*, 1855; *Chatfield News*, 1856; *Hastings Gazette*, 1856; *Hokah Chief*, 1856; *Stillwater Post-Messenger*, 1856; *Mantorville Express*, 1857; *Monticello Times*, 1857; *Red Wing Republican*, 1857; *St. Cloud Daily Times and Daily Journal-Press*, 1857; and *Wabasha County Herald-Standard*, 1857.

It is interesting to note that, in addition to the twelve Minnesota newspapers that qualify for the diamond jubilee group, there are twenty-five surviving newspapers that were established between 1859 and 1869, fifty-two that were established in the seventies, and thirty-four established between 1880 and 1883 that have celebrated their golden anniversaries. The astonishing total of a hundred and twenty-three newspapers that can boast more than half a century of service is thus credited to Minnesota. In view of the fact that there are in the United States only about a hundred and sixty newspapers that have passed the century mark, this is truly a remarkable record for a state as young as ours. It is doubtful if any other business can submit a better endurance record. Bear in mind, please, that in this country the institutions that can boast a hundred years of life are considered venerable indeed. And our own state is but seventy-five years young. What a phenomenal record of growth, expansion, and longevity the newspapers of Minnesota have made in that period! Mark

you, there are editors in this audience who are older than Minnesota—and yet these octogenarians consider themselves young.

The newspapers that were established in the decade following Minnesota's admission to the Union also deserve recognition. The list includes the following newspapers that are still being published: *Mankato Free Press*, 1859; *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, 1859; *Taylor's Falls Journal*, 1860; *Weekly Valley Herald* of Chaska, 1861; *Lake City Graphic-Republican*, 1861; *Preston Times*, 1861; *Preston Republican*, 1861; *Shakopee Argus-Tribune*, 1861; *Owatonna Journal-Chronicle*, 1863; *Waseca Journal*, 1863; *Anoka County Union* of Anoka, 1865; *Caledonia Journal*, 1865; *Anoka Herald*, 1866; *North-Western Chronicle* of St. Paul, 1866; *Dodge County Republican* of Kasson, 1867; *Minneapolis Tribune*, 1867; *Der Wanderer* of St. Paul, 1867; *Sauk Centre Herald*, 1867; *Alexandria Citizen-News*, 1868; *Mower County News* of Austin, 1868; *St. Cloud Sentinel*, 1868; *St. Paul Dispatch*, 1868; *Blue Earth Post*, 1869; *Duluth News-Tribune*, 1869; and *Redwood Gazette* of Redwood Falls, 1869.

Minnesota newspapers that were established in the seventies and are published today follow: *Jackson Republic*, 1870; *Stillwater Gazette*, 1870; *Winnebago Enterprise*, 1870; *Madelia Times-Messenger*, 1871; *Willmar Gazette*, 1871; *Windom Reporter*, 1871; *Evening Tribune* of Albert Lea, 1872; *Brainerd Tribune*, 1872; *Delano Eagle*, 1872; *Detroit Record* of Detroit Lakes, 1872; *Sherburne County Star-News* of Elk River, 1872; *Henderson Independent*, 1872; *Independent Press* of Madison, 1872; *Moorhead Daily News*, 1872; *Olivia Times*, 1872; *Worthington Globe*, 1872; *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, 1873; *Glencoe Enterprise*, 1873; *Janesville Argus*, 1873; *Rock County Herald* of Luverne, 1873; *Marshall Daily Messenger*, 1873; *North Star* of Cambridge, 1874; *Fairmont Daily*

Sentinel, 1874; *Daily People's Press* of Owatonna, 1874; *Plainview News*, 1874; *West Saint Paul Times*, 1874; *LeRoy Independent*, 1875; *Minneapolis Journal*, 1875; *Rush City Post*, 1875; *Cannon Falls Beacon*, 1876; *Howard Lake Herald*, 1876; *Litchfield Independent*, 1876; *Northfield News*, 1876; *Princeton Union*, 1876; *Crookston Daily Times*, 1877; *Mazeppa Journal*, 1877; *Montevideo News*, 1877; *Morris Tribune*, 1877; *New Ulm Review*, 1877; *Inter-County Press* of St. Charles, 1877; *Minnesota Stats Tidning* of St. Paul, 1877; *Waseca Herald*, 1877; *Canby News and Canby Press*, 1878; *Wadena Pioneer Journal*, 1878; *Bird Island Union*, 1879; *Caledonia Argus*, 1879; *Grant County Herald* of Elbow Lake, 1879; *Fulda Free Press*, 1879; *Le Sueur News-Herald*, 1879; *Minneapolis Spectator*, 1879; *Pipestone County Star* of Pipestone, 1879; and *Tracy Herald-Headlight*, 1879.

Among other Minnesota newspapers that have been published for a half century or more are the *Norman County Index* of Ada, the *Appleton Press*, the *Atwater Republican Press*, the *Hutchinson Leader*, the *Lake Benton News*, the *Mankato Ledger*, the *Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch*, the *Spring Valley Tribune*, and the *Warren Sheaf*, established in 1880; the *Brainerd Daily Dispatch* and the *Fergus Falls Ugeblad*, established in 1881; the *Marshall County Banner* of Argyle, the *Belle Plaine Herald*, the *Grand Meadow Record and Dexter News*, the *Kittson County Enterprise* of Hallock, the *Houston Signal*, the *Lake Crystal Tribune*, the *Melrose Beacon*, the *Park Rapids Enterprise*, the *Perham Enterprise-Bulletin*, the *St. Hilaire Spectator*, the *Tyler Journal*, and the *Cottonwood County Citizen* of Windom, established in 1882; and the *Aitkin Independent Age*, the *Duluth Herald*, the *Edgerton Enterprise*, the *Graceville Enterprise*, the *Granite Falls Tribune*, the *Lakefield Standard*, the *Long Prairie Leader*, the *Svenska Amerikanska Posten* of Minneapolis, the *Morris Sun*, the *Red Lake Falls*

Gazette, and the *St. Paul Herald*, established exactly fifty years ago, in 1883.

The introduction of the press in Minnesota followed closely upon the organization of the territory. In April, 1849, James Madison Goodhue, editor of a paper in Grant County, Wisconsin, packed his equipment and boarded a steamboat for St. Paul. He arrived in the midst of a blustery, uncomfortable spring, and with characteristic audacity at once set up shop in the crudest of shelters. There, on April 28, 1849, he issued the first number of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, the earliest newspaper published in Minnesota. For three years he led the way in advertising Minnesota to the rest of the world and in enlivening Minnesota affairs with his pungent remarks on the rapidly changing political, social, and economic situation. His death in 1852 removed from the Minnesota scene a personality that had influenced to a marked degree the development of the territory.

Within a few weeks of the appearance of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, two other papers were established in St. Paul, the *Minnesota Chronicle* and the *Minnesota Register*, which, however, soon consolidated. In 1850 two more newspapers appeared in the territorial capital. One of these, the *Dakota Friend*, was a missionary paper, published partly in the Dakota language. The next year, two additional papers were established in St. Paul; and in St. Anthony, the *Express*, the first paper in Minnesota outside of St. Paul, began publication. Thus in 1851, when the entire population of Minnesota was only a little more than five thousand and that of St. Paul was only slightly over a thousand, five newspapers were being published regularly. It required an optimistic faith in the future to bring forth such ventures in a raw wilderness.

It was natural that the first newspapers in the territory should have appeared in the territorial capital. Settlers were pouring in, but by far the greater portion of the land

of Minnesota still belonged to the Indians. Two highly important treaties negotiated with the Indians in the summer of 1851 extinguished the Indian title to much of the interior of Minnesota west of the Mississippi River. The rush of settlement began between 1852 and 1854, and the next half-dozen years were a period of delirious boom and speculation. Towns and villages appeared by scores, and nearly every one of them had a newspaper. The earliest papers were established in towns along the rivers—the Mississippi and the St. Croix—in 1854. At Winona the *Argus* was started in September, and at Stillwater, on October 23, the first issue of the *St. Croix Union* appeared. In 1855 newspapers were established at such scattered points as Shakopee and St. Peter on the Minnesota River, Sauk Rapids on the Mississippi above St. Anthony, and Red Wing, Wabasha, Winona, and Brownsville on the Mississippi below St. Paul.

The spread of the newspaper press in Minnesota thereafter was rapid. In 1856 and 1857 a host of papers were established in the interior, where rough roads and trails had been laid out to new settlements struggling for existence in the wilderness. As a result of the panic of 1857 the publication of many of the territorial papers abruptly ended, but that mattered little. New papers appeared almost at once. By the end of the territorial period no fewer than eighty-nine newspapers had been established in Minnesota. Among them were five daily papers, four that began publication at St. Paul in 1854, and one, the *Falls Evening News* of St. Anthony, that was established in the autumn of 1857.

These territorial newspapers included not only English papers, but a sprinkling of newspapers published in alien tongues as well. In the middle fifties there began a heavy immigration of foreign-born people into Minnesota. A reflection of that movement is seen in the establishment at St. Paul in 1855 of the *Minnesota Deutsche Zeitung* and,

two years later, of the Norwegian *Folkets Röst*, and of the Swedish *Minnesota Posten* at Red Wing. The *Minneapolis Tidende* is another foreign-language newspaper that deserves to be mentioned here. As the successor to *Emigranten*, the first Norwegian newspaper in the United States to attain any degree of permanency, it traces its lineage back to the early fifties, though it had its beginnings in the neighboring state of Wisconsin.

These ventures in pioneer journalism served their purpose well. They were established in the full blush of frontier optimism. Far and wide they spread the gospel of Minnesota's advantages in soil, resources, and opportunity. They were invaluable to the settler of the frontier, for communication was uncertain and slow, and magazines and books were few and costly. The local newspapers, usually established by ambitious town proprietors or by ardent political partisans, constituted the settler's principal source of information about the rest of the world. They told him what his neighbors were doing; they led him along his political pathway; they brought him current literature, which ranged from doggerel verse to the best writing of the time in America; and they advised him of unexploited opportunities in lands, town sites, goods, or produce. In their advertisements as well as in their editorial columns they reflected the economic life of the times. Many of their editors were "personal journalists" of outstanding character, who contributed to the leadership of the territory and the young state and who, through their personalities, added flavor to the social and intellectual life of the frontier.

Many of these papers were established for a single purpose, and they adhered diligently to that purpose. Thus the *Dakota Friend* sought the spiritual betterment of the Sioux. In 1851 a new kind of paper appeared in St. Paul when the *Watab Reveille* of Benton County was established. Actually the paper was printed, not at Watab, but

in St. Paul. The purpose of the editor and proprietor in establishing it was to obtain lucrative contracts for the official printing of the territory. Upon his failure to do this, the paper was suspended. Many early Minnesota newspapers were established by the owners of town sites, for the purpose of advertising the lands offered for sale. In 1856 Ignatius Donnelly came to Minnesota and helped to found the village of Nininger in Dakota County. To promote settlement in the infant city he established the *Emigrant Aid Journal*, the first issue of which was printed in Philadelphia. The land offices of Minnesota Territory offered rich opportunities for newspaper publishers to print the large amount of legal advertising necessitated by the sale of government lands. This circumstance led to the establishment of such publications as the *Sauk Rapids Frontiersman*, begun in 1855 by officers of the United States land office at Sauk Rapids; the *Chatfield Democrat*, established in 1856 by the officials of the land office at Chatfield; and the *North Shore Advocate*, begun in 1857 at the land office at Buchanan in St. Louis County. Political advancement was a frequent reason for the establishment of a newspaper, for usually the party that had the best-edited newspapers won the elections.

The buildings that housed these pioneer newspapers were often rough shelters—makeshifts, rude shacks, ramshackle barns. When Goodhue arrived in St. Paul he set up his office in a building which he described as being as “open as a corn-rick.” “Not that we would find fault with the pigs,” he complained, “for it is all owing to their bringing up; but really our equanimity is somewhat ruffled, if our chair is not jostled by the movements of their hard backs under our loose floor.” Many other printing presses were set up under conditions little more encouraging.

From the mechanical point of view, publishing a newspaper in territorial Minnesota was no mean task. Type

had to be set by hand with infinite care, and printing was done on little hand presses of the Washington or acorn type. The nearest type foundry was at Chicago, and supplies of paper and ink were even more remote. All such materials had to be brought to Minnesota during the summer months, for freight charges on materials brought overland by team during the hard Minnesota winters were almost prohibitive. As a consequence, Minnesota newspaper proprietors had to invest considerable capital to provide publication materials for the year. In 1858 Jane Grey Swisshelm stated that the press on which she printed the *St. Cloud Visiter* cost eight hundred dollars. She estimated that the total expenditures, exclusive of the press, had amounted to over twenty-five hundred dollars and that the total receipts of the paper were only about four hundred and fifty dollars. On such shoe-string speculation was Minnesota's press established. It is little wonder that most newspapers in territorial Minnesota were published weekly, or less frequently than that.

What happened to these Minnesota newspapers of the fifties? Most of them passed out of existence. The exigencies of frontier finance were too severe for them. A few, however, have survived to the present day. The *Minnesota Pioneer*, Minnesota's first newspaper, is today the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. So far as is known, it has never missed an issue. The *Winona Republican*, established in 1855, is still being published under the name *Republican-Herald*. In the following year three papers that are still appearing made their debuts: the *Stillwater Messenger*, known today as the *Post-Messenger*; the *Chatfield Democrat*, now called the *News*; and the *Hokah Chief*, which is still in existence despite the fact that at times publication has been suspended. In 1857 the *Red Wing Republican*, the *Mantorville Express*, the *Monticello Times*, the *Hastings Gazette*, and the *Wabasha County Herald-Standard*—

originally known as the *Wabashaw County Herald*—were established. All are still being published. In the same year a fiery little abolitionist named Jane Grey Swisshelm started the *St. Cloud Visiter*. The name was successively changed to *St. Cloud Democrat*, *Journal*, and *Journal-Press*, but the tradition was carried on. In 1929 the paper was absorbed by the *St. Cloud Daily Times*, and today it is being issued as the *St. Cloud Daily Times and Daily Journal-Press*. In 1855 the *Minnesota Deutsche Zeitung*, the first German paper in Minnesota, was established. Although there have been temporary suspensions of publication and changes in name, the paper still exists. Today it is known as the *Minnehaha*.

The men, and women too, who laid these foundations for the Minnesota press were equal to their task. The glowing promise of the frontier brought here the young, the able, the adventurous, and the ambitious of older settlements, as well as the decrepit, the poverty-stricken, and the ne'er-do-wells. It was the spirit of adventure that brought Goodhue to Minnesota. For his brilliant gift of personal journalism, he has been called the James Gordon Bennett of the West. The urge of the West brought to Minnesota Earle S. Goodrich, editor of the *St. Paul Pioneer* from 1854 to 1862, who was known as the "gentleman journalist" of Minnesota. In 1854 the promise of adventure and work brought to the territory perhaps the strangest character among Minnesota journalists—Sam K. Whiting, sailor, Arctic explorer, and newspaper man, who edited the *Winona Argus* and in 1855 established the *Winona Republican*. In 1856 Donnelly, the stormy petrel of Minnesota politics for fifty years, radical, erratic, but gifted, began his Minnesota newspaper career as editor of the *Emigrant Aid Journal*. In 1857 Mrs. Swisshelm left her home in Pittsburgh, where, as editor of the *Saturday Visiter*, she had been for ten years an active and bitter foe of slavery. She

came to Minnesota and soon established the *St. Cloud Visiter*. Wide publicity came to her when she engaged in a fiery quarrel with a leading citizen of St. Cloud, as a result of which her press was thrown into the Mississippi River and she was threatened with mob action.

Numerous other journalists removed to Minnesota during the fifties and gained fame during the stirring years before the Civil War. Foremost among them was Joseph A. Wheelock, who arrived in 1850. From 1854 to 1858 he was editor of the *St. Paul Advertiser*; he became in 1861 editor of the *St. Paul Press*, and, after its consolidation with the *Pioneer* in 1875, of the *Pioneer Press*. For over fifty years he stood head and shoulders above the body of Minnesota editors, and rightfully earned the title of "Dean of Minnesota Journalists." Outstanding also was David Blakely, who entered the journalistic field as editor of the *Bancroft Pioneer* and the *Rochester City Post* in the fifties. He served as secretary of state in Minnesota during most of the Civil War period. In the late sixties he became editor and owner of the *Chicago Post*, but in the seventies he returned to Minnesota as editor of the *Pioneer*. In 1877 he became editor of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, and under his management the paper grew rapidly.

Still another outstanding member of the journalistic fraternity in Minnesota during the fifties was William A. Croffut, who was initiated into Minnesota journalism in 1856 as reporter for Thomas N. Newson's paper, the *Saint Paul Daily Times*. His salary was said to have been eight dollars a week. In September, 1857, Croffut was one of the partners who established the *Falls Evening News*. During the Civil War he achieved recognition as a correspondent of the *New York Tribune*. For a time after the war he edited a paper in Connecticut and eventually, in 1871, he returned to Minnesota as editor of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. In 1874 he returned to New York and,

after some years as editorial writer for the *New York Graphic*, he joined the staff of the *New York Daily Tribune*, then under the management of Whitelaw Reid. Subsequently Croffut became editor of the *Washington Daily Post*. He gained widespread recognition as an author.

This briefly, is the history of the Minnesota press during the territorial period. That it exerted a profound influence on Minnesota journalism during the years that have followed is without question. How great that influence is, we cannot say. The men and women who established the territorial papers came to Minnesota when life was rough; yet they brought here a fine culture. Many of them were college graduates—men from Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, and other schools. Many of them, however, were men of the frontier—products of the same rough civilization in which they lived. The chivalry of pre-Civil War days and the sharply defined convictions that the pioneer journalists held on questions of the day may be glimpsed in the crowded columns of early Minnesota newspapers. These editors set up high ideals of honesty, intelligence, adherence to principles, and service to the citizenry of the state and country.

On the foundations of Minnesota journalism laid in the fifties, a newspaper structure has been built that now includes over five hundred publications. The increase in the number of newspapers, their growth in circulation and influence, and their development in size and stability have paralleled the expansion of the state. Between 1850 and 1860 the population of Minnesota increased at the phenomenal rate of 2,730 per cent. From a community of 6,000 people in 1850, Minnesota advanced to 172,000 in 1860, to 439,000 in 1870, and to 780,000 in 1880. The state's population passed the million mark in 1885 and the two-million mark in 1910, and today it stands at over two and a half million. Minnesota's newspapers have met the needs occasioned by this rapid expansion.

Who can measure the contribution of the newspapers to the building of the state during these seventy-five eventful years of development and growth? In making an appraisal it would be more appropriate for some chronicler who is not a member of the newspaper profession to speak. To one thing we who are members of this profession can testify—that no other force touches Minnesota life in so many of its phases.

“There are three estates in Parliament,” declared Edmund Burke, the peerless orator, in addressing the House of Commons, “but in the reporter’s gallery yonder there sits a Fourth Estate more important far than they all.” The same sentiment was expressed by Lincoln in these graphic words: “In this and like communities public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently he who moulds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions.” Dr. John H. Finley, noted educator, college and university president, now editor of America’s greatest newspaper, the *New York Times*, has said: “Journalists are Historians of the Present Tense. . . . With conscientiousness and infinite pains their daily endeavor is to record and interpret history at the moment of its making. They deserve to be classed as historians, as educators.”

Regarding the value of the newspaper to the historian, Lucy Salmon, author of *The Newspaper and the Historian*, testifies:

For this study of normal life the newspaper,—abnormal as it itself may seem with flaring headlines and blurred pages of illustrated advertisements, with all of its limitations, its inaccuracies, its unworthy representatives, its lack of proportion, its many temptations—not always resisted—to throw prismatic colors instead of the white light of truth on its accounts of the day, the periodical press still remains the most important single source the historian has at his command for the reconstruction of the life of the past three centuries.

Striking evidence of the value of newspaper files is to be found in the comprehensive, four-volume *History of Minnesota* by William Watts Folwell, the first president of the University of Minnesota, whose fruitful life contributed so much to the building of our commonwealth. Numerous citations to Minnesota newspapers in this work indicate a liberal use of the priceless newspaper collection preserved by the Minnesota Historical Society.

Someone has said that the schools are the great agency for educating people and that the newspapers are the great agency for keeping them educated; that the newspapers reach more people and influence more lives than all the schools and colleges combined. To what extent newspaper-reading colors the opinions of the American people and shapes public sentiment it is difficult to say. The result is an intangible quantity that defies measurement. Test it in your own case and discover how your point of view regarding public questions and events is shaped by what you read in your favorite newspaper. How many times one hears the significant remark: "I see by the paper!" Will Rogers is not the only person who has to confess that "all I know is what I read in the paper."

Upon the press, then, rests a tremendous responsibility. That responsibility carries with it a challenge to the gentlemen of the press—a challenge expressed by Henry Russell Spencer as follows:

Here is a special responsibility resting on the press, and on you journalists who produce the daily information and suggestion for Everyman's education. You must make of the press not a mere medium of merchandise-advertisement, not a mere purveying to the people of what they want, sensation and amusement, "bread and circuses," which is mere blind leadership of the blind—but a public servant, a service of enlightenment and leadership, rendered by publicists. It is not only the journalists who must do this, readers must choose what is worth reading and reject the remainder; the public must support the publicists.

Today we salute the publicists of the past, the veterans of Minnesota's press, the pioneer editors who, in their day, faced their responsibility and made their contribution to the development of a great state. From them we accept the torch and in a rapidly changing world we carry on, facing the greater responsibility of the new day. We carry on in the spirit of this greeting and challenge voiced in 1916 by a pioneer editor in addressing the Minnesota Editorial Association:

Comrades, and companions of the Grand Army of Minnesota Journalism! Associates of a new generation and a new century in this splendid work! In the name of the founders of this association, we . . . confidently transmit to you, the labors which they and their compeers have thus far advanced.

With better facilities and higher opportunities, and richer encouragement, you succeed to the duties and rewards. That your success may be commensurate with these higher opportunities and richer rewards, is our fervent prayer.

HERMAN ROE

NORTHFIELD, MINNESOTA



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