

Second, no state in the union has a prouder record than Maryland in a stalwart and steadfast defense of the freedom of the press.

And third, it was the first State to proclaim and begin work on the establishment of a National Hall of Fame.

The soil on which we stand was once the estate of George Alfred Townsend, a renowned reporter who covered the battles of the Civil War and wrote under the name of "Gath." He visited this area in 1884, and wrote in his diary that these were the most beautiful mountains he had seen anywhere in the world and that he wanted to live here. And so, he bought the land and immediately started building a collection of houses on this mountain overlooking the six battlefields of the Civil War.

During the construction, he conceived the idea of erecting a memorial to the battle of South Mountain, which occurred on this site. After reflecting on this idea for some time, he changed his mind and decided that, as a war correspondent, he would honor the newspaper writers and artists who served with him in covering the great conflict of the Civil War. The gigantic arch which we see standing near us here is the fruit of his contemplations. As he got on with his work, his ideas branched out, and in the end it became a memorial not only to the working press of the Civil War, both Union and Confederate, but to the entire profession of journalism. And so he inscribed on the face of the arch other names of writers, going all the way back to Joshua.

Where then, I ask, is there to be found in this country a more suitable site for a memorial to the journalistic profession—for a shrine of the freedom of the press?

Maryland, as I have said, bows to none in its long tradition and dedication to the principle of a free press. In the very first session of the General Assembly after Maryland had declared itself an independent State, the lawmakers of Maryland took a bold stand for the freedom of the press. In a resolution, these revolutionary statesmen declared that to proceed against a newspaper for publishing independent opinion was "a manifest violation of the Constitution, directly contrary to the Declaration of Rights assented to by the free men of this State."

This was in 1777, ten years before the now-famed bulwark of our freedom, the first article of our Bill of Rights which prohibits the abridgment of the freedom of speech and of the press, was incorporated into our federal Constitution.