

# Chicago's Muted Trumpets

By MURRAY GART

**J**UST a generation ago Chicago ranked close to the top of the heap of American cities who were noteworthy for their press. It was, to be sure, a notoriety of a special kind, dominated by the invincibly personal presence of Colonel Robert (Bertie) Rutherford McCormick. Yet, in quite another way, it was a consequential press, for Chicago's journalistic terrain contained five separate papers, all of them separately owned and operated. They spanned a healthy spectrum of conviction from McCormick's own flamboyant, isolationist *Tribune* trumpet to the internationalist, New Dealish *Sun*, a creation of stubborn persistence and Marshall Field III's fat bank account. Little Orphan Annie played out her adventures on the same landscape as the crusading, "Front Page" reporting of the *Daily News*, while a serious *Sun* relinquished sensationalism to an inevitably lusty, anti-divisionist Hearstling.

It was a robust, enterprising press, even if some of its experimentation (like fonetic spelling in the *Tribune*) bordered on the bizarre. At least those who published and edited it felt that they should not only express firm convictions, but that they should also try to get their words off newsprint and into the minds of their readers.

By this time, Chicago's press had shaken off its worst habits, those developed in the circulation wars that followed World War I. It had been fashionable then, in an atmosphere of furious thrashing for power-giving circulation, for the city's press lords to import gangs of thugs to carry their battle into the streets. The theory was simply that it was possible to beat one's competitor into oblivion by intimidating and muscling his employees, roughing up his carriers and dealers, turning over his trucks, and stuffing his newspapers into sewers or dumping them into Lake Michigan. To practice the theory required armies of circulation thugs trained in the art of street war, and these were recruited from all over the East. The wars themselves were serious enough, not infrequently involving head bashing and bloodshed, and occasionally reaching an intensity suggested in the gunning down of *Tribune* reporter Jake

Lingle in the Illinois Central Station. As even more serious consequence of such bad journalistic habits, however, was that the oversized hood population branched out in its operations, providing some of the main talent and muscle for the gangland wars of the Capone era. By a generation ago, however, this was past history in Chicago in spite of lingering legend.

Now, a generation later, there is even less friction between one journalistic greenhouse and another, although a good measure of serious competition and enterprise remains—more perhaps than in any major city outside of New York. Also, there are fewer greenhouses. Field's morning *Sun* absorbed the afternoon *Times* to become the *Sun-Times*. In 1956, William Randolph Hearst's heirs threw their ragged afternoon *American* open for bidding to the three remaining publishers, a contest won by the *Tribune*. Then, in early 1959, after helping to raise his father's tabloid to respectable journalistic stature (meanwhile converting it to his own modern Republicanism), Marshall Field, Jr., bought Jack Knight's *Daily News*. The afternoon *Daily News*, which could boast a good foreign news service, a crusading tradition, and an editor who translated his penchant for short sentences into a whole journalistic era of basic language usage, unfortunately faced a slowly decreasing six-day revenue.

Today's press map of Chicago shows four anchor points, a loss of only one in a generation and a casualty record of considerably smaller proportions than national trends would suggest. Of course, Chicago has become in the process a two-publisher town, as any reporter or editor in search of employment quickly discovers. He can seek employment with the morning *Tribune* or the afternoon *Chicago's American*, appropriately housed in the left wing of the *Tribune* tower. Or he can call at the morning *Sun-Times*, published by Marshall Field, Jr., or the *Daily News*, edited and published by Marshall Field, Jr. Both have a common architectural home on the Chicago River.

All this concentration inevitably results in the financial rewards of sharing physical plant and publishing



**Larry Fanning**  
Exec. Editor, *Sun-Times*.



**Lloyd Wendt**  
Editor, *Chicago's American*.



**Tom Collins**  
Exec. Editor, *Chicago Daily News*.



**W. D. Maxwell**  
Editor, *Chicago Tribune*.

facilities in varying degrees, though the accountants still trot out red ink for both afternoon papers.

There exists, however, a fortunate consequence of this new Chicago press construction. Field and McCormick's trust caretakers who now run the *Tribune* cannot willingly give an inch of competitive ground in the morning field, for this could result in potential disaster to the newspaper that is the strength of each publishing house. Likewise, in the afternoon cycle, neither would dare give an inch lest the cost run more than it does already. Even if each publishing house held a different preference, circumstance would dictate only intense competition. In fact, the two-publisher operation of the four-newspaper Chicago press probably has intensified the competitive atmosphere, which in the long run has become more stable than the old five-proprietorship system of glaring weaknesses alongside towering strengths.

What has changed more radically is the position and editorial character of the newspapers. The heirs to McCormick's personal proprietorship have muted his trumpet. To the chagrin of no one, they have stripped the *Tribune* almost entirely of its language idiosyncrasies. While the heirs still bellow from its editorial page in anachronistic Gibraltaria-America or right-wing Republican terms (often in brilliant classic prose), at least they are more susceptible to reporting, using, and displaying news with less ideological fervor. Their *Tribune* seems to recognize, as McCormick's never would, that Little Orphan Annie's pertinence to the contemporary world is about as appropriate as the sermons of Robert Welch. (Though, of course, Annie marches on, daily and Sunday). Under editor Don Maxwell, appointed by the Colonel before he died, the *Tribune* has aged measurably, though by the standards of its hold on readership and its ability to generate profits, it remains Chicago's strongest newspaper.

Chicago's best newspaper, on the other hand, is Field's *Sun-Times*. A well-edited, alert, and highly diversified tabloid positioned against the *Trib*, it has somehow caught the proper balance between informing and entertaining its readership, and gives the impression of engagement with the real world. As a reading diet, its taste has a flavor of blandness, partly calculated to overcome the feel of a tabloid, partly a reflection of Field's own view of the world. Ably piloted by executive editor Larry Fanning, the *Sun-Times* recently became the new home base of cartoonist Bill Mauldin, whose syndicated efforts are the latest addition to Field's "dignity," i.e., columnist, page. It is also the original and perman-

ent home of Ann Landers. Neither exciting nor encyclopedic like a *New York Times*, the *Sun-Times* provides just the best day-to-day fare Chicago offers. Its mild Republicanism irritates Second City business-leader sensibilities less than Field's father did when he founded the paper in a fit of passion for the New Deal. It remains internationalist, however, if imperceptibly so.

Under the new ownership structure in Chicago, the newspaper that has improved most is *Chicago's American*, the *Trib*'s scrapper for afternoon leadership. One of the most able editors in town, Lloyd Wendt, was freed eighteen months ago from his Sunday editorship of the *Tribune* to accelerate the progress of the *American* away from Hearsthood. It had a long way to go, and, to the surprise of the city's editorial fraternity, he was given free reign.

UNDER Wendt, sex, crime, and the passions of Hollywood starlets have given way to serious efforts in news, columns, and features to lure the paper's readership into more enlightening areas of current events. He leans heavily on the *New York Times* news service, and his compass approach to columnists raises eyebrows in the more staid quarters of *Tribune* tower, though the paper boxes it faithfully from Barry Goldwater to Murray Kempton.

When a jet blew up over Iowa last spring, it was his *American* that pursued the story and finally broke the news that it was bombed rather than blown by windstorm from the skies. Such reportorial vigor shows in the *American's* pages, and it is being recognized in the fact that its circulation is closing a gap with the *Daily News*.

Wendt's greatest difficulty, one beyond the control of any editor, lies in the fact that the *American* suffers a disease distressing to any newsman: thinness. In a city of fat, heavy products which tend to obscure by poundage what they lack in substance, the *American* displays its chronic anemia publicly. Consequently, it retains some of the feel of a sick Hearst paper. It also plagues its editors with daily denials of space in which to display their journalistic wares. Even so, Wendt and his staff make better use of available space than other papers in the city, with the possible exception of the *Sun-Time's* tabloid-sized offering. Often the *Daily News* and the *Tribune* appear determined to prove the worthless principle which regards news only as stuff used to fill white space around the ads.

The most disappointing newspaper in Chicago is the *Daily News*, once its best. Its own foreign service, one of its greatest assets, and a good corps

of Washington hands, continue to supply the paper with a diet of independent, relatively perceptive reporting. Its staff in terms of reportorial strength is still large and well seasoned. Its bent for investigative reporting remains, though often of late it has been shunted into unproductive channels. It carries Marshall Field's own banner, for the masthead proclaims him editor. The mystery of Chicago journalism is that, with such a strong editorial tradition, the paper just seems to miss the mark.

Some good reasons, however, can be discovered upon close inspection: an abundance of weak editorial leadership under Field, which he has been too kind to correct, and a somewhat disorganized construction, including a make-up that was the hallmark of many a newspaper of another more chaotic era. Remedies are in the development stage, but it remains to be seen whether the *Daily News* can be spruced up to display that orderly sense of engagement in mirroring the events of the day which modern readers require.

To the combatants in the daily matches among the Chicago newspapers—and newspapering is a sequence of daily matches—a real sense of contest exists as a healthy journalistic stimulus. If there is a moment of pause, it is always possible to reflect on the two enormous financial forces engaged in the happy battle to tell people what they ought to know for the well-being of their way of life: on the one side, a mammoth business and publishing enterprise, the Chicago *Tribune*; on the other, the ever-growing fortune of a long-dead merchant prince named Marshall Field.

In the new Chicago press, there is also abundant evidence of a kind of search for journalistic truth that is a considerable improvement over the old. There is much more of a tendency, even in the *Tribune*, to try to see the world and interpret it not as someone would like it to be, but as it is. Perhaps more than anyone else in the current top echelons of command, Field has attempted to set this kind of standard for the newsman's eternal preoccupation with searching for the truth. It's a standard far more natural than any other for any newsman worth his salary, and it's a standard willingly, though often unconsciously accepted.

For the most part, the Chicago press of today is a more responsible, improved overall product than it was a generation ago. If it is more bland, it is perhaps the times that yield fewer dramatic moments to make hair-raising headlines. If it is less raucous and more reflective, it is probably a consequence of perceiving a world of gray rather than black and white.

A  
A-  
B+  
B  
B-  
C+  
C  
C-  
D+  
D  
D-  
F

## IF SCHOOLS RATED YOU AS THEY DO YOUR CHILDREN, HOW GOOD WOULD YOUR REPORT CARD BE?

Redbook Magazine gave 400 elementary school teachers the opportunity to rate the parents of the children they teach. If you were one of those marked, you probably flunked Attendance, Perceptiveness, and Responsibility. The complete report card appears in October Redbook. It reveals the teachers' deep concern that parents are abdicating their share of responsibility in the educative process. Poor attendance is the first symptom. Children learn at an early age to play parent against teacher, especially when the parent is not familiar with the teacher or her classroom situation.

Even more frustrating to the teacher is the sacrifice of her training and classroom time in an effort to teach health habits and good

manners. One teacher comments that this is a special problem in higher-income families: mother is usually in bed when children go to school.

This kind of pointed criticism from teachers may disturb Redbook's Young Adult readers, most of whom are parents of young children. But by this time they're accustomed to Redbook articles that stretch their minds and touch their sensibilities. In fact, it is this respect for the literacy and purposefulness of its readers that has made Redbook the most popular magazine for Young Adult families. As a

result, circulation is one of the fastest growing among all magazines. And advertising lineage grows apace, climbing at a rate rarely exceeded by others.

THE MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG ADULTS

**REDBOOK**

230 Park Avenue, New York—and Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia. Circulation Base: 3,600,000

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# Magazines



## Cinderella Magazine: "Art in America"

By JOHN TEBBEL

**I**N THE magazine business, Cinderella stories have never been as commonplace as they are in other kinds of endeavor. Good little periodicals that sit home by the fire are likely to continue sitting there until they fall over into the flames. More than a century and a half of magazine publishing in America has produced only a handful of publications which have survived fifty years or longer, and few of these are still alive today.

One of the survivors is *Art in America*, certainly a most unlikely candidate for longevity, a Cinderella magazine which literally stayed at home during most of its life until it suddenly met a prince, went to the ball, and is now living happily ever after on Madison Avenue.

Not many magazine readers probably have ever heard of *Art in America*. It is one of those small, specialized, high-quality publications, bound in board covers, full of handsome color and artistic layouts, and designed for a relatively small subscription audience supplemented by bookstore sales. It is, in a sense, the *American Heritage* of the art world. Seven years ago it had no advertising whatever and a circulation of less than a thousand; yet it was alive. Today, refinanced, published by Lee A. Ault, and with Anthony

Bower as managing editor, it has a circulation of approximately 18,000, including book-store sales (it is distributed by McGraw-Hill); and in 1961 it carried an average of forty-seven and two-thirds pages of advertising in its four issues. With its anniversary issue in February, it will return to its original bimonthly publication schedule, abandoned years ago.

*Art in America's* remarkable success story begins in 1913, which art lovers know as the historic year when, on February 17, an exhibition opened at New York's Sixty-Ninth Regiment Armory, introducing to an American audience the contemporary innovators of European art and a few natives who were in the same avant-garde camp. Known ever since simply as the "Armory Show," this exhibition displayed to Americans who hardly knew what to make of them such now familiar artists as Matisse, Cézanne, Brancusi, Picasso, Gauguin, Braque, Kandinsky, and Duchamp.

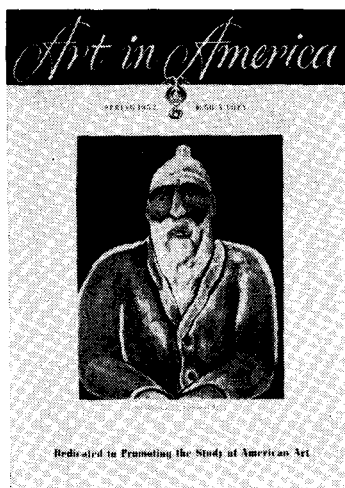
By coincidence the first issue of *Art in America* had appeared only a month before the opening. It was the idea of Frederic Fairchild Sherman, an art collector who dealt with rich accumulators like J. P. Morgan, and who also published fine private press publications in the art field. Sherman was already much interested in American art. He owned some of Albert Ryder's

work and in time published the first book about this artist. The Armory Show stimulated his interest all the more, because he saw there not only Ryder's work but paintings by Winslow Homer, Marsden Hartley, Arthur B. Davies, Robert Henri, George Bellows, John Sloan, John Marin, Edward Hopper, and Charles Sheeler, among others.

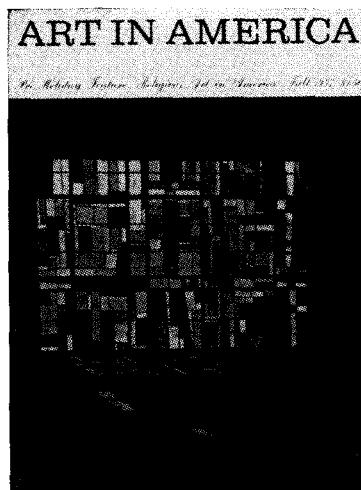
As first editor of his magazine, Sherman hired Wilhelm R. Valentiner, a scholar well known for his studies in Italian Renaissance art. But Valentiner left the post after three years, and Sherman became his own editor in 1917, holding the reins himself for the next twenty-three years. Early in his tenure Sherman found his interests concentrated more and more in native American art, an absorption naturally reflected in his magazine, which soon became the chief exponent in its field of American folk art and American painters.

In the early Thirties, Sherman acquired a young assistant editor out of Wellesley, who came like so many eager college girls to work on a New York magazine, and unlike most of the others, stayed with her first job and became editor after Sherman's departure in 1940. Jean Lipman improved considerably on this success story, however. She was not only editor, but publisher and entire staff, with the help of her husband. The office was her home in Cannondale, Connecticut, in the bucolic precincts of Fairfield County; and there for years she issued *Art in America* on schedule, aided only by the old printing firm in Springfield, Massachusetts, Pond Ekberg Co., which had printed the magazine from the beginning.

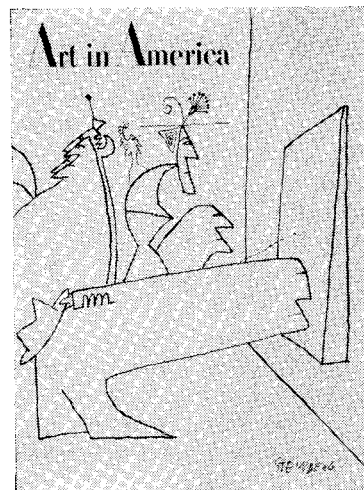
The magazine did not die, but neither did it prosper. By 1950 it had



1952



1957



1961