
THE MAINE PRESS ASSOCIA- TION TAKES A STAND: PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by Stephen A. Banning

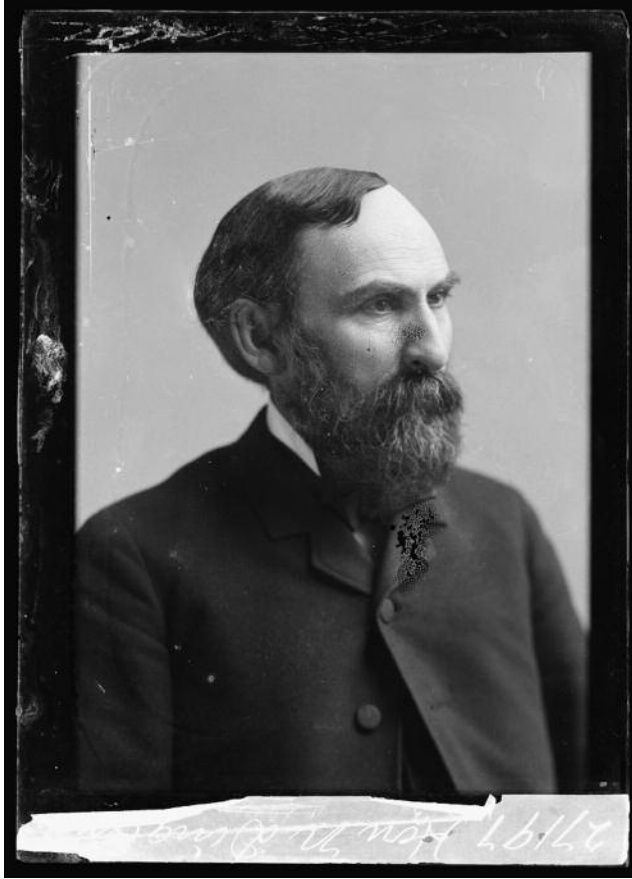
This research sought to examine the Maine Press Association in relation to its motivations, particularly in reference to whether the association members saw themselves as professionals. The only other nineteenth century press association which has been examined for evidence of professional aspirations is the Missouri Press Association, in which it has been found that members were actively seeking to professionalize, modeling themselves after the traditional professions of doctors, lawyers and the clergy.

References to journalists as professionals are present at an early point in the Maine Press Association's history, and the number of references increase within a few years after its inception. This research reveals that Maine Press Association members self-identified themselves as belonging to a profession eighty-four times in the first thirty years of their existence, from 1864 to 1893. The finding that the Maine Press Association members called themselves professionals is important information in that it adds to what little we know about journalist professionalization interests in the nineteenth century. This supplies us with the knowledge that professional aspirations were not isolated to Missouri editors. While the finding that the Missouri Press Association had professional aspirations showed that professional aspirations existed among journalists in the mid-nineteenth century, the finding the Maine Press Association also had professional aspirations, even earlier than the Missouri Press Association, pushes the envelope in regard to understanding journalists' nineteenth century professional aspirations. From this research we now know the geographical spread of the professional aspirations stretched from Missouri to the Eastern Seaboard.

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Introduction

It was August 11, 1864, when thirty-nine editors from the state of Maine packed the Portland New City Hall to hear former editor and current Portland mayor Charles Holden speak. He opined: "Its [Maine editors] members have come together from different parts of the state, frankly and freely to see what may be done to elevate and advance the press, and promote its permanency, in which all are so zealously engaged . . . The power of the profession before me is not to be weighed." The statement was a



Lewiston Journal editor Nelson Dingley, Jr., Library of Congress

heady one to make considering the times. The year of 1864 was during the Civil War, a period which had wreaked havoc on American journalism. War correspondents, sometimes wandering bohemians, had undermined newspaper editors' dignity. The war coverage had been so bad, General Robert E. Lee started a program to teach reporters how to do their jobs. Additionally, national scandals had hurt newspapers' reputations, and bribes, called "puffs," were standard practice.¹

Perhaps the national upheaval was what drew a large representation of the state's editors to the first meeting of the Maine Press Association, an organization that promised to elevate their battered occupation and may have had a strong appeal to the literally war weary Maine editors. The Maine press already had an extensive history, with publications going back to the eighteenth century. During that time, Maine editors were going through changes in technology, as printing advanced in step with the Industrial Revolution.

One of the ideas that had come with the Industrial Revolution was the concept of professions. The thinking was that a new industrial society needed an expert class of workers to perform highly important tasks. The first classic professions were doctors, lawyers, and the clergy who formed associations and required educational autonomy and codes of ethics. It was these occupations that the public associated with the word profession. This is evidenced by the 1876 edition of *Samuel Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language* which defined a profession as: "a calling; vocation; known employment; (used especially of divinity, physic and law)."²

The Traditional Professions

While professionalization as a sociological agent of change was refined in the nineteenth century, it had its roots centuries before in the rise to power of the three traditional professions: doctors, lawyers and the clergy. The American nineteenth century interest in professionalization had roots in England where these professions had achieved a high level of power through organization and self-regulation. In 1857, H. Byerly Thomson noted in his book, *The Choice of a Profession*:

The importance of the professions and the professional classes can hardly be overrated. They form the head of the middle class, maintain its tone and independence, keep up to the mark, its standard of morality, and direct its intelligence.

The first of the three professions to be established was the clergy. As professions, medicine and law followed the clergy because the clergy controlled university education in medieval times. The clergy had paved the way for professional status in requiring education, licensing and standards of work. In fact, when medical practitioners and lawyers sought to raise their status in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the clergy was already well established.³

Lawyers blazed the trail for modern occupations seeking professionalization in the nineteenth century, showing what steps were required to gain professional status. In 1292, the Canon of Archbishop Peckham was passed, re-

quiring three years of specialized training for all lawyers. A regulatory body called “Inns” similar to the modern bar association was established later in the fifteenth century. These Inns also served as educational institutions. In sixteenth century England, the importance of formal education was realized, resulting in the Act of 1729. This mandated that lawyers pass an examination and complete a five-year apprenticeship before being allowed to practice law.⁴

The medical profession, likewise, had roots in medieval England, where discussions on required medical education began in 1353. Degrees in medicine were also available in medieval times although medicine was not considered one of the seven liberal arts. In 1598 licenses were mandated for medical practitioners.⁵

The impetus for professional medicine, however, was a lack of practitioner credibility in the mid-nineteenth century. The medical practitioner fought quackery and medieval heresy by forming associations on a local and national scale. It was this focus on standards that propelled the medical field to power as a dominant profession.⁶

The Journalism Professionalism Connection

As stated above, there are several benchmarks in professionalization that were established by the three first traditional professions of law, medicine and the clergy. These indicators are associations, standards, university education and codes of ethics. In recent journalism history, the most visible sign of these benchmarks occurred in the twentieth century. It was then that the first school of journalism was established, along with established professional organizations and nationally recognized codes of ethics. For this reason, many journalism historians in the recent past believed that an interest among journalists to professionalize began in the twentieth century. John Merrill noted in 1986: “Journalism has come a long way to becoming a profession...whereas in the pre-World War II days, journalism was known as a ‘craft’ or ‘trade’, or simply not given a label at all—it is now quite common to hear it referred to as a profession.”⁷

Also in 1886, Douglas Birkhead discussed journalistic professionalization efforts as a twentieth century phenomenon. Birkhead wrote: “Since the turn of the century, the press has been



Portland Transcript editor Edward H. Elwell, Collections of Maine Historical Society, MaineMemory.net #14254

wrapping its values in the bunting of professionalism. In the moral environment of yellow journalism and muckraking, it didn’t seem like a bad idea. Professionalism offered the press a model of self-regulation at a time when social critics were drawing disturbing parallels between mass circulation newspapers and giant corporations run by robber barons.”⁸

William May came to a similar conclusion in an article called “Professional Ethics.” May said: “The general turnaround occurred in the early twentieth century. By 1904 Joseph Pulitzer had endowed the Columbia School of Journalism . . . and by 1913 the Columbia School of Journalism had opened its doors.”⁹

Journalism historian Hazel Dicken-Garcia also saw journalism as a twentieth century phenomenon. In the book *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth Century America*, Dicken-Garcia notes: “Newspapers established codes of ethics, journal courses, departments, and schools were founded; textbooks were written; and associa-

tions were formed to provide at least a form of social control over press conduct and practices.”¹⁰

Civilizing Voices author Marion Marzolf also perceived the start of journalistic professionalization as a twentieth century concept. She explained:

Efforts to reform journalism in the pre-World War I era were strengthened by the first journalism departments and schools, and by the start of professional organizations to promote common ideas and values. Many of the founders of these institutions saw journalism reaching the status of law and medicine. This led to an emphasis on codes of conduct, standardization of academic requirements, and licensing for professionally educated journalists.¹¹

The understanding of the development of the professional ideal among journalists changed in the 1990s, with the discovery of new information that pushed the journalistic interest in professionalization back to the 1860s. The article “The Professionalization of Journalism: A Nineteenth Century Beginning” described the Missouri Press Association’s push for professionalization, not only in identifying themselves as professionals in the same league as doctors, lawyers, and the clergy, but also in advocating university education and ethical standards.¹²

The same year, the article “Truth is Our Ultimate Goal,” showed that the Missouri Press Association’s standards were the foundation for the journalistic codes of ethics popularized by national press associations at the beginning of the twentieth century. An article the following year titled “The Cradle of Professional Journalistic Education in the Mid-nineteenth Century” revealed the Missouri Press Association’s early enthusiasm for university journalism education, which ultimately led to the founding of the first school of journalism in 1908.¹³

Since this time, a number of studies have been done in this area. Still, many questions persist. For instance, the question of whether the Missouri Press Association case was isolated or widespread has not been answered. The study of the Maine Press Association pushes the envelope of what we know about journalism in the nineteenth century in regard to the presence and extent of professional journalistic identity. Therefore, this study fills a gap in the research

regarding how early editors saw themselves.¹⁴

If Maine editors saw themselves as professionals, this would precede the Missouri Press Association’s use of the term by four years. More importantly, it would establish that journalists self-identified as professionals far more widely than previously thought and that the Missouri Press Association case was not isolated.

The Maine Press Association

The Maine Press Association was one of the earliest state press associations in the United States. Frederic Hudson mentioned the Maine Press Association in passing in his 1873 history of journalism. However, no study has been made of whether the Maine Press Association saw itself as a professional organization and had an interest in the professionalization of journalism.

While John McNay’s article “Breaking the Copper Collar: Press Freedom, Professionalization and the History of Montana Journalism,” examined the professionalization process in Montana, it focused on the twentieth century, rather than the nineteenth. Other more recent research has acknowledged a nineteenth century interest in journalism but has viewed professionalization from the late nineteenth century using trade journals and textbooks as sources.¹⁵

If state press associations tended to promote professional aspirations, as has been posited, it is possible that this state press association might have been a vanguard. If the Maine Press Association championed professionalization, it would show that the Missouri Press Association was not the only organization to promote professionalization and perhaps not the first. If no mention and little interest in professional ideals existed in the Maine Press Association proceedings, it would indicate that the Missouri Press Association may have been unique in its professional approach.

Research into journalists’ professional aspirations is important because professional aspirations are the bedrock of much twentieth century journalism activity. The founding of schools of journalism, press codes of ethics, and professional organizations in the twentieth century have all been traced to an interest in professionalization.¹⁶

This research uses *The Proceedings of the Maine Press Association*, records dating back to

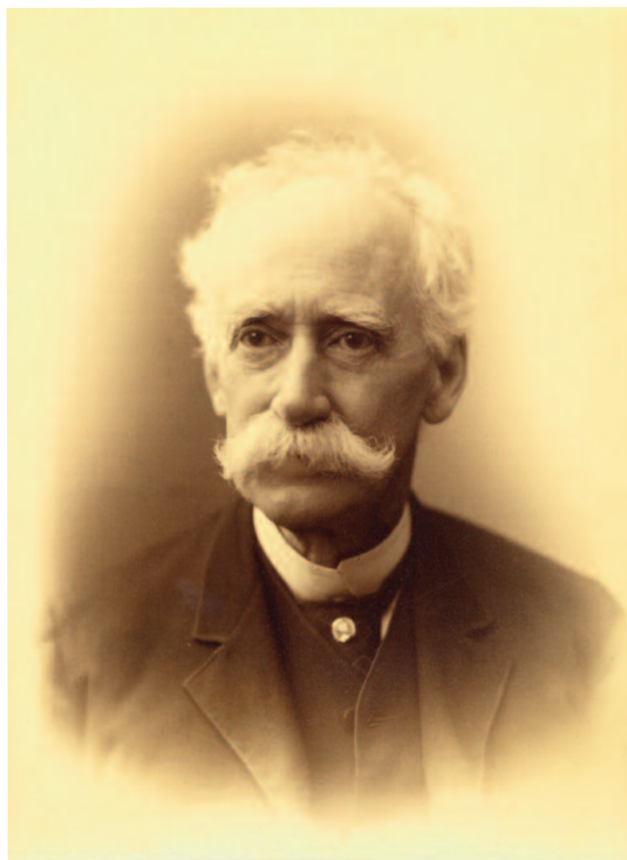
the Maine Press Association's founding in 1864 for a primary source of understanding into nineteenth century journalists' character and motivations in starting the Maine Press Association. The Maine Press Association *Proceedings* allow us to see what journalists at the grassroots level had to say about professional identity. These records, which are essentially the meeting minutes, meant to be heard only by journalists, give us a window into conversations among journalists. These were not pronouncements in trade press newspapers or even newspapers of their own, but the voice of journalists struggling to form an identity amid great change.

The Formation of the Maine Press Association

During the first meeting of the Maine Press Association in 1864, the "Honorable" Charles Holden, the Mayor of Portland, gave the conference address, which included two references to journalism as a profession. In the first reference to journalism as a profession, Holden said: "The prospect of the printer, in those early days, of getting a decent living from his profession in this wide land, may be inferred from an incident well authenticated." In the second reference to journalism as a profession, Holden said: "The power of the profession before me is not to be weighed. Its immensity dazzles us. The good, the grandeur, the moral and religious culture of our beloved State, lie, without circumscribing, in the hollow of their hands."¹⁷

These references show that Holden viewed journalism as a profession at this early date of 1864. It is the earliest reference to journalism as a profession by a state press association, it occurred four years before the Missouri Press Association was formed. A third reference to journalism as a profession was made in a recruiting motion. The motion stated: "Ordered, that the Corresponding Secretary be instructed to communicate the doings of the Association to all members of the Association and other members of the profession who have not yet acted with us."¹⁸

A description of events at the 1865 convention contained another reference to journalists as professionals. It noted: "There was perfect order throughout with the exception that one gentleman's pocket was picked of a seventy-five dollar watch. It was not found, however, upon the person of any gentleman of our profession."¹⁹



Maine Journal of Education publisher Brown Thurston, Collections of Maine Historical Society, MaineMemory.net #11501

The word profession was used again in a description of the business meeting: "The business of the meeting proceeded with calling the roll and reading the minutes of the previous meeting. The following members of the profession were elected members of the Association."²⁰

A brief eulogy for a deceased colleague brought another reference to professionalism. The eulogy noted: "Resolved, that in Capt. Isaac B. Noyes we found an earnest and enthusiastic young man who was devoted to his profession." Noyes was editor of the *Maine Democrat* in Saco.²¹

The word profession was used another time in 1866 as well. However, it referenced law as a profession.²²

At the fourth meeting in 1867 the address was given by editor and former Civil War Lieutenant W. E. Stevens who referred to journalism as a profession eight times. In the first instance, Stevens referred to himself as a printer, commenting on the "tenure which then bound me to the profession." Later in the same paragraph

Stevens refers to the “eminence in the profession,” again referring to journalism.²³ Stevens praised “the journalist who loves and appreciates the profession he has chosen,” while castigating those “who had no taste, adaptability, or love for the profession.” Stevens warned that “Calumny...reacts upon the profession,” predicting that such a person “brings his profession and the press to shame.” To avoid this, Stevens advised his colleagues that “we can never as a profession attain to that high standard which the influence we can command entitles us, until we cease to regard the journals we conduct as strainers, through which to filter our own petty likes and dislikes.”²⁴

Stevens concluded with a rallying cry, exhorting his fellow journalists. Stevens advised:

I trust we shall return to our duties, at the close of this most agreeable session, with a renewed devotion for, and in our profession, a clearer idea of its high requirements, a firmer purpose to observe them in spirit and letter, and an unalterable determination to forego nothing which may redound to the honor and glory of JOURNALISM.²⁵

The next year the editors talked about journalism again. Association President and *Portland Transcript* editor Edward W. Elwell gave a brief talk, referring to journalism as a profession three times. Journalism was labeled as a profession again in the title of a committee. Finally, the annual address referred to journalism nine times. In summary, the proceedings for this year referred to journalism as a profession thirteen times.

In the presidential speech, Elwell claimed that the association meetings had “increased my respect for our profession,” adding that “Ours is an arduous profession.” He warned that “It is proper that we should have occasions of our own, and not confine our social experiences to the gatherings of other professions.”²⁶

In his oration, *Portland Evening Star* editor Enoch Knight touched on several aspects of journalism as a profession. Knight noted:

I am jealous of the good name of the profession I represent...Journalism is to-day a profession but it has not been one long. The newspaper editor of to-day, if he be a good one and loves his business, can really feel

that the business is now entitled to be called a profession, whereas up to a very recent period, it was only an occupation, and a most equivocal one at that, with few rights and obligations...This profession is young yet and has no schools or courses of study.²⁷

Knight continued by raising journalism on a pedestal. He stated:

He is highest in the profession who makes the best picture of the events transpiring around him. To-day, this profession, not more than twenty-five years old in this country, and only a great one since the days of thickly running telegraph lines, overshadows all others in power and true dignity. The learned professions, which we have been accustomed to call Theology, Law and Medicine, are all subservient to this one... .In all seriousness and candor, and with complete justice and discrimination can it be claimed that the editorial profession has capabilities and opportunities that may make it the most desirable and valuable that has ever yet engaged the attention of men bearing close and constant public relations; and how to make the most of this profession, is the natural and legitimate inquiry of the occasion which has called us together.²⁸

Later the author noted:

Journalism, since it came to be justly accounted a profession, may be worthy of the occasion....it has less humbuggery, to day, than almost any other profession. . . . The editor holds to-day no equivocal position in society, if he meets the business of his profession with becoming dignity.²⁹

In 1869, the association passed a resolution which claimed that journalism had been “raised” to the level of a profession. The *Transactions of the Editors and Publishers’ Association of Maine* stated: “Resolved, that the sixth anniversary of our organization has given us evidence of our growth in all the ways of our profession and business, and we freely renew our allegiance to the cause we have raised from an occupation to a profession.”³⁰

The *Transactions* of 1869 mentioned journalism as a profession three other times. The

first was in reference to journalists of Maine, in which it noted: "In regard to the regulation of prices, more might have been done if all the members of the profession in the state had shown the interest in the Association which only a part have manifested." Later, the same unnamed orator noted the death of a fellow editor and commented: "Our profession suffered a loss shared in by the whole community." At a point in the meeting where committees were reporting, the members took part in a discussion on "the mutual relations and obligations of the members of the profession."

In the annual address, *Lewiston Journal* editor Nelson Dingley, Jr., noted that "this is indeed a profession requiring for the highest success as careful and thorough preparation." Dingley, Jr., further admonished his fellow association members to "elevate the profession of journalism to that high place it deserves to occupy." Later at the meeting, in a history of the press, Mayor of Portland Charles Holden mentioned journalism as a profession another time in speaking of a former editor who "was an efficient man of his profession."³¹

The *Transactions* for the years 1870 to 1874 were consolidated and lack the detail of previous Maine Press Association proceedings. Within the four years of consolidated highlights, journalism is only mentioned as a profession three times. A resolution in 1870 touching on the death of a member elicited two references to journalism as a profession. The resolution noted that the deceased had been devoted to "our profession" adding that: "we cherish for him as a citizen, companion, and member of our profession."³²

Kennebec Journal editor Howard Owen, in an 1874 speech titled "Advertising Rates and Agencies" castigated unethical advertisers. He noted: "They cheat themselves and bring reproach to the profession." Owen suggested legitimate advertising was the professional way. Owen said: "Let us encourage liberal and legitimate advertising, and set our faces against this strange and unwholesome admixture that neutralizes and compromises the honor and dignity of the profession."³³

Ellsworth American editor L. A. Emery stressed in an 1875 speech that the public was demanding more of newspapers. Emery said: "The profession have [sic] acknowledged these claims of the public, and have undertaken to

meet these demands. A grave responsibility has thus been cast upon us which we cannot lay down."³⁴

Emery also mentioned journalism as a profession in a discussion of libel law. He explained: "It should be said to the credit of the profession, that but few cases can be found in the books where malice or corruption [sic] are charged to rebut the defense of truth." The answer to libel attacks from without, and ethical problems from within, Emery explained, was courage. He stated: "If a newspaper aspires to lead, it must have courage, as well as ability. The profession has realized this."³⁵

There were four references to journalism as a profession in 1876. *Belfast Republican Journal* editor William H. Simpson, in an 1876 essay called "The Press, Its Relations to Its Patrons and the Public" referred to journalism as an expanding profession. He stated: "In considering the profession to which we belong, we may first view its growth and importance."³⁶ Later at the same meeting, *Portland Transcript* editor Edward H. Elwell, in describing a deceased editor, noted: "As such he was a credit to our profession, and his memory should be honored by the Association which he assisted in founding."³⁷

The death of another editor also was the impetus for other references to journalism as a profession. In a written eulogy, job printer and *Clipper* editor Frank K. Smith said of the deceased that "He belonged to a family of journalists, and early devoted himself to that useful profession which he steadily pursued up to a few days before his decease." Smith added that the editor's character was "a shield of protection in the harassing [sic] profession to which he was devoted."³⁸

In 1877, journalism was referred to as a profession six times. *Portland Transcript* editor Edward H. Elwell referred to journalism as a profession in noting that the newspaper had become indispensable. He said: "This results in giving to journalism a more independent position, and in making it a distinct and recognized profession." Elwell then mentioned journalism as a profession in speaking of the deaths of editors. He noted: "It has fallen to my lot to record the death of a member of our profession." Elwell went on to describe a specific deceased editor, noting the editor had been "prompt to respond to any claim of the profession." In relation to another deceased editor, Elwell also

referred to journalism as a profession. He stated: "I propose rather to consider him as a journalist, to view him in his relations to our profession."³⁹

Chronicle editor Charles W. Keyes referred to journalism as a profession twice in discussing journalists in general. He said: "Some of this number have filled, and are now filling prominent places in the profession . . . Others might be named who have honored the profession in several different and distant parts of the country."³⁹

There were no references to journalism as a profession in 1878. However, in 1879 Howard Owen read an essay called "The Man Who Makes A Newspaper" in which he mentioned journalism as a profession five times. Owen noted the essay was not "a glowing eulogy of a profession," adding "If failure comes to any newspaper man in the legitimate profession, the blame must not be laid at the door of the Great Proof Reader above." Owen also mentioned journalism as a profession in giving advice to young journalists. He explained: "Natural Ability, tact, readiness and spirit, are necessary to success in the newspaper profession . . . The young man venturing upon the untried pathways of this honored and honorable profession may have admiring friends to flatter, and make money to grease the ways . . . Let us remember, my brothers, that we belong to a profession that has shaped and voiced public sentiment since the early dawn of civilization."⁴⁰

There is only one reference to journalism as a profession in 1880. When *Somerset Reporter* editor C. H. Kilby wrote an update on newspaper business activity in one of the Maine counties, he noted of an editor who had just purchased a newspaper: "His long experience and his adaptability to this branch of the profession brings him favorably before the public."⁴¹

The proceedings in 1881 contain one reference to journalism as a profession. In an essay called "The Newspaper Press," *Christian Mirror* editor B. P. Snow commented: "The responsibility of caring for the moral education the highest of all cannot be wholly shifted from the shoulders of the journalist to those of other professions."⁴²

In 1882, Samuel W. Lane delivered an essay called "The Press, Its Power and Duty." In it, Lane described journalism as a profession twice. Even more interesting is his comparison of jour-

nalism to the traditional professions of doctors, lawyers and the clergy. Lane explained:

It has been said that the profession of law provides more constant study, and a wider range of acquirements than any other profession. This doubtless was true when the learned professions were limited to Law, Medicine, and Theology. It may have been true in the times of Littleton, Coke and even of Blackstone. For the journalistic is not an antiquated profession.

Lane continued, explaining that journalism is a profession of a different kind. He noted: "The journalist, who would stand at the head of his profession, must compass in his training all fields of learning, and combine in himself the most of what is valuable of all professions."⁴³

There were no references to journalism as a profession in 1883 and 1884, but in 1885 *Portland Transcript* editor Edward Elwell talked about "The Newspaper Press in Maine," mentioning journalism twice as a profession in describing how journalism had progressed. Elwell said: "The third stage of development in the progress of the press is marked by the advent of the professional editor or journalist . . . Its management is a profession for which young men are educated."⁴⁴

There were six references to journalism as a profession in 1886, one within a county history and the rest in three biographies of Maine journalists. In the first reference, association secretary Joseph Wood, editor of the *Seaside Oracle*, noted of an association member: "He had for some years acted as a regular local correspondent . . . and thus kept up his connection with the profession of journalism, for which he seems exceedingly well adapted."⁴⁵

The next reference appeared in a biography of press association member Joseph Griffin. *Maine Journal of Education* publisher Brown Thurston stated: "The profession was very honorable in his mind, as one would plainly see by reading what he says of it, and of printers who honored it, in his 'Press of Maine.'"⁴⁶

An additional biography by *Maine Farmer* editor George E. Brackett revealed still another reference to journalism as a profession. It states: "William H. [Simpson of the *Belfast Republican Journal*] went to Augusta, entered the office of the *Kennebec Journal*, and served his time, fully

mastering the duties of his profession.” Brackett referred to journalism as a profession a second time in the same biography, noting: “He displayed marked ability as a political writer, and held for a long time the strongest pen in the State of his nativity. He was modest and retiring to a fault; sought no honors outside of his profession.” Brackett used the word profession two more times in describing journalist William Simpson. Brackett said:

At about fifteen years of age he entered upon an apprenticeship in the composing room of the Belfast Republican Journal, then published by Cyrus Rowe, where he remained several years, fully mastering the practical details of the profession which he had chosen. . . . He seemed to possess, in a large degree, the qualifications for his profession which are born in the man and not added to him.⁴⁷

There were no references to journalism in 1887, but an address given by *Bridgeton News* editor Henry Shorey in 1888 held six references to journalism as a profession. Shorey stated: “A popular poet, in his inimitable pen-picture of the daily experiences of the Editorial Sanctum, in which he depicts the knight of the goose-quill as enshrouded in a ‘countenance furrowed with care, his mind at the bottom of business, his feet at the top of a chair,’ graphically outlines some of the bitter as well as a few of the more pleasant experiences of the journalistic profession.” He added: “With the past quarter of a century the profession of journalism has sustained a wonderful transformation in the methods and machinery of the mechanical department no less than in the general scope of the newspaper making art itself.”⁴⁸

The transformation, in Shorey’s eyes, was not taken well by older journalists. Shorey stated: “Much that is droll and amusing, if not vexatious, is encountered, and such as would be esteemed a rare novelty by those patriarchs of the profession who were accustomed to discard, as too frivolous for newspaper mention, matters of local interest.” Shorey concluded his address by noting: “I have no disposition to underrate the dignity and importance of the profession, or to under-estimate the vast power for good or evil of the newspaper-making art . . . It is nevertheless an exalted and an ennobling profession

. . . There is yet reason to apprehend that the Recording Angel has not been wholly unmindful of the virtue and patience and Christian fortitude of the average member of the editorial profession.”⁴⁹

There was one reference to journalism as a profession in 1889. George Brackett, writing of journalist William Rust, explained: “He commenced the practice of law at Belfast, but soon abandoned it for the editorial profession in which he labored for thirty-five years.”⁵⁰

In 1890 an editor gave an essay called “The Practical and Ethical in Journalism” in which he referred to journalism as a profession three times. In the first reference, *Somerset Reporter* editor Joseph O. Smith stressed the importance of a good reputation: “An editor may be a man of ability and have the elements of great strength, but he may fritter away this strength on trivial affairs, cling to crochets and whims, advocate impractical schemes, abuse public opinion, outrage common-sense, and air his smartness by abusing others until he destroys his influence, with the respect of the citizens of his town and become a reproach to his profession.” Smith went on to explain that the editor serves the public: “Some men upon first entering the editorial profession entertain the idea that they are going to regulate affairs generally; but they are apt to have this idea essentially modified, and that early.” Smith concluded with a call for all members to behave ethically: “Realizing that in the ability and integrity of the press in a large measure the well-being of the country depends and that the profession suffers from mean actions or questionable proceedings of even its humble members.”⁵¹

In 1891, Richmond *Bee* editor Raymond Thompson referred to journalism as a profession twice in an address called “The Country Editor His Labor and Rewards.” Thompson stated: “An acquaintance with the profession will convince an observer that its members differ essentially from men engaged in other pursuits....I tell you, gentlemen of the press, that our calling affords us advantages, personal, social and fraternal such as are enjoyed by the followers of no other profession within my knowledge.”⁵²

In 1892, managing editor of the *Kennebec Journal* Clarence B. Burleigh gave a talk called “The Editor and the Public,” in which he noted: “It seems to be pretty well conceded among the

members of the profession at the present time, that judgment is the genius of journalism.” *Temperance Record* editor George Brackett also mentioned journalism as a profession in 1892 in a biography of journalist Benjamin Burr. Brackett stated: “At the age of fourteen years he went to Bangor and learned the printing business which was the profession of his life.”⁵³

There were no references to journalism as a profession in 1893. However, over the decade prior there were a total of twenty-six references to journalism as a profession in the proceedings.⁵⁴

Journalists Compared to Classic Professions

In addition to journalists being called professionals repeatedly throughout the first thirty years of the Maine Press Associations’ proceedings, journalists were also compared to the three traditional professionals of doctors, lawyers and the clergy four times in that period. The references to the three classic professions are significant in that they show the members were cognizant of what a profession was. Also of significance is that the first two references occurred within four years of the association’s inception. The first time the three classic professions were noted was in 1867 when editor and former Civil War Lieutenant W. E. Stevens stated: “Why is it, let me ask here, that the Fourth Estate, superior in power, is made to rank in the scale of respectability below the other estates of divinity, law and medicine?” Later, in the same address, Stevens referred to journalism as “our profession.”⁵⁵

The following year, Portland editor Enoch Knight referred to the classic professions again, noting that journalism was higher in status. Knight stated: “The learned professions, as we have been accustomed to call Theology, Law and Medicine, are all subservient to this one [journalism].” Eleven years later, *Augusta Journal* editor Howard Owen explained the journalist’s position: “His relation to the community is as important as any of the professions.” Owen then continued, giving examples from the three traditional professions of medicine, law, and the clergy. He stated: “While the preacher may advance whatever ideas he pleases, or steadily ignore ideas and please everybody, with no man among the pews who ‘dares to take it up’; while

the lawyer has rights in the presentation of a case fully guaranteed by the rules of the bar; — while the physician may kill or cure, and if he is the family physician, it is all right, and no criticism is allowed.”⁵⁶

Three years later *Advertiser* editor Samuel W. Lane again referred to the three classical professions. He observed: “It has been said that the profession of law requires a more constant study, and a wider range of acquirements than any other profession. This doubtless was true when the learned professions were limited to Law, Medicine and Theology.” Lane went on to explain that the journalists’ training was far more exacting than that of any other field.⁵⁷

There is collateral evidence that the Maine journalists saw themselves as professionals in an 1872 book written by a Maine Press Association member. Joseph Griffin published the 284 page *History of the Press of Maine*, and in it, referred to journalism as a profession six times. It is interesting that Griffin used the word profession six additional times in his book, each time referring to one of the traditional professions of medicine, law or theology.⁵⁸

Conclusion and Discussion

The finding that the Maine Press Association members called themselves professionals is important information in that it adds to what little we know about journalist professionalization interests in the nineteenth century. Not long ago, it was believed that an interest in journalistic professionalization began suddenly with the turn of the twentieth century. Other evidence has since indicated it started much earlier with the Missouri Press Association. This research shows members of a state press association (the Maine Press Association), which started before the Missouri Press Association, also saw themselves as professionals. This supplies us with the knowledge that not only did some journalists in the nineteenth century have professional aspirations, but that professional aspirations were not isolated to Missouri editors.

Previous research established that the proceedings of the Missouri Press Association, established in 1867, referred to journalism as a profession twenty-five times in the first ten years of its existence. This research examined the proceedings of the Maine Press Association for sim-

ilar evidence of an interest in professional aspirations.⁵⁹

This research revealed that the Maine Press Association exceeded the Missouri Press Association in its use of the word profession for members of the association and journalists in general. In the first four years of Maine Press Association proceedings, this research found thirteen references to journalism as a profession. There were twenty-six references to journalism as a profession in the first five years, surpassing the Missouri Press Association's twenty-five references in the first ten years. By the time the Missouri Press Association began in 1867, the Maine Press Association proceedings had already referred to journalism as a profession thirteen times.

In the first ten years of its existence, from 1864 to 1873, the Maine Press Association's proceedings reveal references to journalism as a profession thirty-six times. Over the succeeding ten years, Maine Press Association members continued to refer to journalists as professionals. During the years 1874 to 1883, the *Proceedings* reveal twenty-two additional references of journalists as professionals. Combined with the first decade which produced thirty-six references, we arrive at fifty-eight references to journalists as professionals in the first twenty years of the Maine Press Association's existence, from 1864 to 1883.

The *Proceedings* continued to contain references to journalism as a profession after this period. During the years 1884-1893, the *Proceedings* reveal that journalism was referred to as a profession twenty-six more times.

During the thirty-year time period examined in this study, from 1864 to 1893, there were eighty-four references to journalism as a profession. This would seem to suggest that Maine Press Association members during this time did self-identify themselves as professionals. It is also interesting that the first decade of the organization's existence produced the most references to journalism as a profession. There were thirty-six references in the first decade, twenty-two in the second and twenty-six in the third decade.

The fact that Maine Press Association journalists self-identified themselves as professionals as early as 1864, before the end of the Civil War, suggests that some journalists identified themselves as journalists in states as geographically

disparate as Maine and Missouri. We have no research which suggests how widespread this cultural phenomenon was beyond Missouri, and now Maine, but this research reinforces the understanding that some journalists immediately after the Civil War self-identified themselves as professionals.

The similarity that the Missouri Press Association and the Maine Press Association had in relation to their views on journalism as a profession are surprising given the disparity of their location, history and philosophy on other matters. The Maine Press Association was separated from the Missouri Press Association in several ways. First, it was geographically distant. The twelve-hundred miles that separated the two associations was a great distance in the nineteenth century when the fastest means of travel was a steam engine. Additionally, Missouri was considered to be on the Western Frontier and a new addition to the United States in a still untamed part of the country.

The Maine Press Association and the Missouri Press Association also diverged in regard to philosophy. During the Civil War, Maine was strongly anti-slavery and staunchly Union, while Missouri was classified as a Border State which, among other implications, meant it was sympathetic to the Confederacy despite being a nominally Union state.

The finding that the organizations from these disparate states had a common aspiration to be considered professionals suggests that there may have been a wide-spread interest in the professionalization of journalism as early as the mid-nineteenth century. While the finding that the Missouri Press Association had professional aspirations showed that professional aspirations existed among journalists in the mid-nineteenth century, the finding the Maine Press Association also had professional aspirations, even earlier than the Missouri Press Association, pushes the envelope in regard to understanding journalists' nineteenth century professional aspirations. From this research we now know the geographical spread of the professional aspirations stretched from Missouri to the Eastern Seaboard.

We do not know if other press associations in the mid-nineteenth century besides the Maine Press Association and the Missouri Press Association also had professional aspirations. However, future research could examine these press

associations for evidence of an interest in professional aspirations. Stronger evidence of a widespread interest in journalistic professional

aspirations might suggest a movement rather than the isolated activities of disparate individuals.

NOTES

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