



The FRONT PAGE

by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur
directed by Nick Bowling

STUDY GUIDE

prepared by
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— STUDY GUIDE —

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Hecht and MacArthur: The Newspaper Years

A Partnership is Born

Legend has it the first collaboration between Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur was a piece of gallows humor—literally.

As Hecht writes in his biography of Charles MacArthur, the day before a condemned man is scheduled to hang, they visit him. When they discover he has not planned his last words, MacArthur and Hecht pen a “spicy attack” on the city editors at their respective newspapers.

Unfortunately, the prisoner’s arms are bound when he steps onto the gallows. The convict manages to keep hold of the typewritten speech, but is unable to bring it up to read it. The collaboration between Hecht and MacArthur “died unheard on the gallows air.”

The Jazz Age

In his biography of Ben Hecht, William MacAdams observes that “A new generation, in revolt against nineteenth century values, was drinking, dancing, and making use of automobiles in ways engineers hadn’t planned: The Jazz Age had begun.”

Hecht married, divorced, carried on affairs, and married again, all the while churning out newspaper columns, short stories, novels, poetry and plays as if his life depended on it. Charles MacArthur, who also married more than once, was known for his humor, his valor as a soldier and his love of a good brawl.

Their writing was not generated through a process of calm reflection and careful construction. The belief that the right novel, play or film could make one instantly wealthy lent a sense of oil wildcatting to the whole enterprise. Hecht and MacArthur lived hard, wrote fast and carried themselves with an air of braggadocio that wouldn’t have been out of place in a con artist—or a newspaperman.

Ben Hecht

In 1894, Ben Hecht was born into a garment industry family in New York City. The family eventually settled in Racine, Wis. Hecht came to Chicago in 1910, determined to be a writer. A family friend arranged an interview with the publisher of the *Chicago Journal*. In short order, Hecht was put to work as a “picture chaser.”

The job of a picture chaser was to acquire photos of newsworthy people, often the recent victims of crimes. Hecht claims to have once stolen an oil painting because

it was the only likeness he could find. For another story, he plugged the chimney of a bereaved mother's home. When she ran outside to escape the smoke, he slipped inside to steal a picture of her recently deceased daughter.

Hecht's success led his supervisor to send him out to look for news stories. MacAdams writes, Hecht knew nothing about "the ways and means of getting a story. ... he was unsure how to ascertain the facts. Undaunted, he simply made them up."

With photographer Gene Cour, Hecht manufactured a number of stories, including the story of a Chicago earthquake accompanied by a photo of a "fissure" dug by Cour and Hecht. Their fact-free reporting came to an end when they were caught using a well-known prostitute to pose for a front-page story about a Bulgarian princess. Hecht was nearly fired.

Sherman Duffy, a sports editor at the *Journal*, took the somewhat chastened Hecht under his wing and taught him the ropes of actual newspaper reportage. By 1914, Hecht had become a top reporter at the *Journal*.

Having conquered the newspaper business, he set his sights on literature.

Hecht's first foray into theater was in 1913 with collaborator Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, son of a lumber millionaire. They produced a series of plays at Jane Addams' Hull House. This was Hecht's first writing outside of the newspaper, a pursuit that would take him to New York and, ultimately, to Hollywood.

Charles MacArthur

Charles MacArthur was born in 1895 in Scranton, Pa. Unwilling to follow his father's evangelist calling, a teen-aged MacArthur moved to the Chicago area. His first newspaper job was at *The Oak Leaves*, an Oak Park paper owned by his siblings. In 1914 he joined the City News Bureau of Chicago, a news-service cooperative where cub reporters cut their teeth.

Described by historian Wayne Klatt as "restless, romantic [and a] prank-puller," MacArthur became "everything his father detested: someone who craved excitement, neon lights, women, and liquor."

Searching for that excitement, MacArthur joined the U.S. Army and served as a doughboy in World War I. His artillery service produced his only book, *A Bug's Eye View of the War*, about which Hecht wrote: "[It is] the only witty story of battle and death I have read. ... The pursuit of laughter continues amid exploding shells as if they were the décor of some carnival."

After the war, MacArthur was hired by the *Chicago Herald-Examiner*. He met Hecht in this period, socializing with him at the Corona Café, a reporter hang-out.

As MacArthur's fortunes as a writer improved, he would move to New York City. In New York, he was in frequent attendance at the Algonquin Hotel, becoming a founding member of the famed Algonquin Round Table.

The Front Page and beyond

In the summer of 1927, the two Chicago reporters would re-establish their collaboration in New York. Drawing on their raucous newspaper days, they created the play *The Front Page*. It opened on Broadway in 1928 and ran for 278 performances.

That theater success led to Hecht's work on 1932's *Scarface*, a movie that defined the gangster film genre. The Hecht-MacArthur collaboration also would lead to critically recognized films such as *The Scoundrel* (1936 Academy Award for Best Writing), and to films starring such greats as Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. (*Angels Over Broadway*, 1940), Cary Grant (*Gunga Din*, 1939) and Rosalind Russell (*His Girl Friday*, 1940).

The influence of those early days in Chicago stayed with them: It is apparent in the verve and fire with which they continued to write. Charles MacArthur died in 1956, Hecht in 1964.

Helen Hayes, MacArthur's second wife, spoke of Hecht and MacArthur's newspaper days in a 1980 talk at Chicago's Newberry Library. Chicago, she said, is "where they fell in love with life."

Evolution of the news

Historian George H. Douglas dates the golden age of the newspaper from the 1830s, in which printing and paper advancements made the affordable "penny paper" possible, to the 1930s, with the rise of radio news. He argues a newspaper spoke to a real, nearby community. By contrast, television and radio are remote, standardized and lacking in individuality.

Douglas published *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* in 1999, just ahead of the rising tide of blogs and the increased polarization of cable news. The news today again speaks to different communities, virtual though some may be. Despite advances in technology and the practice of journalism, it seems there are some aspects of the news that never will change.

Prior to the 1830s, Douglas writes, newspapers were nothing like our modern papers. They were commercial journals, offering "static commercial announcements." Most early papers were "unabashed political organs, devoted to scathing and vitriolic attacks on political opponents. ... The concept of unbiased news or objective reporting was unknown."

As technological advances improved the speed and quantity in which newspapers could be printed, they became more affordable. The penny paper—which actually sold for a few cents—became available, and street sales of newspapers began. Appealing to a wide audience, the early papers began including human-interest stories and courtroom material.

The Civil War would make its mark on the newspaper industry, painfully demonstrating the need for timely news. According to historian Frank Luther Mott, the post-Civil War years saw a “growth of independence from party bonds [and] the growth of feature material in place of long political disquisitions.” By this time, newspapers were no longer directly engaged in political disputes. Instead of appealing to consumers with partisan brawling, they began to embrace the sensational interests of urban readers.

As papers evolved into large corporate enterprises in the late 1800s, some observers felt it was the end of personal journalism, in which the personality of the leading editor was the paper’s defining trait. A new type of newspaper began to emerge, offering a more, moderate, serious presentation of the news.

This overall trend towards serious news did not equal an aversion to the sensational, though. The circulation wars in the 1890s between William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer marked the beginning of yellow journalism and muckraking. In yellow journalism, sensational headlines and lurid stories featuring sex and violence were the norm. Rick Musser, a journalism professor at University of Kansas, defines muckraking as the practice of exposing “corruption in government, unfair treatment of factory workers, and the privileges of the upper class.” This taste for the lurid would continue to define papers well into the 1920s. According to Musser, “Modern media’s obsession with sex and crime has nothing on [the Jazz Age’s] scandalous content.”

Under pressure from the founding of journalism schools, shifts in cultural norms, advertisers’ need to offend no one and the corporate desire to reach an ever wider readership, the rollicking sensational press began to give way to the tempered independent mainstream press we see today. While political leaders seek the endorsement of major papers and editorial pages clearly show ideological leanings, newspapers attempt to maintain some sense of objectivity in their reporting of the news.

One might argue that a tactic to increase market share of news organizations (particularly television) has resulted in a backsliding toward increasingly partisan positions. Yet the mainstream media polarization is fairly even-tempered when compared to the political papers of the 1830s. To find that level of personal attack masquerading as news now, however, one simply has to enter the unregulated world of the blogosphere.

In that virtual world we are witnessing the same pattern once seen in the

newspaper industry: free-for-all early days, followed by the influx of advertising money, then a call for standards from within and outside the field. The blog already has taken much of this journey, evolving into online extensions of recognized journals as well as becoming news outlets in their own right. Blogs, though, seem on the verge of being displaced by the current emphasis on shorter-form social media, where everyone can be a reporter in 140 characters or less.

Whatever the next evolution, the one constant has been the country's hunger for information and the power afforded those who can mostly efficiently disseminate that information. It seems likely there will always be a band of individuals who will go to extremes to get the story first—whether it is completely true or not--, much like the reporters in *The Front Page*.

Reporting in the 1920s: You can make a living, but can you survive the job?

Even as *The Front Page* was achieving commercial and critical success, the type of freewheeling reporter it portrays already was fading from existence. “Schools of journalism and the advertising business have nearly extirpated the species,” Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur lamented in a print edition of the play.

Before the journalism schools, a reporter learned by doing. For the reporter of the 1910s and '20s, the learning curve was steep—they either figured out how to cultivate contacts or they failed to get a story. As Wayne Klatt explains in his book *Chicago Journalism*, “A reporter obtained stories by making regular checks on police stations, slapping the backs of policemen who did not mind it, asking about their families, telling jokes, staying out of their way, going for coffee, giving officers a few news tips, and keeping after any unsolved crimes day after day.” If you returned to your editor without a story that a competitor then printed, you were fired.

Successful reporters of the period had four core traits: They were inventive, competitive, controlled their emotions and possessed a strong sense of humor.

Newspaper lore is filled with tales of daring inventiveness. During the Leopold & Loeb trial in 1924, reporter George Wright scooped everyone by acquiring secret grand-jury testimony. Somehow Wright learned there was a five-foot space above ceilings in the courtroom. He smuggled a plank into the building and used it to creep to an area above the witness stand. Getting caught and violating the defendant's rights weren't the only dangers of this kind of reporting. A reporter using a similar tactic elsewhere was found dead in the closet where he had been hiding: It is surmised he came into contact with an exposed wire and was electrocuted.

The quest for a scoop and the threat of being fired made newspaper reporting fiercely competitive, particularly in Chicago. Historian and newspaperman

William T. Moore observes, “It has been remarked that the *Tribune* conducts itself as though it had won and not coined the slogan on its masthead, World’s Greatest Newspaper. ... This lordly air has been a hotfoot stimulating the opposition to trickery, mischief and herculean feats above and beyond the expected coverage of the news.”

Legend has it that while covering the Iroquois Theater fire in 1903, Walter Howey (the inspiration for the character Walter Burns in *The Front Page*) secured exclusive use of a telephone line by bribing a bookie in a nearby saloon and then instructed a crew of men from the City Press Association of Chicago to stick pins in the shielded wires of nearby public phones, rendering them inoperable. “In modern eyes, newspaper tactics in the early years of the twentieth century entailed unconscionable acts,” Klatt writes. “But reporters viewed them as a part of a game as they competed with their friends and rivals, just as the papers were competing with one another.”

In order to be that competitive, a reporter had to maintain a certain emotional distance. In *Chicago Journalism*, reporter Robert J. Casey describes a good crime reporter as one who has the ability to “distance himself from a situation and think of human misery as a commodity.” Klatt writes: “Reporters developed the twin defenses of cynicism, to prevent honest feelings from affecting their work, and sentimentality, to keep them from losing their interest in human nature.”

Reporters also used humor as a defense. “Sensing a certain phoniness in news writing and editing to keep ordinary information entertaining day after day,” Klatt writes, “reporters became a playful lot.” He summarizes the work of historian Norman Howard Sims, who wrote humor “kept reporters from being vulnerable as they moved among the corrupt, the cheated, and the dead.”

Some critics have said *The Front Page* misrepresents the newspaper business. Hecht, though, claimed they had to delete some of the truly wild events to make it believable.

Because Hecht and MacArthur were newspapermen, it is possible to see the madcap comedy of the play as more than simple entertainment. The comedy springs from the intense pressures faced by newspapermen using any means necessary to get a story. Even if not a completely realistic portrayal of the newspaper business, *The Front Page* brings the audience a step closer to experiencing the spirit of a reporter’s life in the 1920s.

The Timeline: Sources of the Story

The Front Page was written in the summer of 1927, but years of important moments are referenced in the play. Not to mention the life *The Front Page* has had since its world-premiere production in 1928. Following are some key dates in the play's legacy.

February 1894

Ben Hecht is born in New York City. In a later account of his birth, Hecht will write he was born in a toilet. In truth, it is a cousin who was born prematurely in a toilet. Hecht simply steals the story.

November 1895

Charles MacArthur is born in Scranton, Pa..

1903

Walter Howey, then a cub reporter for the City Press Association, files a story on the tragic Iroquois Theater fire. Howey eventually will become managing editor of the *Chicago Herald-Examiner*. He is the prototype for Walter Burns in *The Front Page*.

1910

Hecht graduates from high school and moves to Chicago. He is hired by the *Chicago Journal* and begins a newspaper career.

1913

MacArthur begins work on *Oak Leaves*, an Oak Park paper.

1914

Hecht leaves the Journal and joins the staff of the *Chicago Daily News*, where he writes his famous "1001 Afternoons in Chicago" column.

1914

MacArthur begins as a reporter on the *Herald-Examiner*. (Some accounts, though, have him starting after his service in World War I.) He later switches to Colonel Robert McCormick's *Chicago Tribune* and later still to the *American* in New York City.

1916

MacArthur serves as a cavalry trooper with the Mexican border patrol in search of Pancho Villa. After that failed mission, he joins the U.S. Army's 149th Field Artillery, part of the Rainbow Division. He serves in France as an artillery man.

1918

Hecht returns from a newspaper assignment in post-war Berlin.

1921

Convicted murderer Tommy O'Connor escapes from the Cook County Jail. The gallows is stored for use after he is recaptured. He is never found. In 1977, when it is fairly certain he will not be seen again, the gallows are sold to Ripley's Believe It Or Not Museum. O'Connor's escape inspired the character of Earl Williams in *The Front Page*.

1924

MacArthur relocates to New York City. Hecht moves there in 1925.

1925

Cook County Sheriff Peter Hoffman serves time—during his term as sheriff—for contempt of court in connection with a scheme offering special privileges to jail inmates. Hoffman is the prototype for Sheriff Hartman in *The Front Page*.

1927

Hecht writes the screenplay for the gangster movie *Underworld* and wins an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. This launches a film career that includes *Scarface* (1932), *Gunga Din* (1939), and *Monkey Business* (1952).

1927

William H. Thompson is re-elected mayor of Chicago. Thompson is known for his corrupt administration and his slogan “Keep King George out of Chicago,” which is intended to win the support of Chicago's Irish residents. Thompson is the inspiration for the character of The Mayor in *The Front Page*.

1927

Hecht and MacArthur write *The Front Page* over the summer. In Hecht's biography of MacArthur, he describes their collaboration: “I sat with a pencil, paper and a lap board. Charlie walked, lay on a couch, looked out of a window, drew mustaches on magazine cover girls and prowled around in some fourth dimension. Out of him, during these activities, came popping dialog and plot turns.”

1928

The Front Page opens on Broadway, directed by George S. Kaufman. It runs for 278 performances.

1928

MacArthur marries actress Helen Hayes.

1931

The first film version of *The Front Page* is created. It stars Adolphe Menjou, Pat O'Brien and Edward Everett Horton.

1940

His Girl Friday, directed by Howard Hawks and starring Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell, is released. This version of *The Front Page* re-imagines Hildy Johnson as a female reporter.

1945

A television version of the play is created, starring Vinton Hayworth and Matt Crowley.

1946

The play is revived on Broadway. There will be two other Broadway revivals, in 1969-'70 and 1986-'87. The second revival would feature John Lithgow as Walter Burns, Richard Thomas as Hildy Johnson and Julie Hegerty as Peggy.

1956

Charles MacArthur dies.

1964

Ben Hecht dies.

1974

Another film version of *The Front Page* is released; directed by Bill Wilder, it stars Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau and Susan Sarandon.

1981

The Goodman Theatre produces the play. In his review, Richard Christiansen, theater critic for the *Chicago Tribune*, notes Tennessee Williams called *The Front Page* the play that "uncorseted American theater." "Even after 53 years, the play's truths and humor still hold up," Christiansen writes.

1982

Windy City, a musical based on *The Front Page*, opens in London and runs for 250 performances.

1984

Windy City is staged at the Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire; it is remounted there in the 1990s.

1988

The movie *Switching Channels* is released. In it, the story is moved to television news from the newspaper industry. The film stars Kathleen Turner, Burt Reynolds and Christopher Reeve.

1996

The Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., stages a benefit performance of the play featuring members of Congress and the Clinton Administration, including Labor Secretary Robert Reich as Earl Williams and Republican Dick Armey, the House Majority Leader, as Sheriff Hartman. Hildy Johnson and Walter Burns were played by the professional actors Casey Biggs and Stacey Keach.

2011

TimeLine Theatre opens the latest revival of *The Front Page*.

Real Life Inspirations for the Characters

“In 1924, with the Chicago rate of violent deaths twenty-four percent higher than the rest of the country, weekday editions of the *Tribune* carried a stylized clock face with three hands to show the current death tolls due to automobiles, guns, and ‘moonshine.’” — Wayne Klatt, *Chicago Journalism*

Roy Bensinger, *Chicago Tribune*

Bensinger is most likely based on Albert F. Baenziger, police reporter for the *Chicago American*. He was a distinguished reporter who covered major cases, including the Leopold and Loeb trial. Baenziger was apparently offended by his treatment in *The Front Page*. George Murray, a reporter for the *Chicago American*, claims that Baenziger once slugged Hecht in front of the *Tribune* building.

The *Chicago Tribune*

The *Tribune* published its first edition on June 10, 1847. When Colonel Robert R. McCormick assumed the position of co-editor with his cousin Joseph Medill Patterson in 1910, the *Tribune's* circulation of 188,000 made it the 3rd best selling paper in Chicago. In subsequent circulation wars with papers run by William Randolph Hearst, the *Tribune* gained ground. By 1922, the newspaper had added 250,000 subscribers.

The *Tribune* was a conservative and isolationist paper, but billed itself as the “World's Greatest Newspaper.” McCormick claimed the newspaper was “the most vital single source at the center of the world,” but it is doubtful that the newspaper's influence was felt beyond the Midwest.

“After Howey lost his left eye, it was said that it was easy to tell which eye was glass: the warmer one.” — *Alex Barris, Stop the Presses! The Newspaperman in American Film*

Walter Burns, *Herald-Examiner*

Walter Burns is based on Walter Crawford Howey. Howey was managing editor of Hearst’s *Herald-Examiner* during the most rough-&-tumble era of Chicago journalism. A *Times* magazine article describes Howey as “a profane romanticist: ruthless but not cruel, unscrupulous but endowed with a private code of ethics. He was the sort of newsman who managed to have hell break loose right under his feet, expected similar miracles from his underlings, rewarded them generously.”

Harry C. Read, city editor of the *Chicago American*, took particular offense at the characterization of Howey, complaining that it was “a deliberate distortion of a great and able original [that] smacks of personal venom.”

The *Chicago Herald-Examiner*

The *Herald-Examiner* was the lead Hearst newspaper in Chicago. Its reporters were among the most aggressive and creative in the city. The paper was founded as the *Chicago Morning American* in 1902, and was renamed the *Chicago Examiner* in 1907. After a merger brought about in part by circulation wars with the *Tribune*, the paper was combined with the *Chicago Record-Herald* and became the *Chicago Herald-Examiner*. The paper was never highly profitable, but it vied with the *Tribune* as leader in the city’s morning circulation.

The rivalry with the *Tribune* was increasingly unsuccessful in the 1930s. After additional mergers, the paper was ultimately sold to the *Tribune* in 1956.

Mike Endicott, *Chicago Post*

There is no record of a reporter with this name in the period. Historian George W. Hilton notes that the playwrights of *The Front Page* used minor spelling variations to offer a veneer of deniability when basing their characters on real reporters. As a result, Hilton theorizes that Endicott’s real life inspiration must have had a name that would have caused confusion within the play—the name “Johnson,” for example, would cause unacceptable confusion with the main character.

Hilton suggests that there are two “Johnsons” that might have inspired Endicott. One is Edwin C. Johnson, who worked as a copyboy at the *Post* and eventually rose to assistant city editor. The other is Enoch M. Johnson, who covered the Criminal Court Building for the *Chicago Daily News* for 25 years.

Chicago Post

Founded in 1866, the *Chicago Post* identified itself as a reform newspaper, and attempted to publish muckraking stories of Chicago's political corruption. Among its managing editors was the future director of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Michael W. Strauss. The paper shut down in 1932, a victim of the Great Depression.

Hilding Johnson was hit by a taxicab in 1928. According to newspaper lore, he said the accident wouldn't have happened if he had been drunk, and swore that he would never be sober again. Apparently, he kept his oath.

Hildy Johnson, *Herald & Examiner*

Hildy is based on Hilding Johnson, a crime reporter for the *Chicago Herald-Examiner*. Johnson was born in Sweden about 1889. He was a "legman" who phoned his stories into a rewrite desk without getting a byline. Johnson was known for his pranks and stunts in pursuit of the news; he once posed as a police detective to get access to witnesses.

Ernie Kruger, *Chicago Journal of Commerce*

This name for this character is a combination of two Chicago reporters, Ernest Larned Pratt and Jesse Krueger. Neither reporter worked for the *Chicago Journal of Commerce* in real life.

Ernest Larned Pratt was a career Hearst journalist. He served as the assistant managing editor of the *Chicago Evening American* and later as city editor of the *Herald-Examiner*. Pratt was a virtuoso on the banjo.

Jesse Krueger started working for the *Chicago Evening American* and retired fifty years later after working as a reporter, rewrite man, war correspondent, motion picture critic, columnist, editor, and promotional executive for the Hearst Papers nationally.

Journal of Commerce

While some sources date the founding of the *Chicago Journal of Commerce and Daily Financial Times* to 1920, others indicate the existence of a *Chicago Journal of Commerce* in 1870 and earlier. In 1923 it became the *Chicago Journal of Commerce and LaSalle Street Journal*. The *Journal of Commerce* reported the escape of Tommy O'Connor, but did not maintain a full-time crime reporter.

In 1950 the *Journal of Commerce* was purchased by the *Wall Street Journal* and was published as the Midwest edition of that paper.

McCue, City News Bureau

McCue is based on Leroy F. “Buddy” McHugh, who started his journalism career at the City News Bureau as a copy boy in 1906. He shifted to the *Chicago Evening American* in 1915, and remained active as a police reporter until his retirement in 1963.

McHugh once obtained information for a story by impersonating Coroner’s investigator Francis Donoghue. The actual Donoghue arrived to interview the same person after McHugh, and the door was slammed in his face. Evidently, the person had been warned that the next person claiming to be Donoghue “would be some snooping newspaperman.”

City News Bureau

The City News Bureau emerged in 1890 as an evolution of an organization originally founded by eight newspapers as a nonprofit cooperative. It reported minor local news for member newspapers so that multiple reporters were not wasted on routine police actions, minor court cases, and high school athletic results. The Bureau was long identified as a training ground—at low salary—for young journalists. City News Bureau lasted until March 1, 1999—jointly owned at that point by the *Tribune* and *Sun-Times*.

“A Journal man would take a trolley to a crime scene and two Hearst men would pass him en route in a taxi.”
— John J. McPhaul, *Deadlines & Monkeyshines*

Jim Murphy, *Chicago Journal*

Murphy was inspired by James Francis Murphy, a police reporter with whom Hecht worked on the *Chicago Journal* in his early years in Chicago. Murphy had a high school education, as was typical of the reporters of the time. Murphy was a reporter for the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* and *Chicago Evening American* before joining the *Chicago Journal*. When the *Journal* shut down in 1929, he joined the *Chicago Times*.

Chicago Journal

Founded 1884, the *Chicago Journal* was the city’s oldest continuously active newspaper in the 1920s.

The *Journal* was wily, bold, and imaginative in gathering and displaying the news. The paper was occasionally competitive with the *Chicago Evening American* on local stories, but the Hearst paper led in scoring exclusives and continuous coverage of important events. In 1929, *Journal* editor Samuel Emory Thomason sold the paper and its equipment to the *Chicago Daily News*.

Ed Schwartz, *Chicago Daily News*

Schwartz is based on a reporter named Jack Schwartz. He is not well documented, but Jack Schwartz is known to have spent most of his career on the *Chicago Daily News* and the *Minneapolis Tribune*.

Chicago Daily News

Chicago's most prestigious evening paper, it was the traditional choice of affluent suburbanites for the afternoon train trip back to the suburbs. Founder Melville H. Stone envisioned the paper as a commercially oriented, politically independent paper dedicated to the timely presentation of facts rather than the manipulation of public opinion.

Stone was aware that a spirit of independence was not enough to gain a foothold in a town that had six major papers. He had a more practical gimmick: a one-cent paper. The principal papers sold for five cents. Since pennies were seldom used in the Midwest, Stone bought barrels of the copper coins from the Philadelphia mint, and encouraged their use by opening a money-changing office in the News building. He sold merchants on the then-novel idea of running 99-cent sales. A customer with just a penny left couldn't do much else with it but buy a newspaper.

The *Chicago Daily News* became known for its distinctive, aggressive writing style which 1920s editor Henry Justin Smith likened to a serial novel. The paper ceased publication in 1978, in part due to the rise of the automobile commute and the growth of the evening television news.

“Mr. Hearst's *Chicago Evening American* is a refreshingly honest newspaper. Its sly editors are calmly aware that ninety percent of their readers are subnormal servant girls, bridge tenders, soda-water clerks and bellicose illiterates. They cater with an unflagging altruism to the furtive obscenities and arrested mental development of a grateful lower middle class.”

— Ben Hecht, 1923

Wilson, *Chicago Evening American*

Wilson may have been based on *Chicago Evening American* reporter Herbert C. Wilson, an automotive and travel editor. However, Herbert C. Wilson had no background in police reporting, and supposedly lacked the personality attributed to the character in the play. With Wilson, the authors' true inspiration may remain a mystery.

The *Chicago Evening American*

The *Chicago Evening American* was William Randolph Hearst's evening paper in Chicago, and was derided in some quarters as being of poor intellectual quality. William Randolph Hearst launched a Chicago newspaper as part of a plan to reach the White House by age 40. With the backing of the National Association of

Democratic Clubs, Hearst founded the *Evening American* to counter the staunchly Republican *Tribune*. On July 2 1900, William Jennings Bryan started the presses via telegraph.

Because of the *Evening American's* support of city and county Democratic officials, the paper was influential enough to arranged some jail hangings in the afternoon instead of the morning for the convenience of its reporters.

"I wanta make the King of England keep his blasted snoot out of America ... If you don't look out all history books are going to be full of things belittling George Washington. They're teaching un-Americanism. And if you elect me I'll fire out the whole blasted caboodle, including King George of England."

— Mayor William Hale Thompson.

The Mayor, "Woodenshoes" Eichhorn, Sheriff Hartman

Sheriff Hartman is based on Peter M. Hoffman, Sheriff of Cook County from 1922 to 1926. In 1925 Hoffman and Warden Wesley Westbrook were accused of providing illegal privileges to leading figures in the Torrio-Capone mob. A judge sentenced Hoffman to 30 days in jail plus a fine. He served his term in another county, saving him the indignity of being put in his own jail.

"Woodenshoes" Eichhorn is based on Herman F. "Wooden Shoes" Scheuttler, Superintendent of Police during World War I.

The Mayor is based on William Hale Thompson, mayor of Chicago from 1915 to 1923, and also from 1927 to 1931. Thompson was the last Republican mayor of Chicago. Although Democratic, the *Chicago Herald-Examiner* was the only Chicago newspaper to support Thompson in the election of 1919. A feud with the *Tribune* caused the paper to refuse to print his name by the 1930s, referring to him only as "a former Republican mayor of Chicago."

Mollie Malloy, Earl Williams

The character of Mollie is not based on any one particular prostitute, but rather on the type of women the newspaper men would have been accustomed to seeing in various vice areas around the city. Prostitution boomed in the South Side Levee district in the 1910s and 1920s, and was also common in parts of the Near North Side, Uptown, and Lake View. Though not nearly as compact or flagrant as the Levee, these other districts owed their existence to corrupt police and ward politicians.

Earl Williams is loosely based on real-life murderer Tommy O'Connor. The real O'Connor was nothing like the sympathetic character in the play. O'Connor had a criminal record that included robbery and an indictment for murder. During an

attempted arrest, O'Connor killed a policeman and fled, only to be caught later while trying to rob a train porter. He was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged on December 15th. On December 11th, O'Connor escaped by using a pistol allegedly smuggled into the jail inside a pork chop sandwich.

Mr. Pincus, Diamond Louie

Mr. Pincus is based on the lawyer Samuel E. Pincus. An active Democrat, he was appointed to the office of assistant attorney general of Illinois in 1915. He also served as city prosecutor of Chicago until 1927 and was appointed assistant corporation counsel of Chicago in 1931, a post he held until his death in 1956. As assistant attorney general, Pincus would have been the appropriate officer to deliver the paperwork so important to the plot of *The Front Page*.

Diamond Louie was likely inspired by “Diamond” Louis Alterie, a prominent criminal of the period. After various jobs in California, including a short period as a policeman, Alterie moved to Chicago where he became active in labor racketeering. He joined with Dion O’Banion and thereby established himself as anti-Capone. Alterie was murdered in front of his apartment building at 922 Eastwood Avenue in Uptown on July 18, 1935. Two men shot him 19 times from an apartment across the street that they had engaged for the purpose.

As in the play, the use of thugs to intimidate newsdealers was practiced in this period. Alterie is not known to have worked for a newspaper.

Printing a Newspaper In the 1920s

Getting a newspaper to print is a complex, multi-layered process that is constantly in flux. Stories that at the beginning of the day might be front-page material are relegated to inside pages as new events unfold. The journey below is a simplification of that process – some steps might happen simultaneously, and some might be skipped all together. This simplified journey details the workflow on an evening paper. It is designed to convey a basic idea of what it takes to get a news story from the reporter all the way to the newsstand.

1. The Foundation Is Laid

One of the newspaper's copy-readers begins early in the day by reading the recently printed morning papers. Noting stories that can be developed further, he creates a list of leads for the City Editor.

2. The Troops are Deployed

The City Editor, with the help of the morning leads and several assistant editors, creates assignments for the reporters. Some of the assignments are regular beats – established sources of news that a reporter watches each day. Others are one-time assignments to follow breaking news. Assignments also come from the Future File – a list of upcoming events that might prove newsworthy.

3. On The Streets and On The Phones

Once the assignments are made, the reporters start digging for their stories. They might search out persons of interest to interview, they might visit a contact at a police station, or they might call contacts at City Hall. If detailed to cover a developing event at the Criminal Courts Building, they might wait in the pressroom there for the news to break.

4. In Your Own Words, More or Less

Depending on the culture of the specific newspaper and the skills of the individual, a reporter often writes the article for the story he is pursuing. In other cases, he telephones his newspaper and asks for “rewrite.” A rewrite man takes the information delivered in that phone call, and fashions an article from it. Often, the rewrite man will draw from background information in the “morgue,” the newspaper's archive of articles.

5. How to Play It

As the reporter is working on his story, he often gives the city editor an overview of the story. The city editor will instruct the reporter how to “play” the story: what angle to emphasize and how long to make it. When the article is deemed adequate, the city editor passes it on to the copy readers.

6. Checking For Accuracy

The copy readers review the articles to catch mistakes of fact, grammar and spelling. The copy readers also check that the writing conforms to the newspaper's style. They possess an encyclopedic knowledge and are able to ascertain the correct middle initials of prominent people or whether two particular streets intersect. The copy reader also writes the article headline.

7. Cutting the Copy

Once approved by the city editor and the copy readers, the article is sent to the composing room. The first stop in the composing room is the copy cutter. The copy cutter takes long stories and divides them into “takes”: short pieces that can be distributed among several linotype operators. The takes are marked clearly so they can be easily reassembled.

Newspapers are printed using metal “type”: blocks of metal that have a raised impression of a letter that when coated with ink and pressed against a sheet of paper produce the printed page. Early printers set individual letters by hand – a time consuming process. A linotype machine greatly speeds this process. An operator types text on a typewriter like input device and the linotype machine produces “sticks” of type by pouring molten metal into forms.

As the individual sticks of type are created, they are placed on tables called galleys. When a galley is full or the story is complete, a proof is printed on the proof press. The proofreaders examine the proof for errors. Multiple proofs are made until the galley is deemed correct.

8. Making Up the Page

While all this has been going on, the newspaper has already produced sticks of non-news information such as advertisements and placed them in page frames. The night editors then supervise the “make up men” as they assemble each page, placing news items as directed by the editors.

9. Stereotyping

Once the page is made up, large papers must make multiple copies of a page of type so that they can print the same page on multiple presses. The stereotype process creates impressions of a page of type that can be used to cast metal copies of the type.

10. Starting the Presses

Having created multiple copies of the pages of type, the pressmen fit the stereotypes into the presses. In 1928, the Chicago *Tribune* possessed 72 printing units each unit capable of printing 16 different pages at once. Each unit was run at a rate of 300 to 400 revolutions a minute. The *Tribune*, therefore was theoretically capable of printing 20,763,000 pages in a single hour. The *Tribune* notes, however, that this theoretical limit was never actually achieved.

Even at this point, it was still possible to get change the news. In newspaper parlance, the “fudge” is a open space maintained on an alternate front page for late breaking news. If there is last-minute news, a stereotype of the front page with a blank space is fitted into the press, while a smaller cylinder is made up in the composing room with the new story. The smaller cylinder is fitted onto the press in such a way that it keys into the blank space left in the large page, producing a completed page.

11. At a Newsstand Near You

From the presses the pages are fed by conveyor to machines which cut and fold the papers. The completed papers go to the circulation department for distribution via mail, home delivery and to newsstands. In 1928, the *Chicago Tribune* would distribute nearly 750,000 copies of its daily paper each morning.

Tommy O'Connor Escapes

Chicago's newspapers avidly followed the escape of "Terrible" Tommy O'Connor (known also as "Lucky" Tommy O'Connor) on December 11, 1921. In the fallout after his dramatic jail break and disappearance, allegations of rampant corruption followed, including "hordes of dope, moonshine from a still inside the jail, and appalling conditions." A series of inquiries and exposés resulted, all voraciously covered by the Chicago press.

William Fogarty, a former prisoner, confessed to offering the gun to O'Connor, believing he was innocent. He was also depressed by the hanging of a friend, whose song he had heard on the gallows. Fogarty brought the gun to O'Connor concealed in a pork chop sandwich.

"Did you get the smoke pole [pistol]?"

"Yes, we got it."

"Did the big guard fix everything?"

"Yes, Strauss fixed everything."

"Good."

—an alleged conversation among the escaped prisoners overheard by another, according to the *Herald-Examiner*

"How did it happen that BOTH of the gates to the bullpen were opened? How did it happen that only ONE GUARD was on duty?"

— States Attorney Crowe

"When I saw it was a getaway I joined in. I got a sentence of ten years to life the other day. If you had all that hanging over you and you had chance to skip, what would you do?" — prisoner Clarence Sponagel

Almost instantly a "big guard" named Strauss was linked to the escape, and accused of collusion with the inmates. This led the Sheriff to conduct a full-scale investigation of all the guards at the Cook County Jail.

"I'm going to the bottom of this. I haven't suspended anyone yet, but we may keep some of our guards here as customers!"

— Cook County Sheriff

The Chicago American immediately offered a reward to anyone who would give the paper “first and exclusive” information.

5,000 policemen were dispatched to “shoot O’Connor on sight,” but he was never seen again.

Chicago’s Dramatic Mayoral History

The action of *The Front Page* takes place against a decidedly political backdrop. The sordid, sensational, and often scandal-ridden history of Chicago’s mayoral elections is just one of the underplots running through the play. The incumbent Mayor—an obvious clone of William Hale Thompson—makes a cynical attempt to court the South Side black vote by executing a man who has killed (albeit mistakenly) a black police officer. Such tactics, as well as backroom deals, allegations of bribery, and even tragedy have all been part of Chicago’s mayoral history.

William Hale Thompson (1915–1923, 1927–1931)

“Big Bill” Thompson, his detractors said, had the hide of a rhinoceros and sometimes the style of one, but Chicago liked him enough to make him mayor for two straight terms, from 1915 to 1923, and then again for a third term in 1927-31. Known also as “Big Bill the Builder,” his 1927 campaign included attacks on the King of England for alleged interference in Chicago affairs and help at the precinct level from henchmen of Al Capone. At Thompson’s death, several million dollars in cash were found stuffed in his desk drawers.

William Dever (1923–1927)

A tanner’s son who became a judicial careerist, William Dever was responsible for many improvements to the city’s infrastructure, including the completion of Wacker Drive, the extension of Ogden Avenue, the straightening of the Chicago River and the building of the city’s first airport, Municipal Airport.

Anton Cermak (1931–1933)

The city’s only foreign-born mayor, Anton Cermak, was a coal miner and former firewood seller. He was born in Kladno, Bohemia (now the Czech Republic), and emigrated with his parents to the United States in 1874. He began his political career as a precinct captain, and in 1902 was elected to the Illinois state legislature. He helped create one of the most powerful political organizations of his day, and Cermak is considered the father of Chicago’s Democratic machine.

While shaking hands with President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, Cermak was shot in the lung by Giuseppe Zangara, alleged to be attempting to assassinate Roosevelt, who hit Cermak instead.

Edward Kelly (1933–1947)

Following the assassination of Mayor Cermak, Kelly was hand picked by his friend, Patrick Nash, Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party, for the mayoral election of 1933. Together, Kelly and Nash built one of the most powerful, and most corrupt, big-city political organizations, called the “Kelly-Nash Machine.” Kelly further strengthened the control that Irish politicians had over the city’s affairs.

Martin H. Kennelly (1947–1955)

Martin Kennelly was elected mayor in 1947 on a platform of reform, but it was the city council that actually ran the city. Among other things, the council successfully blocked the efforts of the Chicago Housing Authority to put CHA house projects in all wards, not just in all-black wards. The result was later to earn Chicago the dubious distinction of being the “most segregated city in the U.S.” After 8 years in office, Kennelly was dumped in a surprise maneuver by the Cook County Democratic Party.

Richard J. Daley (1955–1976)

A former stockyards cowboy out of working-class Bridgeport, Richard Daley served as Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Central Committee from 1953 and mayor of Chicago from 1955, retaining both positions until his death in 1976. Throughout his many years in office he attended mass daily and was a father figure whose slogan was “Good government is good politics.” He was regarded as personally honest, but a number of his lieutenants were found guilty of various misdeeds. A militant Democrat, he found support not only among his well-rewarded precinct captains and other party workers, but also from the generally Republican leaders of the city’s business community.

Michael Bilandic (1976–1979)

Its first non-Irish mayor since 1933, Michael Bilandic was of Croatian ancestry. He oversaw the creation of ChicagoFest, a food and music festival held on Navy Pier. The Chicago Marathon had its first running in 1977, in which he ran. Considered unbeatable when he came up for re-election in 1979, he was done in by his administration’s mishandling of a bad winter and record snowstorm, compounded by revelations of expensive consulting contracts awarded to political cronies. He was elected to the Illinois State Supreme Court in 1990 and served until 2000. From 1994 to 1996 he was the Illinois Chief Justice.

Jane Byrne (1979–1983)

The first female mayor of Chicago, Jane Byrne was also the first mayor to recognize the gay community. Her win was considered a defeat of the long-established political machine. She was narrowly defeated in the 1983 Democratic primary for mayor by Harold Washington. Richard M. Daley ran a close third, splitting the white vote with Byrne and allowing Washington to win the Democratic primary with just 36% of the vote. Byrne ran against Washington again in the 1987 primary, but was defeated.

Harold Washington (1983–1987)

The first African-American mayor of Chicago, Harold Washington served as Democratic representative to the Illinois state legislature and then became a state senator in 1976. In 1980 he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. His first mayoral term in office was characterized by rancorous, racially polarized battles dubbed “Council Wars.” His second term was cut short when he died in office on November 27, 1987. To honor his legacy, the Chicago Public Library, the world’s largest public library, was re-named after him.

Eugene Sawyer (1987–1989)

Sawyer was elected mayor by the other members of the city council and took over from interim mayor David Duvall Orr.

Richard M. Daley (1989–2011)

Chicago’s longest-serving mayor, Richard M. Daley is the eldest son of Richard J. Daley. Popular but controversial, Daley has been accused of having “imperial” style and power, as when he destroyed the runways at Meigs Field in the middle of the night. During his five terms as mayor he has been focused on rebuilding Chicago as a destination city, improving and expanding parkland, including overseeing the creation of Millennium Park on what had previously been an abandoned train yard. He also spearheaded the conversion of Navy Pier into a popular tourist destination, and openly supported immigration reform, gay rights, and green building initiatives. In addition, he has generally enjoyed strong support from the business community. He chose not to run again in 2011.

Rahm Emanuel (2011–present)

Elected in 2011 after a contentious court battle to prove that he met the Chicago residency requirement for a mayoral run, Emanuel won 55% of the vote in a five-way race to become the first Jewish mayor. Emanuel served as a senior policy advisor to President Clinton, and then three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives representing Chicago’s 5th district. He served as President Obama’s Chief of Staff until he resigned to run for mayor.

Chicago Newspaper Lifespans

1844 *Chicago Journal* founded.

1847 *Chicago Tribune* founded.

1854 Joseph Medill becomes managing editor of the *Tribune*. *Chicago Daily Times* founded.

1865 *Chicago Republican* founded.

- 1871** In the aftermath of the Great Fire, the owner turns what is left of the *Republican* into the *Inter-Ocean*.
- 1875** *Chicago Daily News* founded.
- 1878** *Daily Telegraph* founded.
- 1881** A new owner re-launches the *Daily Telegraph* as the *Morning Herald*.
- 1883** In 1881, the *Daily News* creates a morning edition to compete with the *Tribune*. Originally called the *Morning News*, it is now renamed the *Morning Record*.
- 1886** *Chicago Evening Post* founded.
- 1890** *City Press Association of Chicago* is founded when seven papers form a cooperative to cover routine news.
- 1895** *Daily Times* and *Morning Herald* merge to become *Times-Herald*.
- 1900** As part of his ambition to become President of the United States, William Randolph Hearst founds the *Chicago American*.
- 1901** The *Times-Herald* merges with the *Morning Record* to create the *Record-Herald*. *Chicago Evening Post* is renamed the *Post*
- 1902** William Randolph Hearst founds the *Examiner*.
- 1910** Colonel Robert J. McCormick becomes co-editor of the *Tribune*. *City Press Association* renamed the *City News Bureau*.
- 1914** A new owner renames the *Record-Herald* the *Herald*; the *Herald* absorbs the *Inter-Ocean*.
- 1918** Hearst acquires the *Herald* and creates the *Herald-Examiner*.
- 1920** *Chicago Journal of Commerce and Daily Financial Times* founded.
- 1929** *Journal* ceases publication and sells equipment to the *Chicago Daily News*. The owner of the *Journal* starts the *Daily Illustrated Times* in the old *Journal* building.
- 1932** *The Post* ceases publication, a victim of the Great Depression.
- 1939** The Hearst papers are combined to create the *Herald-American*.
- 1940** *Journal of Commerce and Daily Financial Times* becomes the Chicago edition of *The Wall Street Journal*.

- 1941** Marshal Field III founds the *Chicago Sun* in to oppose the anti-Roosevelt *Tribune*
- 1948** Field combines the *Sun* with the *Times*, creating the *Chicago Sun-Times*.
- 1953** The *Herald American* is renamed the *Chicago American* in 1953.
- 1956** The *Chicago American* is bought by the Tribune Company and renamed *Chicago's American*.
- 1959** The *Daily News* is bought by the Field Company, which also owns the *Chicago Sun-Times*.
- 1969** *Chicago's American* is renamed *Chicago Today*.
- 1974** *Chicago Today* prints its last issue; much of the staff is absorbed by the *Tribune*.
- 1978** The *Daily News* prints its last issue.
- 1994** The *Sun-Times* is acquired by Hollinger International, later renamed the Sun-Times Media Group.
- 1999** The *Tribune* assumes sole ownership of *City News Bureau*, renaming it *City News Service*.
- 2005** *City News Service* is closed, allowing the *Tribune* to put more money into internet ventures.

Discussion Questions

1. In *The Front Page*, the reporters go to great lengths to get the story. What kind of limits should there be on a what a reporter is allowed to do in pursuit of a story?
2. When Walter and Hildy are writing the story of their “capture” of Earl Williams, they make use of hyperbole. That is, they exaggerate in order to evoke strong feelings. Is that an appropriate style for a newspaper story? Why or why not? Can you think of recent news stories that use similar tactics?
3. The reporters accuse the Sheriff and Mayor of purposefully delaying the hanging of Earl Williams for their political advantage. Do you know of any events that you believe politicians have used to their advantage? What about situations in which a leader has ignored public opinion in order to do what he or she believes is right?
4. Many people have predicted the end of print journalism. Where do you get your news? What do you think is the most reliable source for information on current events? Does that source have any competition?

5. Can you think of a story that the news media got wrong? What were the consequences of spreading this misinformation?
6. In this production of *The Front Page*, offensive language that appeared in the original script was left unchanged. Do you think that stories from the past should be altered to fit the ethics of the present? Why or why not? Do you think there is value in seeing this offensive language in an earlier context? Why or why not?

Vocabulary and References

burning sulphur for a week

The practice of burning brimstone or sulphur candles in order to disinfect. Sulphur, when burned, produces sulphurous acid, a gas that destroys most vegetable colors and the germs of most diseases.

catch the fudge

In newspaper parlance, the “fudge” is an open space maintained on an alternate front page for late breaking news. If there is last-minute news, a stereotype of the front page with a blank space is fitted into the press, while a smaller cylinder is made up in the composing room with the new story. The smaller cylinder is fitted onto the press in such a way that it keys into the blank space left in the large page, producing a completed page. To “catch the fudge,” therefore, was to get a story printed in that blank space.

drugstore cowboy

While contemporary ears likely hear a reference by Gus Van Sant's 1989 film, *Mirriam Webster* defines “drugstore cowboy” as one who wears cowboy clothes but has had no experience as a cowboy.

(Now) duck!

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms*, “duck out,” meaning to leave hurriedly or secretly, originated in the late 1800s simply as “duck.” “Out” was added about 1930. As the play was written in 1927, it's conceivable that the authors were more likely to use “duck” than “duck out.”

fellow with a dirty collar

While a Reverend, depending on the denomination can indeed wear a clerical collar, there is no suggestion that “dirty collar” is slang for some impropriety on the part of Reverend Sipperly. In a casual search on the internet, combinations of “dirty collar” and “1920s” indicate that the society of the time saw “dirty collar” as an emblem of slovenliness.

horse's bustle

A bustle is a pad or frame worn below waist at the back to extend the skirt, worn in the late 19th century. It can also refer to a very padded “crupper.” A crupper is

a strap from the back of a saddle that passes under the horse's tail. A padded crupper, or bustle, is used to set the tail at a certain height for show horses. In either case, it appears to carry the connotation of "horse's ass."

Lothario

A man whose chief interest is seducing women. From Lothario, seducer in the play *The Fair Penitent* (1703) by Nicholas Rowe. In the play Lothario is urged by his friend Anselmo to attempt to seduce his wife in order to test her faithfulness.

Lying-In Hospital

As footnoted in the annotated script, this is the name of the maternity hospital at the University of Chicago. It began as the Lying-In Dispensary in 1895 and was Chicago's first outpatient clinic to provide maternity care for needy women and to train medical students. It became the Lying-In Hospital in 1917 and merged with University of Chicago Medical Center in 1938.

Lying-in is an old childbirth practice involving a woman resting in bed for a period of time after giving birth. Though the term is now usually defined as "the condition of a woman in the process of giving birth," it previously referred to a period of bed rest required even if there were no medical complications.

gluten bread

Bread made from flour containing a high proportion of gluten. Gluten is a special type of protein that is commonly found in rye, wheat and barley. Not all grains contain gluten.

In the 1920s, manufacturers started bleaching bread with agents such as nitrogen trichloride, and discovered how to boost the gluten content in the wheat in order to produce a bigger loaf. Up until the 1920s, spelt was the choice bread flour, but because it was labor intensive to mill, it was abandoned for other grains and new hybrid wheats. Spelt, a species of wheat, contained less gluten than the new wheats.

off your feed

American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms: lost one's appetite, as in "Even though Mom's gone only for a week, her absence puts Dad off his feed." Originating in the early 1800s and first used only for animals, this colloquial term later was applied to humans as well.

Passavant Hospital

Northwestern Memorial Hospital was created September 1, 1972 by the consolidation of two of Chicago's oldest established hospitals – Passavant Memorial (founded 1865) and Wesley Memorial (founded 1888). Passavant Memorial was founded by William A Passavant, a Lutheran minister. According to a Northwestern University History Timeline, Passavant was originally founded as Deaconess Hospital of Chicago in 1865. In 1885 Passavant opens an Emergency Hospital on Superior near LaSalle for the treatment of accident cases from nearby factories. And in 1895 the Emergency Hospital is renamed Passavant Memorial in memory of its founder and reorganized as a general hospital.

(he's got the) pazooza

An expert on the *The Front Page* writes: "On the basis of the standard dictionaries of unconventional American English, this is not a slang term for a disease but was probably coined by the authors for the play." In the Mickey Mouse short "The Brave Little Tailor" (1938), Mickey is offered six-million gold "pazoozas" to kill a giant. Perhaps a coincidence, but other sources indicate that the pazooza is a slang monetary unit akin to a "simoleon." Simoleon is thought to originate from a small silver coin (sixpence), which was often as slang called a "simon." The appearance of "pazoozas" in the Disney short suggests that it was a nonsense word that was in some usage.

pickanniny

A derogatory term for an African-American child. As with many offensive terms, there is some debate about how offensive the word originally was. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence that to many people the term simply meant "cute black child" and could even be affectionate.

Polack Mike's

According to the annotated scripts, Polack Mike's is presumably a speakeasy, but is unidentifiable. A speakeasy is an establishment that illegally sells alcohol, and came to prominence in the US during Prohibition (1920-1933). The etymology is apparently from speak + easy, from the practice of speaking quietly about such a place in public, or when inside it, so as not to alert the police and neighbors.

serchay la femme

a corruption of *Cherchez la femme*, a French phrase that literally means "look for the woman." The implication is that when a man behaves out of character or in an otherwise apparently inexplicable manner, the reason may be found in his trying to cover up an illicit affair with a woman, or to impress or gain favour with a woman. The expression comes from the 1854 novel *The Mohicans of Paris* by Alexandre Dumas (père).

you're a real white man

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the first usage of the word white with this meaning was in the 1877 novel *Golden Butterfly* by Walter Besant and James Rice (both British), referring in a highly complimentary fashion to "as white a man as I ever knew." In 1893, the short story "Benefits Forgot," set in Colorado and penned by New Yorker Wolcott Balestier, made wholly non-ironic use of the sentence, "That's deuced white of you." Edith Wharton, born in New York and eventually a permanent resident of Paris, uses the earnest compliment, "Well - this is white of you," in her 1913 novel *The Custom of the Country*. The earliest example of the specific phrase "mighty white of you" was published in 1916 in a letter to the *Chicago Tribune*, in which the Midwestern author professes sincere gratitude.

In contemporary usage, the phrase has taken on an overwhelmingly sarcastic tone ... "That's mighty white of you" is a scathing response to a situation in which someone is condescendingly attempting to portray their own actions as incredibly

generous and worthy of gratitude, when the reality of the situation is just the opposite. Because the current sense is actually negative, many people take issue with the idea that the term is racist in its origins.

zonite!

Zonite was an antiseptic and vaginal douche, a commercial adaptation of the Carrel-Dakin Solution, developed as a medication for wounds in World War I. In the context of the play, it is a derogatory nickname.

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