

1847

Centennial Edition...

1947

Chicago Daily Tribune

ALWAYS AMERICA FIRST

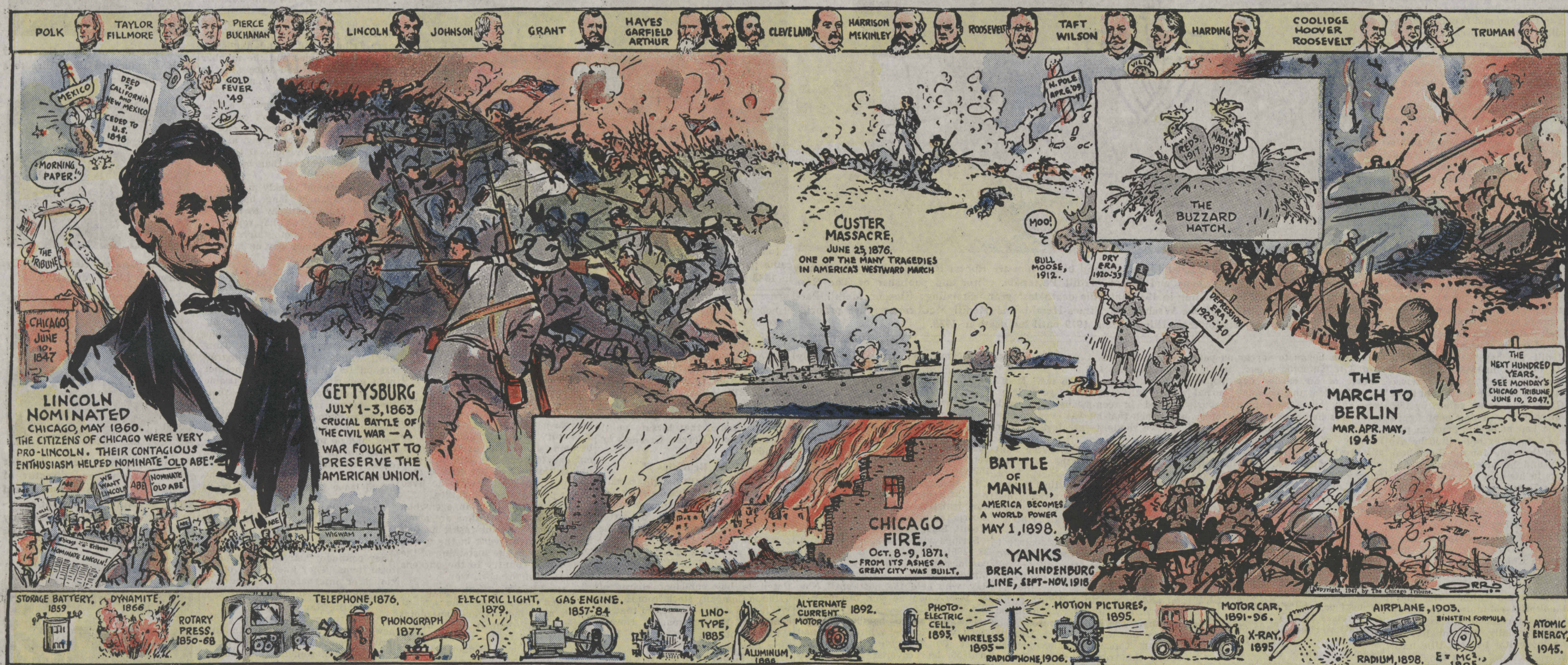
THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 1947

PART 2

TRIBUNE'S FIRST 100 YEARS

HEADLINE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OF THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE'S HISTORY



LINCOLN AND THE TRIBUNE: A GREAT AMERICAN AND A GREAT PAPER JOIN TO MOLD U. S. HISTORY

Medill's Meeting with 'Old Abe' in 1855 Told

BY FRANK HUGHES

This is the Lincoln story, the account of an intimate 10-year association between a great man and a great newspaper.

Politically speaking, Abraham Lincoln and THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE met in early youth. Together, they grew to the greatest stature in the nation—Lincoln to rank with George Washington as the most revered President of the United States; THE TRIBUNE as THE World's Greatest Newspaper.

Historically speaking, it is accurate to say that neither Lincoln nor THE TRIBUNE would have succeeded to his ultimate position, at the time he did, without the other, although they did not always move in perfect unison. The one never controlled the other.

Medill 14 Years Younger

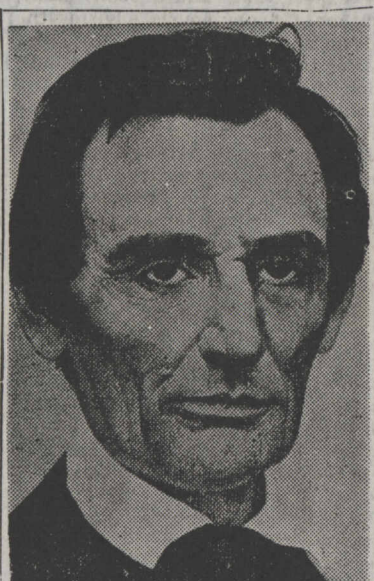
Sometimes, in early years, THE TRIBUNE pushed Lincoln beyond what he thought his abilities and stature merited. Joseph Medill, editor and publisher of THE TRIBUNE, was 14 years younger than Lincoln, but he once had to lecture him like a child to convince him that the Presidency—and not a lesser office—was his true goal.

Sometimes, in later years—particularly in the war years—Lincoln moved too cautiously to suit THE TRIBUNE. When there was no battle action, THE TRIBUNE chided Lincoln generally, and Lincoln for picking them. It demanded emancipation of the slaves long before Lincoln granted it. Reading some Tribune editorials of this period, one might almost think Abraham Lincoln was a southern plantation owner, so caustic was their tone.

Association Always Close

Sometimes, Abraham Lincoln jumped on THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE with that cold, holy wrath that only a great heart, secure in the knowledge of its righteousness, can afford. That happened, once, when THE TRIBUNE opposed Lincoln's fourth draft of Illinois troops after the state had been bled white of volunteers. THE TRIBUNE "ate crow" at the great man's table.

The association between Lincoln and THE TRIBUNE, however, always



This Currier and Ives print of Abraham Lincoln was the campaign picture used in the election for the Presidency in 1860. (Chicago Historical Society)

was one of brotherhood, high esteem, and enormous mutual trust. They had the same inherent honesty, and they recognized it in each other. They stood for the same broad, general principles. They had the same ability to do great labor and give unstintingly in a great cause. Both were tireless, no-quarter fighters.

Joseph Medill begins the Lincoln story in his own words: "It was a spring day in 1855 when Mr. Lincoln and myself first met," he said, in an interview shortly before his death in 1899. "The editorial establishment of THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE consisted then of a single room."

"A Remarkably Thin Man" "Into this room came a very tall, remarkably thin man. His legs were absurdly long and slender, and he carried in one hand a carpet bag, three or four feet long and so deep that, tall as he was, it barely cleared the floor. He glanced along the editorial table to the editor's chair and in a drawing, high-keyed voice asked a young man who occupied that throne:

"Can you tell me when I can see Dr. Ray?"

"Dr. Ray was the editor in chief, but was not in."

"Well," continued the visitor, "may I ask if you are the new editor from Cleveland—McDill, or Medill, or something?"

"I am Mr. Medill, the new edi-

Strong Friendships Undisturbed by Sharp Criticism

tor, the young man, or rather myself, answered.

"Well, I guess you'll do just as well."

"I asked with some asperity: 'Please tell me whom I have the pleasure of addressing?'"

"Well"—this drawing expletive for the third time—"Well, down on the Sangamon river they used to call me Abraham Lincoln. Now they generally call me Old Abe, tho I ain't so very old, either."

"Old Abe" was already a name to conjure with in Illinois, and all the more so in the office of a newspaper which had just been stoutly engaged in Mr. Lincoln's gallant, if unsuccessful struggle against Douglas for the senatorship. Whatever clouds may have overhung the beginning of the interview were forthwith dispelled.

Subscribers for Paper "I'm in a hurry," said Lincoln, "but I ran up to subscribe for your paper. I can't get it regularly down our way, so I borrow it from a neighbor. But sometimes he lends it before I get around. Now I want to pay for six months, and he pulled from the cavernous pockets of his jeans a coppersworth, untied the strap, and counted out four dollars."

"I took the money—there was no pride in those days to separate the editor from the counting room—and wrote a receipt on a sheet of copy paper. This document Mr. Lincoln thrust into his pocket, remarking as he did so:

"I like your paper; I didn't like it before you boys took hold of it; it was too much of a Know-Nothing sheet."

He Asks Questions "From this he drifted into conversation. I noted that he had a sharper faculty for asking questions than for answering them. His reserve as to himself was impregnable. He asked me many questions as to the politicians of Ohio, whom he seemed to know with a surprising degree of accuracy."

"How were Giddings, and Chase, and the young John Sherman? What of the beginnings of the new

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First Issue of Tribune Known to Be in Existence Reprinted

The very first issue of THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE known to be in existence is reproduced in full today in the center of this section as a present to readers of this newspaper on its centennial birthday. It is the issue of April 23, 1847, only 22 months after THE TRIBUNE's founding. The original was printed on the newspaper's first press in its first establishment on the corner of Lake and La Salle sts.

A dramatic story is centered around discovery of this early copy, which came to light only this year. All files of THE TRIBUNE as well as files of all other Chicago newspapers and city and county records were destroyed in the fire of Oct. 9, 1871.

In 1940, it was decided to preserve all files of THE TRIBUNE on photographic film, and a search was made through libraries and universities all over the United States for the best preserved and most complete copies.

A member of THE TRIBUNE's editorial reference department engaged in this work also decided to film representative copies of other Chicago newspapers, where they could

THE TRIBUNE IS BORN: HUMBLE START PROVIDES A SPRINGBOARD TO ITS WORLD PRE-EMINENCE

First Edition of 4 Pages Assembled in Loft Room

One hundred years ago today an "original Chicago enterprise" was born — THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE. It was a four page daily newspaper, put together and locked into the forms in a sparsely furnished loft room on the third floor of a frame building at Lake and La Salle sts.

As its first century ends this morning, THE TRIBUNE stands the World's Greatest Newspaper — first in advertising lineage of any newspaper in the world, with the largest and most modern newspaper production plant on earth, the largest circulation of any standard sized newspaper in America, and so many other achievements behind it the second century is a challenge to behold.

First to Reach Centennial

THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE is the only newspaper ever printed in Chicago to reach the age of 100 years, and one of a very few in the nation. Its very name is an "original Chicago enterprise" for the first newspaper to be called "Tribune" was printed here. Its history, however, goes back several years beyond the memorable June 10, 1847, when the first DAILY TRIBUNE was pulled off a slow moving hand printing press.

Killer K. Jones and James S. Beach put out the first edition of a weekly literary paper, Gem of the Prairie, on May 20, 1844. It was a popular and reasonably prosperous little paper, attracting a number of young Chicago writers, both men

JOSEPH MEDILL GIVES A 'SUCCESS' RECIPE TO INDIANA EDITORS

This is the recipe Joseph Medill gave for the successful publication of a newspaper in an address to editors and publishers at Indianapolis May 24, 1869:

"Be very particular with the mechanical execution, charge fair living prices for your work and stand by them; do a cash business, as nearly as practicable, refuse long credits, 'short settlements make long friends'; devote your main editorial efforts to discussion of home topics and furtherance of home interests."

"Let each issue be a photograph of the doings of your county of the previous week and a foreshadowing of the week to come. Preserve your independence of all demagogues and place hunters and never submit to their dictation; write boldly, and tell the truth fearlessly; criticize whatever is wrong, and denounce whatever is rotten in the administration of local and state affairs."

"See that your journal is devoted to the advocacy and promotion of their [the people's] temporal interest and moral welfare and they will repay your favors with their esteem, friendship and patronage, rendering you influential and respected in the community, and prosperous in your pecuniary affairs."

and women, thru its literary quality.

Nonetheless, at the end of a year, neither Killer Jones nor James Beach was any longer connected with it. By that time, the "Gem" was owned by Thomas A. Stewart and James Kelly.

One account of the founding of THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE credits James

The Only Chicago Newspaper Ever to Reach 100

Kelly with the idea of starting a daily paper so that the material from the daily could be used in the weekly Gem of the Prairie. Since the early files of both the "Gem" and THE TRIBUNE were destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, there is not much information available except what was written after that holocaust from interviews with the people who were here in 1847.

One story says Kelly bought out Stewart's interest in the Gem of the Prairie before THE TRIBUNE's founding, but was forced to sell everything back to Stewart shortly afterward because of failing eyesight.

A Second Account

Another account, substantiated by one of the men who was there, says that Kelly and Stewart, having decided to start a daily newspaper, took two other men into the partnership—Col. Joseph K. C. Forrest, early day proprietor of a Chicago private school, unordained Swedenborgian minister, and at the time an assistant editor of the Chicago Journal; and John E. Wheeler, also of the Swedenborgian faith, described by Forrest as "a ripe scholar, an easy, fluent, and felicitous writer, and a most conscientious gentleman."

This would give THE TRIBUNE four founders—James Kelly and Thomas A. Stewart of the Gem of the Prairie, and Col. Joseph K. C. Forrest and John E. Wheeler, who took partnership in the new venture.

Col. Forrest was interviewed by THE TRIBUNE as late as 1891, and in his account he claimed full credit for selecting the name "TRIBUNE."

Weekly Published in 1840

The very first TRIBUNE was a weekly published in 1840, a year before Horace Greeley took that name for his New York newspaper. According to Col. Forrest, the other proprietors of the new daily wanted to call it the "Daily Gem of the Prairie" but he held out for "TRIBUNE" because, in his own words, "it was an original Chicago enterprise."

He told how the prospectus for the new journal was sent to him for

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Joseph Medill's Standard for Tribune Ideals

I want the Tribune to continue to be a paper of the people as it has been under my direction an advocate of political and moral progress, and in all things to follow the line of common sense. I desire the Tribune as a party organ new to be the supporter of that party which sought to destroy the American Union on the 6th of the State above the union.

Statement from Joseph Medill's will, in his own handwriting, containing his ideals for The Tribune.