

This Day in History... March 13, 1872

Birth of Oswald Garrison Villard

Journalist and civil rights activist Oswald Garrison Villard was born on March 13, 1872, in Wiesbaden, Germany. He was an editor of the *New York Evening Post* and a founding member of the NAACP.

Villard's father was a German immigrant and his mother was the daughter of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. The family spent a couple years in Germany before returning to the US in 1874, where they settled in New York City. His father later purchased *The Nation* and *New York Evening Post* newspapers.



From the 2009 Civil Rights Pioneers issue

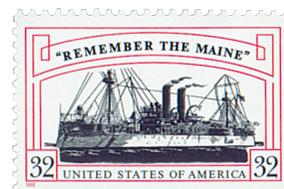


In 1897, Villard took over the management of both the New York Evening Post and The Nation.

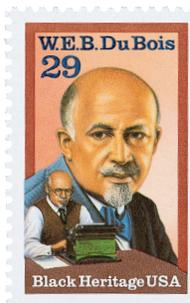
Villard went on to attend Harvard and after graduating in 1893, toured Europe with his father for a year. He returned to Harvard to get a graduate degree in American history and worked as a teacher's assistant. But Villard didn't want to spend his life in school, so he soon started working in newspapers. He briefly worked for *The Philadelphia Press* before joining his father's *New York Evening Post* and eventually *The Nation*.

In 1898, Villard helped found the American Anti-Imperialist League. The league called for the independence of territories that the US captured in the Spanish-American War. In 1900, he even pushed for a third major candidate in the presidential election to oppose William Jennings Bryan and William McKinley. He attempted to convince former president Grover Cleveland to run, but was turned down. However, Villard continued to share his anti-imperialism views in his newspaper editorials.

Villard was also active in the civil rights movement. Outraged by the brutality of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot, Villard used his newspapers to call for a national conference on the civil and political rights of African Americans. Scheduled to coincide with the centennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth, the meeting led to the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)



The explosion of the USS Maine led the US to declare war on Spain in 1898.



Garrison served as chairman of the NAACP until a disagreement with Du Bois in 1914. He remained on the board until his death.

in 1909. He was a founding member of the group, funded their early work, gave them free office space in the newspaper's building, and served as their disbursing treasurer for several years.

In 1912, Villard supported Woodrow Wilson's bid for the presidency. During an interview with the president, Villard pressed him to work on improving conditions for African Americans. However, when Wilson won, he began segregating federal offices. Villard wrote to him to change his policy, but he didn't. Villard then began supporting Wilson's opponents and criticized him in his newspaper editorials.

In addition to his journalism, Villard also wrote several books. His biography of John Brown was widely praised. He also wrote several books about Germany and the German people. Villard wrote extensively about journalism and newspapers – he felt too many papers were more focused on making money than maintaining their journalistic integrity.

In the 1930s, Villard initially supported Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, but later opposed it as well as the president's intervention in World War II. He suffered a heart attack in 1944 and died on October 1, 1949 after suffering from a stroke.



Villard opposed Wilson's segregation of federal offices.

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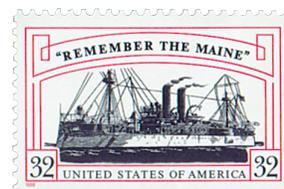


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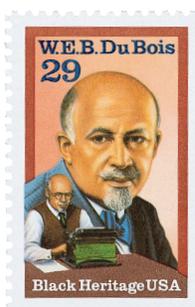
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