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# When Ink Turned into Bullets: The Effect of the Press in Buffalo, New York and the Nation along with Its Role in Igniting a Civil War

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When Ink Turned into Bullets:  
The Effect of the Press in Buffalo, New York  
and the Nation along with Its Role in Igniting a Civil War

A Thesis in  
History with Museum Studies Concentration

by

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## **Abstract**

The American Civil War was a multi-faceted conflict: North versus South, states' rights versus federal law, slavery versus abolition. Due to increasing and constant advancements in technology, this was the first war in American history that developed in full view of the public through newspapers. The Industrial Revolution and capitalism allowed the press to evolve into rich and powerful soap boxes for political bosses and editors alike to voice their opinions far beyond the village square. Unbeknownst to much of the public at the time, the Union had been at the mercy of newspaper editors and politicians in a grand spectacle to sectionalize the American people in the name of capital, popularity, and power. A growing city at the center of innovation, Buffalo, New York had a thriving journalism industry during the mid-1850s and faced the same dilemmas involving sectionalism and upheaval from the influence of the press on the public prior to the Civil War.

## Introduction

[The press's] capacity for good and evil is unbounded. As an engine of moral and political power it has no equal—it is the grand regulator of the world, and its power is alike felt and acknowledged, as well by the prince on the throne, as by the dweller in the hamlet. It is the lever by which the great operations of the world, political, moral, and social, are moved. How vastly important then, that this power is not misplaced.  
-Frederick Follett<sup>1</sup>

In regard to the American Civil War, historians are in concurrence that there were several factors at play that led to the conflict between the states. The difference in opinion for these scholars emerges as those factors are narrowed down to which are to be considered as the most detrimental and effective in causing the division of the Union. A man of the newspaper industry himself, Frederick Follett understood the sheer magnitude of the press in its ability to walk a fine line between infecting the American populace with benevolence or exasperation. Given the nature of the press throughout the history of the United States to the present day, as well as the effect it has had on the American population during periods of societal strife and turmoil, it is only instinctive to believe that the influence of newspapers on the public during the Antebellum era in regards to specific events assisted in swaying public opinion and increasing tension at a rapid rate.

In the years prior to the beginning of the Civil War in April of 1861, the media of the time, as seen through newspapers of the North and the South contributed to a growing restlessness that was felt on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line and ultimately led to the public desire for mobilization. As the main form of information and public communication, the press was able to manipulate the American public into a fury of emotions and hatred they might have

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1. Frederick Follett, *History of the Press in Western New York From the Beginning to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Charles F. Heartman, 1920), ix.

otherwise never known existed. This was implemented through fervent oratory and the biased reporting of overdramatized and sensationalized events which have been more recently associated with the succession of the southern states and the inevitability of civil war.

Although it would then be instinctive to place such blame and responsibility for the American Civil War upon the editorial machines of New York and Boston amongst other newspapers of prominent East Coast cities, it is also important to examine the presses of smaller cities that may have had more influence on the events that were to transpire than what has been previously thought. As a rapidly developing city due to its location on the eastern shore of Lake Erie, Buffalo, New York was at the forefront of new technologies during this time of ever-increasing industrialization and innovation. Although it paled in comparison to the older and more advanced cities on the East Coast such as Boston and New York, Buffalo was still considered an important player. By this time, Buffalo was the municipal center of Erie County and already had long been considered a gateway to the West well before the conception of an independent nation; it was regarded even more as such with the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825. Thus, despite the fact that it was still regarded as a fairly young city far away from the metropolitan meccas with well-respected and reputable newspapers, Buffalo became an anchor for providing important news to the Midwest, the territories on the frontier, and the rest of the growing country as it continued on its turbulent quest to achieve manifest destiny.

As word of events was brought to the Niagara region by way of telegraph and large influential newspapers from the East Coast, the way in which Buffalo journalists took these events and chose to interpret them for the masses in the form of newspaper print greatly affected the views and beliefs of the populace. As stated by Ratner and Teeter in *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters: Newspapers and the Coming of the Civil War*, a substantial amount of harm “came from

individual editors' and journalists' distortions of telegraphic dispatches and from placing and interpreting the accounts into regional and political contexts."<sup>2</sup> As was customary at the time, many smaller newspapers would reprint articles from more prominent papers instead of taking the time to rewrite an article on the same event or topic. Consequently, whatever biases or opinions that existed within the article from the first newspaper then carried over to every other paper that decided to use the same article within their pages. For example, since Buffalo was the western most city in the north to have access to telegraph for some time during the 1840s, newspapers in Illinois were reprinting articles from the *Buffalo Morning Express* and the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, among others.<sup>3</sup>

Even after every major city in the United States except San Francisco was connected by telegraph by 1852, urban areas west of the Great Lakes and beyond still relied on their news from Buffalo; the city had seven telegraph wires that were linked directly to New York City, which was outnumbered only by the fourteen wires that connected New York to Philadelphia.<sup>4</sup> The importance of Buffalo as the West's link to vital news of events is reiterated in Frank A. Severance's compilation entitled "The Periodical Press of Buffalo, 1811-1915." Severance writes:

For some months following the completion of the telegraph to Buffalo, this city was the base, the distributing point, of news for all the vast region to the west, southwest and north of it; so that the Cincinnati *Chronicle* was moved to remark: "It is but a very short time since we received the news from Buffalo by way of New York, and now we receive the news from New York by way of Buffalo!" "This is a sign," commented the [Buffalo]

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2. Lorman A. Ratner and Dwight L. Teeter Jr., *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters: Newspapers and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 17.

3. *Juliet signal*. (Juliet [Joliet], Ill.), 17 Nov. 1846: 2, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024082/1846-11-17/ed-1/seq-2/>>.

4. Ratner and Teeter, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*, 15-6.



*Express*, “a sort of gauge of the great revolution in the transmission of intelligence which is now going on.”<sup>5</sup>

These newspaper articles from the time that were highlighted in Severance’s work illustrate that Buffalo was on the precipice of significant change that was historically unprecedented. Still many, with the exception of some involved in the newspaper business, did not yet know of or understand its significance, or the ramifications that were to come. On the arrival of the first telegraphic communications in Buffalo in July 1846, the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* exclaimed, “This invention is so amazing and so new that few even realize it, and still fewer, if any, justly estimate the effects it will have upon business and society generally.”<sup>6</sup>

As will be seen through the pages of Buffalo newspapers and a few papers from other parts of the country, the distortion of the press took its toll on the American public in its response to several events that occurred prior to the Civil War. Tensions rose over the question of slavery and its pending expansion. Anger was felt through the discussion of unrest in Kansas and what was to become of that territory destined for statehood. The media of the time effectively caused societal distress following the caning of Senator Charles Sumner, as well as Lincoln’s election in 1860. And on top of all of this mayhem, the newspapers were clamoring for first place in readership by attacking their rival journalists while fervently reporting the news through a jaundiced lens. As published in a book from 1884 about the history of the city of Buffalo and Erie County:

The press of the city of Buffalo... has occupied a conspicuous and honorable position in the history of journalism in the Empire State, and its influence... has been felt in an effective and gratifying manner in political policy and the counsels of the nation. Men have conducted and are conducting the leading newspapers of the city, who have in such

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5. Frank H. Severance, comp., “The Periodical Press of Buffalo, 1811-1915,” in *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society*, ed. Frank H. Severance (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Historical Society, 1915), 19: 188.

6. *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 3, 1846, quoted in Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo, 1811-1915,” 185-6.

capacity and otherwise, won national reputations and left the impress of their personalities upon the events of their time.<sup>7</sup>

It was clearly understood by those in control of the press at the time that they were able to essentially write history on their own terms, according to the politicians and causes they supported and the profits they would gain in return. Every piece of type that was set for printing had a much deadlier and devastating effect than they could have ever imagined.

### **Literature Review**

As to be expected, there are several books and articles in academic journals regarding the press in the antebellum period and during the American Civil War, much of it focusing extensively on the media coverage in relation to the events that were occurring in Kansas. In discussing the Civil War, scholars and educational media have also mentioned either directly or indirectly how much the press of that time period had served as a catalyst for growing tensions and the arduous conflict that followed only to not have actually addressed it or to not go into any detail in defending such a claim. For many years historians had neglected to research newspapers of that time period to prove that much like today and in other junctures of our nation's history, the media and its ability to play the public like marionettes has shown to have caused the nation to nearly sever its ties altogether through violence and upheaval during the war. This is another interpretation of the causes of the Civil War that for the most part still had not been brought to the attention of the general public and is something that should be regarded as general knowledge when teaching or learning about this time period in American history.

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7. "Journalism in Buffalo," in *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County*, ed. H. Perry Smith (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., 1884), 2: 327.

Thus, scholars are now noticing the need for this perspective to be investigated and fortunately, more literature is being written specifically about the detrimental effect that technological innovation and the rise of media actually had on the psyche of the Union during that period. Although there may be others that are unknown at this time, only a few sources on this topic have been published. As a result, this innovative research is causing many to recognize the idea of this concept as being one of the multitude of reasons that the Civil War commenced when it did and not at any other time.

As one of the earliest works on this topic, Donald E. Reynolds's *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession* examines nearly a couple hundred newspapers of the South and how they responded to several events in the year leading up to the beginning of the war.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of this study is to try to contemplate the very sudden and violent shift of Southerners from Unionist sympathies toward those warranting secession in such a short amount of time. Reynolds manages to delve more deeply into the political landscape of the southern states and how it related to the politicization of newspapers during the middle of the nineteenth century. Due to the narrowness of Reynolds's focus of study, many other events that were portrayed by the press and affected public opinion in the north are not evaluated.

In the pioneering work titled *Seeding Civil War: Kansas in the National News, 1854-1858*, Craig Miner argues that the biased and political rhetoric of the press surrounding the events that constituted what is now known as "Bleeding Kansas" was the decisive factor that accelerated the onset of the Civil War.<sup>9</sup> Miner is the preeminent scholar on Kansas history and

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8. Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970).

9. Craig Miner, *Seeding Civil War: Kansas in the National News, 1854-1858* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

tirelessly searched through thousands of newspapers from the antebellum period in order to validate his theory. Although this book is helpful in looking specifically at Bleeding Kansas and how the press surrounding this territory affected public opinion before the war, it does not discuss other events that flared up a media firestorm during the antebellum period and the resulting fissures that grew until the outbreak of war.

The work by Lorman A. Ratner and Dwight L. Teeter aptly named *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters: Newspapers and the Coming of the Civil War* focuses on the relationship between journalism, politics, and public opinion in the years leading up to the Civil War.<sup>10</sup> Ratner and Teeter argue that the press during antebellum played a vital role in shaping public perception and the events that followed by looking at political rhetoric, newspapers, and the subsequent public response. They also examine the connection between the rise in sensationalistic journalism and the rapid advancements in technology as the industrial revolution was in full swing.

In the article "*All Southern Society Is Assailed by the Foulest Charges*": Charles Sumner's "*The Crime against Kansas*" and the Escalation of Republican Anti-Slavery Rhetoric, historian Michael D. Pierson discusses Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner's speech "The Crime against Kansas."<sup>11</sup> The author goes on to analyze the reasons that led Sumner to write the speech given his dire political situation during the spring of 1856, as well as the resulting physical assault wrought down upon Sumner by South Carolina Representative Preston Brooks. Pierson argues that it was these actions and events that led directly to the dramatic increase in Republican Party enrollment, as well as further splintering in the relations of the North and

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10. Ratner and Teeter, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*.

11. Michael D. Pierson, "'All Southern Society Is Assailed by the Foulest Charges': Charles Sumner's 'The Crime against Kansas' and the Escalation of Republican Anti-Slavery Rhetoric," *The New England Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (December 1995): doi: 10.2307/365874.

South. This article is significant in that it gives insight into the extremely radical rhetoric that escalated tensions prior to the Civil War.

Like several other analyses on this chapter in American history, historian Maury Klein provides a narrative of the immediate aftermaths of the 1860 election in *Days of Defiance: Sumter, Secession, and the Coming of the Civil War*.<sup>12</sup> Klein's work however provides commentary of these tumultuous times by examining the emotions and behaviors of those who were experiencing this unrest and uncertainty. In addition, Klein greatly utilizes the voices of several newspapers and their editors from around the country, as well as the London *Times*, to facilitate a broader comprehension of the events and how they were reported to and affected the nation's populace. Given the topic, this study is limited to a particular and rather short fragment of time and does not focus specifically on the effect of the press in manipulating public sentiment.

Although there have been many works published about the history of the newspaper industry in the Western New York area, none of them touch on the contribution of the Buffalo press in influencing and manipulating the local populace and government during the middle of the nineteenth century. The great majority of these histories had also been compiled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and have thereupon been reused several times in subsequent historical narratives. Moreover, many of these writings were actually produced by those who were editors of the Buffalo newspapers themselves, or were directly related to the press of that city in some way. This is extremely helpful in that these histories are essentially firsthand accounts of the men that built the industry and what occurred during its ascent as a result of the Industrial Revolution. On the other hand, this kind of information could be

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12. Maury Klein, *Days of Defiance: Sumter, Secession, and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

detrimental since facts could have been altered by these men as to make others see them and their work in a more positive light. For this reason, these accounts must be studied with an objective eye. Respectively, the following information is the first compilation of research concerning the newspapers in the city of Buffalo on the precipice of the American Civil War and their involvement in impacting the opinions of the public on a local and national scale.

## **Chapter 1: Origins**

Before delving into the prospect of newspapers' fiery rhetoric being the figurative first shots fired in the Civil War, we must take notice at how the press had evolved into a commercial media machine by midcentury that allowed for such social upheaval to transpire. For the first half of the nineteenth century, newspapers were a commodity reserved mostly for the elite. Although it was relatively easy and inexpensive to begin and manufacture a newspaper, they were time-consuming to produce and rather costly to purchase; many papers were obtained through subscription and also catered to businessmen by providing news on the economy and politics.<sup>13</sup>

By the 1850s, the structure and content of the news began to change shape. Major advancements in communication and transportation created opportunity for the press to get news almost instantaneously, print more newspapers, and give more people access to them. The newspapermen of cities that were not located along the Atlantic seaboard no longer had to rely solely on "the nation's journalism capital" of New York City and now, according to Richard Schwarzlose, "newspaper success rested on finding a niche of untapped readership, whether through style of news presentation, mix of news content, political slant, price per paper, or amount of sensationalism."<sup>14</sup> Thus newspapers were more affordable and the consumer demographic changed; people in the lower and middle classes now read these papers and the editors felt that they would bring in more profits if stories in their papers were more sensationalistic and dramatic in nature, something they felt would entertain and interest an ever-

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13. Ratner and Teeter, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*, 7-8.

14. Richard A. Schwarzlose, *The Nation's Newsbrokers*, vol. 1: *The Formative Years, from Pre-Telegraph to 1865* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 123-24.

increasing audience.<sup>15</sup> This same examination was even acknowledged at the time in which these developments were taking place. As written in the *Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census* in 1860, it states:

At the present day the newspaper and the periodical have become “popular educators.” ...The universal diffusion of education, combining with the moderate prices at which the daily visits of the public press may be secured, has given to the newspaper a very great currency among us. And where so large a share of the popular activity is, ...it is easy to predict that the public press must here ever exert a power which renders it mighty for good or for evil, according to the intelligence and the virtue of those who preside over its conduct.<sup>16</sup>

The extent to which the press was able to infiltrate society and became incorporated into everyday life for the majority of Americans within a period of ten years is staggering. In 1850, approximately 2,526 periodicals existed in the United States. By 1860, 4,051 newspapers were in operation, marking an increase of 60 percent. Conceding the fact that this data alone is astounding, the proliferation in newspaper circulation is almost unbelievable. The amount of copies created by the presses across the nation increased from 426.4 million in 1850 to almost 928 million copies circulated annually in 1860, being a 117.6 percent increase overall.<sup>17</sup>

The newspaper industry’s ability to produce more papers at a constantly accelerated pace was of vital importance in making the United States “a newspaper-reading nation.”<sup>18</sup> It would have never achieved such unmarked success in its distribution from the printing press to the hands of the American public, however, without the assistance of the railroad. The extension of the nation’s rail networks made tremendous midcentury progress. The amount of railroad tracks

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15. Ratner and Teeter, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*, 8, 19.

16. Joseph C.G. Kennedy, *Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1862), 102.

17. Kennedy, *Eighth Census*, 103.

18. *Ibid.*, 102.



in operation went from 8,589 miles in 1850 to 30,599 miles by 1860. Thus, the expanse of railroads across the country increased 256.3 percent.<sup>19</sup>

Other factors that attributed to the growing circulation of newspapers outside of the cities that they were published involved the government and its involvement in the development of mail service. Since railroads were continuously covering new ground and were being incorporated into a vast expanse of rail networks, the United States government saw the potential of the train and its use in transporting mail. As early as 1838, three-quarters of the daily mail's weight that was being transported out of New York City consisted of newspapers and in the same year, Congress declared that "all railroad lines were also post roads."<sup>20</sup> In addition, newspapers were permitted mailing rates at a discount of 50 percent if they had accrued enough wealth to pay in advance in accordance with the Postal Act of 1852.<sup>21</sup> In consequence, the newspapers of the larger cities were able to expand their domain and widen their sphere of influence.

Although the development of the press in the South very much paralleled what was occurring in the North, there were slight variations that allowed for opinions to be diverse and for sectionalism to flourish. Just as in the states above the Mason-Dixon Line, increasing population and literacy rates along with the diminishing cost of newspapers permitted for an exponential growth in Southern journalism.<sup>22</sup> The issue rests, however, with the dissemination and successful circulation of the periodicals and thus differences in opinion as the nation progressed. As previously examined, from 1850 to 1860 the amount of railroads in operation increased substantially across the nation and into the frontier. According to the *Preliminary*

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19. Ibid., 103.

20. Ratner and Teeter, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*, 13.

21. Ibid.

22. Reynolds, *Editors Make War*, 3.

*Report on the Eighth Census*, however, “The southern States have been behind the northern in their public enterprises.”<sup>23</sup> While the North expanded their railroads from 6,507 miles to 21,005 miles of track between 1850 and 1860 for an increase of 222.8 percent, the South seriously underperformed in comparison. With 2,083 miles of track in 1850, Southern railroads were not that far behind the amount the North had at this time. Even so, the South never caught up to the North in their progression. By 1860, the southern states only succeeded in constructing 7,433 more miles of railroad track for a total of 9,515 miles.<sup>24</sup>

The unprecedented Northern railroad development that occurred during the following decade was just one indication of the differences between the two regions and the South’s inability to harness important innovations of the Industrial Revolution. Because the railroads were unable to effectively pervade the South, and due to the railroad’s increasing importance in carrying post and newspapers from the large newspapers of the northern cities to other areas in the North, the opinions and ideas of the more liberal northern periodicals were not able to transfuse among the southern populace. Moreover, the newspapers of the South were also not to be found in the hands of Northerners for the same reasons, and thus, this subtle isolation of the South aided in augmenting a distinct regionalism that was already in existence.

The fact that the printing press, the railroad, and the telegraph were able to evolve and grow simultaneously is a major factor that allowed the stage to be set for the newspaper industry’s societal and political domination in the decade prior to the American Civil War. Because of the break-neck speed at which the latest news could be acquired by way of telegraphs, the efficiency and capacity of innovative steam and rotary newspaper presses to

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23. Kennedy, *Eighth Census*, 105.

24. *Ibid.*, 234-37.

produce from 12,000 to 20,000 four-page papers an hour, and the ability to distribute these papers to just about every city and town east of the Mississippi by use of the railroad with ease, newspaper editors now had immense power and control that had never been witnessed before in the history of the press in the United States.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the existence of major newspapers with growing dissemination in out-of-town markets created increased competition that further transformed the style and content of most papers throughout the country.<sup>26</sup> All of these factors combined gave major newspaper outlets the muscle and far-reaching influence to distort and exacerbate newsworthy events. If it wasn't for these innovations in correspondence and distribution, the evolution of newspapers from a trade to a major commercial industry would not have been allowed to occur, which in turn could have delayed the onset of the Civil War. As stated by Edward Ayers:

[the press as a tool of modernity] created the necessary contexts for the war. [It] permitted people to cast their imaginations and loyalties beyond the boundaries of their localities, to identify with people they had never met, to see themselves in an abstract cause... Print shaped everything we associate with the coming of the Civil War.<sup>27</sup>

Much of the same that was occurring nationally was also true for the establishment of the press in the Buffalo Niagara region. Having brought the trade of printing and newspapering to the city, as well as establishing the first newspaper, the Salisbury family had created an empire in Buffalo that lasted for more than five decades and established a legacy that lives on to this day. The *Buffalo Gazette*, the first paper of Erie County, was printed in 1811 by Hezekiah A. and Smith H. Salisbury.<sup>28</sup> In the two subsequent decades the paper, whose name had changed to the

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25. Ratner and Teeter, 18, 20-22.

26. *Ibid.*, 19.

27. Edward Ayers, *What Caused the Civil War? Reflections on the South and Southern History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 140, quoted in Miner, *Seeding Civil War*, 6.

*Buffalo Patriot* after the creation of Erie County in 1820, was intermittently edited by Smith H. Salisbury and William A. Carpenter.

It was under Carpenter's charge that, in 1826, the paper became deeply aligned with the Anti-Masonic Movement after the development of the Morgan Affair.<sup>29</sup> William Morgan was a Freemason who was supposedly in the process of writing a book about the surreptitious activities of the secret order, which led to his kidnapping from a jail in Batavia, New York by other Masons who had then supposedly murdered Morgan near Fort Niagara. Although speculation had been made about his demise, William Morgan's body was never found.<sup>30</sup> This incident, however, sparked a growing detestation of Freemasonry throughout the country which, in due course, culminated in the formation of the Republican Party in the 1850s.<sup>31, 32</sup>

Coming from the same press as the *Buffalo Patriot*, the *Daily Commercial Advertiser* was created in 1835 under the charge of Hezekiah A. Salisbury and Bradford Manchester, while being initially edited by Guy H. Salisbury, the son of Smith H.<sup>33</sup> Through several mergers of other papers and a few name changes, the *Daily* became known as the *Buffalo Commercial*

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28. Guy H. Salisbury, "Early History of the Press of Erie County," in *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society* (Buffalo, NY: Bigelow Brothers, 1879), 2:199, <<https://archive.org/stream/publicationsbuf04socioog#page/n6/mode/2up>>; A. Gordon Bennett, *Buffalo Newspapers Since 1870* (Buffalo: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, 1974), 1; Follett, *History of the Press in Western New York*, 20.

29. Salisbury, "Early History of the Press," 201.

30. Lorman Ratner, *Antimasonry: The Crusade and the Party* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 30-31.

31. The Morgan Affair led first to the creation of the Anti-Masonic Party, then subsequently to the Whig Party. Once members of the Whig Party began to see slavery as an issue of priority, those who believed in the institution's abolition generally defected in favor of creating the Republican Party. As such, the Whig Party died with the birth of the Republican Party.

32. William Preston Vaughn, *The Antimasonic Party in the United States, 1826-1843* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 46-49, 186.

33. J.C. Brayman, "When Our Press was Young: Reminiscences Written in 1885," in *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society*, ed. Frank H. Severance (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Historical Society, 1915), 19: 158.

*Advertiser* in 1840.<sup>34</sup> In the five year span from the time of the newspaper's inception to its 1840 name change under which it would remain throughout the Civil War years, the *Commercial Advertiser* also went through several changes in ownership and editorship.

As the local newspaper industry grew and adapted in a constantly evolving industrial landscape, there were frequent and convoluted changes in regard to the administrative positions of several newspapers. Although papers would commonly have separate editors and proprietors, many times the two positions would overlap or a single person would serve both as the proprietor and editor of a newspaper. Furthermore, changes in proprietorship and editorship were not always made public or would not necessarily be announced in a timely manner. More often than not, those who came under the employ of a newspaper as a journalist or editor would then purchase an interest in the paper, thus becoming a part-owner. It becomes more perplexing then, that involved parties were constantly buying or removing their interests in the Buffalo papers. These issues render a comprehensive chronology of the newspaper industry in Buffalo during the middle of the nineteenth to be incredibly problematic.

Although at the outset the paper was edited by Guy Salisbury, it didn't remain under his editorship for very long. This is important since Salisbury considered himself to be a "Radical Democrat" while the editors that succeeded him in the position were Whig men, ideologies that at the time were on the opposite ends of the democratic spectrum in the political makeup of the country.<sup>35</sup> These Whig editors were in control of the *Commercial Advertiser* for greater lengths of time and as such, significantly influenced the future of the paper to be one in support of Whiggery. Understanding that under the editorial governance of Dr. Thomas M. Foote, a self-

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34. J.H. French, *Gazetteer of the State of New York*, 10th ed. (Syracuse, NY: R.P. Smith, 1861), 280-81.

35. Guy H. Salisbury, "To the Editor," *Buffalo Republic*, October 28, 1847, quoted in Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 183.

proclaimed Whig, the *Commercial Advertiser* had headed in a different political direction from that in which he believed, Guy H. Salisbury “dispose[d] of [his] interest in the establishment” in May of 1839.<sup>36</sup>

While Dr. Foote was serving as a diplomat under Millard Fillmore during his term as Vice President and then President of the United States, he continued to maintain a stronghold in his intermittent role as proprietor of the *Commercial Advertiser*, with the position of editor eventually being held by Theodore N. Parmelee.<sup>37</sup> He also left the city to pursue editorial endeavors elsewhere in the state. The *Commercial* of June 9, 1851 asserted:

Dr. Foote left town last Thursday for Albany, to take the editorial charge of the *State Register* in that city. His departure will cause no change in the proprietorship of this paper, nor in its general course. It will continue, as heretofore, to advocate National Whig principles, and oppose ultraism and fanaticism, whether North or South, while the arrangements we have made for editorial assistance will, we trust, render the paper worthy the generous support and confidence it has so long enjoyed, and which we would gratefully acknowledge.<sup>38</sup>

Although he was still greatly involved in the editorship of the paper when he returned to Buffalo, the *Commercial* remained under the combined management of Foote and Ivory Chamberlain.<sup>39</sup> After Thomas M. Foote was forced to resign from the editorial post and his journalism career shortly before his death in 1858, the position was manned by Dr. Sanford B. Hunt.<sup>40</sup>

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36. Ibid., 184; “Journalism in Buffalo,” 329.

37. Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 214-15; *The Commercial Advertiser Directory for the City of Buffalo, 1852* (Buffalo, NY: Jewett, Thomas & Co., 1852), 40.

38. *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, June 9, 1851, quoted in Severance, “Editorial Notes,” 323.

39. *The Commercial Advertiser Directory for the City of Buffalo, 1857* (Buffalo, NY: E.R. Jewett & Co., 1857), 25.

40. Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 215; *The Commercial Advertiser Directory for the City of Buffalo, 1858* (Buffalo, NY: E.R. Jewett & Co., 1858), 29.

On April 9, 1861, three days before the unofficial commencement of the Civil War when Fort Sumter was fired upon by Confederate forces, the *Commercial* was procured by Rufus Wheeler, Joseph Candee, and James D. Warren under the firm R. Wheeler & Company. In the following years Mr. Warren would continually gain more ownership over the paper as it became increasingly viewed as “the leading Republican Organ of Western New York.”<sup>41</sup> Even through these alterations, this periodical remained to be considered as one of the more moderate and conservative papers in its views in the decade leading up to and during the Civil War, despite its Whig and subsequent Republican leanings.

Another name connected to the *Commercial* and of vital importance to the evolution of the press during this time period is Bradford A. Manchester. Without Manchester’s vision for innovation and his devotion to the advancement of the newspaper industry and printing as a whole, Buffalo may have had a much different history given how much the press had influenced and shaped the city up through the present day. He had originally come to Buffalo as a young man to apprentice under the Salisbury’s in the printing profession.<sup>42</sup> Although he continued to partner with the Salisbury brothers on and off during his lifetime, Bradford Manchester is responsible for bringing important technological advancements to the area that changed the game of the newspaper business on the Niagara frontier through the addition of wealth, prestige, and power. According to Calvin F. S. Thomas, who was in the printing business with Elam R. Jewett, Thomas M. Foote, and many others from the office of the *Commercial Advertiser*, Manchester

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41. “Journalism in Buffalo,” 330; *Ibid.*, 332.

42. Bennett, *Buffalo Newspapers*, 1, 2.

introduced the first steam powered press to the city in 1838.<sup>43, 44</sup> The Adams Press, as it was called, had the ability to print five hundred pages per hour with four feeders and an operator at the wheel.<sup>45</sup> Even though the speed of this printing press paled in comparison to the presses that came into use decades later, this single alteration quadrupled hand production of the newspapers he manufactured at the time, which were the *Buffalo Patriot* and the *Daily Commercial Advertiser*.<sup>46</sup> In 1845, Manchester was at the forefront of technological innovation once again when he brought the first cylinder press to the city. With this machine, he debuted his latest newspaper, the *National Pilot*.<sup>47</sup>

Just as it had been previously indicated, this is where Buffalo also began to follow the national trend and we begin to see the press taking a different shape locally. Now that circulation was able to increase exponentially due to press advancement, as Ratner and Teeter explain, “news ceased to be whatever accounts came to hand and came to mean ‘news is what’s new.’ In competitive terms, it might have been expressed as ‘my news is newer than your news.’”<sup>48</sup> For instance while in control of the *National Pilot*, according to fellow newspaperman J.C. Brayman, Manchester went as far as to use carrier pigeons before the days of the telegraph in order to get news ahead of the mail so as to have an advantage over the other papers in the city; he had even

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43. Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 184; Bennett, *Buffalo Newspapers*, 3.

44. According to *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County*, Manchester had brought the first power press to Buffalo in 1836. This would be the same year that Manchester also decided to purchase an interest in the firm that created the *Commercial*, which then became Salisbury, Manchester, & Co.; “Journalism in Buffalo,” in *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County*, 328.

45. Ibid.; Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 184.

46. Bennet, *Buffalo Newspapers*, 3; French, *Gazetteer*, 280-81.

47. Bennet, *Buffalo Newspapers*, 3; Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 247.

48. Ratner and Teeter, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*, 10.



hired newsboys from New York to assist in the increase of marketing and sales.<sup>49</sup> Bradford Manchester went on to become involved in countless newspapers during his lifetime as owner and printer, which included the *Commercial Advertiser* and the *Courier and Pilot*, among others.<sup>50</sup>

At this point, the newspaper business in Buffalo had already made considerable progress in its rapid ascension as one of the most influential industries, as indicated thus far through its growth and increasing circulation. The extent of the press' significance, however, relied predominantly on the papers' readership. It is assumed that such an immense progression in the distribution of the newspapers at the time would ultimately equate to higher literacy rates, as the necessity for papers would not exist if the populace was mostly illiterate. The data supports this claim, as the national illiteracy rate decreased from 9.7 percent in 1850 to 8.3 percent in 1860.<sup>51,52</sup> Additionally, despite the constant influx of immigrants and other settlers adding to the population of Erie County, the illiteracy rate was tremendously low. In 1855, Erie County had a substantially large population of 132,331 residents, yet it was reported that only 2,315 of these individuals over twenty-one years of age could not read or write.<sup>53</sup> This low number may also account for the fact that Buffalo's public school system first established evening schools in each district throughout the city during the 1851 to 1852 school year.<sup>54</sup> The evening schools allowed

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49. J.C. Brayman, "When Our Press was Young," 159.

50. French, *Gazetteer*, 280-81.

51. Harvey J. Graff, *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 344.

52. During this time period, the terms "illiterate" and "illiteracy" were favored over "literate" or "literacy" and data referred to those "over twenty or twenty-one years of age who [could not] read or write." In addition, the demographics typically included were white males and females, as well as free blacks.

53. French, *Gazetteer*, 150.

children and adults alike to learn reading and writing, as well as other subjects, since many were employed or had other obligations during the day that made them unable to attend classes during normal school hours. The students who attended the evening schools ranged in age from under fourteen years to over forty years of age, and out of the many different nationalities that were represented, the majority of students were either natives of the United States or originated from Germany.<sup>55</sup>

A very important element in the creation and successful development of the city's public school system was the contribution made by those involved in the local newspaper industry. It was common during this time period for newspaper editors and owners to assist the educational sector in their cities by promoting literacy, as educational institutions "contribut[ed] to an enlightened public."<sup>56</sup> Although the newspaper men must have had good intentions by trying to serve a cause for the greater good of society, they must have understood that their altruistic works also served a dual purpose that put the newspapers at a distinct advantage. As affirmed in *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States* by Soltow and Stevens, "The entrepreneurial spirit of newspapermen made them vigorous spokesmen for their own product, and they sought their customers among adults and youth alike."<sup>57</sup> Several editors, including Oliver Steele, Sanford B. Hunt, and Joseph Warren, served as superintendents. Being that members of the press in Buffalo were superintendents of the public schools or were otherwise

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54. *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Buffalo, for 1851* (Buffalo, NY: Steele's Press, 1852), 20-21.

55. *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Buffalo for 1852* (Buffalo, NY: A.M. Clapp & Co., 1853), 29; *Twentieth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Buffalo for 1856* (Buffalo, NY: Brunck, Held & Co., 1857), 60.

56. Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 75.

57. *Ibid.*

involved in the educational system of the city in some way, learning and literacy truly were important factors that directly influenced newspaper circulation.

The *Buffalo Morning Express* was another prominent newspaper during the middle of the nineteenth century that had Republican leanings, though they would be considered more passionate than those of the *Commercial Advertiser*. The *Express* made its debut at the beginning of 1846 under the proprietorship of A. M. Clapp and Company. From its first year in existence, the *Express* was viewed as a very liberal paper derived from the same vein as the *New York Tribune*. On its first day in print, the editors of the *Express* boldly conveyed their intentions to their new and potential readers. The paper stated:

The *Morning Express* is to be a political journal and by no means a neutral one. We regard the strivings and activities of the political parties into which the people are divided, as one of the great instrumentalities by which the national life and civilization are to be developed... We believe the elements of a true Democracy and a real Progression to be much more abundantly and clearly manifest in the principles and positions of the Whig party, than in those of the party styling itself Democratic.<sup>58</sup>

Their purpose was further accentuated when, by the fall of 1846, it was announced that the new editor of the *Express* was none other than the Washington correspondent of the *Tribune*, W. E. Robinson, who would later go on to serve as a congressman.<sup>59</sup> At the same time that the *Express* publicized Robinson as its new editor, it also informed the public about the paper's new technological improvements. The article states:

This sheet is printed on one of 'TAYLOR'S PATENT CYLINDER PRESSES'... This is one of the modern improvements in the art of printing, and has capacity to make two thousand impressions per hour, and while it accelerates the speed of printing, it improves the style and beauty of execution.<sup>60, 61</sup>

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58. *Buffalo Morning Express*, January 15, 1846, microfilm, p. 2; "Journalism in Buffalo," 336.

59. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 224; Salisbury, "Early History of the Press," 203; *New-York tribune*, Jan. 24, 1892: 4, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1892-01-24/ed-1/seq-4/>.

60. "A Talk with the Public," *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 24, 1846, microfilm, p. 2.

The proprietors felt that in order to keep up with the rapidly advancing technology of the time, the intensifying competition in the newspaper industry, and have a continued increase in profits and readership, they needed to invest more money into their business. Thus, they procured a press of the highest quality from New York City. The article continues:

We have been led to this great additional expense to our establishment by the simple fact that we could not ‘*go ahead*’ without it. Our circulation had attained a point where the hand press, the good old way of printing, was incompetent to work our edition in time for our subscribers. We were, then, driven to the alternative of heading our circulation where it was, or of increasing our facilities, and we adopted the latter expedient, believing that it would better subscribe our interest than to check the inward progress of our business.<sup>62</sup>

Due to this improvement in printing, the *Express* was able to remain on the competitive edge of the industry while flattering their readers by stating that these changes were made to benefit the public more than the business itself. For instance, the *Express* asserts:

The improvements which we have made upon our establishment, to facilitate our publication, and the use of the Magnetic Telegraph, which enables us to be a little ahead of our eastern cotemporaries in the reception and publication of news, are necessarily attended with heavy expenses, yet our motto is ‘ONWARD’ and we keep pace with the march of improvement, trusting with the fullest confidence for a reward at the hands of a discerning public.<sup>63</sup>

In the years that followed, the editorship changed fairly often until 1852 when A. M. Clapp took it upon himself to manage the editorship of the paper. He remained in that position up through 1869 with only occasional assistance from associate editors.<sup>64</sup> Hence, in the time leading

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61. All capitalizations and bolded font within quotations accurately reflect what was in the specific newspaper exactly as it was printed.

62. “A Talk with the Public,” *Buffalo Morning Express*.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 224.

up to and during the Civil War, the *Express* strongly heeded the principles under which it was first published.<sup>65</sup>

Like many of its other contemporaries, the Buffalo *Courier* also went through many mergers and changes in names and proprietorship since its recognized establishment in 1834. Even though the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* was printed from the same office that began the first paper in Buffalo, the *Courier* was considered to be the oldest paper in the city as it was directly descended from the *Western Star*, established by James Faxon.<sup>66</sup> Theoretically, it could be argued that the *Courier* began six years earlier, since it was also derived from the *Buffalo Republican*, which was first published in 1828, and Horace Steele's *Buffalo Bulletin*, established in 1830.<sup>67</sup> The date of 1834 had been more widely accepted however, since the *Western Star* was the first daily newspaper to be printed in Buffalo, while both the *Republican* and the *Bulletin* were weekly papers. The agreement upon 1834 may also have something to do with people wanting to recognize the *Courier*'s beginnings with a politically neutral paper, rather than acknowledge its connection to the *Buffalo Republican*, which was the first Democratic paper in the region, or the *Buffalo Bulletin*, which was first a paper of the Workingmen's Party before becoming Democratic in nature; the Democratic Party was not in favor at the time do to the rise of Whiggery in Western New York.<sup>68</sup>

The *Republican*, *Bulletin*, and the *Star* were all consolidated into a single proprietorship in 1835, and in October of 1842 passed into the hands of Joseph Stringham. Not only did Stringham own and edit the paper, he also renamed the entity the *Daily Mercantile Courier and*

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65. "Journalism in Buffalo," 336.

66. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 216, 267; Salisbury, "Early History of the Press," 203.

67. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 267; Salisbury, "Early History of the Press," 202.

68. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 208, 216, 260-61.

*Democratic Economist*.<sup>69</sup> In February 1843, the name of the paper was again changed to the Buffalo *Courier and Economist*, only to be shorted a subsequent time a month later to the Buffalo *Courier*.<sup>70</sup>

By December of 1846 after it had been merged with Bradford Manchester's *National Pilot* and was renamed the *Courier & Pilot*, the title of the paper became the Buffalo *Courier* for a final time when it was owned by Manchester and J. O. Brayman, and it would remain under this name throughout the war.<sup>71</sup> The proprietorship would change again however, when in the following year it was passed on to William A. Seaver and Robert D. Foy, then continuing under the ownership and editorship of Seaver primarily until the involvement of Joseph Warren, first as editor in 1845 before becoming part owner in 1858.<sup>72</sup> Warren would remain involved in the *Courier* in some capacity as either editor, owner, or both until his death in 1876.<sup>73</sup>

Another editor for the *Courier* during this time period was David Gray, who in 1859 began his career with the paper as a "commercial reporter" before his promotion to "associate editor" only a year later.<sup>74</sup> As to be expected, the difference between the *Courier* and the other papers that have been discussed thus far continued to be political affiliation. Even after all of the mergers of newspapers, the *Courier* followed in the ancestral footsteps of the *Republican* and *Bulletin* as it persisted to be a voice and proponent of the Democratic Party in Western New York.

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69. Ibid., 216.

70. Ibid., 218.

71. Ibid., 216, 218; French, *Gazetteer*, 281.

72. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 217.

73. Ibid., 216-17.

74. Ibid., 217.

Not to be confused with the *Buffalo Republican*, the *Buffalo Daily Republic* was, ironically enough in spite of its moniker, another periodical of the Democratic camp. Although politically aligned with the Democratic Party, the *Republic* was a paper printed for the “Barnburners,” or the anti-slavery faction of the party.<sup>75</sup> The paper was issued first in January 1847 by “an association of practical printers” until passing on to E. A. Maynard and Company in 1848 with Benjamin C. Welch as its editor.<sup>76</sup> From 1851 until 1861, the editorship of the *Republic* at one point or another comprised of C.C. Bristol, Henry W. Faxon, Guy S. Salisbury, and Thomas Kean [Keene], at which point Mr. Kean, then the sole editor and proprietor of the *Republic*, sold the establishment to Joseph Warren and Company of the *Buffalo Courier*. It was at this point that the *Buffalo Republic* no longer remained its own entity, instead becoming strictly an evening paper.<sup>77</sup>

Given the political affiliations of all four of these newspapers, it is evident that just as today, not everyone in a given region agrees or feels the same way about the same issues. There was a wide range in differences of opinion in Buffalo at the time as there was anywhere else in the country. However, though these differences existed, it did not change the fact that the newspapermen tried everything in their power to sway the opinion of the public to prove their points were more valid in order to increase their influence, power, and wealth. Nor did it mean that they needed to follow any sort of moral code in order to pull at the heartstrings of the populace to get what they desired.

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75. “Death of Benjamin Welch, Jr.,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, April 14, 1863, microfilm, p. 3.

76. Ibid., 259; *The Commercial Advertiser Directory for the City of Buffalo, 1848* (Buffalo, NY: E.R. Jewett & Co., 1848), 80.

77. Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 260.

It is important to note that newspapers and the information they relayed to the general population during this time period were not, and still cannot be, taken at face value. Just as today, this news was filled with biases in order to promote political and moral agendas, as well as sell the highest amount of newspapers as possible. Furthermore, despite the papers' attempts to indoctrinate people into trusting all of the sentiments they conveyed, it must be understood that not everyone agreed with or believed what was being put forth by the press at that time; the public cannot be branded as a simple and submissive mob, as the population was surely just as unique and diversified as it has always been throughout the American experience. Yet, enough readers had apparently taken what was written as gospel and irrefutably undisputed, especially if it was something that they already agreed with even to the slightest degree. Thus, the press perpetuated, accelerated, and escalated viewpoints and opinions that already existed among the public, though not to this extent, which solidified the public's belief that their ideas were correct and indisputable, in order to make increased profits.

Moreover, the press was not concerned with ethical practice and did not feel that they were responsible for complete and impartial reports on the affairs of the nation. According to Ratner and Teeter, "In effect, the newspapermen of the 1850's functioned without rules that might have guided or restrained them and without evident understanding of the desperately high stakes involved as a war of words helped bring on a war of bullets."<sup>78</sup> Incidentally, there was mention about this exact topic by the editor of the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* in 1854. The article states:

It is one of the misfortunes of the times that so many editors of widely circulated papers feel themselves compelled to indulge in a strain of high rhetorical declamation, to "pile up the agony," – to use an ordinary, but expressive phrase – instead of vigorous and earnest, but calm discussion of important questions. The public, that, in a great degree, necessarily looks to the newspapers for information on such subjects, and for the means

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78. Ratner and Teeter, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*, 17, 19.



of arriving at just conclusions, has a right to demand sober fact and argument, instead of declamation, however brilliant, or invective, however severe... Swaggering talk, therefore, like that we have quoted, is idle. It is worse, for if it have any effect at all, it can only inflame the popular mind without tending to any practical result except evil.<sup>79</sup>

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79. *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 25, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

## **Chapter 2: The Newspaper Stand, or, Politically Charged Soapbox**

To be involved in the newspaper business in the mid-1800s typically meant an individual used to be, was at the time, or would at some point become involved in politics. Because of the press's evolution into mass media in its first true form, editors rose in prestige and their opinions were broadcasted further than they had ever imagined.<sup>80</sup> This power allowed for the transition of editors and publishers into the political arena and for editors who were politically aligned with those in office to publish speeches and other propaganda on their behalf. This permitted them to express and exhort their ideas upon an unsuspecting public, and, depending on the preexisting cognizance of this public in different regions of the nation, the politicians' ideas could then be ratified regardless of their zealotry, intent, or possible repercussions. Nevertheless, most of what politicians said in the newspapers was meant to rile up sentiment for their cause in hopes that it would better their chances at higher elected office and/or incumbency for their same powerful position.

This was true for politician Robert Barnwell Rhett of South Carolina, who made a transition from politics to owning and managing a newspaper. Known for his passionate rhetoric and fanatical editorial writings, Rhett went from being a congressman and senator to the editor and part owner of the *Charleston Mercury*. Although he had seemingly left the world of professional politicking by way of state and federal office by 1852, he was dismayed over not being appointed to the Confederate Provisional Congress that structured the Confederate States of America in 1860.<sup>81</sup> He had anticipated that the Southern citizenry and politicians would rally

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80. Ratner and Teeter, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*, 20.

81. *Ibid.*, 22.

around him and his ideals due to his charismatic and constant presence through his newspaper editorials.

Countless newspapermen went on to seek public office solely due to their involvement in the press. Thurlow Weed was an editor in Albany that published the *Albany Evening Journal*, one of the largest Whig newspapers in the country during the first half of the nineteenth century. Weed later became a New York political boss with connections to many prominent politicians including Secretary of State William H. Seward. During the 1850s, Weed even coedited the *Albany Evening Journal* with William Seward's son, Frederick W. Seward.<sup>82</sup> Horace Greeley, the editor of the *New York Tribune*, served for a short time as a congressman due to Thurlow Weed's political influence. Greeley later ran for several political offices, the most notable being his run for president against Ulysses S. Grant in 1872 on the Liberal Republican ticket.<sup>83</sup>

Greeley's most trusted confidant was none other than William E. Robinson, the Irish born Washington correspondent and Greeley's editorial assistant for the *New York Tribune*. Robinson also had a stint as editor of the *Buffalo Morning Express* in the fall of 1846 soon after that paper was established. In 1889, Robinson published an article in the *New York Herald* which disclosed his personal correspondence with Horace Greeley over several years, along with related commentary.<sup>84</sup> As seen through their letters and his explanation of the ensuing events that were being discussed by Greeley and himself, Robinson revealed that Greeley was purposely

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82. *Albany Evening Journal*, May 31, 1854, *Old Fulton New York Post Cards*, <http://fultonhistory.com/newspapers%20Disk3/Albany%20NY%20Evening%20Journal/Albany%20NY%20Evening%20Journal%201854.pdf/Albany%20NY%20Evening%20Journal%201854%20-%2000505.pdf>.

83. Ratner and Teeter, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters*, 21.

84. W. E. Robinson, "Horace Greeley's Letters. Correspondence with 'Richelieu,' His Editorial Assistant; with His Son Arthur and with His Wife," *New York Herald*, June 9, 1889, *Old Fulton New York Post Cards*, <http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2014/New%20York%20NY%20Herald/New%20York%20NY%20Herald%201889/New%20York%20NY%20Herald%201889%20-%20202366.pdf>.

attempting to have Robinson gain the editorship of a Whig paper in the Midwest to further broaden the political influence of the Whig Party on a national scale. Greeley was also assisted by other great men of influence to make this goal a reality, such as Thurlow Weed. In the article, Robinson affirms, “Mr. Greeley took great pains... to have me employed as the editor of some whig paper in the West. He and Thurlow Weed gave m[y] letters to Mr. Newberry, of Chicago, a wealthy and influential whig merchant of that city, to have a place made for me there.”<sup>85</sup>

Although Greeley’s plan was for Robinson to go to Chicago or Detroit, it occurred by a certain degree of happenstance and more political connections that Robinson was to end up as editor of the *Buffalo Morning Express*. En route to Chicago, Robinson stopped in Buffalo on October 6 to give a lecture on Ireland.<sup>86</sup> It appears that it was on this trip that Robinson became acquainted with Millard Fillmore, a prominent lawyer and Whig politician from Western New York that would later become President of the United States in 1850. According to Robinson:

On my way [to Chicago] I met Mr. Millard Fillmore at the depot in Buffalo, who was just leaving for Albany, but would immediately return. On learning my object he induced me to stay till he returned, as he wanted me to remain there. I did so and the result was my engagement to edit the *Buffalo Express*, then recently established. My name was announced as its editor and I issued an address to my new readers.<sup>87</sup>

This bit of information is interesting since Robinson obviously could not let the general public know that he had essentially been planted at the *Express* solely for the benefit of politicians. In his welcoming address to the public on October 24, 1846, Robinson states:

Four weeks ago I arrived in this city, on a journey to the west – intending to stop only a few days. I found that the proprietors of the *Express* required the assistance of an editor. At the suggestion of an honored friend, I consented to remain for a week. The week

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85. Robinson, “Horace Greeley’s Letters.”

86. *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 06, 1846, microfilm, p. 2.

87. Robinson, “Horace Greeley’s Letters.”

ended and found me loth to depart. I remained another and another week, till the result is as above announced by the proprietors of this paper.<sup>88</sup>

It is clear that Robinson's "honored friend" was none other than Millard Fillmore, however it does not seem to be truthful that the *Express* just so happened to "require the assistance of an editor" when he happened to be in town to accept such a position. Even so, it is strikingly evident that Mr. Fillmore had a hand in Robinson's appointment as editor.

In his greeting, Robinson also goes into great detail about the wrong-doings of the Democratic Party, as well as the reasons why he supports the Whig Party and their principles. Although the news was made public and the arrangement appeared to be finalized, certain unforeseen circumstances later occurred that forced Robinson to retract his acceptance of the editor position and prevent him from moving to Buffalo.<sup>89</sup> If Robinson would have stayed true to his word had he fallen through with taking the editorship of the *Express*, emotions and events may have occurred differently, at least on a local scale. Despite this setback for Greeley and the other Whigs affiliated with this scheme, this account proves not only that Buffalo was seen as an important city by which to conduct editorial business, but was also seen as a possible center of operations. Buffalo's geographically centralized location would assist in influencing politics and lead to the larger goal of liberal control across the country.

The occurrence of the press being closely affiliated with politics could not be more true within Buffalo itself. Already by 1847, those in the Buffalo newspaper industry, namely Guy H. Salisbury, were calling the world of editorials the "political arena."<sup>90</sup> Some local newspapermen

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88. "A Talk with the Public," *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 24, 1846.

89. Robinson, "Horace Greeley's Letter."

90. Guy H. Salisbury, "Early History of the Press of Erie County," in *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society*, 203.

went on to gain national prominence with the press and have great success in politics. A few of these men are Dr. Thomas M. Foote, Ivory Chamberlain, Dr. Sanford B. Hunt, and Almon M. Clapp, all of whom had worked for the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* as editor at one time or another.

Having already been acquainted with Thomas Foote in the previous chapter, it is important to note, like with many of the men that will be discussed, Foote's career in Buffalo's journalism field is what allowed him to gain recognition and establish his subsequent political career at the highest rungs of the federal government. Given his status as one of the most prolific Whig editorialists in Buffalo during the 1830s and 1840s, he, along with Elam R. Jewett became close acquaintances of Millard Fillmore. It was not surprising then when Fillmore was elected to be Vice President of the United States, Foote was appointed as a diplomat at Bogota in 1849. Following Fillmore's accession of the presidency after President Taylor's untimely death in 1850, Foote was again appointed to a diplomatic position in the Court of Vienna. Fillmore also attempted to have Foote designated as the postmaster of Buffalo, although this arrangement never came to fruition. Foote later abdicated his ambassadorial career once Franklin Pierce became president in 1853 and resumed his career in journalism with the *Commercial Advertiser*.<sup>91</sup>

Ivory Chamberlain was an editor for the *Commercial Advertiser* along with Thomas Foote from 1856 to 1858. He would go on to gain national esteem for his editorial prowess, so much so that he was holding the position of editor for the *New York Herald* when he passed away in March of 1881. He first arrived in Buffalo expecting to advance his teaching career, only falling into journalism when as principal of Buffalo High School he began writing articles for the

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91. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 215.

*Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*.<sup>92</sup> His writing quickly grabbed the attention of Elam Jewett and Dr. Foote who in turn offered Chamberlain a position at the paper, and thus he moved on to a new career path that would end up being his life's calling.

As another journalist that shared Whig principles, he, like many of the other fellow Whig newspapermen in Buffalo at the time, became close friends with former President Fillmore. After serving on the *Commercial's* editorial staff until 1858, Chamberlain left Buffalo for New York City in 1863. He became the editor of the *New York World* upon his arrival in New York and remained there until 1874 when he began his employment with the *New York Herald*.<sup>93</sup> The *Herald* and the *World* wrote lengthy obituaries honoring their fallen editor, and epitaphs about his life and career appeared in newspapers across the country.<sup>94</sup> Dr. Sanford B. Hunt, another editor that assumed Chamberlain's position when he left the *Commercial Advertiser*, was even a pallbearer at Chamberlain's funeral in New York City.<sup>95</sup> In speaking of Chamberlain as an editorial journalist, perhaps the *Herald* said it best when in his obituary, it stated, "Few men in America have exercised a greater influence in moulding [*sic*] the political thought of this generation than Ivory Chamberlain..."<sup>96</sup>

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92. "Ivory Chamberlain, Journalist," *New York Herald*, March 10, 1881, *Old Fulton New York Post Cards*, <http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2014/New%20York%20NY%20Herald/New%20York%20NY%20Herald%201881/New%20York%20NY%20Herald%201881%20-%2000888.pdf>.

93. *The Commercial Advertiser Directory for the City of Buffalo, 1856* (Buffalo, NY: Thomas & Lathrops, 1856), 24; *Commercial Advertiser Directory, 1857*, 25; *Commercial Advertiser Directory for the City of Buffalo, 1858*, 29; "Ivory Chamberlain, Journalist," *New York Herald*, March 10, 1881.

94. "Ivory Chamberlain, Journalist," *New York Herald*, March 10, 1881; "Ivory Chamberlain," *New York Tribune*, March 10, 1881, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1881-03-10/ed-1/seq-5/>; "A Lamented Journalist," *New York Evening Express*, March 10, 1881, *Old Fulton New York Post Cards*, <http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2014/New%20York%20NY%20Evening%20Express/New%20York%20NY%20Evening%20Express%201881/New%20York%20NY%20Evening%20Express%201881%20-%2000236.pdf>.

95. "The Late Ivory Chamberlain," *New York Herald*, March 11, 1881, *Old Fulton New York Post Cards*, <http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2014/New%20York%20NY%20Herald/New%20York%20NY%20Herald%201881/New%20York%20NY%20Herald%201881%20-%2000900.pdf>.

Akin to Thomas Foote, Sanford B. Hunt first trained in the medical profession only to pursue a career in the newspaper business. Not having had any experience in journalism, Hunt moved to Buffalo after the amusingly astute articles he had written for the *Buffalo Medical Journal* using the pseudonym “Smelfungus” caught the attention of editor Dr. Flint. As a result, Hunt was requested to become a professor of anatomy for the Buffalo Medical College and was appointed editor in chief of the *Buffalo Medical Journal* in July of 1853. Dr. Hunt had done remarkably well at the helm of the *Journal* and thus, in June 1855, Dr. Flint relinquished the entirety of his interest to Sanford Hunt making him both the owner and editor of the paper. Given Hunt’s affinity for satirical commentary, it is not surprising that the *Buffalo Medical Journal* became involved in a libel suit which resulted in the *Journal* owing five hundred dollars in damages to Dr. John D. Hill, the plaintiff in the case.<sup>97</sup>

In 1858, Hunt replaced Ivory Chamberlain as the editor of the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* and in turn, he resigned from his professorship at the Medical College and the editorial chair of the *Buffalo Medical Journal*. By 1860, Dr. Hunt left the *Commercial* to become editor of the associated with the editorial staff of the *Buffalo Morning Express*; he was already listed as the editor in chief of the *Express* in the 1862 directory for the city of Buffalo.<sup>98</sup> All of his successes in journalism allowed for his appointment as superintendent of the Buffalo Public

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96. “Ivory Chamberlain, Journalist,” *New York Herald*, March 10, 1881.

97. Truman C. White, ed., *Our County and its People; a Descriptive Work on Erie County, New York* (Boston: The Boston History Company, 1898), 1:790-91.

98. Ibid., 791, 821; “Dr. Sandford [sic] B. Hunt,” *New York Daily Tribune*, April 28, 1884, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1884-04-28/ed-1/seq-5.pdf>; *Buffalo City Directory for 1862* (Buffalo, NY: E. A. Thomas, 1862), 46.



Schools from 1860 to 1861.<sup>99</sup> Once the war was underway, Dr. Hunt enlisted in the United States Army as a surgeon and served in Virginia and the West. After the war, Dr. Hunt assumed the editorship of the *Newark Daily Advertiser* in New Jersey and remained in that position until his death in 1884.<sup>100</sup> He was so highly regarded that obituaries were published in the *New York Tribune* and *New York Herald*.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, despite the fact that he had not lived in Buffalo for more than two decades, his influence transcended time since kind words were spoken of him in obituaries published in the local papers and his remains were brought back to Buffalo for internment at Forest Lawn Cemetery.<sup>102</sup>

Another Buffalo editor who had strong political connections was Almon M. Clapp. Originally from Connecticut, Clapp came to Buffalo in 1828 to improve on his trade as a printer and establish a career in the newspaper business. In 1835, Clapp began publishing a newspaper in East Aurora, New York, and became a proprietor and publisher of the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* when the two papers merged in 1838.<sup>103</sup> Soon after, he withdrew from journalism to enter politics only to reenter the newspaper business in 1846 when he began publication of the *Buffalo Morning Express*.<sup>104</sup> During his hiatus from journalism, Clapp served as clerk for the

99. White, *Our County and its People*, 791; “Dr. Sandford B. Hunt;” G. Morton Weed, *School Days of Yesterday: the Story of the Buffalo Public Schools* (Buffalo: Buffalo Board of Education, 2001), 17.

100. White, *Our County and its People*, 791.

101. “Dr. Sandford B. Hunt;” “Sanford B. Hunt,” *New York Herald*, April 28, 1884, *Old Fulton New York Post Cards*, <http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2014/New%20York%20NY%20Herald/New%20York%20NY%20Herald%201884/New%20York%20NY%20Herald%201884%20a%20-%2000845.pdf>.

102. “The Late Dr. Sanford B. Hunt,” *Buffalo Evening Courier & Republic*, April 29, 1884, microfilm, p. 1; *Buffalo Express*, April 29, 1884, microfilm, p. 4; “The Late Dr. Sanford B. Hunt,” *Buffalo Express*, May 2, 1884, microfilm, p. 5.

103. Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 225; French, *Gazetteer*, 280-1.

104. Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 225.

Erie County Board of Supervisors, and loan commissioner for the U. S. Deposit Fund. It was around this time that Clapp noticed the changes that were occurring in respect to slavery and the increasing societal response toward its abolition. In finding the motivation to create the *Express*, Almon Clapp said:

The growing sentiment that slavery had no proper abiding place on the soil of a free nation had begun to manifest and assert itself in Western New York without a sympathizing journal to espouse its cause. It seemed that the time had come when free sentiment should have an advocate, and that feeling crystallized in The Buffalo Morning Express, a journal of modest dimensions and pretensions at its birth, and which has survived the institution of slavery, the existence of which caused its conception and birth.<sup>105</sup>

After he again became involved in the newspaper business, Clapp continued to be involved in Buffalo's political sphere. He was elected to the State Assembly in 1853 and ran unsuccessfully for the position of Secretary of State as a Republican in 1857.<sup>106</sup> By 1861, Clapp was selected to hold the position of postmaster for the city of Buffalo by President Lincoln and held this title until 1866; he was removed from office "for disloyalty to the administration of [President] Andrew Johnson."<sup>107</sup> Clapp continued to be associated with the *Express* as an owner and editor until 1869, when he was forced to sell his interest in the paper after being appointed as the Congressional Printer at Washington, D. C.<sup>108</sup> He remained in this role until 1877 when he again returned to journalism as editor and proprietor of the *National Republican* in Washington.<sup>109</sup>

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105. "Article by Mr. Clapp. It was Written for the [*sic*]-centennial Number of the Express – Interesting Reminiscences of his Early Life," *Buffalo Morning Express*, April 10, 1899, microfilm, p. 2.

106. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 225.

107. Ibid.; "A. M. Clapp Dead," *Buffalo Morning Express*, April 10, 1899, microfilm, p. 1.

108. "Journalism in Buffalo," 339.

109. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 225.

Joseph Warren, David Gray, and Thomas Kean were extremely influential when it came to promoting the Democratic agenda on a more local scale. A native of Vermont, Joseph Warren arrived in Buffalo in 1854 to undertake the position of local editor at the *Buffalo Daily Courier* and later became proprietor and editor in chief when he bought an interest in the paper in 1858.<sup>110</sup> He remained in charge of the editorial duties of the *Courier* until his death in 1876.<sup>111</sup> In 1857, prior to his involvement in the ownership of the *Courier*, Warren was elected as superintendent of schools for the city of Buffalo after receiving the Democratic nomination.<sup>112</sup> He remained involved in politics for the rest of his life. According to his obituary:

Each year of Mr. Warren's residency in Buffalo found him more and more prominent in public affairs. On the death of Dean Richmond, in August, 1866, the virtual leadership of the Erie county democracy devolved upon him by common consent, and he became member-at-large of the democratic state central committee. He remained an active member of that body till his death, and for ten years past has been a recognized leader and valued counsellor of the democratic party of Western New York and the state.<sup>113</sup>

Given his standing in Buffalo as a respected member of the newspaper business and politician, according to Severance in "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," "Very many local interests were promoted by [Warren]; and his paper was given a strength, influence and standing it had never before possessed."<sup>114</sup> Moreover, due to his acquisition of the *Buffalo Republic* at the onset of the Civil War and having turned it into an evening paper, Warren was able to reach even more people with his opinions and ideas than most of the other editors in Buffalo.

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110. "Death of Joseph Warren," *Buffalo Daily Courier*, October 2, 1876, microfilm, p.1; Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 217; "Biographical Sketches," in *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County*, ed. H. Perry Smith (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., 1884), 2: 111.

111. "Biographical Sketches," 111; "Death of Joseph Warren," *Buffalo Daily Courier*.

112. "Biographical Sketches," 111.

113. "Death of Joseph Warren," *Buffalo Daily Courier*.

114. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 217.

Of all the individuals that have been examined for the purpose of this study, David Gray was a metaphorical puppeteer who manipulated how events and politics were shaped in Western New York, all without ever attempting to obtain political office.<sup>115</sup> David Gray began his association with the *Courier* as a correspondent in 1859 and was soon thereafter a part owner and associate editor in either 1860 or 1861.<sup>116</sup> He remained as associate editor to Joseph Warren until succeeding as editor in chief following Joseph Warren's death in 1876. Gray resigned from the *Courier* and sold his interest in the paper in 1884, retiring to "Glen Iris," or the home of William Pryor Letchworth, for reasons involving complications to his health.<sup>117</sup> In announcing his death, the *Buffalo Daily Courier* established how involved he was behind the scene in the political happenings of the city and the state. The paper of March 19, 1888 states:

Although the natural turn of his mind was toward political independence, the times and the circumstances made David Gray... a staunch unswerving party man. He was in thorough sympathy with the most respected and the wisest leaders of the democratic party. He was a zealous supporter of Governor Seymour. Against the wishes of some of his political friends, at an early stage of Governor Tilden's administration, he committed THE COURIER to the earnest support of the governor's policy and his reform measures. His cordial indorsement and able defence [*sic*] of these measures attracted attention and won the confidence of Mr. Tilden, who consulted the Buffalo editor on various occasions.<sup>118</sup>

Later on, David Gray was also an avid supporter of Grover Cleveland and the work he accomplished while in office as the mayor of Buffalo. Gray has been lauded as one of the main contributors in seeing that Cleveland received the democratic nomination for New York's

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115. The only positions Gray held that could be considered slightly political in nature were treasurer and secretary of the park commission and as a member of the Historical Society, those of which he became involved with later in his life; "David Gray," *Buffalo Daily Courier*, March 19, 1888, microfilm, p. 2.

116. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 217; "Journalism in Buffalo," 334, 335.

117. Severance, "The Periodical Press of Buffalo," 217; "David Gray," *Buffalo Daily Courier*.

118. "David Gray," *Buffalo Daily Courier*.

gubernatorial race, which he then succeeded in winning.<sup>119</sup> According to the *Courier* and many others who were affiliated with politics and the periodical business, “There has never been a man connected with the press of Buffalo who had a keener insight into or a clearer and more intelligent understanding of municipal, state and national politics.”<sup>120</sup>

Much like David Gray, Thomas Kean also refrained from becoming involved in political affairs, yet he intended to persuade the bureaucracy through the ink of the printing press. Kean first came into the employ of the *Buffalo Daily Republic* as a columnist in the fall of 1859, having hastily been designated as editorial writer and managing editor of that paper.<sup>121</sup> While an editorial journalist for the *Republic*, Kean gained a reputation for his support and the paper’s endorsement of Senator Stephen Douglas, which most likely led to his receiving the promotion to managing editor during the presidential campaign of 1860. According to “Journalism in Buffalo” from *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County*, “...the *Republic* had hoisted the name of Stephen A. Douglas for President, and in the preliminary campaign Mr. Kean did good service for the “Little Giant,” for whom he had conceived the warmest admiration.”<sup>122</sup> Shortly after, he was named proprietor for only a few months before selling in 1861 to Joseph Warren and Company of the *Courier*.<sup>123</sup> Given the merger of the *Republic* with the *Courier*, Joseph Warren noticed Kean’s remarkable aptitude for editorial work and was thus appointed the city editor of the *Courier* in the fall of 1861, maintaining that role until 1882.<sup>124</sup>

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119. Ibid.

120. Ibid.

121. “Journalism in Buffalo,” 335; Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 260.

122. Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 260; “Journalism in Buffalo,” 335.

123. “Journalism in Buffalo,” 335; Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 260.

124. “Journalism in Buffalo,” 335.

Reminiscent of many others in that occupation, Benjamin Welch, Jr. also of the *Buffalo Republic* managed to make strong political connections that were interlaced with his career in journalism. Welch became associated with the *Republic* as its editor in chief and proprietary partner of E. A. Maynard in December of 1847 after leaving an associate editor position with the *Utica Observer*.<sup>125</sup> However, his affiliation with the *Observer*, along with his natural talent for coordinating political conventions at the county and state level allowed him to gain a favorable standing among many formidable New York politicians. Thus, he had tried to be elected to office in the late 1840s and by 1851, Benjamin Welch succeeded in receiving the Democratic nomination for State Treasurer and formally entered politics.<sup>126</sup>

Having removed himself from the ownership of the *Republic* in 1848, most likely due to his political candidacy, Welch continued to remain as editor of the paper and again bought an interest along with C. C. Bristol in March of 1853. Welch would remain in this position with the paper until resigning from the editorship and proprietorship in 1859 when he was selected by New York Governor Edwin D. Morgan to be the Commissary General of the State.<sup>127</sup> In 1856, during the unrest that was occurring as a result of the turmoil in Kansas, Welch was greatly involved in the sect of the Democratic party that was vehemently against the expansion of slavery. Along with other “Barnburner Democrats,” Welch created an address entitled “Voice of the Radical Democracy” that was published before the Party’s National Convention.<sup>128</sup> In the

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125. Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 259; “Death of Commissary General Welch,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, April 15, 1863, microfilm, p. 3.

126. “Death of Commissary General Welch,” *Buffalo Morning Express*.

127. *Ibid.*

128. “Democratic Pronunciamento.,” *Semi-Weekly Courier and New-York Enquirer*, May 21, 1856, *Old Fulton New York Post Cards*, <http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2011/New%20York%20NY%20Semi-Weekly%20Courier%20and%20Enquirer/New%20York%20NY%20Semi->

address, Welch and the other politicians were protesting the actions of the opposing Democratic faction and their views on the possibility of slavery being permitted in free territories and their subsequent admittance into the Union as slave states. In 1862, although he maintained his position as Commissary General, Welch was appointed by General Pope to be given the rank of Colonel and placed on his staff. Although he most likely would have continued to be involved in politics and possibly editorial work later on, Benjamin Welch succumbed to disease in April of 1863, becoming afflicted after the battle of Second Manassas.<sup>129</sup>

As established through the biographies of several individuals of the Buffalo press during the middle of the nineteenth century, journalism was constantly involved in the political sphere of the city. The preceding information could also be regarded as a case study that would be representative of many other established and developing cities in the United States at the time, essentially, Buffalo as a microcosm of what was occurring on a national scale. Ironic as it was, owing to their personal affiliations with Millard Fillmore and conservative Whigs, the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* published an article in 1855 regarding concerns over the *Buffalo Morning Express* being too closely connected to political parties.

In providing a narrative history of the press of Buffalo and Erie County, Frederick Follett warned those aspiring to enter the newspaper business about the strong connection between the worlds of newspapering and politics. Follett declared:

The history of the Press in this county is one of admonition and should be received as a lesson of caution by the aspirants for political or literary fame. Men who make politics a trade, are bad counsellors [*sic*] to the young who are about to engage in the establishment of a newspaper. Generally, they are the first to volunteer their counsel, and promise aid—but in nine cases out of ten, "they have an ax to grind," and no sooner is that accomplished, than their promises are forgotten... Besides, there would not be so many

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Weekly%20Courier%20and%20Enquirer%201855-1856%20Grayscale/New%20York%20NY%20Semi-Weekly%20Courier%20and%20Enquirer%201855-1856%20Grayscale%20-%200439.pdf.

129. "Death of Commissary General Welch."

ephemeral publications thrust upon the world, and by this means dividing a patronage among four, that is scarcely competent to sustain one well conducted newspaper...If properly heeded by those who are to come after us, the lesson may be of infinite value.<sup>130</sup>

As an allegorical eunuch, the press permeated the governing body in different attempts to persuade the law to act in their favor. When this method did not meet their expectations, the men of the broadsheet could turn on those that they were trying to seduce by libeling them in the papers, thus rallying up public support. In a sense, the newspapers at the time functioned on Machiavellian principles; they did whatever they saw was necessary to achieve a favorable result. That is, if they could not convince the government to change laws that reflected their beliefs, they would enter politics to try to change the laws themselves. If all else failed, they would air their grievances to the public to gain sentiment for their cause.

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130. Follett, *History of the Press in Western New York*, 29-30.



### **Chapter 3: Civil War in Kansas**

Although it has been previously mentioned that other events occurred during the second half of the 1850s that, by the stroke of the journalist's hand, had transpired to be hotbeds for public debate and controversy, some of the first and continually discussed occurrences to be transformed by the press into a media frenzy would be part of a collective known as Bleeding Kansas. Craig Miner, the preeminent scholar on Kansas history has argued that:

Kansas was... *the* major collector in the 1850s of arguments, *the* most important focus for the complex sectional argument, *the* issue that drew in the most elements that concerned people about the nature and survival of the Union, and *the* single matter to which the most ink was devoted by the national press and the congressional reporter in the crucial center of the 1850s. This importance played out more in the media and opinion capitals of the eastern United States than in the tiny towns on the plains of Kansas.<sup>131</sup>

According to the Kansas-Nebraska Act that was proposed by Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas and brought into question for the final time in May of 1854, Kansas would be admitted as a state by which the people of that state would decide through “popular sovereignty” whether it would enter into the Union with or without slavery being permitted. Being that Kansas was a territory located above the 36° 30’ line outlined in the Missouri Compromise of 1820, this piece of legislation by Douglas ultimately repealed that legislation and would allow slavery to exist in the North. This prospect outraged many Northerners and abolitionists alike; those who were otherwise indifferent to slavery or believed in slavery’s containment, not abolishment, were now faced with a bone of contention in that slavery was beginning to creep into the territories.<sup>132</sup> If slavery was now permissible in the North and was free to expand into new territories, when and where would it stop?

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131. Miner, *Seeding Civil War*, 3.

132. *Ibid.*

Although the amount of ink dedicated to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the ensuing events that occurred in that territory differed from city to city, the papers in Buffalo spent quite a bit of time contesting the subject throughout the majority of the 1850s. Despite the leanings of many of the city's newspapers and populace towards Kansas becoming a free state, there were still differences in opinion among the local Buffalo newspapers which led to grand public spectacles that played out within their pages. The Act had not been signed into law by President Pierce until May 30 1854, yet from the fifteenth of that month to the thirty-first, there were approximately seventy-five articles concerning the Kansas-Nebraska Act in the four Buffalo dailies that are being examined alone. This astounding count does not even include the numerous editorials on the topic in the other Buffalo periodicals or those articles during this time period that mentioned slavery in other capacities. For example, during the same interval of time, several articles were being published about the events that were transpiring involving the Fugitive Slave Act along with the ensuing riots and upheaval that was occurring in Boston.

As the utmost liberal voice in the city, the *Buffalo Morning Express* was much more impassioned with their rhetoric in opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act than the majority of other Buffalo papers, so much so that they termed the Act's pending ratification "the Nebraska fraud."<sup>133</sup> Although the Act had already been before the Senate for more than two months at that point, the controversy over its sudden "resuscitation in the House" began to emerge in the *Express* and other papers early on in the month of May; many of the papers that were opposed to this measure felt the tabling of "seventeen bills, many of them of the most urgent character" in order to immediately take up the issue of Kansas at this time was surreptitious in nature.<sup>134</sup>

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133. "Senator Seward's Speech," *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 30, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

134. "The Progress of the Nebraska Bill," *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 11, 1854, microfilm, p. 2; *New York Tribune*, quoted in "The Progress of the Nebraska Bill," *Buffalo Morning Express*.

Oddly enough the *Buffalo Daily Republic*, a paper that was generally viewed as having affiliations with the Democratic Party, deviated from the most other publications of that faction and openly opposed the Act and its passage. On several occasions, the editorial pages of the *Republic* expressed very similar ideals and concerns as those of the staunchly liberal *Morning Express*. The May 16 edition of that paper stated:

We have protested from the outset against this measure, and have deemed it our duty to point out its impolitic and dishonorable characteristics. If its passage bequeaths to the country a legacy of sectional strife and domestic warfare ; if it arrays one portion of the people against the other and compels the north to boldly assume the attitude of uncompromising hostility to the admission of another slave state into the Union, these consequences will be attributable to the authors of the violation of a solemn compact and not to those who have protested against it. Upon the former will rest the fearful responsibility of reviving an agitation which threatens the country with the most direful results.<sup>135</sup>

Prior to this sudden movement of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in the House of Representatives, those that disapproved of it were under the assumption that it would fail. As a supporter of the Act, the *Buffalo Daily Courier* made reference to this fact, saying they “have had almost daily, the strongest and most positive assurances from the Whig and Free Soil papers” and that “the Nebraska bill could not by any possibility become a law ; that a known majority in the House of Representatives had decreed its defeat, and it was dead – stone-dead.”<sup>136</sup> The sudden and dangerous possibility that it could pass through Congress and become a law brought upon a panic in the press that naturally mutated into a fight of good versus evil. The papers were beginning to make their readers question whether they should rescind their respect of the office of the presidency. To the *Express*, it appeared that “[President Pierce] and

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135. “The Struggle in the House of Representatives,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 16, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

136. “The Nebraska Bill – Probability of its Passage in the House,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 8, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

his clan ha[d] done everything that Satanic cunning could suggest to thrust Nebraska and Slavery into the arms of the Union,” regardless of what resulted from it.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, this dilemma was seen as “a contest between two foes” in which “one ha[d] right and patriotism, and God upon its side” while the antagonist had “might, and recklessness,... and the devil.”<sup>138</sup> The article went further, affirming, “It is easy to see which should conquer, and yet when Satan has been allowed to achieve so many triumphs, he may be permitted to crown them with Nebraska.”<sup>139</sup> It is evident from this editorial that the *Express* was making President Pierce and other politicians appear to be demonic figures with malicious tendencies and that God stood with those that were on the side of freedom.

Like the *Express*, the *Republic* also resorted to dramatics early on once they realized that there was an actual chance for the Act to become law. In an editorial piece titled “Integrity,” the *Republic* lamented over their loss of faith in American Democracy. It stated:

The labor which is required to conceal bad purposes and impart false colorings to facts, principles and circumstances, occupies three-fourths [*sic*] of the time of the national legislature, defeats the legitimate purposes for which that body was constituted, sinks the national standard of morals to the lowest level, even to the zero of political ethics... and proves that popular governments are no better shields to the governed against wrong and oppression, than monarchies and despotisms...<sup>140</sup>

Essentially, according to this rather pessimistic article, the author claimed that the Missouri Compromise was the only thing that held the nation together and, if the attempts to repeal it were successful, there was nothing to stop the country from falling to “the horrors of civil commotion and anarchy.”<sup>141</sup>

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137. “The Nebraska Excitement,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 15, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

138. *Ibid.*

139. *Ibid.*

140. “Integrity,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 10, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

Expressing such notions for the sole purpose of public consumption could be entirely detrimental to the public psyche and potentially lead to disorder and rebellion. Only a day later, the *Republic* continued on this perilous progression when they published another article aptly named “Association of Ideas,” in which they provided a philosophical explanation of sorts on different unsavory situations, along with the initial trains of thought that are often associated with witnessing such behaviors.<sup>142</sup> The purpose of this article was to explain to the reader that it was easy to correlate the politicians of northern states that were going to assist in passing the Kansas-Nebraska Bill with the barbaric act of tarring and feathering. The paper divulged:

For our own part, we do not look into a Washington or New York [newspaper report] without being reminded of tar and feathers before we lay it down. The reason is that we never fail to see, in them, the names of northern representatives who have lent their aid to the Nebraska swindle, or sneaked away from their post at the particular time when they should have been there, above all other times. Such an intimate connection is there between all northern recreants who favor that abomination, and the process of tarring and feathering, that we cannot separate the two ideas. They are next of kin.<sup>143</sup>

In other words, the article was condoning the possible use of an archaic practice that called for citizens to take justice into their own hands. Although they were most likely giving vent to their anger over this troublesome affair, it was incredibly irresponsible of the *Republic* to publish these sentiments with anxieties and tensions running so high. In a matter of two days, even before it was conclusive that the statute would pass, the *Republic* managed in attempting to instill mobocracy and vigilantism among the populace of Buffalo. As expected, similar concepts transpired in newspapers elsewhere around the country, which made the events that were to

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141. Ibid.

142. “Association of Ideas,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 11, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

143. Ibid.

come that much more justifiable in the minds of common people on the precipice of the most brutal conflict the nation had ever seen.

As the debate became more heated over the next few days, the editorial pieces became more and more maligned and antagonistic toward the South, despite the fact that the Act was drafted by a northerner. While the blame for this crisis remained mostly on the South and how southern society functioned, the *Express* sensed it was important for them to confess that it was the fault of the North for the South's unfavorable characteristics. The *Express* of May 23 stated, "The South is overbearing, and it is mainly the fault of the North that it is so. The South exacts – the North yields. The South menaces and blusters – the North cringes and sneaks. Thus it is that Southern encroachment upon Northern rights and sentiment succeeds so well in each and all of its efforts for the ascendancy."<sup>144</sup> The article went on to speak about the cowardice that existed among many Northern politicians in Congress in bending to the Southerners demands.

"Occasionally," the *Express* asserted:

...we find a Northern man who faces the music – who can look a bully in the face and a loaded pistol in the muzzle, without shrinking, and it is to such that we owe what few rights and guarantees of free sentiment are yet left us. Then again, we find a class of men in Congress who can be bullied and brow-beaten like a cowed school-boy, and who have not the spirit and pluck to resent an insult and chastise the insulter. It is mortifying in the extreme to know and acknowledge this fact ; because, while it reflects upon Northern manhood, it at the same time admonishes us that we cannot look for or hope for a proper vindication of Northern rights and Northern sentiment by Northern men.<sup>145</sup>

Since the passage of the Kansas Nebraska Bill led many people to believe that the future of the Union would be in jeopardy, the *Express* firmly believed at this time that if any states were to leave the Union, it would be the northern states that would remove the southern states themselves. In another article in which the *Express* responded to the *Virginia Sentinel*'s threat of

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144. "Congressional Comity and Northern Pluck," *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 23, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

145. Ibid.

southern separation due to northern hostility, the *Express* persisted in chastising and ridiculing the South by declaring that “the Slaveholding States will never go out of the Union until they are, by mein [*sic*] strength and physical violence, forcibly ejected, thrust out and kicked out.”<sup>146</sup> The *Express* continued, “The threat of secession is the mere senseless vapping of a cowardly bully, a poor concealment of his cowardice... It is a threat to be continually repeated, but designed never to be executed.”<sup>147</sup> In this, the *Express* was referring to times past when Southern states threatened to dissolve the Union, such as during the Nullification Crisis of 1832 to 1833.<sup>148, 149</sup>

The editorial ended with a severe warning to the South, saying:

The ‘South’ was the spoiled peevish, bawling child, that was always threatening to throw itself out of the window and dash its little brains out if it could not have everything it cried for... But let this tawney [*sic*] half-savage urchin beware of a further repetition of its tantrums. The next time the North holds it out of the window in that way, the North will be in good earnest, and will certainly throw the good-for-nothing creature into outer darkness into the pit it has so long been digging. Fools! Quit your sham alarms and outcries of ‘Wolf! Wolf!’ You have cried that, just once two [*sic*] often. The wolf is a-coming at last ‘and no mistake’, and all your arms can bring you no deliverer, while you are torn in pieces and your flock is scattered.<sup>150</sup>

By claiming that the South was a “spoiled peevish, bawling child” and a “half-savage urchin, it is evident that the *Express* was adamant in pitting the North against the South in an ever-increasing sectional fissure that would not have occurred so drastically or as rapidly if it was not for the incessant clamor of the newspapers.<sup>151</sup>

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146. “Sectional Malignity,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 17, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

147. *Ibid.*

148. This article also mentions John Quincy Adams and the Haverhill petition of 1842, when residents from Haverhill, Massachusetts pushed for Congress to dissolve the Union. They were under the opinion that a large amount of federal money was being used to fund the South and that the Union was onerous to the northern states. This appeal caused much panic among the state representatives, especially those of the South.

149. *Ibid.*; Paul C. Nagel, *John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, a Private Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 385.

150. “Sectional Malignity,” *Buffalo Morning Express*.

Other than the usual editorial sermons that were commonly found in the pages of the dailies during this time period, the opposing papers throughout Buffalo and the rest of the Union frequently skewed data regarding the same event in order to promote an agenda, prove a point, or to bash the other papers they were competing against in order to sway the public. The *Morning Express* published an article that reported on the meeting that was held in New York City to protest the Act. Both the *Express* and the *Republic* wrote in support of the proceedings of the New York Anti-Nebraska Meeting, stating they learned from the New York papers that “it was no mean affair,” that it was “an immense gathering... at least five thousand people were present.”<sup>152</sup> Overall these papers saw the demonstration as a success, the *Republic* saying “the resolutions told the tale of northern sentiment” and that it demonstrated “a general feeling of deep concern for the consequences that must follow such a violation of faith as that which is threatened by the pending bill in the House.”<sup>153</sup> The *Buffalo Daily Courier* wrote about this meeting as well, mocking the demonstration as “a signal and complete failure, and a total disappointment to all concerned in getting it up.”<sup>154</sup> The *Courier* scoffed at the trivial size of the audience, saying it “was attended, says the *Tribune*, by five thousand people, including, of course, all the boys and ordinary Park loafers,” while also including a count as low as one thousand from the *New York Herald*, the controversial democratic paper that supported the Act that was also the nemesis of the *New York Tribune*.<sup>155</sup> The article finished with a harsher criticism, concluding that:

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151. Ibid.

152. “The Anti-Nebraska Meeting in New York,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 17, 1854, microfilm, p. 2; “The New York Anti-Nebraska Meeting,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 16, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

153. “The New York Anti-Nebraska Meeting,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*.

154. “The Park Meeting in New York,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 17, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.



The meeting was worse than a failure, for its insignificance demonstrates that there is no such feeling against the Nebraska bill among the people, and no such strength of opposition to it as its free soil and abolition opponents allege and claim. It was, on the contrary, an additional proof that the Democratic doctrine of Non-Intervention, and the great principle of Popular Sovereignty, have taken deep hold on the convictions of the people, and must and will prevail.<sup>156</sup>

Having understood that to critics the attendance would appear to have been abysmal, the *Republic* justified the low attendance rate on account of it having been “called on an exigency so pressing that there was no time for the use of means to induce a numerous attendance.”<sup>157</sup>

According to the article, the organizers of the event recognized that “The danger that the infamous measure would be carried through the House, seemed so imminent that no moment could be lost,” but that “‘the solid men’ of the Metropolis came together as if notified by prescience.”<sup>158</sup> The coverage of this affair remains a perfect indication in the plethora of biases that existed in the media and the utter absence of journalistic integrity for the sake of championing a cause.

Once the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed through the House of Representatives on May 23, 1854, the *Express* appeared to be nearly hysterical and began making acute predictions over what the future held. The *Express* lamented:

Slavery might as well come into New York as go into Nebraska. If it can go there by bribery and fraud, it can attempt with equal propriety to come here by force... The future is pregnant with important consequences to the common country... The fight between slavery and freedom is now to be open, and ‘to the bitter end.’ The gauntlet has been cast at our feet.<sup>159</sup>

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155. Ibid.

156. Ibid.

157. “The New York Anti-Nebraska Meeting,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*.

158. Ibid.

159. “Consummation of the Fraud,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 24, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

The article persisted in the art of prophesying, claiming that the passage of the Statute "...is but the opening of the chapter. The hand of slavery is next to be laid upon Cuba, and the North will be called upon to shed its blood and expend its treasure in a war which must inevitably ensue with Spain, to gratify a Southern thirst for conquest and extended servitude."<sup>160</sup> The *Albany Evening Journal's* also claimed that this was to be the fate of the United States, stating, "Now that Nebraska is disposed of, the administration, with its slaveholding and 'Dough Face' allies, can turn their attention to the acquisition of Cuba."<sup>161</sup> The *Buffalo Daily Courier* felt obligated to reply to this statement, scathingly responding:

That is precisely what is to be done next, and [that] it will be done by the intelligent and patriotic decree of the American people, there need be no doubt... With or without Slavery, Cuba is of right, and is to be, part and parcel of our soil, without any violation of moral or national law, and by the force of circumstances beyond the control of either nations or individuals.<sup>162</sup>

The *Express* was not the only local paper to insinuate that the United States would go on to colonize other countries in the name of slavery's expansion. A couple days later, both the *Express* and the *Republic* publicized the claim that Senator Douglas's motion "to inquire into the expediency of recognizing the independence of the Republic of Dominica, and of opening diplomatic intercourse with the same" insinuated the beginning of a new conspiracy.<sup>163</sup> "Here is another development of the plan of the south for the enlargement of the empire of slavery, and the supremacy of the slave section over the free states... Every intelligent reader will see at once

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160. Ibid.

161. The "forty-four 'Dough Face' traitors" was meant to represent the forty-four Congressmen from the Free States that voted in favor of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. "Dough Face" was a commonly used term at the time that referred to any Northerner, especially a politician, that sympathized with the southern states and/or the institution of slavery; *Albany Evening Journal*, quoted in *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 25, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

162. *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 25, 1854.

163. "Recognition of Dominica," *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 26, 1854, microfilm, p. 2; "The Progress of the Play," *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 26, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

that there must be some important ultimate object in this movement,” said the *Republic*.<sup>164</sup>

According to the *Express*:

If, therefore we publicly make friends with the Dominicans, there will be a chance to lend them help enough to master their black neighbors, and when that is done, we have only to offer them annexation. The Dominicans would be overjoyed at the prospect, and we should gain a new Slave State... population of one million, or about that of Virginia, entitling it, under the three-fifth rule, to two Senators and thirteen Representatives. Thus, like the horse-leech, slavery cries – give ! give! and the North is expected to yield passively to its inordinate demands.<sup>165</sup>

Being that one was more conservative while the other humored different thoughts and principles, the *Commercial Advertiser* nor the *Courier* made mention to such speculations in regard to Haiti. Little did the *Express* know at the time that in less than a decade, a bloody conflict would ensue. Not against Spain on foreign lands as predicted, but against their fellow countrymen in sleepy towns contemporary to those that existed in Western New York.

Surely, in welcoming the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the *Courier* did not think that they were on the wrong side of history or that God did not support their beliefs. In publishing an editorial on May 26 following its acceptance, the article exclaimed:

...we congratulate the Congress, which has had the nerve and the patriotism, in the present excited state of the public mind, and in the face of the fiercest sectional opposition, to do this [great] act of public necessity and public justice; we congratulate the country which is to reap the benefit of it. From the first we have given this bill our cordial and unhesitating support.<sup>166</sup>

The *Courier* felt that the entirety of the situation was completely sound, that “the basis upon which this territory is organized, in respect to the slavery question, is eminently politic and just,” also saying that the measure was “but a practical application of the principle embodied in the

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164. “Recognition of Dominica,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 26, 1854.

165. “The Progress of the Play,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 26, 1854.

166. “The Nebraska Bill,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 26, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

Compromise of 1850, and which ha[d] received the emphatic approval of the great majority of the American people.”<sup>167</sup> The paper then speculated that the reason the Kansas Nebraska Act was fought against so aggressively by the “political fanatics of the North” was due to the adoption of popular sovereignty, which would “take the slavery question out of politics, and thus rob them of the sole element of their political existence.”<sup>168</sup> This was, of course, a drastically different opinion from that shared by the other three Buffalo papers discussed herein. It also brings into question what the true judgements were for the majority of Americans who were forced to obtain their news from such biased and cynical sources.

The *Buffalo Daily Courier* also alleged that all of the disquiet over the Kansas-Nebraska Act was a complete overreaction, that the violent reactions to it would alleviate as with any other controversial measure and everything would return to normal. On May 24, 1854, a day after its passage in the House of Representatives, the editorialist asserted:

The Senate will, of course, make speedy disposition of [the Nebraska Bill] . . . and, that done, all the excitement which has been created by it, and which has been monstrously magnified and over-rated, will at once subside, and the country become as quiet and as “safe” as it was after the passage of the Sub-Treasury Law, the Revenue Tariff, or the Compromise.<sup>169</sup>

Once the Kansas Nebraska Act passed through both Houses a couple days later and only needed approval from President Pierce, the paper exclaimed that its passage “sets at rest an element of sectional agitation, which . . . threatens [the country] with the dangers and horrors of disunion.”<sup>170</sup> But really the passing of the Act created more sectional issues that were then inflamed by the impassioned rhetoric of pro-slavery advocates, abolitionists, and newspaper editors combined.

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167. Ibid.

168. Ibid.

169. “Passage of the Nebraska Bill,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 24, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

170. “The Nebraska Bill,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 26, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

Although it very much disliked and did not approve of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* felt that the situation was completely blown out of proportion by the more liberal papers in Buffalo and throughout the country, and that it was the fault of the Northern politicians that it was going to become law. The *Commercial* stated:

[The Act] was invented and brought forward by renegade Northern men, and was finally carried by renegade Northern votes, won, as there is too much reason to believe, by the corrupt influences and appliances of a Northern Executive...we do not feel disposed, nor called upon by any sense of duty, to enter upon a crusade against the South, or engage in violent declamatory agitation of the subject.<sup>171</sup>

As previously mentioned, riots in response to a fugitive slave case broke out in Boston at the same time, resulting in the death of a police officer. The *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* discussed in a commentary appropriately named “The First Fruit” about how they appreciated mind provoking thoughts from the readers in establishing “whether the deplorable deeds [the riot reports] relate are to be considered the first fruits of the passage of the Nebraska Bill, or the latest and legitimate fruits of sedulous, persistent efforts... to pervert and inflame the popular mind in reference to all subjects with which slavery is in any wise connected.”<sup>172</sup> The *Commercial* did sympathize with those that felt “this kind of legislation [was] a dishonoring step backward in the great march of freedom and civilization.”<sup>173</sup> However, the paper did not agree with individuals who were very upset about this violation feeling that they were “morally absolved” and could respond with violence. The editorial reasoned:

For ourselves, while deploring the existing condition of things, we do not hesitate to declare our conviction that obedience to the law is the first and paramount duty of every citizen. Neither one wrong nor twenty wrongs can make another wrong right; and, if we suffer ourselves to be led by our first passionate impulses, rather than our sober considerate judgement, evils innumerable and remediless will ensue. The rash,

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171. *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 25, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

172. “The First Fruits,” *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

173. *Ibid.*

intemperate declaimer and inflamer of popular passions is now the greatest enemy the country has to dread. The future of this country...is dependent on the turn of present popular sentiment and its embodiment in acts. If calm, prudent and considerate..., all will go well. If we give ourselves up to passion inflamed by one controlling idea, and blindly heed the counsel of those who live by excitement..., inconceivable disaster must ensue.<sup>174</sup>

The author of this article persisted with this lesson, bringing in the names of Wendell Philips and Theodore Parker as instigators of the chaos in Boston. The article ended with harsh criticism of newspapers, and exclusively the editorial columns of the *Buffalo Morning Express*. The *Commercial* argued that the papers were doing more harm than good by rejecting laws in order to “signalize their devotion to the cause.”<sup>175</sup> After publishing an excerpt of that morning’s *Express* editorial as “an illustration of the language and teaching of many newspapers,” the *Commercial* affirmed, “Bad enough this, it must be confessed, yet it is mild in comparison with what others say. If such sentiments are adopted and responded to by the people, what better than riot and bloodshed can be expected?”<sup>176</sup> The *Express* reacted to this attack a couple days later, retorting that the *Commercial* was sitting idly by while the South oppressed northern rights. The *Express* responded:

[The *Commercial*] sits down and passively awaits the time when oppression shall voluntarily relax its iron hold upon Norther rights and interests, and wring shall convert itself by its own persuasive powers to the principles of right and justice. This position, like faith without works, is dead, and of no possible avail in bringing our government back to the paths of truth and justice.<sup>177</sup>

The *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* was often making examples of the *Buffalo Morning Express*, displaying the type of hurtful and fanatical rhetoric that was being used by many newspapers

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174. Ibid.

175. Ibid.

176. Ibid.

177. “The Supremacy of Law,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 31, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

throughout the nation. This sort of language abetted in rousing a frenzied response from the general population, or rather, it acted as a bellows, emitting words that stoked the flames of sectionalism.

The *Courier*, like the *Commercial Advertiser*, was also of the opinion that the blame for all of this strife and hostility belonged to the liberal newspapers that were against the Kansas-Nebraska Act. After the riots in Boston occurred, even the *Courier* could no longer deny that the nation would not return to normal, although they still refused to believe that the Act was at the root of this agitation as the liberal and abolitionist papers were declaring. The *Courier* scoffed, “It is said by these fanatics, and an unscrupulous partisan press, that the enactment of that Bill being a violation of the Compromise of 1820, it therefore absolves them from all regard and fidelity to that of 1850. The enactment of one law, a good excuse for the armed resistance to the execution of another! This is the morality of infidels, and the logic of traitors.”<sup>178</sup> In concluding their thoughts on this matter, the paper was sure to forewarn their readers, “The signs of the times indicate unerringly a coming struggle which will try our institutions, and our Union, more severely than any that has gone before; a struggle in which progressive Whigdom with the political fanaticism of the country will be ranged on the one side, and the lovers of order, of the Union and constitutional liberty on the other.”<sup>179</sup>

On the day that the nation waited anxiously for the pending passage of the Act by the simple addition of the President Pierce’s signature, the *Buffalo Morning Express* devoted more than half of its usable editorial page to publish in its entirety the speech of Senator Seward, petitioning the measure for a final time in the United States Senate. None of the other three

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178. “Resistance to Law,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, June 5, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

179. *Ibid.*

Buffalo papers being examined devoted as much space to the speech, the *Commercial Advertiser* only included select passages and their own editorial remarks thereafter while the *Republic* and the *Courier* failed to comment on Seward's speech at all.<sup>180</sup>

Immediately following the passing of the statute, those who refused to give up the fight against the Kansas Nebraska Act were making plans to repeal it. More importantly, the press in Buffalo as well as the other liberal and abolitionist organs around the nation felt obliged to continue their never ending and hostile foray. The *New York Tribune* published a list of all the northern politicians that voted in favor of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. After identifying their names, in an attempt to further vilify these men for their actions, the *Tribune* proclaimed:

By the votes of these men, representing Free Labor constituencies, One Million square miles of Territory, heretofore shielded FOREVER from Slavery by a bargain, forced by the South upon a reluctant and struggling North... has been opened to slaveholding immigration and settlement, and so exposed to be brought into the Union as Slave States. Shall not Free People mark their betrayers!<sup>181</sup>

Furthermore, as soon as the day after the Kansas-Nebraska Act was ratified, newspapers began suggesting what should be done in response to such a law. The *Albany Evening Journal*, which was owned and edited by powerful New York Whig/Republican politicians Thurlow Weed and Frederick W. Seward, published a short article of "Four Things to be Done." It stated:

First, Resolve upon the Restoration of the Missouri Compromise and the Repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law and every other repealable law which favors Slavery. Second, Encourage the emigration of Freemen to the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Third, See to it that every Legislature at the North returns true men to the Senate of the United

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180. "Mr. Seward's Speech in the Final Debate on the Kansas-Nebraska Bill," *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 30, 1854, microfilm, p. 2; "Mr. Seward's Speech on the Passage of the Nebraska Bill," *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 30, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

181. "BE IT REMEMBERED," *New-York daily tribune*, May 31, 1854, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1854-05-31/ed-1/seq-5/>.



States; and forth, Rebuke the forty-four “Dough Face” traitors, and honor the true men who stood up for Freedom.<sup>182</sup>

Another article that was originally written by the editors of the *Albany Evening Journal* and was very similar in nature happened to be reprinted in the *New York Tribune* on May 31, 1854.<sup>183</sup>

Similar reactions appeared in the newspapers in Buffalo. The *Buffalo Morning Express* proclaimed:

Now, that the measure has become law, it is well to be honest with it, and candidly consider it in all its aspects. The North must yield passively to it and prepare itself for new shackles, or boldly take the field, not only for the repeal of the Nebraska bill, but for the prevention and eradication of slavery wherever Congress has the jurisdiction. This appears to be the only way left for the North to save itself from utter bondage.<sup>184</sup>

### **“Kansas Ho!”: Occupation of the Kansas Territory**

Once the Free Soil faction acknowledged that there was nothing more that could be done to stop the rule of popular sovereignty over the land that encompassed Kansas, they knew it was essential to win the upcoming elections that were to be held there in order to guarantee Kansas’s admittance as a free state into the Union. Such a task would require them to have as many people with free state sentiments as possible to move to Kansas with all due haste. As witnessed, this dilemma in connection to the Kansas Nebraska Act caused a whirlwind of reactions to be displayed publicly in the papers, as well as a mass exodus of mostly armed and radical antislavery and proslavery supporters to fall upon Kansas in an attempt to sway the vote in their favor.

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182. “Four Things to be Done,” *Albany Evening Journal*, May 31, 1854, *Old Fulton New York Post Cards*, <http://fultonhistory.com/newspapers%20Disk3/Albany%20NY%20Evening%20Journal/Albany%20NY%20Evening%20Journal%201854.pdf/Albany%20NY%20Evening%20Journal%201854%20-%2000506.pdf>

183. *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 31, 1854, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1854-05-31/ed-1/seq-5/>.

184. “A Change of Tone,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 27, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

Large northern newspapers with significant financial and political backing, along with coalitions, even published advertisements in their papers to send people to Kansas and pay for their expenses in an attempt to assist in getting Kansas to become a free state and/or to report occurrences back to their press offices for the newspapers' use. An announcement in the *New York Daily Tribune*, whose editor was radical abolitionist and soon-to-be politician Horace Greeley, declared, "**Kansas, Ho!** – The NEW-YORK STATE KANSAS LEAGUE send DAILY parties or individuals to Kansas at REDUCED RATES, furnishing letters to their agents at St. Louis and Kansas, who aid, free of charge in making purchases, selecting land, &c."<sup>185</sup> These advertisements also appeared in other papers in Buffalo and around the country. The first items concerning Kansas emigration to appear in the Buffalo newspapers were short announcements regarding actions occurring elsewhere in an attempt to instigate the movement of settlers to the territory. An extract was published in the "Omnibus" section of the *Buffalo Morning Express* of that date, stating, "Immediate steps are to be taken in New York to promote Emigration to Nebraska. Fill up the Territory with Northern Freemen, and Slavery will be speedily 'crushed out.'"<sup>186</sup> Two articles in particular reoccurred numerous times in local papers. The first, being reprinted from the *Detroit Tribune*, referred to the population of the Minnesota Territory and how its growth could be stemmed by the "Nebraska fever, which is now raging in all parts of the Northern States."<sup>187</sup> It goes on to report:

New England alone is organizing an emigration of 20,000 persons for Nebraska and Kansas, and Iowa will, it is stated, send thither full 10,000 emigrants. From Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York, many hundreds are already on the route, and these three great States

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185. *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 23, 1856, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1856-05-23/ed-1/seq-1/>.

186. *Buffalo Morning Express*, June 1, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

187. "Minnesota," *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 29, 1854, microfilm, p. 2; "Minnesota Territory," *Detroit Tribune*, quoted in *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, June 1, 1854, microfilm, p. 1; *Detroit Tribune*, quoted in *Buffalo Daily Republic*, June 1, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

will probably send fourth much larger numbers; enough in fact to give a political tone to the territories. Judging from present appearances, Nebraska and Kansas will be both rapidly settled, as the feeling of the two great sections of the republic are warmly excited as to whether slavery shall or shall not be recognized and prevail there as a domestic institution.<sup>188</sup>

The second article was printed in the *Commercial Advertiser* and the *Daily Republic* and announced the establishment of the Emigrant Aid Society, having been "...incorporated by the Legislature of Massachusetts."<sup>189</sup> the organization already procured investments worth five million dollars, and its intent was to "contract forthwith with the Transportation Lines for the conveyance of 20,000 emigrants, giving the advantage of the reduced fare to the emigrants."<sup>190</sup> The society also expected "to erect immediately a large receiving establishment in Kansas, where the emigrants may be accommodated until they have time to settle themselves; to send out set in operation...mills, and such necessaries of civilization as require capital, with the apparatus for a weekly newspaper."<sup>191</sup>

By 1855, the occupation of the Kansas Territory was in full swing by those who were attempting to make it either a free or slave state. Announcements of settlers passing through Buffalo on their way to Kansas were published in the local papers quite frequently. An article in the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* reported on the flurry of activity, stating that "the tide of emigration flowing to Kansas Territory is immense. From all sections of the country it is pouring in...Parties are organizing in every section of the Northern States, and also in the Northern slave states, composed of men who love freedom and desire its privileges."<sup>192</sup> At the same time, those

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188. Ibid.

189. "The Kansas Emigration Society of Massachusetts," *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, June 2, 1854, microfilm, p. 2; "Occupation of Kansas," *Buffalo Daily Republic*, June 1, 1854, microfilm, p. 2.

190. Ibid.

191. Ibid.

who were in favor of slavery's extension were also sponsoring the movement of emigrants into Kansas, most of these people being from neighboring Missouri. A notice was published in Buffalo papers announcing "The *Mississippian* says that \$10,000 have been raised in Lexington, Missouri, to assist settlers from slaveholding States to go to Kansas, and urges the Mississippians to organize, and not to leave the laboring oar of making Kansas a slave State to Missouri."<sup>193</sup>

Predictably, as the sectional and political attacks continued being printed from the presses at an alarming rate, tensions elevated quickly and violence ensued soon thereafter. The *Buffalo Morning Express* told the public about the dangers of travelling to Kansas as a person with abolitionist sentiments. Their story about their "friend Samuel Taylor, of New York city" allowed the *Express* to share a story of a man who "went out [to Kansas] with pro-Slavery proclivities" only to have a change of heart once he was mistaken for the Free State Governor of Kansas by border ruffians and almost hanged.<sup>194</sup> This episode made Taylor realize the

"importance of securing that country to freedom" and warned the reader that:

this [was] but one of the innumerable instances that occur on the route between the free States and Kansas, where personal rights are outraged by a lawless mob. The Slave Propagandists can travel with their Slaves and their rifles unmolested, but a free man has no guarantee of protection from insult and perhaps death... The Missourians have determined; if possible, to force Slavery into Kansas at all hazards...<sup>195</sup>

In a more positive view of Kansas settlement, advertisements were appearing in the newspapers telling the public that "Public cottages for Kansas [*sic*] [were] being made at Cincinnati," and that they were convenient to be built or dissembled with ease.<sup>196</sup> Apparently this was an

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192. "Kansas Territory," *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, March 31, 1855, microfilm, p. 1.

193. *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, April 2, 1855, microfilm, p. 2.

194. "The Perils of Kansas Travel," *Buffalo Morning Express*, April 4, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

195. *Ibid.*

important factor, as lumber was in short supply according to the announcement, and that component made “it necessary for a settler to take his house with him.”<sup>197</sup> Public notices and other stories of similar attributes continued to appear in the newspapers of Buffalo and other cities in the coming years, as the country fell deeper into a struggle it would never emerge from unscathed.

### **The “Sacking” of Lawrence**

It is evident that many of these columnists for the newspapers of Buffalo and other cities in the Union wrote in a sensationalistic style so as to gain possible notoriety and make as much money as possible from their reports.<sup>198</sup> Thus, events that transpired became convoluted and exaggerated, which made it difficult to get a full and accurate understanding of occurrences in Kansas. This was attributable to the fact that recounting of such events by way of telegraph were not only distorted by newspapermen, but also by means of correspondents that reported events on behalf of large newspapers back east. Many of the reports in the Buffalo newspapers regarding chaotic events that were occurring in Kansas in the ensuing years leading up to the Civil War were republished from other larger newspapers or their correspondents. Thus, this occurrence would result in very similar reactions amongst the reading populace of cities whose papers also reused the same material.

During a series of violent episodes in Lawrence, Kansas that occurred from November of 1855 into early June of the following year which became known as the Wakarusa War, a pro-

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196. *Buffalo Morning Express*, March 26, 1855, microfilm, p. 2; *Buffalo Daily Republic*, March 24, 1855, microfilm, p. 2.

197. *Buffalo Morning Express*, March 26, 1855.

198. Miner, *Seeding Civil War*, 36-8.

slavery militia from Missouri “raided” the town and looted buildings, razed Lawrence’s principal hotel, burned the home of Territorial Governor Charles Robinson, and sacked the offices and presses of the *Herald of Freedom* newspaper. While no armed confrontation ensued and only one individual was killed by circumstances indirectly related to the violence, the press went wild with fictitious titles such as “Particulars of the Attack on Lawrence: THE TOWN SACKED AND PLUNDERED” and “**STARTLING NEWS FROM KANSAS: THE WAR ACTUALLY BEGUN. MORE MURDERING AND PILLAGING**” from ‘special correspondents’ saying that there were thousands of armed men waiting for combat.<sup>199</sup> As mentioned by Miner in *Seeding Civil War*, these incidences did not at all equate to a “war” per se, as they did not include battles or skirmishes by organized military forces. Rather, “it was a war because the press wanted to make it a war.”<sup>200</sup>

Moreover, the press in New York made martyrs of the two men that were killed by pro-slavery supporters during the Wakarusa War. A writer stated that these, among the other “thousand-and-one outrages upon peaceful individuals, travelers, and others, perpetrated by the Border Ruffians during their week’s foray” needed to be investigated by the Territorial Government as criminal activity, and “if [government officials] are not able [to punish the criminals],” the writer for the *New York Tribune* declared, “...let them stand aside at once, and make room for the new Government to be organized under the State Constitution.”<sup>201</sup>

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199. Ibid., 144-5; *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 29, 1856, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1856-05-29/ed-1/seq-6/>; *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 23, 1856, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1856-05-23/ed-1/seq-5/>.

200. Miner, *Seeding Civil War*, 137.

201. *New-York Daily Tribune*, December 25, 1855, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1855-12-25/ed-1/seq-4/>.

The events in Kansas unfolded in the newspapers over several years and stirred up resentment for those on both sides of the conflict. The sending of abolitionist fighters and news correspondents by newspapers and abolitionist groups became well known by the opposing party and others in the South. In efforts to mock the abolitionist faction, *The Daily Dispatch* of Richmond, Virginia stated:

The fellows that have been sent to Kansas by the Abolition Emigrant Societies have been driving a sharp business with Sharp's Rifles... Beecher, Greeley and Co., supply the champions of freedom with Sharp's Rifles, which the said champions box up and send back to the East, selling them at reduced prices, and then demanding more arms, when Greeley and Co., purchase up the identical weapons and send them again to Kansas... It is a sharp business of Yankee eat Yankee all around, and truly edifying to behold.<sup>202</sup>

In the same edition of the same paper regarding the "raid" of Lawrence, a writer scathingly exclaimed:

This famous free soil town of Kansas, which the *New York Tribune* and other journals of that kidney have represented as a sort of free soil Sebastopol, has caved in with miraculous expedition. It is but a few days ago since it was stated with great pomp and parade that there were fifteen hundred fighting men, well disciplined, all strongly fortified, in the town of Lawrence, and fully able, with their Sharp's rifles and artillery, to use up the Border Ruffians in double quick time. Behold the result! There was some difference between the defense of Bunker Hill and that of Lawrence! Where were Greeley, Beecher, Silliman, and Raymond, that they did not rush to the rescue?<sup>203</sup>

From the future state's baptism by fire after the passing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 to 1858, the *New York Herald* had published 4,042 articles and 635 editorials on Kansas.<sup>204</sup> The press had all but exhausted the exaggerated rehashing of events in Kansas to the point that editors made excuses to their readers for again bringing the topic to attention. For instance, the editor of the *Times & Sentinel Tri-Weekly* in Columbus, Georgia declared, "The frequency with

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202. *The Daily Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), May 29, 1856, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024738/1856-05-29/ed-1/seq-2/>.

203. *Ibid.*

204. Miner, *Seeding Civil War*, 22.

which this subject has been pressed upon the consideration of our readers is excused and justified by its overshadowing importance to the South.”<sup>205</sup> Unfortunately, the real residents of Kansas suffered immensely as the press and zealous outsiders invaded and ransacked their communities all in the name of morality and upholding constitutional rights.

Like the other papers in cities throughout the country, the press in Buffalo spent a tremendous amount of time covering the affairs of Kansas and providing their own interpretations on these confusing times in the history of the Union. While many of the articles included in their pages were reprinted from other larger newspapers, many of the Buffalo editors provided their own variations to these regurgitated news reports while others made criticisms of what was being said by the beacons of the East. While this was occurring, the Buffalo newspapers continued to bicker back and forth and attack each other over their differences of opinion in relation to the incidences in the territory. Considering how they reacted to the passage of the Kansas Nebraska Act, it appears that the newspapers predominantly had very similar responses to the other events that occurred in regard to the territory in question.

From the onset of the first pieces of correspondence arriving to the city about the violent occurrences that were transpiring at Lawrence in May of 1856, the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* maintained appropriate levels of concern regarding the ominous news and suspicion as they had no way to verify if this early information was truthful or accurate. The *Commercial's* report of May 24 stated:

Affairs in Kansas are approaching a crisis; and if the accounts from the territory are to be credited, the country is on the brink of a civil war. There is, of course, a great deal of distortion and exaggeration, but after making [all?] allowance for this, we cannot doubt that things are in a very critical and alarming condition.<sup>206</sup>

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205. *Columbus (Ga.) Times & Sentinel Tri-Weekly*, Mar. 7, 1857, quoted in Miner, *Seeding Civil War*, 21.

206. “Kansas,” *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 24, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.



The *Commercial* published an article exhibiting a headline presumably from a telegraphic dispatch that had since been reported by “a morning contemporary,” titled “MORE TROUBLES IN KANSAS! – LAWRENCE DESTROYED! – A Number of Lives Lost – Hotel and Printing Office Destroyed. – CIVIL WAR,” which the *Commercial* printed as a sort of disclaimer.<sup>207</sup> This preamble was announcing that “It is impossible to determine what degree of reliance is to be put on the accounts forwarded from the West respecting the civil war which has been kindled in Kansas.”<sup>208</sup> It also allowed its readers to know that the letters and dispatches that the newspapers across the country were receiving “[bore] on their face marks of exaggeration,” although they admitted that it was “impossible to doubt that there has been serious trouble.”<sup>209</sup> Thus in this message, the *Commercial* was able to provide to the public another lesson on the dramatics “in which the abolition press indulge[d],” insisting that it was “one of the favorite devices of those who thrive by agitation to place staring capitals over telegraphic despatches [*sic*] of doubtful authority, and so convey impressions which even the exaggerated reports they introduce will not warrant.”<sup>210</sup> Consecutive stories that the *Commercial* wrote about the civil unrest generally had headlines such as “The Rumors from Kansas” and made sure to remind the public that “The abolition papers rear so enormous a superstructure on a slender basis of ascertained facts, that they are perhaps misleading the public.”<sup>211</sup>

Of all four newspapers discussed, the most outrageous headlines and reports graced not the pages of the *Morning Express*, but of the *Daily Republic*. On the Monday following when the

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207. “The News from Kansas,” *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 27, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

208. *Ibid.*

209. *Ibid.*

210. *Ibid.*

211. “The Rumors from Kansas,” *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 28, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

first telegraphic reports were being seen across the country, the *Republic* included a worrisome headline titled “**The War in Kansas Begun – Destruction of Lawrence – Freedom Crushed,**” wherein they informed the public that although caution must be taken in reading intelligence from the telegraph:

...there is still too much reason to fear that in this case the actual facts are far worse than is represented by these meagre despatches [*sic*]. . . From all accounts it appears to us that the people of Kansas and more especially those of Lawrence, are already actually subdued, if not slaughtered, for which there is too much reason to fear.”<sup>212</sup>

The *Republic* continued to fabricate these hysterical headlines despite knowing that the unfounded information they were going by appeared to be a growing illusion as each day passed. On May 29, after other papers like the *Commercial Advertiser* scoffed at the incredible insinuation of mass destruction, the *Republic* included a news story with the nearly humorous title “**GREYTOWN OUTDONE!! Destruction of the Printing Press and the Hotel, and Probably the Whole Town of Lawrence in Ashes – Women and Children Fleeing in Every Direction.**”<sup>213</sup> As it was soon learned, the majority of these headlines and reports could not be further from the truth. Nevertheless, the purpose of the press was to pull at the heartstrings of the American people, which the *Republic* attempted to do in an article that proclaimed with great insistence:

People of Buffalo: –The city of Lawrence is partially if not totally destroyed! The blood of her murdered citizens cries to Heaven for vengeance. Armies of the ruffians of slavery . . . are hunting down with remorseless cruelty, the free men of Kansas. Their cry is ‘we will exterminate and drive out every d – d abolitionist!’ meaning thereby every freeman of the North. Their victims are our countrymen, our fellow-citizens, our friends. Their only crime is that they love liberty rather than slavery. . . Have you no public voice of burning indignation, detestation and scorn to utter? Have you no hand to stretch out to

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212. “The War in Kansas Begun – Destruction of Lawrence – Freedom Crushed,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 26, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

213. “Greytown Outdone!!,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 29, 1856, microfilm, p. 1.

aid and succor the champions of liberty on the plains of Kansas, struck down by the strong arm of tyranny, and no words of cheering and hope to whisper in their ears?<sup>214</sup>

While not as extremist in its oratory as the *Republic*, the *Buffalo Morning Express* conveyed similar opinions about the news from Kansas and still published the same fanaticized articles with preposterous headlines from St. Louis newspapers and the powerful papers of the eastern cities. Soon after receiving intelligence of the crisis in Kansas by way of telegraph dispatches, St. Louis papers, and the *New York Tribune*, the *Express* proposed that the time had come for Kansas to be admitted as a state. “There are strong and controlling reasons why Kansas should be admitted at once to the family of States,” the *Express* argued.<sup>215</sup> “It is the only way in which peace can be restored to the country at large, and that Territory saved from the wrongs and oppressions of a Missouri mob.”<sup>216</sup> Although they relied heavily on the intelligence of the telegraph reports and other newspapers, the *Buffalo Morning Express* appears to have been the only Buffalo paper that had a designated correspondent give a report from Kansas during the crisis in Lawrence. The correspondent was the *Express*’s “staunch Republican friend PRENTICE, who left Williamsville in this county a few weeks since for Kansas.”<sup>217</sup> In introducing Prentice’s communication, the *Express* stated, “His admonitions regarding what the people of Erie county have not done [on] behalf of the cause of freedom in Kansas are well merited. Substantial evidences should be furnished to prove the faith which is here professed in behalf of the justice of the cause of that oppressed and afflicted people.”<sup>218</sup> From this report, Prentice also concluded that:

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214. “People of Buffalo,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 30, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

215. “Kansas Should be Admitted as a State,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 22, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

216. *Ibid.*

217. *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 30, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

...should [the ruffians] attack us it is the opinion of nearly all of the citizens that there must be war. *War* that will spread from Maine to the utmost regions of freedom. The people of the North must rise, or else all that *has* been done for freedom will be lost. The time has come for action, and all we need here is men – *Men* that can stand fire and return the compliment. And with them we want *means* to help support the great cause. If I am not mistaken, Erie county has not done anything for the cause of freedom in this territory, and it is time that they should. These we want and *must have*, or all is lost.<sup>219</sup>

The paper was endeavoring to use this article in particular to rouse guilt in the local populace so as to instigate action, either through donations to the cause or mobilization to the front lines for the sake of freedom and justice. Inasmuch as the *Express* embellished news items to gather as much attention and sympathy as possible, they were often quick to criticize other papers, both local and national, that did the same but were on the opposite end of the argument. Of the *New York Times*, they jeered, “The articles which they appropriate with such a relish are mere garbled extracts, which, removed from text and context, are made to say what they do not mean when taken in their proper connections.”<sup>220</sup>

Just as in the national news, the newspapers in Buffalo managed to find a local martyr in a “young gentleman” named Stewart of Rushford, Cattaraugus County, who was killed in Kansas at the hands of border ruffians, according to reports from May 30 and 31. What is strange about this account though is that it would be expected that a story with local significance would conjure up more notoriety. Oddly enough, the only two papers in the city that picked up this story were the *Buffalo Morning Express* and the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, and even then it was only included in an untitled article from the correspondent of the *Express* and as small extracts in the local news section that was located on the third page in both newspapers.<sup>221</sup> Even though it is

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218. Ibid.

219. Ibid.

220. *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 26, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

peculiar that the two papers on the opposite ends of the political spectrum happened to find this story worthy enough to include in their pages, only the *Express* presented it in a way as to tug at emotions of the community and promote their agenda simultaneously. The daily titled this article “Mr. Stewart the Kansas Martyr,” where they updated their readers about the effect that his death had had on his hometown. “We learn, from Rushford...that the excitement growing out of the young man’s death is tremendous” affirmed the *Express*.<sup>222</sup>

When the news reached the town, there was excited spontaneously a general feeling of sympathy with the distressed family and of indignation against the perpetrators of the outrage. Banners were hung across the streets, men neglected their private affairs, and the business of arming and preparing for emigration was commenced by a number of young men who have sworn to leave for Kansas as soon as they can get ready. The feeling extended to all parties.<sup>223</sup>

In the apparent continuation of an ongoing trend, the *Buffalo Daily Courier* did not share the same beliefs about the “civil war in Kansas” as the other three newspapers being examined. However, just as the *Commercial Advertiser* was, the *Courier* was extremely skeptical of the initial reports coming from that territory and St. Louis. In “The Rumor of War in Kansas,” the daily paper wrote, “If the telegraphic reports are correct, civil war has broken out afresh in Kansas...There is, however, something irreconcilable in the reports, which tends to throw suspicion upon the accuracy of the news.”<sup>224</sup> Once the nation began to respond to the events transpiring in that territory, the *Courier* began with its usual onslaught of critiques aimed at other papers. The *Courier* chose to react to a resolution that was passed by “Black Republican agitationists at their Convention at Syracuse,” whereas they had “evidence that squatter

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221. *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 30, 1856; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, June 3, 1856, microfilm, p. 3; “Buffalonian Killed in Kansas,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 31, 1856, microfilm, p. 3.

222. “Mr. Stewart the Kansas Martyr,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, June 3, 1856, microfilm, p. 3.

223. *Ibid.*

224. “The Rumor of War in Kansas,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 28, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

sovereignty [was] a delusion and fraud; that slavery [was] equally unscrupulous...and that the only safeguard against its universal...dominion [was] to be found in its rigorous confinement within the limits of the States which constitutionally cherish[ed] it.”<sup>225</sup> Wildly opposed to this statement, the *Courier* felt that it was “very foolish or very treasonable” and felt it was necessary to provide a lecture on the concept of popular sovereignty and why it was extremely justified under these circumstances.<sup>226</sup> Other than this attack, the *Courier* did not partake in their denunciations in regard to Lawrence quite as much as they had with other events that the newspapers had devoted much of their pages to, though it is not apparent as to the reason why.

As seen through the aggravated discourse of the *Commercial* and the writings of the *Buffalo Morning Express* and the *Buffalo Daily Republic*, the later papers surely intended to stir up sentiments with their unrelenting and outlandish talk on Kansas. The comments from the *Commercial* about exaggerations based on hearsay were extremely relevant, especially because a day after that exposé was published, the *Daily Republic* happened to print an article that best illustrated the nonsensical views that that paper and other papers like it had regarding what they perceived as acceptable information to disseminate to the public. The article admitted:

We devote a large amount of our space to-day to the details of the Kansas news as furnished by the St. Louis papers. Although differing somewhat from the despatches [*sic*] furnished by telegraph, the facts are still sufficient to make one’s blood boil with indignation. It cannot be that the people of the north will submit forever and a day to these outrages without making an effort to wipe out the disgrace which such submission heaps upon them? We trust these accounts will be read and thoroughly reflected upon, and that when the time for action arrives, the blood of the Kansas martyrs will not have been shed in vain.<sup>227</sup>

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225. “Is Popular Sovereignty a ‘Delusion and Fraud?’” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

226. *Ibid.*

227. *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 29, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

Evidently, as long as they could get their message across to their readers that would continue to stoke frustrations and sectional hatred, most papers of this vein felt any unethical journalism was justified.

### **“The Crime Against Kansas”: The Caning of Senator Sumner**

As discussed in the previous chapter, another aspect of the press during this time period that allowed such fanaticism and oratory was the ability of politicians to use newspapers as their literary soapbox; radicals on both sides became modern-day heralds in an abounding and never-ending public forum. Certainly, this was also the case for Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. By 1856, two years after the Kansas-Nebraska act was passed into law, the situation in Kansas was well underway and tensions over whether the territory should enter the Union as a free state or slave state were at an all-time high. It was also during this year that Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts was worried about the possibility of losing his incumbency in the Senate and felt he needed to make his strong abolitionist stance known to the public. He did this in the form of a melodramatic speech that scorned at the events in Kansas and was considered to have defiled certain Southern politicians and Southern society at large.

He hoped that his plan would rile up sentiment for the Republican Party that would get members of that party elected, giving him a greater chance at keeping his Senate seat. In the article *"All Southern Society Is Assailed by the Foulest Charges": Charles Sumner's "The Crime against Kansas" and the Escalation of Republican Anti-Slavery Rhetoric*, historian Michael D. Pierson discusses Senator Sumner's speech "The Crime against Kansas." Pierson believes that Sumner's dire political situation during the spring of 1856 led him to write the speech.<sup>228</sup> This

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228. Pierson, "All Southern Society Is Assailed by the Foulest Charges," 533-39.

speech was given by Sumner in the Capitol and he subsequently made sure that the press distributed his speech through its sale as a pamphlet and its reprinting in the newspapers. In a letter to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Sumner attested, “My desire is not pecuniary profits, so much as the diffusion of the sentiments I have vindicated and the strengthening of my own position... Anything in this behalf will be more to me than money.”<sup>229</sup> Thus, it is only fitting then to find advertisements for the sale of Sumner’s speech in papers such as Greeley’s *New York Daily Tribune*, which could be bought by the dozen, hundreds, or thousands.<sup>230</sup>

The zealous speech became a national sensation, attracting good reviews and harsh criticism alike. Little did Senator Sumner know, the Southern Senators he had vilified in his speech would not go down without attempting to clear their names. This resulted in the physical assault wrought down upon Sumner by South Carolina Representative Brooks in May of 1856 in retaliation for Sumner’s slanderous remarks and attack upon the Southern institution. Of course the attack itself outraged many Northerners and abolitionists while Southerners and proslavery sympathizers applauded Brooks for flogging Sumner “like the dog he was.”<sup>231</sup>

Additionally, it could be argued that the media frenzy that followed the Sumner-Brooks affair, along with the sacking of Lawrence, Kansas by proslavery radicals angered fanatical abolitionist and Free-Soiler John Brown to the extent that it was a partial reason for him to stage what became known as the Pottawatomie massacre. This event occurred at Pottawatomie Creek,

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229. Sumner to Longfellow, 9 January 1856, *The Papers of Charles Sumner*, ed. Beverly Wilson Palmer, microfilm (Alexandria, Va.: Chadwyck-Healey, 1988), reel 71, 655, quoted in Pierson, ““All Southern Society Is Assailed by the Foulest Charges,”” 538-39.

230. *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 23, 1856, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1856-05-23/ed-1/seq-4/>.

231. William L. Barney, *Battleground for the Union: The Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction, 1848-1877* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990), 80, quoted in Pierson, ““All Southern Society Is Assailed by the Foulest Charges,”” 532.



Kansas, in which Brown and a group of his adherents brutally murdered five men and boys.<sup>232</sup> Pierson also argues that it was these actions and events that led directly to the dramatic increase in Republican Party enrollment, as well as further splintering in the relations of the North and South.<sup>233</sup> As a result, and with no thought as to the consequences of their words, politicians with a radical agenda such as Sumner knew that they could use the press to their advantage in that newspapers would surely publish melodramatic rhetoric and other theatrical goings-on that would sell papers and in turn stoke up fervent and nonsensical emotions in the American public. Fortunately for Sumner, although he most likely would rather to have not been flogged by Brooks, the incident was the central catalyst for the mass dissemination of his speech across the Union. In Buffalo, the newspapers issued announcements for several Republican meetings when all of this commotion was taking place; the papers that sympathized with Sumner and the Republican cause made sure to include that “[e]xtra copies of Senator SUMNER’S GREAT SPEECH on behalf of Free Kansas ha[d] been received, and [would] be ready for distribution at that time.”<sup>234</sup>

As the paper with the most diversified opinions in relation to their political framework, the *Buffalo Daily Republic* again sided with the more liberal Republican press over the Sumner incident and provided more sensationalist commentary for the affair. In addition to publishing overzealous reports about the supposed destruction of Lawrence and the caning of Senator Sumner, the *Republic* made sure to include excerpts of editorials from southern newspapers so as to make sure the focus of these bothersome events remained on the South as being the true

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232. Miner, *Seeding Civil War*, 145.

233. Pierson, ““All Southern Society Is Assailed by the Foulest Charges,”” 531.

234. “Meeting this Evening,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, June 3, 1856, microfilm, p. 2; *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 27, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

culprit.<sup>235</sup> Although these writings did originate from the papers of the South, it is important to keep in mind that not all southern papers were attacking the North just as some of the press of the northern states did not adhere to instigating sectionalism. Nonetheless, according to the thought process of these papers with fanatical tendencies, it was important to remind the readers who the true enemy was, or at least who they perceived the true enemy to be.

As to be expected, the *Buffalo Morning Express* was appalled by the incident at Capitol Hill and went great lengths in defending Senator Sumner and Republican ideals. In dealing with the criticism of an anonymous reader's open letter to the editor, a war on words ensued in the form of the *Republic* editor's damning response. The anonymous writer, who went by the moniker "Republican" felt that the paper went too far in propositioning that the seat of government should be moved from its current location at Washington, D.C., as it was located between two slave states, and placed where it could not be cajoled as easily by way of intimidation from the slave states.<sup>236</sup> "Republican" was also dismayed over the *Republic*'s condemnation of the attack upon Sumner by Brooks, affirming that "[i]f a Senator stands upon the floor of the Senate Chamber and abuses his privilege, as did this man Sumner, he should be punished and that too severely... Your doctrine is not republican, but on the contrary, is unchristian and calculated to do great mischief."<sup>237</sup> The *Express* quickly shot back:

[t]he above anonymous communication... is from one of a sneaking, cowardly class of persons, who skulk through society and strike their fellows with assassin blows, either in their reputations, property or rights. They are of the Brooks order of character, but less bold and respectable... the writer of the above communication, dare not stand out in open day and utter such sentiments regarding the outrage committed upon Sumner, but sneaks behind a fictitious signature. We pity any Northern man with such a craven soul... He is

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235. "What Our Southern Overseers Thing of it," *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 28, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

236. *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 30, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

237. *Ibid.*

unfit to draw his breath from the free air of the North; but should be made to breathe the pestilential vapors of the slave region.<sup>238</sup>

In a separate instance, the Republican paper even went as far as to include a minute but humorous announcement that provided the public with a new definition of chivalry, which now meant, according to the *Express*, “[a]ttacking an unarmed man, prevented by his desk from resistance, knocking him down, and striking him after he is down.”<sup>239</sup>

They continued to find differences in opinion to argue over, but on the topic of Senator Brooks caning Senator Sumner at Capitol Hill, the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* came to find that on average they were in agreeance with the *Buffalo Morning Express*. The *Commercial* concurred that the actions of Brooks against Sumner brought upon “a profound sensation, compounded of indignation, disgust and horror.”<sup>240</sup> Overall, although the *Commercial* believed that Sumner had brought the beating upon himself by spouting such libelous oratory, the paper felt Brooks’ actions were abhorrent and that he should be expelled from Congress; it was very important to the *Commercial* that Congress upheld the right of freedom of speech for the sake of the people and the future of the nation.<sup>241</sup> Furthermore, in discussing how the *Commercial* was in consensus with the *Morning Express*, the former periodical stated that the “*Express* agrees with us [the *Commercial*] that Sumner owes it to his manhood to retaliate on his adversary,” which for the conservative *Commercial*, looked as though they were developing to be slightly more radical in nature when concerning certain issues.<sup>242</sup>

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238. Ibid.

239. “Chivalry,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 26, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

240. “The Assault upon Senator Sumner,” *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 23, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

241. *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 27, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

242. *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

After the assault on Senator Sumner, the *Buffalo Daily Courier* was placed in a peculiar position. Soon after the first commentaries were published in response to the occurrence in Washington, other papers such as the *Buffalo Daily Republic* accused the *Courier* of being an apologist paper for Senator Brooks.<sup>243</sup> The *Courier* immediately responded to this onslaught by saying that this accusation was “a wilful [*sic*] and premeditated misrepresentation” and then proceeded to provide one of their quotes saying the attack was a “cowardly and ruffian act.”<sup>244</sup> After this incident, it seems that the *Courier* was very cautious and continued to tread lightly in regard to remarks made about the issues that were being discussed out of fear for having their opinions misconstrued by the rival newspapers of the city. In discussing a meeting that was soon to be held in the city, the *Courier* again brought up a recurring theme that made occasional appearances in the papers during this time period, that being the theme of “the importance of temperance in the use of language, and truthfulness and moderation in the actions of public men.”<sup>245</sup> The *Courier* continued to issue a warning, proclaiming:

The intemperance of unprincipled or misguided men, both at the North and South, has aroused and inflamed the passions of the whole people, and an effort is making to embroil the nation in a civil war. A crisis like the present demands cool heads and true hearts... We make these remarks at the hazard of being again accused of ‘apologising’ [*sic*] for the dastardly assault upon Senator Sumner, but we make them because we think the exigency demands them.<sup>246</sup>

The *Courier* then discussed how they felt that the sentiment of the people was moving toward rational thinking rather than actions based on fanatical emotion. The paper continued:

We believe there is an under-current in the tide of popular opinion which sets strongly in favor of all that is honorable, and of good report among men, and against all that is base and fanatical; – we believe that the mass of our citizens are unwilling to countenance any

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243. “The Effect of It,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 27, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

244. *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 28, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

245. “The Indignation Meeting,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, June 2, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

246. *Ibid.*

action that tends to create internal feuds or embitter feeling between the different sections of the Union. At the present time, true patriotism calls more for organized effort to heal the wounds of the country, than to inflame them by passionate appeals.<sup>247</sup>

Although they would not always put into practice what they had warned the populace about in this address, it is clear that the *Courier* and other newspapers were beginning to get a sense of how dire this situation of sectionalism was and, unlike all of the false threats that had been made in the past, this time they could possibly wind up with a much different and catastrophic result.

Not long after the violent attack, an announcement appeared in all four newspapers for a mass meeting to be held in Buffalo, stating that “all those who ha[d] a correct appreciation of the outrage committed in the United States Senate upon the person of the Hon. Charles Sumner” were to convene at the Eagle Street Theatre on the night of June 2.<sup>248</sup> The notice continued:

Argument is not necessary to induce the people of Buffalo to meet together for the purpose of condemning a brutal, cowardly and murderous assault upon an unarmed and defenceless [*sic*] man, nor to constrain them to characterize, as it deserves, the attempt to stifle the freedom of speech in our legislative halls. Let there be a large attendance and a full and free expression of public opinion.<sup>249</sup>

While all four newspapers advertised the meeting and all agreed to attend at first with the exception of the *Courier*, the editorial staff of the *Courier* did eventually decide to join the meeting and thus, commotion ensued due to their differing opinions about the issues at hand.<sup>250</sup>

In addition, it is interesting to note that this meeting had been called upon under the pretense that it was not to be politically affiliated in any way, yet it was being orchestrated by Benjamin

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247. Ibid.

248. “The Meeting To-Night,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, June 2, 1856, microfilm, p. 2; *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 30, 1856, microfilm, p. 2; “The Meeting in behalf of Freedom and Free Speech,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 31, 1856, microfilm, p. 2; “The Meeting Tonight,” *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, June 2, 1856, microfilm, p. 2; “A Call,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 31, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

249. “The Meeting To-Night,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, June 2, 1856.

250. “The Indignation Meeting,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, June 2, 1856.

Welch, Jr., who was the editor of the *Buffalo Daily Republic* at the time.<sup>251</sup> This was clearly seen as a conflict of interest by some, in particular the editors and accomplices of the rival newspapers of the city since they were also promoting different agendas and opinions.

Naturally, with the creation of an incident that brings upon reactions of societal strife, many responses that arise result in a tremendous increase in the aid of a directly related cause. Even though by this time emigrants and aid in the form of monetary donations had been migrating to Kansas for approximately two years, dissension over Lawrence and the caning of Senator Sumner through the telling of fervent reports in the newspapers brought support to the territory in ever increasing numbers. Meetings were being held across the North to discuss these concerns and what plans of action were required in response. A telegraphic report from Boston detailing the annual meeting of the New England Aid Company at the end of May informed the public that the company had received over \$67,000 in donations from 1855 to 1856 alone.<sup>252</sup> The Buffalo papers that approved of emigrants settling in Kansas and hoped to entice people to do so for the purpose of establishing that territory as a free state were publishing articles of the more favorable ways to get to Kansas safely. The *Express* mentioned how a committee had “made arrangements, by which steamboats bound for the mouth of Kansas river, and contiguous points...and receive Kansas freight and passengers at rates as low as from St. Louis, and that they will deliver the same without harm or molestation at the place of their destination or consignment.”<sup>253</sup> The *Buffalo Daily Republic* reprinted a similar story from the *Nebraska News*, informing their readers of a “good wagon road across the southern portion of Iowa, to Kansas”

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251. “The Voice of the People,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, June 3, 1856, microfilm, p. 2; “The Meeting Last Night,” *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, June 3, 1856, microfilm, p. 2; “The Meeting last Night,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, June 3, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

252. *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 28, 1856, microfilm, p. 1.

253. “Alton and Kansas Line of Steamers,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, May 26, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

while also providing fairly descriptive directions of the route so as to possibly convince people to begin the trek and guide them along the way there.<sup>254</sup>

Although it was only mentioned in the *Buffalo Morning Express*, the Kansas Emigrant Aid Company held their convention in Buffalo in July of 1856 “to secure so far as possible, unity and efficiency of action throughout the country, in behalf of freedom in Kansas.”<sup>255</sup> All but four state representatives were present. The conference was most likely held in Buffalo “with a view, apparently, to securing a wider representation of Northern organizations.”<sup>256</sup> The location of the meeting could also be due to the growing number of Kansas settlers emerging from the western portions of the country.

These episodes involving Sumner and Kansas happened to occur at the same time and thus, the readers of the newspapers in Buffalo were constantly bombarded with all of this negativity and dissention. Although there are countless other incidences, whether truthfully recounted or fabricated, that played out in the pages of the Buffalo papers and other newspapers across the United States prior to the formal commencement of the Civil War, the episodes that occurred at Kansas and the telling of these said events had set the stage for further political and regional divisions among the nation’s populace. From May 21 to June 4 of 1856, more than one hundred and fifty articles and excerpts were published pertaining to the events that transpired in relation to Kansas in these four Buffalo newspapers alone. It is apparent that had it not been for the ability of the press to permeate the strife that was occurring at Kansas and cause it to spread like wildfire throughout the country, the public would not have become agitated so quickly and

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254. “Wagon Road to Kansas,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, May 21, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

255. “Kansas Convention,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, July 10, 1856, microfilm, p. 2.

256. Samuel A. Johnson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom: The New England Emigrant Aid Company in the Kansas Crusade* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 215.

there would have been a smaller amount of hostilities and at a later time. A writer for the *St. Louis Missouri Democrat* worried that the “absurdity” that existed in Kansas would cause the rational citizens of the nation to join the “swell of popular passions” that were fueled by the words of editors and politicians in newspapers, and that:

...history itself, the history of their own times as viewed by the future, might be resolved into a ‘gigantic myth, into a congeries of subjective fancies and daydreams, a brilliant but baseless phantasmagoria, a shadowy procession of unrealities which but cheat the senses and make a bitter mockery of our rational nature.’<sup>257</sup>

Unfortunately, this gentleman was correct as it is well known that the fervent oratory found throughout the press from editors and politicians of this era unleashed a fury and hatred among the population that had never been seen before, and ultimately led to the bloodshed of neighbors and brothers.

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257. *St. Louis Daily Missouri Democrat*, February 7, 1856, quoted in Miner, *Seeding Civil War*, 34-5.



## **Chapter 4: The Election of 1860**

As was customary during the nineteenth century, many cities would see an outbreak of political fever in the year leading up to a state or presidential election; there would suddenly be an explosion in the amount of “campaign papers” that came out of the woodwork whose only purpose was to throw their support toward a certain candidate or party. Once the election concluded, the presses would close up shop just as quickly as they had begun.<sup>258</sup> The election of 1860 was no exception. In fact, up until this time in American history, the nation had never before witnessed such an exhibit of public response as seen through the resulting upsurge in the establishment and purchase of political papers. In other words, the American people were now demonstrating their disapproval over what was going on in the nation through the capitalist notion of entrepreneurship and mass consumerism. In 1860, 3,242 out of a total 4,051 newspapers published in the United States were political in nature, which equates to just over 80 percent. This is compared to only 1,630 political papers in 1850, which would be an increase of 99 percent in ten years.<sup>259</sup> Although it must be taken into consideration that 1850 was not an election year which could account for a portion of the growth ten years later, the decade leading up to 1860 was one of constant turmoil and hysteria which played out in the papers for all to read. The *Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census* declared, “The last decade in our civil history has been one of extraordinary political agitation.”<sup>260</sup> In the South by early 1860, there were already approximately seven hundred political papers among the eleven states that would secede only a year later. The number increased evermore as the year progressed; Arkansas alone

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258. Reynolds, *Editors Make War*, 72.

259. Kennedy, *Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census*, 102-3.

260. *Ibid.*, 103.

gained twenty-three papers from spring to the end of summer.<sup>261</sup> Severance discussed this same issue of election papers affecting the Buffalo newspaper industry in his compilation for the Buffalo Historical Society entitled “The Periodical Press of Buffalo: 1811-1915.” He states:

A good many papers have been started in Buffalo during political campaigns. Sometimes the principal purpose of the promoters has been to get as much as possible of the campaign fund of one party or another, making pledge of great political influence in certain districts or among certain classes. This is "easy money," none too strictly accounted for; and the paper finds it necessary to suspend soon after election.<sup>262</sup>

For the election of 1860, the four papers discussed herein were equally divided in their support of the presidential candidates. Long the voice of liberal and Republican sentiments, the *Morning Express* was unwavering in its nomination of Abraham Lincoln. During the campaign, the *Express* spent a tremendous amount of time discussing how numerous amounts of Democrats were dissenting and joining the Republican ranks.<sup>263</sup> Having long been associated with the Democratic Party, a surprisingly large factor in claiming a victory for Lincoln in Erie County was the large German immigrant population. Regarding their strong support for Lincoln in this campaign, the *Express* mentioned that “[t]he time was, and not very far back, in the history of this city and country, when the German voters were decidedly with the Democratic Party. They then were fascinated with the term Democracy. They thought it conformed in spirit and purpose with the German idea of freedom... Time and intelligence, however, have dispelled this dream.”<sup>264</sup> According to the *Morning Express* just prior to the election, the German vote for the Republican ticket in the state of New York was to supposedly swell to fifteen or twenty thousand

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261. Reynolds, *Editors Make War*, 72.

262. Severance, “The Periodical Press of Buffalo,” 193.

263. “More Accessions,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 16, 1860, microfilm, p. 2; “Another Vote for Lincoln,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 19, 1860, microfilm, p. 2

264. “The German Voters,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, November 9, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

more than it had ever been before.<sup>265</sup> The *Express* also mentioned in a large proportion of their articles concerning Republican Rallies all over the county that many of them had at least one speaker that made speeches in German to gather the sentiments of that population, as it was dispersed broadly across the majority of the municipalities of Erie county.<sup>266</sup>

A main attribute to the *Express*'s strategy to assist the Lincoln camp was to provide readers with editorials rooted in sectionalism, as well as condemnations of Douglas and the Democrats.<sup>267</sup> Of southern journals that wrote "articles upon disunion," and were attempting to instill worry and chaos among the public, the paper affirmed that "Abraham Lincoln will be elected, and that his administration will be patriotic and national is just as certain as that he will enforce the laws and punish traitors."<sup>268</sup> In an article titled "Stephen the Prophet," the *Express* discussed the Bible story of Stephen, "a prophet of old, that was stoned for having given some offense to the populace."<sup>269</sup> The writer then made a comparison of the prophet Stephen to "another Stephen who is surnamed Douglas, and who deserves a similar fate for setting himself up as a prophet, when he is not endowed with the spirit of power of prophecy."<sup>270</sup> When reporting on an attack by Democrats on a Republican rally in Troy, New York, the *Express* felt it was appropriate to condone violence, having stated that "[i]t was one of the most murderous demonstrations ever witnessed. This sort of thing must be nipped in the bud. We are no

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265. "The German Vote," *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 22, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

266. "Great German Republican Meeting," *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 22, 1860, microfilm, p. 2; "Republican Meeting at West Seneca," *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 19, 1860, microfilm, p. 2; "Judge Hausserek, – to Night," *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 20, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

267. *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 23, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

268. "The Wolf," *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 29, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

269. "Stephen the Prophet," *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 16, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

270. *Ibid.*

advocates of civil war and riot, but if they must come, then let them come!”<sup>271</sup> These would generally be seen as rather harsh words, but to the *Express*, they were just more frenzied pieces of writing that they had hoped would help change a few more votes in favor of the Republican Party.

By this time, the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* had left behind its old Whig Party affiliations and jumped on the Republican band wagon in favor of Lincoln. While the *Express* also resorted mainly to showing their readers reasons why the Democratic Party was the wrong choice for the upcoming election, the *Commercial* wrote many articles explaining election issues and trying to convince its readers why Lincoln and the Republican ticket were the better option. For instance, the periodical decided to respond to the criticisms that to vote for Lincoln was sectionalism in which they replied:

The charge of sectionalism, as all understand, is made in view of the position of the Republican party touching slavery... Here, it is true, is opposition to the further extension of slavery in the territories. But this is not sectional in the true sense of that term. For the term implies that the supporters of Mr. Lincoln as a party are limited in their aims and support by geographical lines. But this is not so. Their aims are national. A policy worthy to be denominated national is a policy that looks to the prosperity and glory of the nation as a whole.<sup>272</sup>

In an odd change of events, the *Buffalo Daily Republic* lauded Stephen Douglas as their candidate for president. This is ironic given the paper’s vehement disapproval of Douglas and his Kansas Nebraska Act of 1854 and the paper’s subsequent attacks of that faction thereafter. Although this choice did not seem to fit the newspaper’s sentiments of the past five years, it was most likely a result of the change of editorship and proprietorship to that of Thomas Kean, a man more closely aligned with Democratic principles. Therefore, as the editorial writer of the

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271. “The Argument of Desperate Politicians,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 20, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

272. “Sectionalism,” *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, October 13, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

*Republic* from 1859 to 1861, Thomas Kean was responsible for the paper's endorsement of Douglas.

Once the *Republic* completely changed their sentiments, they were still a paper fascinated with startling the populace with enormously embellished headlines and fanatical language, however they now wrote strongly in favor of the Democrats. For example, nearly a week before the election, the *Republic* published an article with the headline "ECHOES OF SOUTHERN SENTIMENT – Mutterings of the Coming Storm! – First Preparation for the 'Irrepressible Conflict' – **MINUTE MEN FORMING AND DRILLING!** – PROBABILITIES OF A COMMERCIAL CRISIS! – **MILITARY MOVEMENTS.** – IT IS TIME TO THINK!"<sup>273</sup> The paper, like many others that also supported the Democrats, was clearly trying to frighten the public and make them fear that if they voted for Lincoln, war would be inevitable.

As to be expected, every paper was overly optimistic that their candidate would secure the votes needed to win the election. More importantly in this election, each faction believed that it was their candidate that was going to save the Union, while a vote for the opposing candidate meant the certain demise of the country. In publishing a step-by-step guide for their readers on how to influence others to vote the Democratic ticket in the election, the *Buffalo Daily Courier* concluded the article by essentially saying that it was the readers' responsibility to make sure the vote for Douglas was secure, that "[l]et such work as this be done during the few remaining days, and the State will be won and the Nation saved. *Reader, will you do it in your district?*"<sup>274</sup>

Each paper also made sure to publish announcements for upcoming party rallies as well as reports on the proceedings of these meetings. An advertisement from the *Morning Express*

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273. "Echoes of Southern Sentiment," *Buffalo Daily Courier*, October 25, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

274. "We can Win the Victory and Save the Union," *Buffalo Daily Courier*, November 2, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

stated that arrangements were even made for discounted train fare from surrounding municipalities to and from the “Grand Republican Mass Meeting” and “Grand Torch-Light Display” that took place in Buffalo on October 12, 1860.<sup>275</sup> Naturally, given the competitive environment of the Buffalo newspaper industry during this time period, the papers would constantly criticize the coverage of their rivals’ political party meetings on a daily basis. The paper that was reporting on the proceedings of a meeting that it was in support of always claimed it was a great success while the rival papers made a mockery of them. For example, regarding the Democrat’s Union rally of October 26, the *Daily Courier* in reporting about the proceedings gave the article the headline “**Grand Union Demonstration! – THE MEETINGS LAST NIGHT – Torch Light Procession – SPEECH OF GENERAL EWEN OF TENNESSEE – Mass Meeting of the Germans.**”<sup>276</sup> In discussing the same meeting, the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* said that “the procession was a failure, less than four hundred participat[ed] in it.”<sup>277</sup>

Once the voting concluded and the ballots were counted, Erie County voted in favor of the Republicans and assisted in achieving a Republican victory for the White House.<sup>278</sup> The official elections results for Erie County shows that 53.3 percent had cast their ballot for Lincoln.<sup>279</sup> The *Daily Courier* felt the loss of the election was due to the fact that the Democratic Party was technically running two candidates for president on their ticket, both Douglas and

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275. *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 11, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

276. “Grand Union Demonstration,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, October 26, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

277. “Democratic Meeting Last Night,” *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, October 26, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

278. *Buffalo Morning Express*, November 7, 1860, microfilm, p. 2; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, November 7, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

279. Michael J. Dubin, *United States Presidential Elections, 1788-1860: The Official Results by County and State* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002), 176.

Breckinridge, which caused a split Democratic vote and ensured a Republican victory.<sup>280</sup> The *Buffalo Daily Republic* solely blamed the Democratic loss on the “Breckinridge disunionists of the North,” saying that “[i]n this State they have done more to defeat and injure the Democratic party than the Republicans could ever have done.”<sup>281</sup> The local editor of the *Republic* also published an article entitled “Our Lament,” which accepted defeat, admitting:

...we [the *Republic*] don't feel particularly pleased with the result of the election, still we can live under your confounded republican administration as well as the Lincolnites. We did everything we could to convince the people they would rue the day Old Abe was elected, and because they didn't take our advice, we are not going to give up... We are going to stay right here with the rest of you crazy headed fellows – obey the laws – be a good citizen, and sweat it out. Some of you will be ashamed of yourselves before four years are over, and then it will be our turn to tantalize you.<sup>282</sup>

On a more serious note, the *Courier* also issued a warning to the victors. The article states:

It is a fixed fact that Abraham Lincoln is elected President by the popular vote of the Free States – by a geographical party whose one idea is hostility to slavery. This party, which we have honestly opposed, and which we shall continue to oppose so long as it occupies its present position, had conquered an immense responsibility. To its keeping will be measurable committed the government of this great Republic, and it will remain with a few men – the leaders of this party – to say whether we are approaching an era of continued distrust, of strife, of financial revulsion, of civil war. We hope for the best, and shall labor for the interests of our common country.<sup>283</sup>

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280. “After the Election – The Indomitable Democracy,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, November 10, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

281. “A Big ‘Splurge,’” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, November 9, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

282. “Our Lament,” *Buffalo Daily Republic*, November 7, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

283. “The Result of the Election,” *Buffalo Daily Courier*, November 7, 1860, microfilm, p. 2.

## **Conclusion**

Unfortunately, just days after the election, southern states were already preparing for their separation from the Union. South Carolina first passed an ordinance of secession on December 22, 1860 which in turn began a domino effect of seceding states over the next few months. In this respect, many people had probably wished that all of the warnings and panics brought on by the press were only just rumors.

At some point, the media must have realized that portions of what they had fabricated in order to instill fervor in the public had transfigured into a problematic reality in ways that it had never happened before; the threat of secession ebbed and flowed throughout the young life of the Union, but it was never brought to this conclusion. They had entered upon new territory and no one knew how to resolve such a crushing dilemma, or if it was even an issue that could ever be fixed. Thus, tensions continued to rise to a level that they could no longer control which produced horrible results of catastrophic proportions.

As much as it appears that the purpose of the press was solely to manufacture a perfect storm of sorts that would bring on a civil war, they most likely did not intend for things to get so out of hand. After all, most of the individuals in the newspaper industry were there to make profits, gain notoriety, and influence politics from the outside or by becoming an active participant in politics in order to promote their personal beliefs or agendas. Most of these reasons were for a self-serving purpose, and not to purposely cause direct harm to their fellow constituents. Little did many of the editors of the newspapers know, this individual aggrandizement did cause severe consequences.

Just as with the new technology that came into use during the war, the press knew the immense power that they had recently acquired. However, the technology had come into



existence so suddenly, those in control of it did not know how to harness it safely. Therefore, whether they became completely aware of it or not, the newspapers during the 1850's caused such a tremendous amount of harm because they, along with other aspects of society, fell victim to the rapid changes of the Industrial Revolution and the economy. This allowed for a dangerous concoction of lightning fast communication for news and opinions, capital, and public interaction, and the newspaper provided a means for this pertinent information to be shared with the masses.

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