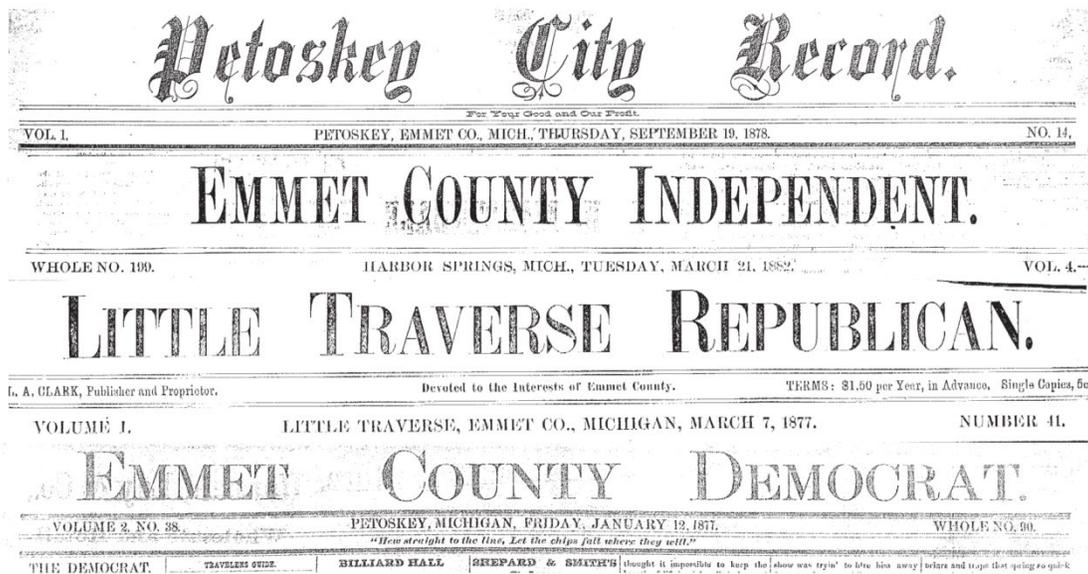


The News Graveyard

Old news from Petoskey gets new life online

Patrick Sullivan – Northern Express
May 5th, 2014



In May 1901, an editor of the Independent Democrat mused about the viability of a year-round daily newspaper in Petoskey.

“Newspaper burying grounds are plentiful and well filled, and Petoskey to all intents and purposes is not yet large enough to properly insure against a first class funeral of an over-zealous journalistic endeavor,” the editor wrote.

The words were prescient. Today the Independent Democrat has literally wound up in a graveyard, along with the rest of Petoskey’s old papers.

The Greenwood Cemetery became home to the region’s newspaper archives and, beginning this year, has been offering thousands of old editions online, available to anyone who wants to look at them.

RICH NEWSPAPER HISTORY

Petoskey’s old newspapers wound up at Greenwood because staff at the cemetery wanted to preserve obituaries for genealogical research and old news stories as fodder for history tours.

It also happened that Greenwood had a room that's air conditioned in the summer and heated in the winter, which makes it suitable for storage of the delicate material.

"Our two main reasons for doing this at all was for obituaries and because we were doing history tours here," said Karl Crawford, Greenwood superintendent. "We were scanning the papers anyway so that we could cut out the obituaries and read them."

Crawford said he wanted to put the newspapers online so that they could be available to anyone. Greenwood cannot afford to open the physical archive to the public.

Around 12,500 editions are now online, dating back to Aug. 8, 1874, the date Petoskey's first newspaper was published.

The archive chronicles a rich newspaper history. At least eight papers were started in Petoskey by 1900. In the year 1883, Petoskey saw editions of the Northern Independent, the Petoskey City Record, the Emmet County Democrat, and the Daily Resorter hit the streets.

FIRST AND LAST EDITION

The online archives are already a treasure trove of Petoskey history.

That first paper, for example, an edition of the Petoskey City Weekly Times, was also the last edition of that newspaper.

R.H. Little, Petoskey's first doctor and one of its founding fathers, published it. The paper had little content beyond an introduction and request for support.

"Your best wishes for the paper is respectfully solicited," Little wrote in a frontpage, paragraph-long notice, which was the only item on the page.

"He moved to Petoskey at age 33 and died when he was 35, so he didn't have a lot of time to publish another edition," Crawford said.

<p>WATER OR RAIL,</p> <p>We are prepared to fill large or small orders in 1 DAY'S NOTICE. y1</p> <p>OVER 1500 ACRES UNDER CULTIVATION IN LANDRETH'S SEEDS SENT BY MAIL TO DAVID LANDRETH & SONS. PHILA.</p> <p>Over 5000 Druggists AND Physicians</p> <p>Have Signed or Endorsed the Following Remarkable Document:</p> <p>Messrs. Seabury & Johnson, Manufacturing Chemists, 21 Platt St., New York:</p>	<p>J. INGALLS & BRO.,</p> <p>PROPRIETORS OF THE City Mills,</p> <p>PETOSKEY - - - - MICH.</p> <p>Flour and Feed,</p> <p>AT WHOLESALE AND RETAIL</p> <p>Our flour provided with the latest machinery, and we are prepared to make equal to that of the very best mills in the State.</p> <p>WE MAKE A SPECIALTY OF CUSTOM GRINDING, AND RESPECTFULLY REQUEST A TRIAL.</p> <p><i>For Every Sixty Pounds of No. 1 Wheat we will give Forty Pounds of No. 1 Flour.</i></p> <p>Buckwheat Ground Every Day.</p> <p>We furnish barn room for teams free of</p>
--	---

The following year saw the commencement of the Emmet County Democrat, which would go to press regularly for years.

Greenwood obtained permission to use the archives from the Petoskey News Review, which inherited them over the years.

BEACH BOYS' BAD REVIEW

Michael Federspiel, executive director of the Little Traverse Historical Society and a history education instructor at Central Michigan University, said the collection is an amazing local history resource because it's exhaustive and can be accessed from anywhere in the world.

"It's something of a rarity to have that kind of a run of local newspapers available online," Federspiel said.* Federspiel said that when someone comes to the historical society with an obscure question now, he has a way to show the person where to find an answer.

Last summer, for instance, a writer from New York called who was working on a book about the Beach Boys. He wondered if there was an article published in the early 1960s after the band played a concert in Petoskey.

The archives were not yet online, but Federspiel knew a lot of them had been digitized and with Crawford's help he was able to help the writer find the article he was looking for.

The Beach Boys' performance had been reviewed, "and not very favorably, either, interestingly," Federspiel said.

YESTERYEAR'S FACEBOOK

The digitized obituaries and the newspaper pages will also be a great resource for people who want to find out about longdead family members.

If someone knows his or her ancestor passed away in Petoskey in 1902, for example, the death was probably mentioned in the newspaper – maybe along with an interesting story.

Newspapers were hotbeds of gossip back then.

Crawford said an 18-year-old employee who was going through old papers to clip obituaries said something about the old papers that made a lot of sense.

"She said, 'It sounds a lot like Facebook,'" Crawford said.

To wit, from the June 1, 1904 Petoskey Record:

“Miss Alice Buckingham expects to act as cashier at the Bay View House this summer; Mr. and Mrs. Eli Gray, with their little daughter Mary, spent a few days camping last week; Mrs. L. M. Thomas has returned from her visit to friends and relatives in Saginaw and vicinity.”

“I think the newspapers were very family-, people-, business-oriented, promoting the individual in the community,” Crawford said. “I don’t think you could be that involved in somebody’s life like they were back then. They were the social media of the time. They were the Facebook; the Twitter.”

“The other thing that we forget is that, in the days before the Internet or the cable news networks, you didn’t get national or international news from anywhere but your local newspaper,” he said.

30 YEARS YET TO GO

Crawford said he expects all of the pages that have been scanned will be uploaded by the end of the year. As far as all of the pages that have yet to be scanned, Crawford said there is not a timeline to get those up.

“We have 30 years of papers that we don’t even have scanned yet, so it will be a while,” he said.

Crawford said the project is primarily supported through the labor of workers at Greenwood, which doesn’t wind up on Greenwood’s balance sheet because the work is done during the winter or on rainy days in the summer, when staff cannot work outside.

Greenwood’s archives are not searchable, but you can search for a newspaper by date. To find the old papers, visit gwood.us online.

OLD NEWS IS STILL GOOD NEWS

A January 1876 edition of the Emmet County Democrat shows that back then, Northern Michigan was still a fur-trapping, timber-cutting economy. One ad reads, “WANTED!!! Wanted this winter 50 men to cut wood. Also 19 teams to haul wood. Steady employment given. Bong & Ingalls.” Another says: “Fur! Fur! FUR!!! Lots of Fur wanted for which highest cash prices will be paid, at Fox, Rose & Butters.”

By the 1950s, the paper looks much more like a modern paper, albeit with columns thick with words. It now also included photos. Just because the paper came off the press in black and white didn’t mean its staff didn’t have a colorful take on local events, however. On Feb. 18, 1950, the Petoskey Evening News staff sought a fresh look at an issue that had apparently erupted into a controversy — some residents believed homeless dogs were overrunning

Petoskey and they wanted an ordinance to take care of them. The paper reacted by sticking a picture of a pooch wearing a camera above the fold. "I'm Buck," the feature began.

Buck was a "PhoDOGrapher" hired to "photograph and interview some of the more prominent canines in town on the proposed ordinance."

In the 1960s, the Petoskey Evening News was part serious newspaper and part-folksy small-town paper. In the July 17, 1962 edition, local headlines included "Harbor Springs Adopts City Employee Pension Plan." There is a story about unrest in the Congo. There is a brief about the contentious legislation that sought to establish the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. And then there is this, under the headline 'It Happened in Petoskey': "Joseph and Sophia Karamol, Petoskey, spotted an elk this week while they were driving near the Clark Most farm on Wildwood-rd. Friends say if you ask him, Joe will tell you about it."

There is a similar project in Gaylord. That city's news from 1903 through 2009 is available online and is searchable through the Otsego County Library website.