

Spirit of the Age ^[1]

Spirit of the Age

by David McGee, 2006

The *Spirit of the Age*^[2] was a temperance newspaper established in 1849 in [Raleigh](#) ^[3] by [Alexander M. Gorman](#) ^[4], who earlier had served as the foreman of the *Raleigh Register's* office. It began as the organ for the North Carolina chapter of the [Sons of Temperance](#) ^[5]. Initially a small paper, it gradually enlarged and eventually became one of the most popular four-page newspapers in North Carolina. The addition of a power press in the early 1850s permitted Gorman to expand the paper's physical layout. By 1860 the *Spirit of the Age* boasted the largest circulation of any newspaper in the state.

The evils of [using alcohol](#) ^[7] dominated its pages. Stories often focused on how it harmed families, describing in heartbreaking detail the tribulations of abused and shamed wives, children who lacked food and clothing, and husbands who had lost all sense of pride. The *Spirit of the Age* also carried [literary](#) ^[8] features (mostly dealing with family-oriented themes) from some of the better-known North Carolina [writers](#) ^[9] of the time.

Gorman's paper was a financial success until the beginning of the [Civil War](#) ^[10], when the temperance issue took a backseat to secession and military matters. The result was a rapid loss of patronage. During the conflict Gorman sold the paper's office and presses to John G. Williams and became the associate editor of another Raleigh journal. Williams continued to print the *Spirit of the Age* until almost the end of the war, when he finally closed shop. In 1871 the Raleigh [printing](#) ^[11] company Edwards and Broughton attempted to resurrect the newspaper but gave it up after a couple of years.

References:

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Additional Resources:

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Subjects:

[Antebellum \(1820-1861\)](#) ^[16]

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[Newspapers and magazines](#) ^[19]

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1 January 2006 | McGee, David

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