



o celebrate 225 years of Lancaster newspapers, we present this weekly series of 52 front pages from throughout our history. Many feature  $\,$ events that would shape the course of world history. Some feature events of great local importance. Still others simply provide windows into the long-ago lives of Lancaster County residents. Make sure to check in every week, and enjoy this trip through time with LNP.



## The Lancaster Intelligencer.

VOLUME 84

OME OF THE INFAMOUS DEEDS OF GRANT'S ADMINISTRATION,

A DARK RECORD.

**COVER 19 OF 52** 

## POETRY AND PROSE



Throughout the 19th century, newspaper front pages on both a national and local level would often supplement "hard news" with short stories, poems and

other pieces of fiction to delight the masses. Sometimes referred to as "squibs" or "fugitive verses," these paragraphs were often moral fables without an author's byline attached. In some cases, these anonymous pieces would be printed in dozens and sometimes hundreds of newspapers, almost as a sort of early wire service for creative writing. Although the modern usage of the word "fugitive" usually refers to criminal acts, the word can also be used to designate something as fleeting or ephemeral, which largely fits the bill for these short stories. The concept of "virality" was still well over a century away, but that didn't stop these stories from making the rounds from state to state and newspaper to newspaper. In the Jan. 5, 1881, edition of the Lancaster

Intelligencer, editors seemed to still be experiencing a post-Christmas Iull in stories, which should explain the proliferation of Yuletide tales nearly a week and a half after Dec. 25. In the "Miscellaneous" section, which occupies nearly half of the left side of the page, there are plenty of poems, songs and fables. The lyrical work, which includes "In a Christmas Letter" and "A Christmas Lyric," both speak of the joy of the holiday in a way that would appear familiar to the modern reader's eye. Most notably, the second column of the paper features an abridged chapter from the book "Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe." Mary Ann Evans released the book two decades prior to this front page under the pen name George Eliot. As with many female authors of the time, Evans used a male pen name to increase her chances of publication. Despite revealing her true identity in the 1870s, the article in the Intelligencer is still given the "George Eliot" byline.

Compare the charming "squibs" written by authors both anonymous and otherwise to the few reported stories of the day, and it becomes apparent why 19th century newspapermen sought to liven their pages. "Bold Young Hunters," a story initially printed in the mid-1800s newspaper the Stanton Vindicator, details two preteen hunters who somehow walked away with a 225-pound deer carcass. In the bottom left corner, there's a short paragraph regarding the grim death of Philadelphia resident William C. Simmons, who fell out of a second-story window in a spice factory.

This counter-balance of sad and cheerful, bizarre and factual would play out over the next several decades, with newspapers relegating less and less space to fiction-writing. Recently, LNP's Sunday Magazine featured a dedicated space for haiku submissions from Lancaster County residents.









**READ MORE: BIT.LY/LANCLIFE225**