



The American Press Tradition Thecasesolutions.com

Americans hold few principles more firmly than our commitment to a free press.

We protect it as critical to the operation of our democratic political process, and we celebrate it as essential to the vitality of our free society.

Yet neither the full meaning of a free press nor the actual character of the press itself had fully matured at the time of the nation's founding.

The Evolution of Journalism

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Americas First Newspaper

In 1690, Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestick, is published in Boston. The paper, able to fill only three of its four pages with text, suspends publication after one issue after drawing criticism from the colonial government.

At first, all American newspapers were highly partisan. They had no sense whatsoever that their primary responsibility ought to be simply to report the news, or to provide a balanced and objective analysis of events.

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In 1769, Isaac Doolittle of Connecticut builds the first printing press made on American soil.



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In 1791, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, expressly forbidding Congress from making any law "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press," is ratified.

The Evolution in Journalism

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By the middle of the nineteenth century, America's newspapers shed their partisan excess, but only by reaching out to the interests—often the vulgar interests—of the mass urban audience.

On Sep 3, 1833 Benjamin Day issues the first edition of the New York Sun, America's first "penny press" newspaper. The cheap paper, sold for a fraction of the cost of all earlier newspapers, soon attracts a much wider audience by catering to the interests of New York City's ordinary citizens.

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On May 6, 1835, James Gordon Bennett issues the first edition of the New York Herald, which will soon grow in popularity to become the country's most widely read newspaper.

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On May 24, 1844 America's first telegraph line, stretching from Washington, D.C. to Baltimore, officially opens for business. The instant long-distance communication offered for the first time by the telegraph will make it possible for local newspapers to offer timely coverage of far-off events.