

Amy Ferris

History 201

Assignment #2

Yesterday's News from The New York Times

The world has changed in many ways in the last two centuries, and those lucky enough to peer into the documented past are sure to experience surprise. One great method of doing so is to take a look at old newspapers. I was fortunate enough to be able to go all the way back to The New York Times's 1877, 1933, and 2001 newspapers. All of these years' papers had very many articles and pages, so it was only natural (and selfishly interesting) to examine each paper by choosing to look at my own birth days.

Upon reading the New York Times from March 10th, 1877, I was met with such a feeling of surprise. I was sure that there would be some sort of old fashioned Shakespearean-like cadence to these antiquated articles- but to my relief, there was not. Onward now to the first page and what I discovered.

On the first page, there stood a captivating article titled, "News from Australia- Serious accusation against a public official-escape of Fiji cannibals from imprisonment." (Times 10 March, 1877, 1) What a title! I read on to see what was going on in the other side of the world in 1877. According to the article, some Australian natives called the Kaiculu people were imprisoned and named as cannibals. They escaped the prison and ran away into the mountains, the article stated. (Times 10 March, 1877, 1). I couldn't help but think that back in the 1870's, there must have been quite a lot of misunderstandings between colonizers/westerners in Australia and the native people. Were these natives even cannibals? Even if they were, did they do

anything to the westerners to warrant being put in prison, or were they merely in the way? Also, I would gamble that the news from Australia to New York must have at least been altered a touch, much like that Telephone Game we've all played in grade school. There's even a feeling of uncertainty in the article itself, saying that "...two or three were retaken as prisoner." (Times 10 March. 1877, 1) It must have taken that news an eternity to reach New York as well, as the 1870's were not host to courier mail or of course, the internet.

This particular 1877 New York Times might have been my favorite issue out of all that were researched. Even though I do not condone taking advantage of little old ladies and do not find it amusing to see them robbed, there was something quite Vaudeville about the article titled, "An Old Swindle Revived." This story involved a woman whose husband had passed, Mrs. Luchen. Two men (who apparently knew exactly who she was) came to her house claiming that they were there for her welfare and proceeded to gain her trust. In the middle of their conversation, another man showed up to the house asking for someone who did not live there. He said he was promised money for his silks that he just brought back from overseas, and needed help. So one of the two first men gave him \$50 in exchange for his watch. This action prompted Mrs. Luchen to give up \$200 to the silk man also in exchange for two watches. (Times 1877, 2). The article reads, "The men then left, and soon after their departure Mrs. Luchen discovered that the watches were worth at the highest estimate about \$10." (Times 10 March. 1877, 2)

Moving on now to the year 1933, I was immediately confronted by the Nazis. This time remains a poignant but important era for many. In the article on page one of 1933's New York Times, "3 More Americans Attacked In Berlin As Raiding Goes On". (Birchall 10 March. 1933, 1) catches the attention of any passerby. The issues being mentioned were personal, as one part

states that, “he (a Nazi tenant in an American Jew’s apartment building) no longer intended to pay rent to the “American Jew” after Adolf Hitler took office.” (Birchall 10 March. 1933, 1) I can’t imagine being an American Jew *in Germany* during *World War II*, with *Nazi tenants*, who refuse to pay, *and then* having men in Nazi uniforms barge into my room *while I slept*, telling me that if I don’t refrain from evicting the Nazi who won’t pay, I’ll be killed. Now *that* is a real problem. For one reason or the other, reading it in the newspaper as it was a current event, brings a fresh fear to the old stories from this time.

In a much lighter note though, I enjoyed the ads from 1933 immensely. In particular, on page 5 is an advert for Gimbels¹ hats with drawings of classy women wearing their merchandise. These sketches resemble current fashion design model sketches as well. The women in the picture have their gloves and tasteful makeup on, reminding me of all the perfect Mothers from the shows on “Nick At Night”. I get a feeling of sentimentality seeing these ads, even though I was but just a twinkle then.

I can’t resist, I must talk more about advertisements. Now I’m referring to the New York Times 2001 paper from March 10th. On page 14 is a Gateway computer advert², I stopped immediately and felt a wave of nostalgia! These old PC’s were on their way to the top, and I had just bought one of my own. Boasting their (now infantile) RAM capabilities and the fossilized slogan, “Get more than just a PC”, (Times, 10 March. 2001, 14) I am taken back to waiting in line to get one with my Mom. Not everyone had a computer at home back then, and we waited in line at Best Buy for a special deal. It took us six hours, and we got one of the very last ones.

¹ Gimbels, “Celtegal” (advertisement), The New York Times, March 10, 1933, 5.

² Gateway, “Get more than just a PC.” (advertisement), The New York Times, March 10, 2001, 14.

Anyway, while this advert was running in the papers, the dawning of the internet age was afoot.

What a time! Time moves quickly doesn't it?

Bibliography

- “News from Australia.” *New York Times*. March 10, 1877, 1.
- “An Old Swindle Revived.” *New York Times*. March 10, 1877, 2.
- “3 More Americans Attacked in Berlin as Raiding Goes on.” *New York Times*. March 10, 1933, 1.