

# HISTORIC ROOTS

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# GEORGE JONES AND THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO PRINT

By THOMAS L. BENSON

In Poultney, Vermont, on the campus of Green Mountain College, stands the Two Editors Inn. This guest house is named for two young men who met in Poultney and went on to become leading newspaper publishers. The first was Horace Greeley, who later founded *The New York Tribune*.<sup>1</sup> The second is not so well known, even though his newspaper still thrives. He was George Jones, founder of *The New York Times*.

George Jones was born in Poultney in 1811. He lived briefly in Ohio, but after his parents died, he moved back to Poultney to live with his brother. He and Greeley met as teenagers, when they both worked for the local newspaper, *The Northern Spectator*.

In 1833, Jones moved to Troy, New York. He worked, first, in the dry goods business, and then in banking and finance. He moved to New York City in 1841, when Greeley invited him to help start a new newspaper, *The New*

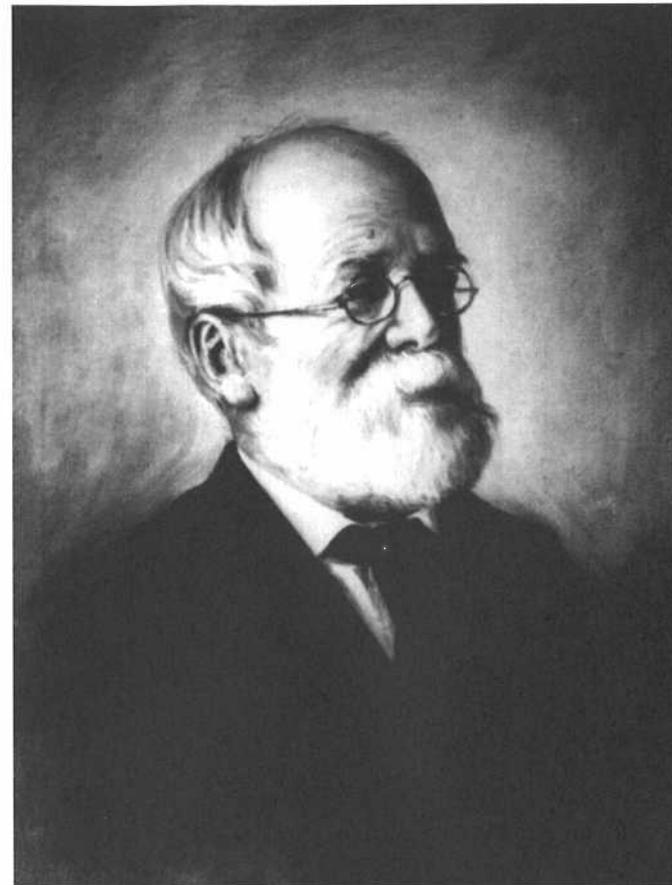
<sup>1</sup> Greeley also ran for President against President Ulysses S. Grant in 1872.

*York Tribune*. The *Tribune* was to be an anti-slavery, pro-reform paper. It soon became one of the country's most highly respected publications. Jones worked in the paper's business office, where he met and became friends with Henry J. Raymond. Raymond was a graduate of the University of Vermont. He was seen to be a rising star in both the newspaper world and New York State politics.

Two years later, Raymond had left the *Tribune*. Jones then decided to move to Albany, where he had a very successful career in banking. In 1849, when Raymond was elected to the New York State Assembly, the two men became reacquainted. Raymond, too, dreamed of founding his own newspaper.

One winter day in 1850, during a walk across the frozen Hudson River, Jones commented that Greeley seemed to be doing well with the *Tribune*. The paper was highly thought of and was making money. The two men agreed that they would follow his example.

They pooled their own money and borrowed some more. A year later, they formed Raymond, Jones, and Company. Their newspaper would be called the *New York Daily Times*. Raymond was to be Editor-in-Chief. Jones would run the business side. The *Times*' goal was to be "the best and cheapest daily newspaper in the United States." Unlike the liberal, reformist *Tribune*, and the more sensational



George Jones

*New York Herald*, the *Times* would try to be even-handed in its reporting. It would limit itself to printing news the whole family could read.

The first issue of the *Times* was published on September 18, 1851. Its front page articles covered political developments in Austria,

Poultney Historical Society

## New-York Daily Times.

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PUBLISHED EVERY MORNING (Sunday excepted).  
At the Office, No. 112 Wall-street, between Broad and Nassau Streets, opposite the Bank of America.  
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## New-York Daily Times.

### THE NEWS FROM EUROPE.

#### ARRIVAL OF THE EUROPA'S MAILS.

#### AFFAIRS IN ENGLAND.

#### The Election in France—Arrests, &c.

#### APPREHENDED DISTURBANCE IN AUSTRIA.

#### SOUTHERN EUROPE.

The Royal Mail Steamer *Europe*, arrived at Boston yesterday morning, at about 6 o'clock. Her mails were sent on by the New Haven Railroad train, which left at 6 o'clock, and reached this city at about half past seven.

By this arrival we have received our regular English and French files, with correspondence, circulars, &c., to Saturday, September 6th—the Europe's day of sailing.

The news by this arrival has considerable interest, though it is not of startling importance.

In *England*, political affairs are quiet. The *Musso* arrived at Southampton on Thursday, the 6th, with the usual number of British papers. The day men under Col. Crittenden's command. The details of their news are given in length in the London papers.

In *France* attention is chiefly absorbed with speculations on the approaching Presidential election. The Prince de Joinville is clearly to be a candidate, and will probably be a more formidable opponent of Louis Philippe than any other that could be affected.

Another "Conspiracy" has been discovered in Paris, forty-seven arrests have been made by the police.

In *Austria*, hostility to the government still abounds under the surface with occasional outbreaks. An affray took place near Gross-Wardin, between a mob of day men and several Gendarmes, of the most brutal character.

In *Poorland* attention is absorbed by an accusation of a Cabinet Minister of bribery. He has resigned and gone before the courts of law.

The news of *Castlereagh's* release is confirmed, but the time is now said to have been the 13th of September. It is said that he proposes to go first to England and provide there for the education of his children and then proceed to the United States.

The money which presents a feature of marked interest.

#### GREAT BRITAIN.

The Queen was absent on her visit to Scotland where she had been very enthusiastically received. The Exhibition continues to attract numerous visitors. The attendance and receipts were:

Tuesday, . . . . . 49,665 persons—£9,407.15s.  
Wednesday, . . . . . 49,617 persons—£9,000.12s.

Thursday, . . . . . 44,329 persons—£3,177.16s.

The necessity of reducing prices is strongly urged. In view of the large amount of the public money required to send four additional regiments of infantry from England, to enforce obedience to the law. The correspondence of *The Times* denounces this as simply impudent.

*The Freeman's Journal* announces the death of one of the editors of the newspaper for 1813, namely, the

# New-York Daily Times.

VOL. I....NO. 1.

NEW-YORK, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1851.

PRICE ONE CENT.

The storm, the very set of the water in rising to supply the dike-breaker would add the impetus to the body of the water, and sweep away the fortifications.

The make of the Americans, was understood, is quite the reverse of that just described, the bows are sharp, and the breadth of beam, which is considerable, and the hull is built up, so that the ship is able to run along with the other model. But the strength of water in the bows is trifling—about three feet, and it depends on the tides to move the ship.

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A Thomas Nast cartoon of Boss Tweed. Nast and others joined the Times in a crusade against corruption and influence.

French elections, ship arrivals, death notices. In its early years, the *Times* was known to be one of the nation's most independent and well crafted papers. As it became increasingly profitable, it moved to larger offices.

Raymond died suddenly, in 1869. Jones then took over the editorial side of the paper. In his role as both publisher and editor, Jones set new standards for courage and honesty in news coverage. He believed that the public had a right to the truth about what was happening and that it was the duty of the paper to report it. He insisted that the business side of the newspaper be completely separate from the editorial side. He felt that the need to attract readers and advertisers must not limit the paper's freedom to report the news honestly and without bias.

The most famous of Jones' crusades against corruption was his battle against William Marcy ("Boss") Tweed. Tweed and his followers had turned Tammany Hall, in New York City, into a wealthy, corrupt, and politically powerful organization.

While other newspapers largely ignored Tweed, Jones and a few others, including political cartoonist Thomas Nast, wanted to expose Tweed's vast corruption. Tweed, in return, tried to undermine the *Times'* circulation and advertising income. At one point, Tweed sent one of his associates to Jones with

an offer of \$5 million to back off a story. Jones later wrote "I don't think the devil will ever make a higher bid for me." Tweed's associate told him that with that kind of money he could live like a prince. Jones' reply was: "True sir, all true. But I should know while I lived like a prince that I was a rascal....The *Times* will continue to publish the facts."

Jones remained at the helm of the *Times* until his death in 1891 and always practiced tough-minded journalism. As a result, the *Times* became one of the most respected newspapers in the world. But its outspokenness on the issues had serious consequences. When the *Times* was sold, in 1893, it was in bad financial shape. It was in worse shape three years later, when it was sold again, this time to Adolph Ochs.<sup>2</sup> Ochs, a newspaper publisher from Chattanooga, Tennessee, was determined to restore the paper to its former prestige and profitability. That he was successful is shown by the worldwide respect in which the paper now called *The New York Times* is held today.

Ochs and his daughter and son-in-law, Iphigene and Arthur Hays Sulzberger, who followed him at the *Times*, recognized George

<sup>2</sup> Adolph Ochs was the publisher of the *Times* after Jones' death. He created a slogan for the paper, "All the news that's fit to print," that still appears on the front page of every issue. It is a reminder of the paper's purpose and of the vision of its founders.

Jones' vision and work. After the 75th anniversary of the paper's founding, the Sulzbergers came to Vermont and dedicated a memorial stone in front of George Jones' birthplace. One hundred fifty years after its founding, *The New York Times* still publishes "all the news that's fit to print." Its growth and success are the continuing legacy of one of Vermont's most influential, although not best-known, sons.



Thomas L. Benson

*In honor of The New York Times' 75th anniversary, the paper's publishers placed this stone in front of the house in Poultney where George Jones was born.*