

**AFTER FIFTY YEARS. SEMI-CENTENNIAL  
OF THE OXFORD DEMOCRAT. HISTORY  
OF THE PAPER FROM THE FIRST ISSUE,  
WITH SKETCHES OF ITS EDITORS,  
PUBLISHERS, &C.**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649164905

After fifty years. SEMI-CENTENNIAL OF THE OXFORD DEMOCRAT. History of the Paper from the First Issue, WITH SKETCHES OF ITS EDITORS, PUBLISHERS, &C. by Wm. B. Lapham

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**WM. B. LAPHAM**

**AFTER FIFTY YEARS. SEMI-CENTENNIAL  
OF THE OXFORD DEMOCRAT. HISTORY  
OF THE PAPER FROM THE FIRST ISSUE,  
WITH SKETCHES OF ITS EDITORS,  
PUBLISHERS, &C.**



---

6

AFTER FIFTY YEARS.

---

SEMI-CENTENNIAL OF

THE OXFORD DEMOCRAT.

HISTORY OF THE PAPER FROM THE FIRST ISSUE,

WITH SKETCHES OF

ITS EDITORS, PUBLISHERS, &c.

BY WM. B. LAPHAM, M. D.

---

PARIS, MAINE:  
PRINTED AT THE OXFORD DEMOCRAT OFFICE.  
1886.

✓ AL 307.80



Charles H. Taylor  
Boston.

## The Oxford Democrat.

---

VOL. 51.      PARIS, MAINE, JANUARY 8, 1884.      NO. 1.

---

The fiftieth anniversary of a newspaper is by no means as common either in this State or in the country, as might be supposed by those who have not given careful attention to the subject, and for the very good and conclusive reason that but few papers attain to that age. In fact, the history of the newspaper press goes to show that of the numerous newspaper enterprises started, a large majority are unsuccessful, and not a few papers die in their infancy. Within the space of seven years, not less than seven newspapers were started in Norway and Paris. The OXFORD DEMOCRAT is here, but where are the other six—the *Oxford Observer*, the *Jeffersonian*, the *Politician*, the *Village Spy*, the *Journal of the Times* and the *Oxford Oracle*? All of them died young and most of them before the end of their first year.

The mania for newspaper publication has prevailed from the earliest times of newspaper printing; it is the goal to which every practical printer is looking and hopes to reach. It is the ambition of every professional man to attain to the highest honors to which his profession naturally leads. The clergyman wants the degree of Doctor of Divinity, the physician to be promoted to a Professorship and the lawyer to be Judge; and the practical printer is never satisfied until he reads his imprint on a paper of his own. In this as in many other enterprises, his ambition overrules his judgment

and his reason. He stops not to enquire whether such a paper be needed, whether he have the ability to manage or the means to establish it, and his venture ends where all enterprises are likely to end, in which the chances and circumstances have not been carefully considered and weighed beforehand. The young aspirant for journalistic honors says: "Why, Horace Greeley and Thurlow Weed succeeded, and why should not I succeed?"

The first newspaper printed on this continent was in Boston by R. Pierce in 1692. It had only a brief existence. The first newspaper printed in the United States was the *Boston News Letter* in 1704. It lived seventy years and was discontinued at the evacuation of Boston in 1774. The *Boston Gazette*, a rival of the latter, was started in December, 1719. The *New England Courant*, established by Benjamin Franklin in 1721, was the third. The *Boston Chronicle*, the first volume of which is now in my possession, was started in 1767. I speak of this latter, because it was Thomas B. Wait who had been concerned in its publication, who came to Portland and started in company with Benj. Titcomb, a practical printer, the first paper ever printed in Maine. It was issued the first of January, 1785, and was the *Falmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*. The first semi-weekly was started in Portland by John K. Baker, a former apprentice of Wait, but it did not succeed. The *Weekly Advertiser* is still published as the *Portland Advertiser*. The *Daily Advertiser* was first issued in 1831. The *Eastern Argus* first appeared in 1803, and the *Daily Argus* in 1835. These are our oldest dailies. Since the establishment of the *Falmouth Gazette*, upwards of forty papers have been started in Portland and three-quarters of them have found early or premature graves.

The history of the press of Cumberland County is only repeated in nearly all the older and some of the more recent counties in the State. Newspaper life is generally a "struggle for existence," and the "survival of the fittest" does not always follow. Once in a while a newspaper starts



easy and seems almost to plant itself and to grow without much outside effort. But such instances are rare, and occur only where there is a popular demand for such a paper and no rivalry. The rule is that it requires time, patience, perseverance, ability and money to start a newspaper, and make it a success, and the latter is as important a requisite as either of the others. Especially is this true when an attempt is made to plant a new paper by the side of an old one. With the new paper, the money tide ebbs a long time before it turns and flows in upon it. In this respect, the already established one has every advantage. A journal that has been well planted, is properly conducted, and that has been growing for a score and more of years, has become so deeply rooted that no rivalry can materially injure it, the power to do this being entirely with the management. While I would discourage these oft-repeated experiments of starting new papers where none are needed, on account of the disaster which is almost sure to follow, I would by no means underrate the important profession of journalism nor discourage any one from learning the printer's art. The printing office is a school where many a man without previous training, has educated himself and become fitted for the highest positions. Such men as Benjamin Franklin, Horace Greeley, Thurlow Weed, J. T. Buckingham, Benjamin and John Russell are striking examples of this fact. But even a good type-setter may not have the business capacity to conduct a paper nor the ability to edit it.

A few statistics of Maine newspapers may not be amiss here as illustrating what I have said respecting the small percentage of those who bear the test of time. Of eighty newspapers started in Maine prior to and including the year 1833, only eight have had a semi-centennial and only nine, including the OXFORD DEMOCRAT, still published in Maine, now survive. These nine are as follows:

Portland Advertiser, Eastern Argus, Eastport Sentinel, Christian Mirror, Zion's Advocate, Kennebec Journal, Maine Farmer, Republican Journal and OXFORD DEMOCRAT. The Zion's Herald and Morning Star removed from the State.

The 71 which dropped out by the way, many in infancy, some in youth, a few quite well advanced but not reaching their fiftieth year, were as follows :

Freemen's Friend, Independent Statesman, The Wreath, The Courier, Yankee, World in a Nutshell, Jeffersonian, Christian Intelligencer, Sabbath School Union, Christian Pilot, Family Reader, Maine Intelligencer, Maine Baptist Herald, Juvenile Key, Brunswick Journal, Androscoggin Free Press, Eastern Star, Tocsin, Kennebec Gazette, Herald of Liberty, American Advocate, Hallowell Gazette, Genius of Temperance, Kennebec Intelligencer, Augusta Patriot, Maine Patriot, The Age, Augusta Courier, Eastern Chronicle, New England Farmer, Waterville Intelligencer, Watchman, The Times, Telegraph, Eastern Repository, Lincoln Telegraph, Lincoln Intelligencer, Yankee, Castine Journal, Eagle, Bluehill Beacon, Maine Gazette, Independent Courier, Politician, Journal of the Times, Russell's Echo, Oxford Observer, Village Spy, Freeman's Friend, Maine Palladium, Maine Democrat, Columbian Star, Bangor Weekly Register, Penobscot Gazette, Eastern Republican Clarion, Penobscot Journal, Northern Light, Evening Star, Hancock Gazette, Juvenile Magazine, Christian Visitant, Maine Farmer and Political Register, Workingmen's Advocate, Maine Gazette, Maine Enquirer, Gazette and Enquirer, Somerset Journal, Thomaston Register, and National Republican.

Several attempts to establish a paper in Oxford County were made before one came to stay. The first of these attempts was by Elijah Russell at Fryeburg, in 1798. This sheet was called

RUSSELL'S ECHO,

or the *North Star*. Mr. Russell was a practical printer and had previously been concerned in newspaper publication in Concord, N. H. The size of the paper was 18 by 24 inches and its subscription price was \$1.50 per year. It died before the first anniversary of its birth. A copy of *Russell's Echo* is in the possession of Hon. Geo. B. Barrows of Fryeburg, and I know of no other in the State. The early demise of this paper appears to have had a very discouraging effect upon the business, for it was more than a quarter of a century before a second attempt at journalism was made in Oxford County. In July, 1824, Asa Barton issued the first number of the

OXFORD OBSERVER,

at Paris Hill. The paper was folio in form, having five columns to the page. Mr. Barton was not a practical

printer, and in connection with the publication of the *Observer*, he kept what he called the "Oxford County Bookstore." He continued the publication of the paper in Paris for two years with moderate success, and then moved the concern to Norway. The removal was made by means of an ox-cart in the night time, and without the knowledge of the citizens of Paris. The affair created considerable feeling and excitement, and perhaps was the beginning of the rivalry which has existed and cropped out in various ways, ever since. In 1828, Mr. Wm. P. Phelps became associated with Mr. Barton, and in 1829 Barton sold his half interest to Wm. E. Goodenow, a practical printer, who had then just come to Norway from New Hampshire. In 1830 Mr. Goodenow bought out Phelps and changed the name of the paper to

#### THE POLITICIAN,

with Wm. A. Evans as editor. The *Politician* was Whig in politics and was published as such by Mr. Goodenow until April, 1833, when it was sold to Hon. Horatio King, consolidated with the *Jeffersonian* and carried to Portland.

#### THE JEFFERSONIAN.

This paper was started at Paris in 1827, by a number of prominent Democrats on Paris Hill, and it appeared as "Published for the Proprietors," until May, 1830, when it was purchased by Hon. Hannibal Hamlin and Hon. Horatio King. Mr. Hamlin was then a minor, but he remained in the office about a year, working a portion of the time at the case. In October, 1830, he sold out to Mr. King, studied law and in April, 1833, the same month that the *Jeffersonian* was moved to Portland, he moved to Hampden where he lived until most of his political successes were achieved. The *Jeffersonian* was a Democratic paper as its name would suggest. Mr. King continued to publish it at Paris until 1833 when, wishing for a more extended field of labor, in April of that year, having bought up the *Politician*, he united the two under the name of the former, and