

# THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE CIVIL WAR INDEX

A Guide to the Weekly Newspaper  
Dedicated to Civil War Veterans, 1877-1943

Volume 1: 1877-1903

Compiled by Richard A. Sauers



Savas Beatie  
California

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For John McElroy,  
whose tireless work with *The National Tribune*  
contributed so much to our study of the Civil War



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# Introduction

## A Short History

**T**he *National Tribune* was the premier newspaper published for Union veterans of the Civil War and their families. George E. Lemon, a wounded veteran of the 125th New York Volunteer Infantry, was the brains behind the genesis of this paper. Lemon, a pension lawyer by trade, started the *Tribune* in October 1877 as an eight-page monthly sheet, listing the following reasons for publishing the paper:

1. To help influence Congress to pass a law equalizing the bounties paid to Civil War veterans;
2. To lobby for the passage of a law to mandate that pensions for wounded, disabled, injured, or families of deceased soldiers would begin from the time of death or discharge from service on account of disability;
3. To obtain pensions for Mexican War veterans;
4. To include on the pension rolls all survivors of the War of 1812 and all widows of deceased veterans; and
5. To lobby Congress to remedy defects in the existing pension laws, especially Section 4717 of the Revised Statutes.

Lemon chose a phrase from Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address to describe the *Tribune's* mission: "To care for him who has borne the battle, and for his widow and orphans."

In March 1879, the paper changed publishers when The National Tribune Company of Washington, D.C. assumed printing responsibilities. George E. Lemon & Company remained as advisors. The paper continued as a monthly issue until June 1881, and after a month's hiatus, became a weekly newspaper on August 20, 1881, when volume 1 #1 of the new series began. By this time, the *Tribune* had become a driving force in the pension battle and was

attracting a wider reading audience, especially among members of the Grand Army of the Republic, the major organization of Union veterans.

In the August 20 edition, Lemon included the following editorial: “We shall be glad at all times to hear from any of our soldier or sailor friends who have matters of historical interest, incidents, or amusing anecdotes of the war to relate.” At first, readers were slow to respond and Lemon, following the tradition of period newspapers, excerpted or copied Civil War articles from other papers such as the *Philadelphia Weekly Times*.

By mid-1882, articles from veterans were beginning to pour into the *Tribune’s* office. Men of all ranks from privates to generals contributed to paper’s rising success. Although it continued to cover issues of vital interest to pensioners, the increasing number of historical articles and letters greatly added to the overall appeal of the paper. Lemon also began including weekly pages devoted to GAR news, primarily individual post information and reunion notices and events. The Sons of Union Veterans and Women’s Relief Corps also received space in the paper.

In 1884, Lemon brought John McElroy to the paper as managing editor. McElroy, who was the editor of the *Toledo Blade*, was a veteran of the 16th Illinois Cavalry. He had been captured and imprisoned in the notorious Andersonville camp, and in published his memoir, *Andersonville: A Story of Rebel Military Prisons, Fifteen Months a Guest of the So-Called Southern Confederacy*, in 1879. Under McElroy’s firm guidance, the *National Tribune* became the premier veterans’ newspaper. McElroy remained editor until his death on October 12, 1929. After George Lemon died in December 1896, McElroy also became the *Tribune’s* publisher when the firm of McElroy, Shoppell & Andrews purchased the paper.

McElroy enticed prominent officers to contribute their recollections. Notables such as John Pope, William P. Carlin, Robert H. G. Minty, August V. Kautz, Green B. Raum, Abner Doubleday, and Oliver O. Howard penned major articles or series for the *Tribune*. And, of course, their former comrades scrutinized such recollections very closely and did not hesitate to praise or condemn.

The subjects of the thousands of Civil War articles in the *National Tribune* ranged from the major battles of Gettysburg, Antietam, Chickamauga, Franklin, and Atlanta, to scores of obscure skirmishes and actions, some of which went unreported in the official records. Veterans also used the pages of the *Tribune* to argue among themselves dozens of questions. Who fired the opening shots at Gettysburg? Who recaptured DeGress’s battery at Atlanta? Where did the phrase “grab a root” originate? Which brigade was actually the first Iron Brigade? Where was the last battle of the war? Who raised the first flag in Atlanta? Who was the youngest veteran? The oldest? Which battery fired the shot that killed General Leonidas Polk? How was Stonewall Jackson shot? And by whom? Such topics might seem petty with the passage of time, but to proud Union veterans, these arguments were important, and the editors of the *Tribune* gladly allowed their paper to be used by the men in blue to recall the glory years of 1861-1865.



As time went on, Confederate soldiers also contributed to the paper, although not in great numbers. In addition to the serializations of such notables as J. P. Cannon of the 27th Alabama and George D. Mosgrove's recollections of service with John Hunt Morgan, Southern veterans occasionally wrote articles in reply to bombastic criticisms of their former enemies. Southern cavalymen, for example, tried to help set the record straight when they wrote about the decimation of the 6th United States Cavalry at Fairfield, Pennsylvania, while others wrote about the death of General John F. Reynolds at Gettysburg.

During the *National Tribune's* heyday (1880s-1900s), a number of regular columns appeared in the newspaper. These included:

The Question Squad  
Loyal Woman's Work  
For the Ladies  
Sunday Meditation  
Washington Gossip  
Our Correspondents  
Our Rural Topics  
Recent Literature  
News of the Week  
Humor  
Congress  
Personal  
Mustered Out  
Sons of Veterans  
Relief Corps News  
The Grand Army

Under McElroy's direction, the *Tribune* published a number of serializations over the years. Many of these runs were later extracted and published as separate paper-bound books. Such titles included Augustus Buell's *The Cannoneer* and a number of McElroy's own writings on the war as well as his fictional series about the adventures of Si Klegg, a bumbling Union private. The paper also published three volumes of *The National Tribune Scrapbook*, a series of accounts not published in the paper, and *The National Tribune Repository* (1907-1908), another series of original articles. In the late 1890s the company also issued a set of paper-bound books under the series name "Great War Books" at the cost of only a quarter each, including:

J. O. Kerbey, *The Boy Spy In Dixie*  
J. O. Kerbey, *Further Adventures of the Boy Spy*  
Lafayette C. Baker, *Secret Service*  
Augustus Buell, *The Cannoneer*

William Pittenger, *Capturing a Locomotive*  
Alf Wilson, *Adventures of Alf Wilson*  
Albert D. Richardson, *The Field, Dungeon, and Escape*  
Albert D. Richardson, *A Personal History of U. S. Grant*  
Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict* (2 volumes)  
J. T. Headley, *The Great Rebellion* (2 volumes)  
*National Tribune Soldier's Handbook*  
*Further Mishaps to Si Klegg and Shorty: The Second Year of Their Service*

These paperback books were published with a uniform brown cover and measured 8.5 x 5.5 inches. The paper was produced from cheap wood pulp, so it is rare to find one today in good condition. *The Tribune's* hardcover books used better paper and can be found in better condition, as can the *Repository* and *Scrapbook* series.

In the late 1890s, newspaper also published a series of books called "The National Tribune Library." In 1897, this series included the following volumes:

1. *Statistics of the War*
2. *Lincoln's Words*
3. John McElroy, *Miscellaneous Memoranda*
4. *Pension Statistics*
5. John McElroy, *History of Slavery in the United States*
6. Byron Andrews, *President Monroe and His Doctrine*
- 7-8. John McElroy, *Commanders of the United States Army*, 2 volumes
9. Byron Andrews, *The Story of Cuba*
10. John McElroy, *The Life of Major General George H. Thomas*
11. John McElroy, *The Life of Major William McKinley*
12. John McElroy, *The Life of Major General Philip H. Sheridan*
13. H. E. Weaver, *Chronological Record of Battles, etc.*
14. John McElroy, *The Life of Admiral David G. Farragut*
15. John McElroy, *Some of the War Fun*
16. John McElroy, *Fair Ohio* [songs and music]
17. John McElroy, *Glorious Pennsylvania* [songs and music]
18. John McElroy, *Some Poetry of the War*
19. John McElroy, *The Life of General U. S. Grant*
20. H. E. Weaver, *Memorial Day Poetry and Oratory*
21. John W. Fisher, *The Hawaiian Islands*

These "books" were more like long articles, and usually around 32 pages for the biographies. In its issue of July 1, 1897, McElroy recorded that the company had sold 100,000 copies during the prior year.

Over the course of time, newspaper underwent some modifications. In late 1906, most Civil War articles disappeared from the front page as the paper began publishing material from other veterans. By the time World War I began, Civil War material had been reduced to one page as few veterans were left to contribute to the paper. In 1911, McElroy wrote in an editorial entitled “Our New Dress” that the paper was changing a bit in order to entice enough new subscribers to reach one million subscriptions. New columns included Farm and Garden, News from Our Colonies in Lynn Haven, Woman and the Home, and Humor of the War. Fighting Them Over became Sketches and Echoes.

During this decade, the paper’s office moved to a slim four-story building at 44 G Street Northeast, only one block from Union Station, the Washington city post office, and the Government Printing Office. Originally built as the Terminal Hotel, the building was heavily remodeled and remained the office of the paper until the early 1980s. By that time, the building was badly in need of expensive repairs, so the paper sold it to the government and moved elsewhere.

In its edition of July 19, 1917, the paper’s title changed to *The National Tribune, incorporating the National Guardsman and the American Standard*. The change reflected the paper’s broadening scope to include the push for pension benefits for veterans of the Spanish-American War, the Peking Expedition, and the recent border troubles with Mexico. By including these veterans, McElroy ensured that the paper would continue to exist even as the number of Civil War veterans continued to decline with each passing month. After McElroy died, W. L. Mattocks took over as editor. Mattocks, born in 1875, was a Spanish-American War veteran and former editor of the American Standard. Former senator and Spanish-American War veteran Rice W. Means was president of the corporation from 1927-1937.

On January 7, 1926, the paper became the *National Tribune, Stars and Stripes*. *The Stars and Stripes* had been the official newspaper of the American Expeditionary Force during World War I and had been discontinued overseas in 1919. *The Stars and Stripes* had continued publication in Washington to help espouse the pension and relief causes of recent veterans. Both papers formed a united front in the continuing struggle to care for America’s veterans. The paper remained with this title until January 7, 1963, when the title became *The Stars and Stripes, National Tribune*. In 1999, the paper was sold to iServed.com, an internet multimedia military content and solutions provider based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Soon thereafter, in May 2000, iServed changed its name to Stars and Stripes Omnimedia and continued publishing a print version of the *Stars and Stripes* (the old subtitle *National Tribune* was dropped completely from the masthead), as well as an on-line version at [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com). The concern became financially insolvent and Stars and Stripes Omnimedia went out of business in 2002. The paper’s assets were acquired by *Stars and Stripes*, a military paper that began publication during World War II.

*National Tribune* highlights include:

1877: Begins publication as a monthly pension newspaper;

1881: August 20—becomes a weekly newspaper;

- 1883: February 22: expands to seven columns;  
    March 15: “Fighting Them Over” column begins
- 1884: February 7: lists 77,159 subscribers;  
    September 4: “Condensed Letters” column starts;
- 1885: April 30: Obituaries begins as a regular feature;  
    November 19: Si Klegg stories begin serialization;
- 1886: February 25: Colonel Milo B. Stevens’ Soldiers Bulletin merged with the *Tribune*
- 1887: January 27: “Picket Shots” replaces “Condensed Letters”;
- 1893: June 8; “Their Records” series begins;
- 1897: April 29: “Their Records” series ends, replaced for a few issues by “Making a Record” column;  
    July 8: The first photograph (“Sherman and His Generals”) appears in the paper;
- 1904: April 5: The “Fighting Them Over” column becomes “Recitals and Reminiscences”;
- 1911: April 20: last issue published with Civil War articles on the front page;
- 1931: January 15: “Veterans of the Civil War” page premiers;

## The Scope of this Guide

I first discovered the *National Tribune* at the United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, in the early 1980s. At the time I was a graduate student at The Pennsylvania State University searching for new sources of information for my dissertation. In the same institution was a typescript listing the highlights of the Civil War material in the *Tribune*, compiled by Helen H. Ellis of the Detroit Public Library in the late 1960s.

Dr. Richard J. Sommers, who was then the Archivist of the Institute, suggested the need for a better index to the *Tribune*. I embarked on this ambitious undertaking in late 1983. During the next several years I worked through all forty reels of microfilm, visited the former headquarters of the National Tribune Corporation on the outskirts of Washington, and compiled several notebooks of articles in chronological order, from 1877 to 1943.

Included in this guide are all the major Civil War articles as well as the vast majority of letters appearing in the “Fighting Them Over” column that featured rebuttals and arguments over previous articles. I have included all biographical material relating to Civil War veterans as well as notices of battlefield monument dedications.

The paper also published a “Condensed Letters” section that was later re-titled “Picket Shots.” This column printed highlights from letters that were not deemed important enough to print in their entirety. I have noted the major letters in this series but have not included them in the indices. From 1893 to 1897, the paper included a series called “Their Records,” which provided capsule unit histories to readers. I decided to omit this series because the summaries are very brief and much better unit summaries are readily available, including in publications such as Frederick Dyer’s *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*. I have also omitted the majority

of the ever-increasing obituary notices that appeared in most issues. (The current guide merely notes page and column numbers of obituary notices.) Vast amounts of fiction were published in the pages of the *Tribune*, especially the Si Klegg series. I omitted these as well. The copious amount of GAR material needs an indexer of its own and several years to complete such a guide.

Occasionally I noticed typographical errors in names and have corrected these when known. I consulted the Soldiers and Sailors system on the National Park Service website to identify the names of authors, especially very similar names or to add first names when only last names were available. I would appreciate hearing from researchers who can document any additional errors so they can be corrected in future editions.

There are two parts or volumes to this guide-index. The first two comprise the guide to the *National Tribune*, a chronological presentation of the Civil War contents of each issue from 1877 to 1903 in Volume 1, and from 1904 to 1943 in Volume 2. Each entry includes the page and column numbers, the author's name, his unit (when known), the title of the article, and a brief note on the article's subject if the title does not suggest it. Obituary sections include nominal listings. The longer columns with more names only have page and column noted. Thereafter are the listings for both the *National Tribune Repository* and the *National Tribune Scrapbook*.

Volume 3 consists of an Author Index, a Subject Index, a Unit Index (which consists of articles written by members of these units), and a Units as Sources Index (which includes articles about certain units not necessarily written by members of those units, as well as biographies of members of the unit). All four are alphabetical and are referenced by issue date (1877 to 1943). The major subject headings are broken down into subheadings in order to allow readers seeking finite information on a subject to locate the desired information as quickly as possible. Many of the larger battles and campaigns have the entries broken down into the Union corps and divisions that participated. I felt this approach would be easier than trying to divide the entries by topic. Cross references are used when needed.

Of course, it is also highly entertaining to simply read through the contents of issue after issue just to see what the veterans were writing about and when they were doing so.

*The National Tribune* is a goldmine of information for anyone studying and/writing about the Civil War. I hope users find it useful.

## Where to Find *The National Tribune*

*The National Tribune* can be found in a variety of libraries across the United States. A few institutions have complete files of the paper, but most repositories seem to have incomplete runs.

The Chronicling America section of the Library of Congress's website (<http://chronicling.america.loc.gov>) offers a fairly complete list of repositories. The name changes of the paper each have one entry in the Chronicling America section, so be sure to check each one to follow the newspaper's long history. The Library of Congress microfilm set of 40 reels (1877-1940) was copied for Antietam and Gettysburg, among other places. A gap from October 6, 1904 through September 28, 1905, exists in the Library of Congress' own holdings. The Ohio Historical Society has a microfilm copy covering this gap.

The following list includes only the major libraries that have extended runs of *The National Tribune*:

Antietam National Battlefield Park, Sharpsburg, MD. 1877-1917.

Center for Research Libraries, Chicago, IL. 1932-1938, 1942-1946.

Detroit Public Library, Detroit, MI. 1896-1940.

Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, PA. 1877-1940.

Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 1877-1940.

Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA. 1882-1887, 1889-1895, 1915.

New York Public Library, New York, NY. 1884-1894.

Stars and Stripes Museum/Library, Bloomfield, MO. 1903-1905, 1908, 1910-1995, 1997-1999.

United States Army Heritage & Education Center, Carlisle, PA. 1877-1940.

University of Texas, Austin, TX. 1929-1946.

University of Toledo, Toledo, OH. 1877-1921.

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY. 1889-1894, 1897, 1903-1917 (lots of missing issues).

Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH. 1883-1916.

Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI. 1882-1917.

# Abbreviations

AADC: Acting Aide de Camp  
AAG: Assistant Adjutant General  
AAQM: Acting Assistant Quartermaster General  
ADC: Aide de Camp  
AIG: Assistant Inspector General  
Art: Artillery  
Bg: Brigade  
Biog: Biography  
Btn: Battalion  
Bty: Battery  
Btys: Batteries  
CSA: Confederate States of America  
Cav: Cavalry  
Cmpn: Campaign  
Co: Company  
Dept: Department  
Div: Division  
ES: Eastern Shore  
Eng: Engineer  
Enr Mil: Enrolled Militia  
Gen: General  
HQ: Headquarters



Hvy: Heavy  
Inf: Infantry  
Jct: Junction  
LtCol: Lieutenant Colonel  
Mtd: Mounted  
Obit: Obituary  
Off: Officer  
Ord: Ordnance  
PA Res: Pennsylvania Reserves  
PHB: Potomac Home Brigade  
POW: Prisoner of War  
Prov: Provisional  
RR: Railroad  
Res: Reserve  
SS: Sharpshooters  
SM: State Militia  
US: United States  
USC: United States Colored  
USCT: United States Colored Troops  
USMC: United States Marine Corps  
USN: United States Navy  
USS: United States Ship  
VRC: Veteran Reserve Corps  
Vet: Veteran  
( ): Denotes unit of author  
[ ]: Clarifies or identifies subject of article

