



Red Blood & Black Ink: Journalism in the Old West

David Dary

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For the first time, the long, exciting, often surprising story of journalism in the Old West--from the freewheeling days of the early 1800s when all the news was an expression of the editor's opinion, to the more balanced reporting of the classic small-town weeklies and busy city newsrooms of the 1920s. Here are the printers who founded the first papers, arriving in town with a shirttail of type and a secondhand press, setting up shop under trees, in tents, in barns or storefronts, moving on when the town failed, or into larger quarters if it flourished. Using many excerpts from the early papers themselves, Dary shows us the amazing ways the early editors stretched the language, often inventing new words to describe unusual events or to lambaste their targets--and how they sometimes had to defend their right of free speech with fists or guns. We see women working in partnership with their husbands or out on their own, and tramp printers who moved from place to place as need for their services rose and fell.

Here, too, are Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Horace Greeley--and William Allen White writing on the death of his young daughter. Here is the Telegraph and Texas Register article that launched the legend of the Alamo, and dozens of tongue-in-cheek, brilliant, or moving reports of national events and local doings, including holdups, train robberies, wars, elections, shouting matches, hyperbolic vegetable-growing contests, weddings, funerals, births, and much, much more.

In *Red Blood & Black Ink* David Dary makes a strong case for the importance of the press in settling the West and helping to knit the nation together, making us into the country we are today. A fascinating look at a neglected part of our history.

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