

= William T. Porter =

William Trotter Porter ( December 24 , 1809 ? July 19 , 1858 ) was an American journalist and newspaper editor who founded an early American newspaper devoted to sports . After working at a number of small newspapers , Porter moved to New York City in the 1830s . After employment at a newspaper in the city , he founded the Spirit of the Times , a newspaper modeled on a London paper called Bell 's Life in London . The Spirit , which went through a number of names and incarnations over the years , was devoted to sports and other recreational pursuits . One of Porter 's main interests involved horse racing , and he was involved in attempts to create the first stud book in the United States , which did not bear fruit . He was also instrumental in the development of American literature , as the Spirit published a number of short stories by American tall tale writers , and Porter edited two collections of short stories by American writers . After publishing the Spirit through the 1830s , he sold it to another printer but continued as the editor into the 1850s . He left the original Spirit in 1855 and in 1856 was hired as editor for another sporting newspaper , Porter 's Spirit of the Times , published by George Wilkes . Porter died in 1858 .

= = Early life = =

Porter was born on December 24 , 1809 , the son of Benjamin Porter and Martha Olcott in Newbury , Vermont . He was one of five boys born to his parents . His father was a lawyer , but died suddenly in 1818 , leaving the family in difficult financial circumstances . He attended a charity school in Hanover , New Hampshire after the family moved there , but left school to work in a print shop . He also attended Dartmouth College . His mother died in 1825 , which meant the family was broken up and Porter worked at a number of small newspapers before arriving in New York City in the early 1830s . While in New York , Porter gained the nickname of " York 's Tall Son " .

= = Editorial work = =

Porter edited the Constellation , a newspaper in New York City that published humorous stories . Porter became interested in sports , and concentrated on the emerging sports journalism field . In December 1831 , Porter published the first issue of a new newspaper devoted to covering sports and other recreational activities , which he called The Spirit of the Times . Porter imitated Bell 's Life in London , a contemporary English publication covering the same subjects . The first attempt at Spirit of the Times failed quickly , and Porter sold the magazine to C. J. B. Fisher , who merged it into Fisher 's publication of the Traveller , and the Spirit was combined with the Traveller as the Traveller and Spirit of the Times . During the brief period that Porter operated the Spirit , he employed Horace Greeley as a typesetter . When Porter sold the Spirit , he then went to work at the New @-@ Yorker , which was edited at the time by Horace Greeley . In January 1835 Porter purchased the Traveller and Spirit of the Times and renamed the newspaper back to Spirit of the Times , returning to editing it . This version of the Spirit managed to survive , although with some initial financial difficulties . Porter focused on selling his paper in the south and west of the United States , and emphasized subjects of use to his readers , such as cattle breeding , farm methods , books of interest , as well as sports . The newspaper was published weekly .

Porter was interested in reforming the sport of horse racing , and expended much effort in the newspaper trying to bring together horsemen in the various parts of the country . Although the effort did not bear fruit , the Spirit became a repository for information of interest to those involved in horse racing , printing statistics and results of races . Porter was also involved in attempts to publish an American stud book for race horses in the United States , similar to the General Stud Book that was published in England documenting the pedigrees of Thoroughbred horses . In February 1837 , Porter announced in the Spirit the projected coverage of the project , which was to be edited by Wiley Jones Stratton , who was secretary to the National Jockey Club in Washington , D. C. But this project never materialized , and Porter turned to Patrick Nesbitt Edgar in January 1838 to take over the project . But Edgar did not finish the work , and by 1842 , the project was abandoned .

Porter also served as an arbiter of disputes about sports rules and sports betting . Porter also encouraged new authors from the south and the west to write in his newspaper and helped them get books published . He also edited two collections of short stories from the frontier , The Big Bear of Arkansas in 1846 and A Quarter Race in Kentucky and Other Sketches in 1847 .

Besides the sporting interests , the Spirit was involved in the emergence of American literature , especially the " tall tale " form of humor . Porter encouraged Southwestern authors to write and publish their short stories in the Spirit , and was involved in getting their works published in book form . He was the editor for two of these collections : The Big Bear of Arkansas , published in 1846 , and A Quarter Race in Kentucky and Other Sketches , published in 1847 . Porter was instrumental in encouraging the career of Johnson Hooper . Another writer who contributed to the Spirit was Henry William Herbert , who wrote under the pen name " Frank Forester " .

The Panic of 1837 hurt the Spirit 's circulation , but Porter responded by buying out his main competition , the American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine and moved it to New York City . Porter edited the Turf Register until the paper stopped being published in 1844 . Porter continued the publication of annual stallion lists and the publication of lists of horses owned by breeders . However , the purchase of the American Turf Register strained Porter 's finances , and he sold the Spirit to another printer , John Richards , who retained Porter as editor . The 1840s were prosperous , but in the 1850s the magazine again encountered difficulties . Around 1855 , Porter left Richards ' paper , and in 1856 , another printer , George Wilkes , began a new sporting newspaper , which he called Porter 's Spirit of the Times , and employed Porter as editor .

= = Later life = =

In 1845 , Porter served as secretary for the New York Jockey Club , during the famous match race between the fillies Fashion and Peytona at the Union Course on May 15 , 1845 . Although the Spirit and the American Turf Register were known for their coverage of horse racing , Porter 's main sporting interest for himself was fishing .

Porter never married , and three of his brothers died before Porter himself caught a cold and died of consumption on July 19 , 1858 , in his house in New York City . He left unfinished a biography of his friend Wiliam Herbert . The journalist and historian Frank Luther Mott wrote that " Porter undoubtedly did much to give American sports a respectable standing . "