

Moses Yale Beach: A Newly Restored Portrait



In April 2009, a mid-nineteenth-century oil portrait of Moses Yale Beach, acquired from the Beach family last year, returned to AP after weeks of cleaning and conservation. The results are remarkable: a man in the pink of health, probably at the peak of his career, radiating satisfaction and success, if not fame.

Moses Yale Beach was born on January 15, 1800 in Wallingford, Connecticut to a distinguished farming family. He worked as a cabinetmaker in Hartford and Northampton, Massachusetts and invented a rag-cutting machine before joining his brother-in-law, Benjamin Day, as manager of the mechanical department of the *New York Sun* in 1834. Four years later, he bought Day out and embarked on an energetic program to raise the paper's profits and circulation.

In 1846, during the Mexican War, Beach recognized that newspapers were duplicating each other's newsgathering efforts and thus wasting resources. He offered an equal share in a special pony express that guaranteed a 24-hour beat on war news, and four New York dailies accepted his offer. Dispatches originated in Vera Cruz, crossed the Gulf of Mexico to Mobile, Alabama and traveled by Beach's express to Montgomery. From there, they went by mail coach to Richmond where they were put on the telegraph wire to New York and distributed to all five papers. Thus was born the Associated Press.

In 1848, Beach turned over the *Sun* to two of his sons, Alfred Ely Beach and Moses Sperry Beach, and retired to Wallingford where he died on July 19, 1868.

The original Telegraph News Association in which was afterward merged the Harbor News Association was based upon ~~and~~ a contract for a daily express to be run between ~~Mont~~ Mobile and Montgomery Ala. by — Riddle ~~then~~ during the existence of the Mexican War in 1846-7 the payment for which was conditioned upon a daily gain of 24 hours upon the regular mail.

This contract was made by Mr Beach in behalf of Mr Beach for the benefit of the Sun, but on its completion Mr Beach offered an equal interest to each of the other papers. first (and this offer was accepted without a word of hesitation by Mr Hallock for the Journal of Commerce.

Mr H. J. Raymond then of the Courier accepted it next, on behalf of that paper.

Mr Hudson representing Mr Bennett asked time to present the matter to his principal after which he accepted it. Mr Brooks followed Raymond with his acceptance.

Moses Sperry Beach, son of Moses Yale Beach, wrote this memorandum on the occasion of the death of *New York Herald* publisher James Gordon Bennett, who had always claimed to have founded the AP. The verso of this document carries the notation "Death of Bennett/ June 172." Beach sets the record straight with his recollection.

Moses Sperry Beach
Autograph memorandum
June 1872
Moses Sperry Beach Papers
AP Corporate Archives

Cover Image:

Moses Yale Beach, 1800-68
Unknown Artist, American School, ca. 1846
Oil on canvas; 30 x 25 in.
Acquisition, 2008
The AP Corporate Archives

AP Corporate Archives
June 12, 2009