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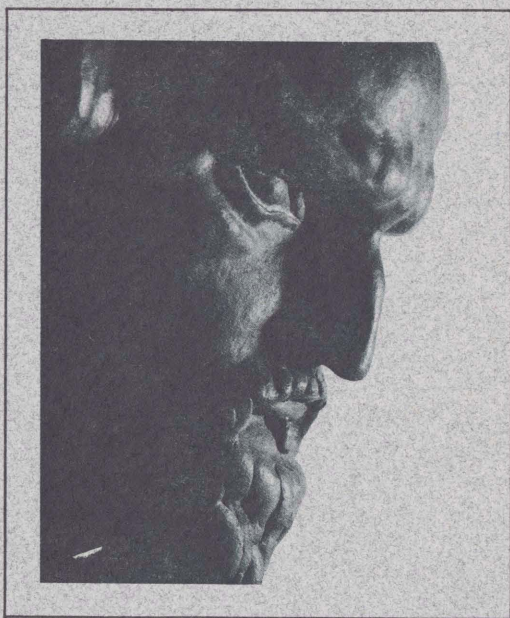
Recommended Citation

Sorrentino, Paul. "A Reminiscence of Stephen Crane." *The Courier* 19.2 (1984): 111-114.

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VOLUME XIX, NUMBER 2, FALL 1984

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
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COURIER

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A Reminiscence of Stephen Crane

BY PAUL SORRENTINO

John S. Mayfield (1904-1983), a curator of rare books and manuscripts at Syracuse University from 1961 to 1971, assembled a small, but noteworthy, collection of material by and about Stephen Crane (1871-1900), one of the University's most famous students. Mayfield himself published several articles on Crane, including three in the *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier*,¹ which he edited from 1962 to 1970. Judging from Mayfield's own notes, one can conclude that he intended to publish, perhaps in the *Courier*, the following brief reminiscence of Crane.

The reminiscence was written by Samuel Riggs on the recto of the frontispiece in a copy of *The Red Badge of Courage* (New York: Appleton, 1900). Riggs served in Cuba during the Spanish-American War and later became a prominent Rockville, Maryland, lawyer.² The note recounts Riggs's meeting Crane in late July 1898 at Chamberlain's Hotel in Old Point Comfort, Virginia:

During the Summer of 1898 my Regt 1st Md. Infy was stationed at Fort Monroe Va. Among the sick and wounded, brought from Santiago, Cuba, came Stephen Crane, the author of this book. I met him one afternoon at the 'Chamberlain' and carried him to the 'Casemate Club' and there gave him the first Mint Julep he ever had in his life. We became good friends and I saw him often during his stay at Old Point Comfort (Fort Monroe). He had gone to Cuba as a correspondent of the New York World but lost his job owing to the account he sent in of the misconduct of the 71st New York while under fire at Santiago.

Sam'l Riggs of R[ockville]
Capt 1st Md. Infy

1. John S. Mayfield, "Stephen Crane's Bugs", *Courier*, no. 19 (September 1963): 22-31; "To Stephencraneites", *Courier*, no. 25 (Autumn 1965): 26; "S.C. at S.U.", *Courier*, no. 29 (Spring 1968): 8.

2. News article, *Montgomery County Sentinel* (Rockville, Maryland), 23 December 1943.

During the summer of 1898 my
Regt - 1st - Me. Infy - was stationed at
Fort Monro Va. Among the sick
and wounded, brought from Santiago,
Cuba, came Stephen Crane, the author
of this book, I sent him over often
at the "Chamblain" & carried him
to the "Carnegie Club" & there
you knew the first - time - July
he was hurt in his life. We
became good friends and I
saw him often during his stay
at Old Point Comfort (Fort Monro).
He had gone to Cuba as a corres-
pondent of the New York World
but lost his job owing to the
account he sent in of the mis-
conduct of the 71st New York
which reached him at Santiago.
Samuel Riggs of
Capt - 1st - Me. Infy

Samuel Riggs's notation in his copy of *The Red Badge of Courage*.

Riggs's reference to Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* contains a once popularly held misconception: although Crane did lose his job with the newspaper, he did not write a story that got him fired. In the 16 July 1898 issue of that paper, p. 1, an unsigned dispatch accused the officers of the New York 71st Regiment of cowardice during battle.

William Randolph Hearst's rival *New York Journal* promptly condemned the *World* for slander and lack of patriotism. Pulitzer tried to offset bad publicity by starting a fund for a memorial to the 71st, but he failed to raise much money. In the midst of the circulation war between Hearst and Pulitzer, Don Carlos Seitz, business manager of the *World*, arranged to have Crane fired. Although Sylvester Scovel, head of the *World* staff in Cuba, most likely wrote the dispatch,³ Seitz seemed bent on using the occasion to denigrate Crane's integrity as a reporter. Instead of defending himself, "Crane very likely shrugged his shoulders at the accusation so as to shield his friend Scovel from blame".⁴ Later, Seitz attacked Crane in print for ignoring his job as a correspondent in Cuba and accused him of writing the dispatch.⁵ Crane, however, could not have written it, for the dispatch was cabled from Port Antonio, Jamaica, on 15 July, two days after Crane had arrived at Old Point Comfort.

Instead of shirking his duty, as Seitz had charged, Crane submitted a number of memorable dispatches during his service in Cuba. His contemporaries recognized his valor and reportorial skills. Marine Corps Captain G. F. Elliott wrote the Secretary of the Navy that he had "requested [Crane] to act as an aid if one should be needed. He accepted the duty and was of material aid during the action, carrying messages to fire volleys, etc., to the different company commanders."⁶ Major Charles McCawley wrote Crane personally: "I, in company with all my brother officers, have always looked back with pleasure and pride upon your service with us in Cuba, for you were the only outsider who saw it all, and we regard you as an honorary member of the [Marine] Corps and hope you will always have the same affection for us as we have for you."⁷ Fellow journalist Richard Harding Davis declared that "the best correspondent is probably the man who by his energy and resource sees more of the war, both afloat and ashore,

3. Ames W. Williams, "Stephen Crane: War Correspondent", *New Colophon*, 1 (April 1948): 113-23.

4. R. W. Stallman, *Stephen Crane: A Biography*, rev. ed. (New York: Braziller, 1973), 406.

5. Don Seitz, *Joseph Pulitzer: His Life and Letters* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1924), 240-42. See also: Don Seitz, "Stephen Crane: War Correspondent", *Bookman* 76 (February 1933): 137-40.

6. U.S. Marine Corps, *Report of the Commandant of the United States Marine Corps*. House Document 3, 55th Cong., 3d Sess., 1898, p. 845.

7. Stallman, *Stephen Crane*, 372.

than do his rivals, and who is able to make the public see what he saw. If that is a good definition, Stephen Crane would seem to have distinctly won the first place among correspondents in the late disturbance. . . . Mr. Crane easily led all the rest [in] his power to make the public see what he [saw].”⁸ Seitz probably disliked Crane because of an incident involving Crane’s friend and fellow correspondent, Edward Marshall. When Marshall was seriously wounded on 24 June while covering a battle, Crane selflessly took down and cabled his friend’s dispatch to Marshall’s editor at the rival *Journal*. Following Crane’s dismissal from the *World*, the *Journal* hired him to report the same war, and he sailed at the end of July for the Puerto Rican campaign.

8. Richard Harding Davis, “Our War Correspondents in Cuba and Puerto Rico”, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, 98 (May 1899): 941.