

= George Wilkes =

George Wilkes (1817 ? September 23 , 1885) was an American journalist and newspaper editor . A native of New York , Wilkes became a journalist and after losing a libel case was imprisoned in New York City 's jail ; his imprisonment led him to write a pamphlet on the jail 's conditions in 1844 . The next year , Wilkes and a friend started publishing National Police Gazette , a newspaper dealing with crime reporting and other sensationalistic topics . In 1856 Wilkes bought a sporting newspaper called The Spirit of the Times , which he had previously worked for . After selling the Gazette , Wilkes continued to publish and edit the Spirit until his death in 1885 . Wilkes also wrote a couple of books on non @-@ sporting topics as well as introducing parimutuel betting into the United States .

= = Early life = =

Wilkes was born in 1817 in the state of New York in the United States . It is not sure who his parents were , although they may have been George Wilkes , a cabinet maker , and Helen . Little is known of his upbringing before he became a law clerk for Enoch E. Camp . But Wilkes left the legal profession for journalism , first working for a series of short @-@ lived newspapers in New York City , the Flash , the Whip , and the Subterranean . He lost a libel case and was sentenced to a term in the city jail , The Tombs . From his experiences there , Wilkes wrote a pamphlet entitled The Mysteries of the Tombs : A Journal of Thirty Days Imprisonment in the N. Y. City Prison , which came out in 1844 .

= = Early writings = =

In 1845 Wilkes joined forces with Camp and began the National Police Gazette . The Gazette quickly became popular and within a few weeks of its founding had a circulation of 15 @, @ 000 . Collier 's Magazine once called the Gazette a most interesting record of " horrid murders , outrageous robberies , bold forgeries , astounding burglaries , hideous rapes , vulgar seductions , and recent exploits of pickpockets and hotel thieves . " Because of Wilkes ' and Camp 's efforts to combat crime in New York through the Gazette , the offices of the newspaper were the subject of attacks by mobs stirred up by criminals .

Also in 1845 , Wilkes wrote a History of Oregon , Geographical and Political , which was inaccurate . Notwithstanding this , an extract from the work was published as Project for a National Railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean , also in 1845 . It was popular , and was in its fourth edition by 1847 . Around 1849 Wilkes went to California , either with or shortly after his friend David Colbreth Broderick . Wilkes was a political advisor of Broderick 's , but they quarreled over water issues in 1853 and Wilkes left California . Wilkes then traveled to Europe , turning the experience into another book , this one entitled Europe in a Hurry . Returning to California after Europe , he reunited with Broderick in late 1853 but another quarrel in 1854 over Wilkes ' appointment to a judicial post led to Wilkes ' leaving California permanently . The two men reconciled in 1859 during a visit by Broderick to New York shortly before Broderick 's death . Wilkes was the recipient of Broderick 's estate , and Wilkes wrote a long eulogy to his friend that appeared in the Spirit in October 1859 .

In 1866 , Wilkes and Camp sold the Gazette to George W. Matsell , who had previously been Chief of Police for New York City .

= = Spirit of the Times = =

When Wilkes returned from California to New York City , he began to work for William T. Porter at Porter 's newspaper The Spirit of the Times . Porter sold the paper in 1856 to Wilkes , who retained Porter on the newspaper 's staff until Porter 's death in 1858 . Wilkes , however , renamed the paper to Porter 's Spirit of the Times , a title it retained until 1859 . In September 1859 , Abraham C. Dayton , who had previously worked for the Spirit , left the paper and because he had purchased a share of the paper at one point from Porter , began publishing a paper he called Porter 's Spirit of

the Times . Dayton got a court order preventing Wilkes from using Porter 's name , so Wilkes changed the name of his paper to Wilkes ' Spirit of the Times , while Dayton continued to publish Porter 's Spirit of the Times . Dayton was only able to publish until August 1861 , however , as Wilkes drove the other paper out of business . Wilkes owned the surviving paper until his death in 1885 .

Under Wilkes ' ownership , the Spirit , which previously had covered mainly sporting events , expanded its coverage to include political matters . When the American Civil War began in 1861 , Wilkes covered the battles also . He was present at the First Battle of Bull Run and wrote an account of it . He continued to serve as a correspondent throughout the war and contracted the kidney disease which he later died from during his war journalism . Wilkes also used literary feuds with other newspapers , both in and out of the sporting press , to help his subscription rates . After the Civil War , Wilkes ' Spirit was one of the three leading newspapers in New York City . Two , including the Spirit , of the three were mainly devoted to horse racing ? the other being The Turf , Field and Farm by Sanders D. Bruce .

= = Later life = =

Wilkes was active in Republican Party political affairs and ran for the United States Congress against James Brooks , losing the race in 1870 , with Brooks receiving 12 @, @ 845 votes and Wilkes 7149 votes . Wilkes , along with John Chamberlain and Marcus Cicero Stanley , introduced parimutuel betting in the United States . Wilkes also was active in promoting boxing , acting as the promoter for some prizefights . Wilkes also became involved in an effort to colonize Baja California , becoming trustee of a colonizing company in 1867 . In 1877 he published his last work , Shakespeare from an American Point of View , which reflected his lifelong interest in William Shakespeare . This work was revised twice , with the third edition appearing in 1882 .

Married twice , Wilkes had two adopted children , George and Alicia . He also had a sister , Catherine , and a brother , Henry . He died on September 23 , 1885 in New York City , and was buried on September 26 , 1885 . It is claimed that Tsar Alexander II of Russia in 1870 inducted him into the Order of St Stanislas for Wilkes ' promotion of a railroad route from Russia through India to China . The writer of his Dictionary of American Biography entry described him as a " master of a vigorous style that exactly suited his hard truculent disposition " .