

Read All About It!

Before social media, before the internet, before TV and radio, people got their information from newspapers. From before Canada was a country to the early 1900s, these newspapers were widely read and fiercely argued over.

The Halifax Gazette

The very first newspaper in Canada's history came out on March 23, 1752. The *Halifax Gazette* was just two pages and mostly carried stories from papers back in Europe. The first daily paper, Montreal's *Daily Advertiser*, started publishing in May 1833.

Most of the first newspapers in Canada were run by Americans — printers loyal to Britain who had fled north to what are now the Maritimes, Quebec and Ontario after the American Revolution. There was even a paper called *The Royal American Gazette* published in Nova Scotia from 1783 to 1786.



Rolling ink on metal letters (type) in a printing press at the Mackenzie Printery in Queenston, Ont.

Press that Paper

Early printing was hard work. Printers had cases full of individual letters they put together upside down and backward to form words. When they had a full page together, they rolled ink across it, put paper over it and pulled a heavy metal plate down on top to press the words onto the paper. (To this day, people often describe newspapers as “the press.”) Most early print shops also produced books, advertising and other things.



Officials at first refused to allow printing presses in New France. The first newspaper in what became known as Lower Canada was *The Quebec Gazette*, which came out on June 21, 1764. It appeared in English and French. It's the oldest newspaper still being published in North America, now under the name *The Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*.

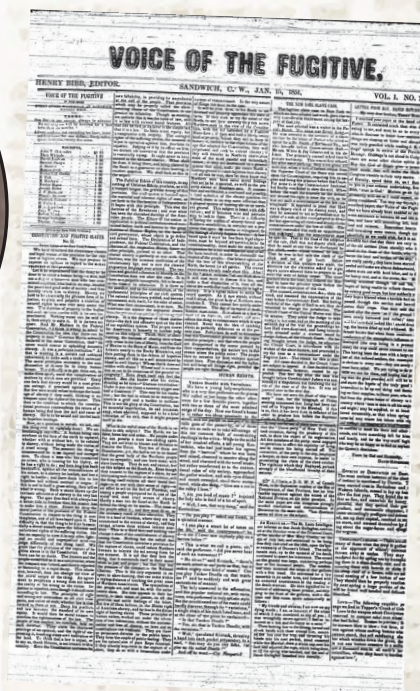


While people in cities could buy their papers in shops, it wasn't so easy in the country. Newspapers arrived by mail or on a train to smaller towns and villages. Their stories were pretty old by then, but people didn't mind. They were mostly just happy to have something new to read.



A Black Voice

Born into slavery in the United States, Henry Bibb escaped several times. He and his wife Mary made it to Canada and started publishing *Voice of the Fugitive* in 1851 in what is now Windsor, Ontario. (A fugitive is someone trying to avoid being captured.) Subscribers in both countries were interested in learning more about how enslaved people could settle freely in Canada.



Creating a Country

Would Canada have come together without newspapers? Hard to say, but there were a LOT of newspapermen at meetings in Quebec, Charlottetown and London, England from 1864 to 1867. Those meetings led to Confederation — the creation of Canada. George Brown ran the *Toronto Globe* — the biggest newspaper of its time in British North America. He brought a group of politicians including John A. Macdonald and George-Étienne Cartier together when it seemed like they'd never agree, and Canada was on its way to being born. Joseph Howe, publisher of the *Novascotian*, was against Confederation at first, but eventually became part of the new country's government in 1869. Amor de Cosmos successfully pushed British Columbia to join Confederation in 1871 through articles in his paper *The British Colonist*.



Early newspapers were usually *broadsheets* — they measured more than a metre and a half across when folded out. *Tabloid* newspapers, which came along in the 20th century, were much smaller.



The first photograph in a Canadian daily newspaper appeared on March 28, 1891. It was a picture of Liberal Party leader Wilfrid Laurier.

Political Papers

For decades, pretty much every town in Canada had two papers — one that supported the Liberal Party and one that backed the Conservatives. They praised the politicians they liked and harshly criticized the ones they didn't. In many places — the island of Newfoundland, for instance — papers also sided with a particular religion. Roman Catholics and Protestants attacked each other in print. All over Canada, political tempers got so hot at times that mobs who opposed what a paper printed would break into its offices, wrecking the presses and hurting or even killing its staff.



A cartoonist's sketch of politician and editor William Lyon Mackenzie and politician Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine

Canadian Press

By 1850, news from Europe was coming to Canada by telegraph. In 1910, a group of publishers formed the Canadian Press. At first it mostly sent American news around the country by telegraph. CP started reporting more Canadian news during the First World War. It eventually added French services and hired its own reporters. Its stories still appear in many newspapers and online every day.



The Canadian Pacific Railway Telegraph office on Granville Street in Vancouver, 1898.



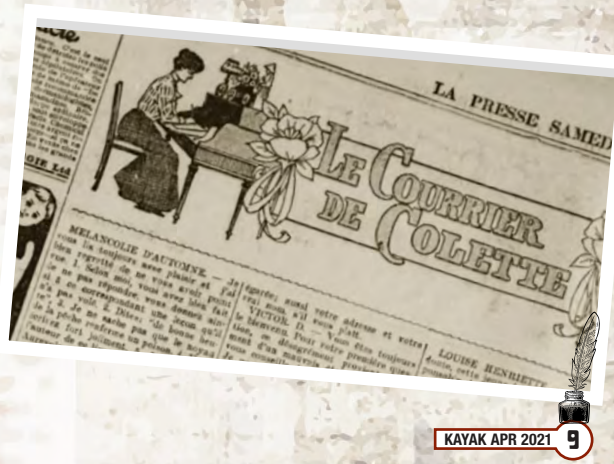
The Kamloops *Wawa* was printed in the Chinuk (Chinook) jargon — a language that mixed words from several B.C. First Nations, later adding English and French. It appeared from 1891 into the early 1900s.

They seem more complicated than funny now, but editorial cartoons were a popular part of early newspapers in Canada. They often took vicious swipes at politicians and political parties the paper didn't support.



Just for Women

Newspapers were always looking for ways to attract more readers. In the late 1800s, many started adding a page or even a section focusing on things they thought would interest women: recipes, housekeeping tips, fashion stories and more. One of the most popular items was advice to readers on everything from love to proper manners. Montreal's *La Presse* advice columnist, who wrote under the name Colette, sometimes received a thousand letters a week. Her real name was Edouardina Lesage. She wrote "*Le Courrier de Colette*" for more than 50 years.





The first newspaper between the Red River area of what is now Manitoba and Victoria, B.C., was the *Saskatchewan Herald*. Its first edition came out in August 1878 in Battleford. Two years later, the *Edmonton Bulletin* became the first paper in what is now Alberta.



A century ago, kids your age often worked as newspaper sellers.



School News

Many Canadian universities have student-run newspapers that have been around for more than a century. *The Brunswickian*, the University of New Brunswick's student paper, is as old as Canadian Confederation itself — it started in 1867. The next year, the *Dalhousie Gazette* began publishing at Dalhousie University in Halifax. Mount Allison, the University of Alberta, Brandon University, Queen's University, the University of British Columbia and several others printed their first issues before 1920. Most French-language student newspapers started a bit later.





Golden News

British Columbia's 1858 Fraser River gold rush led to the first five papers in the province being set up, all of them in Victoria. When people streamed into the Yukon searching for gold, newspapers came soon after. The *Klondike Nugget* put out its first edition in May 1898. In 1899, *The Yukon Sun*, shown here, declared itself the farthest north paper in the whole British Empire.

At their most popular, many city newspapers printed one edition in the morning and another in the evening. Sometimes they even gave the two editions different names.

Ad Up

At first, newspaper advertisements were pretty basic — just a bunch more words. By the late 1800s, ads included drawings of their products, fancy lettering, snappy slogans and detailed information about what the product could (supposedly) do.



Changing Times

The early 1900s saw more people moving to cities for work. Newspapers started to see that they'd have more readers if they weren't connected to a political party. That led to new kinds of newspapers meant for as many readers as possible. Some filled their pages with shocking stories about crime and famous people, lots of local news, entertainment and sports. Many moved their opinions to the editorial pages and made their news stories fairer. By the 1920s, some owners were starting to buy publications in several cities to create what we still know as newspaper chains.

