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Abstract

Charles A. Dana, the Civil War Era, and American Republicanism

by

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When Charles A. Dana bought the *New York Sun* in 1868, he used it to support the presidential candidacy of Ulysses S. Grant and the Republican party ticket to unify the post-Civil War nation. After a victory for the Civil War general and Republican party, though, the first fifteen months of the new administration turned the editor against the President and his party. Throughout his life up until this point, Dana had developed a clear republican understanding of the nature of the United States. At Harvard College, Brook Farm, the *Tribune*, and the Union War Department during the Civil War, Dana developed a clear picture that American values centered principally around egalitarianism, communitarianism and civic virtue. In the months after Grant's inauguration, however, Dana had repudiated the President and become one of his harshest critics – precisely because he almost immediately violated traditional conceptions of American republicanism. This reversal, which made Dana an infamous at the time, illuminates both Dana's consistent commitment to republican politics even as it suggests his sense of Grant's betrayal of those principles. Two issues explain the basis of Dana's republican-based criticism: amorality within the administration and the administration's foreign policy. Dana's *Sun* criticized Grant and his allies for allowing lobbying and corruption to reach the highest levels of government, of using the military for political ends, and of growing the size and power of government beyond traditional American practice. Against this backdrop, Dana decried the Grant administration's foreign policy saturated with many of these same issues, especially regarding the Cuban Revolution, Franco-Prussian War, Paris Commune, and other conflicts. This dissertation explores how Dana used the White House's domestic and foreign policy to justify further criticism of the President and his party between March 1869 and the election of 1872.

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