

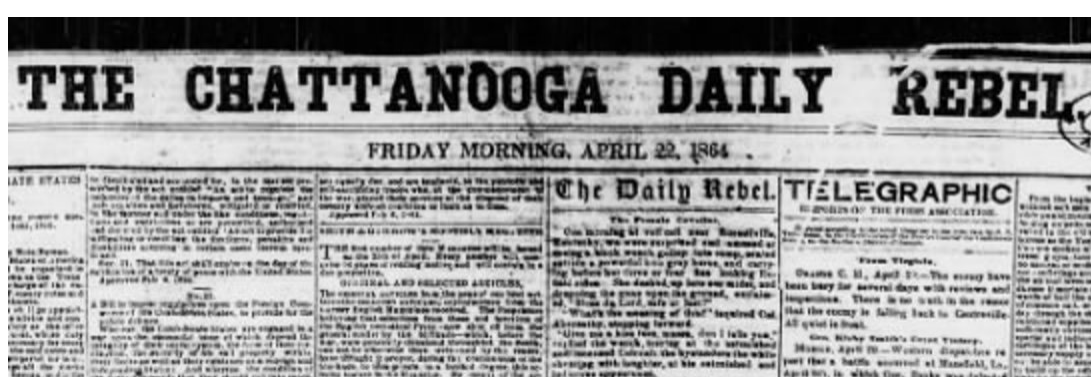


# BLUE AND GRAY DISPATCH

## All in a (Pen) Name

Robert D. Jenkins, Sr., November 16, 2020

[blueandgrayeducation.org](http://blueandgrayeducation.org)



The *Chattanooga Daily Rebel* was the longest running Confederate periodical | LOC

During the Civil War, citizens across the North and South clamored for information on the latest news from the Civil War military front. And war correspondents were on hand to tell the stories—often under a pseudonym.

One of the most famous correspondents was Albert Roberts, who used the name John Happy in humorous works. He had been the European correspondent at his father's newspaper, the *Nashville Banner*, but the Civil War interrupted his career, during which time he joined Company A of the 20th Tennessee Infantry Regiment and trained at Camp Trousdale in Sumner County. There he satirized camp life, oftentimes being quite blunt in his descriptions. For example: *"The discreet government 'pet' who selected a damp flat, covered with a dense undergrowth and forest trees, as a camping-ground for 5000 men, should be damned with...immortality. There is nothing under Heaven to recommend Camp Trousdale but its name...."*

And with that excerpt, we begin to understand why correspondents used pen names. Indeed, there are several reasons why.

First, the ethical and professional standards of journalism today were not yet in practice, and it was easier for a writer to provide his opinion and editorialize on a subject by hiding behind a pen name. Today, newspapers clearly identify (or should) what is a news story and what is an editorial or opinion piece. At the time of the war, the writer was left to his own conscience to decide how much fact and how much opinion about a matter should be given. There was considerable pressure to sell papers and the audience longed for good news, not bad news. Thus, the pressure was there for writers (who oftentimes were the owners or partial owners of the paper) to offer good news for sale. On the flip side, should a reporter dare tell the truth of the dire circumstances that his pet or nation faced, he would be well-served to mask his identity in the shroud of a pen name.

Another good reason for using a pen name was to keep a commander from running the reporter out of town, or out of camp, or even from arresting him. Federal Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman did not trust reporters, and he forbade them from being in the camps of his soldiers or near the front during his campaign in Georgia. He controlled the flow of information from them by having his military seize all telegraph wires and stations from Nashville, Tennessee, south during the campaign so that a reporter could not get his story sent out on the line, and had to travel by rail all the way to Cincinnati or Louisville in order to publish a story.

On the Confederate side, Gen. Braxton Bragg banned sales of the *Chattanooga Daily Rebel* to his soldiers. Bragg became upset when details of the movements of some of his troops (Longstreet's move to Knoxville) appeared in the paper.

Eventually, as military leaders became more and more concerned about damaging the war effort, the issue of newspaper censorship came to rise. But it's thanks to these intrepid journalists—whatever their names—that we have first-hand accounts of some of the Civil War's most pivotal moments.

As for John Happy, he retired from the army in 1862 and went on to work for the *Chattanooga Daily Rebel*—making quite a pseudonym for himself. That is, until the newspaper itself had to go on the run as the Union Army moved southward, eventually occupying Chattanooga. It printed its last copy in a hand press on April 27, 1865, when it was captured in Selma, Alabama.



This Civil War Dispatch has been brought to you by the Blue and Gray Education Society, a non-profit 501-3C educational organization. Please visit us at [www.blueandgrayeducation.org](http://www.blueandgrayeducation.org).

Share this email:



Manage your preferences | Opt out using TrueRemove®

Got this as a forward? Sign up to receive our future emails.

View this email online.

P.O. Box 1176  
Chatham, VA | 24531 US

This email was sent to .  
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.



Subscribe to our email list.