

Start the Presses: America's first printing business was founded by Elizabeth Glover in 1638, in Cambridge, MA. As a woman without a husband, the widow Glover needed special permission from male government officials to open her business. She continued to manage the Cambridge Press during her second marriage to Henry Dunster, Harvard's first president. After his death in 1654, she turned over the business to Harvard College. Another widow, Dinah Nuthead, became the first licensed female printing operator in the colonies in 1686. It is believed, she was illiterate.

In 1738, Elizabeth Timothy was the colonies' first female newspaper publisher and editor. Timothy printed the *South Carolina Gazette* in partnership with Ben Franklin, who owned the press and founded the newspaper. She operated under her 13-year-old son's name, Peter. The fourth newspaper in the colonies was the *American Weekly Mercury*. It was published by Cornelia Bradford after the death of her husband. When Bradford sold the paper, she continued to work as a bookbinder and printer.

America's first children's magazine, *Juvenile Miscellany*, was started in 1826 by Lydia Maria Francis, who wrote her first book at age 22. It was a daring romance between a Native American man and a white woman. After her marriage to David Child, she wrote *The Frugal Housewife*, a first of such books in 1829 America and her *History of the Condition of Women* followed in 1837. She then wrote another first of its kind in which she argued against slavery, and in 1841 she edited the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. Subsequently, numerous subscriptions to her children's magazine were canceled by respectable Bostonians.

Her domineering husband once forbid Jane Grey Swisshelm to read. But read she did, as well as write, and even publish. She published newspapers in three different cities, one being Pittsburgh. Under Pennsylvania law, a woman's wages went to her husband. When Swisshelm learned he could make money from Jane's writings, he allowed her to launch her own paper the *Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter*, where her editorials on slavery had a national audience of abolitionists. In 1850, she became the first woman to sit in the press gallery of the United States Senate. In 1857, she left her husband, moved to Minnesota and published the *St. Cloud Visiter* in which she continued to write against slavery. After pro-slavery advocates destroyed her press, she restarted her paper as the *St. Cloud Democrat*.

Maria Stewart was America's first African-American journalist. Her abolitionist essays (1831-33) were published by William Lloyd Garrison in his newspaper the *Liberator*. The male leaders of the free-black community were intolerant of a publicly outspoken female journalist. Stewart was forced to leave Boston and her career. However, her essays and speeches are collected in a 1987 anthology edited by Marilyn Richardson.

The first African-American newspaper publisher in America was Mary Ann Shadd Cary. Born free in Philadelphia in 1823, she became a teacher. At age 27, when Congress passed the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, Cary and her family fled to Canada. There she established the *Provincial Freeman*, a weekly publication for other blacks living in Canada. Criticism from black men made it difficult for her to publish, but publish she did.

In 1892, Ida B. Wells, owner of the *Memphis Free Speech* newspaper, wrote an editorial urging blacks to move out of racially restrictive Memphis. Within two months, six thousand had done just that. Wells observed that many of the young black men being lynched, were making economic gains in their lives. They were refined for the time and their place in it. More likely to become registered voters, successful black men were perceived to be a threat to the status quo. Wells decided to do research. She scavenged old court records and newspapers in the late 1800's and pioneered investigative journalism.

After three months, she uncovered the trends of economic and political gains in the records of the young black men being accused of white rape and lynched. Her research also

disclosed information of consenting, loving relationships between white women and black men. Wells wrote about this and published it in her paper.

Her article was picked up and reprinted on the front page of a Memphis city newspaper. In an editorial response, the Memphis paper praised the patience of the Southern whites, and literally put a price on Wells' head stating, "that any...black scoundrel is allowed to live and utter such loathsome and repulsive calumnies...would not be tolerated."

Wells was in Philadelphia when this editorial which called for her murder, was printed. Her newspaper office was looted and burned by whites. She was advised not to return. Her response was another editorial that provided names, dates, places, and circumstances documenting the hundreds of lynchings that supported her story.

Her story was the seed for what was to become the international campaign against lynching. She tried to influence the NAACP's men of power to take a visible stand against lynching, however, they didn't and she withdrew her membership. She ultimately made her home in Chicago.

Sources: *Women with a Deadline*, National Women's History Museum, www.nwhm.org;
Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970, Lynne Olson.