

Wilmington Star ^[1]

Wilmington Star

by Wiley J. Williams, 2006

The *Wilmington Star*, North Carolina's oldest continuously published daily [newspaper](#) ^[2], was founded by Maj. [William Henry Bernard](#) ^[3], a Confederate veteran, on 23 Sept. 1867 as the *Wilmington Evening Star* (soon renamed the *Wilmington Morning Star*). Under Bernard, the paper was unabashedly [Democratic](#) ^[4], voicing support for Democrats at all levels of government and bitter criticism of [Republicans](#) ^[5]. Moreover, it was an ardent advocacy of white supremacy—a view never more strongly demonstrated than in its coverage of the [Wilmington Coup of 1898](#) ^[6]. The newspaper remained Democratic until [World War II](#) ^[7], when it became politically independent.

In 1909 failing health forced Bernard's retirement, and he sold the paper to the Wilmington Star Company. In 1927 the R. W. Page Corporation of Columbus, Ga., bought the *Star* and in the latter part of 1929 acquired the *Wilmington News-Dispatch*, an afternoon daily. A combined Sunday edition of the *Star* and the *News-Dispatch* began to appear on 29 Sept. 1929 as the *Sunday Star-News*. In 1940 R. W. Page purchased the *Star*, the *News*, and the *Sunday Star-News* from his own parent company, naming the new corporation Star-News Newspapers. In addition to his journalistic expertise, Page was widely recognized as a leader in the quest for better ports, serving as the first chairman of the State Ports Authority. He continued as president and publisher of the *Star* until his death in February 1955, when his son, Rye B. Page, succeeded him. Family ownership of Star-News Newspapers ended when the New York Times Company bought the business in 1975.

As a morning paper in what was for many years North Carolina's largest city and only ocean port, the *Star* attracted ambitious and talented journalists to [Wilmington](#) ^[8] from across the state. James A. Parham of [Robeson County](#) ^[9] left the *Star* in 1917 to become managing editor of the *Charlotte Observer* ^[10], helping to build that paper into the state's largest daily. In 1929 Alfred G. Dickson went to Wilmington as a reporter, beginning a 45-year career spent almost entirely with the *Star-News* papers. He was named managing editor in 1936, editor in 1947, executive editor in 1955, and assistant to the publisher in 1970, two years before his retirement. In 1966 he won a 1965 Sigma Delta Chi (national journalism fraternity) Distinguished Service Award for editorials condemning links between the [Ku Klux Klan](#) ^[11] and law enforcement officers.

Jay Jenkins of Shelby came home from World War II and joined the staff of the *Star*, where he built credentials that led him to positions at the *Raleigh News and Observer* ^[12] and later the *Charlotte Observer*. For many years he was considered the "dean" of the state's capital news corps. David Brinkley, a native Wilmingtonian and winner of many awards for excellence in TV reporting and commentary, got his first job (1938-40) in journalism as a *Star-News* reporter. He went on to gain national recognition for his work on the *Huntley-Brinkley Report* ^[13] on NBC television, for coverage of political conventions beginning in 1956, and for ABC's *This Week with David Brinkley* ^[14] after 1981.

Additional Resources:

StarNewsOnline.com official website: <http://www.starnewsonline.com/> ^[15]

"Wilmington Daily Star." North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program. <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=D-75> ^[16] (accessed September 10, 2012).

Svanum, Ken. "New look to page; heritage remains." *Star-News*. April 24, 2003. <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=N7tOAAAAIBAJ&sjid=kx8EAAAAIBAJ&pg=4791%2C7000> ^[17] (accessed September 10, 2012).

[Archive of previous issues of Star-News](#) ^[18] on Google News.

"Aged Wilmington Star." *The E.S.C. Quarterly* 9. No. 1-2. Winter-Spring 1951. p.17-18. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/e.s.c.-quarterly-1951-winter-spring-v.9-no.1-2/4239121> ^[19] (accessed September 10, 2012).

"Wilmington - *Star-News*." *The E.S.C. Quarterly* 9. No. 1-2. Winter-Spring 1951. p.28. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/e.s.c.-quarterly-1951-winter-spring-v.9-no.1-2/4239121> ^[19] (accessed September 10, 2012).

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