

# WRITE ON!

Here are some of the interesting people who wrote, edited and printed the papers where people in early Canada got their news.



## << FLEURY MESPLET

Born in France, Mesplet moved to England and then to what would become the United States. He set up one of the first print shops in Montreal and published the first French newspaper in Canada in 1785. Although he often made the local Roman Catholic church officials angry, he also printed a lot of books for them. He printed material in four languages: French, English, Latin and Iroquois.

## LUDGER DUVERNAY >>

At a time when printers were also newspaper and book publishers, Duvernay did it all. He started the first newspaper in Lower Canada (later Quebec) outside Quebec City or Montreal: *La Gazette des Trois-Rivières* in 1817. He later moved to Montreal where he published both the *Canadian Spectator* in English and *La Minerve* in French. In 1832 he was jailed briefly for calling the governing council “a great nuisance.” He stuck by his political opinions, fighting as an officer for the Patriotes in the 1837 Lower Canada rebellion.





## << WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE

After arriving in Canada from Scotland, Mackenzie worked for newspapers in Montreal and York (Toronto) before starting the famous *Colonial Advocate* in 1824. His harsh criticism of Upper Canada's powerful people led a group of young men to smash his printing press and throw the letter blocks into Lake Ontario. He was elected the first mayor of Toronto and was a member of the provincial government for a time. In 1837 he led an uprising against the government. It failed and he fled for the U.S., returning in 1849. Throughout it all he wore a bright red wig that matched his fiery temper.



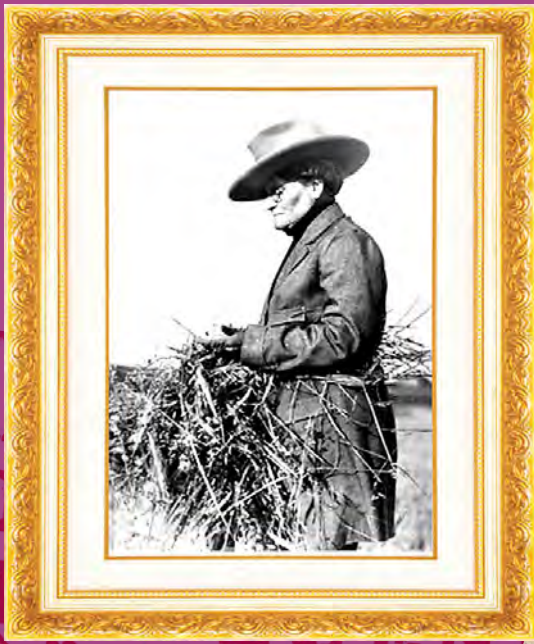
## HENRY DAVID WINTON

After arriving in Newfoundland from England, Winton started the twice-weekly *Public Ledger* and *Newfoundland General Advertiser* in 1820. Winton was clever but biased. He was strongly anti-Catholic and did not think ordinary people should have a say in government. He fired harsh words back and forth with other St. John's papers the *Newfoundlander* and the *Newfoundland Patriot*. In 1835 an angry gang attacked him on the road, knocking him off his horse and cutting off part of his ears. His wife and son kept running the paper after he died in 1855.

## MARY ANN SHADD >>

Although she was born in a state that allowed slavery, Mary Ann Shadd was born free. She moved to Sandwich (now Windsor, Ont.) in 1851 and set up a school that was open to both Black and white children. In 1853, she started publishing stories of Black people who had come to Canada for freedom in her weekly paper *The Provincial Freeman*. Shadd listed a man as the editor and did not put her name on the articles she wrote, so few at the time realized she was the first Black woman newspaper publisher in North America. She was also the first woman to run a newspaper in what would become Canada.





## << E. CORA HIND

After her parents died when she was little, Hind grew up on her grandfather's farm. He taught her all about animals and crops. She moved to Winnipeg in 1882 hoping to work for a newspaper, but the editor of the *Manitoba Free Press* told her women couldn't be journalists. She learned even more about farming, becoming an expert on agricultural issues. She went out and looked at fields for herself, which made her predictions about how crops would do each year more accurate than the government's. Finally, in 1901, the *Winnipeg Free Press* hired her to be its agriculture reporter.

## ROBERTINE BARRY >>

This famous Quebec journalist started writing articles when she was still in school in the early 1880s. Under the name of Françoise, she wrote "Chronique du lundi" every Monday in *La Patrie* from September 1891 to March 1900. She started her own hugely popular twice-monthly publication *Le journal de Françoise*, which ran from 1902 to 1909. Its motto was "Dire vrai et faire bien" (Speak the truth and do good). She often wrote about the need to make life better for women, children and older people.



## << BOB EDWARDS

Originally from Scotland, Edwards roamed around the western United States for years before ending up in Wetaskiwin, Alta., in 1897. His first paper, the weekly *Free Lance*, was a hit but he couldn't keep it going after store owners cancelled their ads because he made jokes about them. He had a few other jobs in journalism before moving to Calgary and starting his best-known publication, the sharply funny *Eye Opener*. It was popular all over the country for its stinging political comments, like the time he said that between the Liberals and the Conservatives, "of two evils it is best to choose neither."



## << ALICE FREEMAN

By day, Freeman taught school in Toronto, but at night she took on a secret identity. She would have lost her teaching job if anyone knew she was also an “unladylike” reporter. By 1887 she was writing popular articles for Toronto newspapers under the name Faith Fenton. She was finally able to give up teaching in 1894. She covered murder trials, crime, homelessness, women’s rights and much more. The *Globe* sent her to cover the Klondike gold rush in 1898, and she loved it so much she stayed for five years.

## JOHN P. MCCONNELL >>

Known as Jack, McConnell earned the nickname Black Jack with both his sharp writing and his personal life. (He was married four times, which was generally seen as pretty shocking back then.) Originally from Ontario, he moved to Vancouver and started the weekly *Saturday Sunset* in 1907. Two years later he bought the *Edmonton Journal* but sold it soon afterward for more than he paid. In 1912, he and Richard Ford started the *Vancouver Sun*, which is still running. A devoted Liberal, McConnell ended up in court several times after using the paper to attack B.C.’s Conservatives and anyone else he disagreed with.

