

INTRODUCTION

Saluting our 120th anniversary

For more than 6,200 weeks The Canadian Champion has been chronicling the life and the events of a town and county—that's 120 years. As the paper begins its 121st year—one of the town's "senior citizens"—it seems appropriate to look back to those early beginnings.

Through yellowing pages, old and rare copies of earlier publications, cross checking references, sorting out the contradictory dates, the research project was a tremendous chore undertaken by the then publisher Jim Dills in the 1970s.

Some of the confusion in dates may never be completely relieved, but with the available knowledge, gained often a very small piece at a time over the course of more than 15 years, the history of the town's newspapers and The Champion in particular is reviewed here. Particular attention has been paid to those individuals who played a major part in its life where adequate information was available on them.

As in all history, there is no guarantee of absolute accuracy. If any of the facts can be disputed, we

would be delighted to hear the evidence.

The Champion, though, is an ongoing thing, and this brief lapse into the history should not be regarded as some nostalgic desire to return to "the good old days". We hope The Champion will always spend more time looking ahead, than looking back—looking outward, rather than looking inward.

But for a few minutes return to Milton's early foundations and the setting in which James A. Campbell produced the first Milton Canadian Champion.



Herb Crowther, Publisher

Publisher's thoughts on a day in history

By Herb Crowther, Publisher, The Canadian Champion

Today The Champion reaches the grand old age of 120 years—what a milestone!

As publisher of the paper for only the last two and one-half years, I feel pretty humble about this significant anniversary. The owners, publishers and staff who guided Milton's community newspaper through the first 118 years deserve most of the credit for making it what it is today.

The community, too, deserves our appreciation for its longstanding support of The Champion as a local advertising medium and source of weekly information

and entertainment. Without that continuing support, a newspaper is nothing.

As we pass the 120-year mark, our thoughts go forward. What lies ahead? The Champion has already been assured its place in Milton's history, and those of us closely involved look forward with anticipation to making sure another 120 years of Champion keep rolling off the presses—recording (and shaping) history along the way.

It's a pleasure to be a part of this important day. I hope you, the readers, will enjoy participation in The Champion's future as much as we who are so closely associated.

The Canadian Champion

An Inland Community Newspaper—Serving the Community for 119 Years

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ANNIVERSARY SALUTE

The Champion: 120 years of history

by Jim Dills

The weeks of preparation for a new newspaper had ended and on May 13, 1861 The Canadian Champion of Milton was presented to readers by publisher James A. Campbell.

It was just four years after the incorporation of the town and the centre already had two other newspapers. Milton had been named the county town but a few years earlier.

The county buildings had been erected but the town had changed little from its early beginnings.

There was no town hall, verandahs were part of most store fronts, the wide street of dirt was a constant source of complaint and handy hitching posts were located in the business section for the convenience of those driving a carriage or riding a horse.

Small area
Little of the town extended east beyond the Sixteen Mile Creek and to the west there was not a great deal beyond James St. The boundaries south and north were equally limited.

George Brown had opened the first store in Milton in 1830 and it was he who later served as the town's first mayor when the town was incorporated in 1857.

The Halton Grist and Flour Mill, around which the town was centred, was operated by White and Martin. Wellington boots were in style and the Royal Exchange Hotel on Main St. was being operated by James Winter.

Pine and hardwood bush was plentiful and timber was one of the products of the area.

Town council was extending the walks in town and experimenting by making the walks three planks wide and laying them lengthwise. Earlier walks were of planks three feet long, laid across three by fours.

Stores' boast
Curling and baseball were popular sports and the town's stores boasted fine goods "at city prices."

No doubt it was with some trepidation that James A. Campbell began his publishing career in Milton. He had apparently moved the site of the paper from Georgetown to Milton in 1861, but there is confusion about the length of time the paper may have been in Georgetown.

A Halton Journal editorial of May 2, 1856 referred to a merger between the two papers.

In September 1864 at a testimonial banquet to Mr. Campbell, after selling the Champion, he commented: "It is now upwards of ten years since I first launched my frail bark in the troubled sea of public opinion in this county."

In contradiction of the time the paper was in Georgetown, an editorial in The Champion of June 1865 states The Champion was published for the first six months in Georgetown, then moved to Milton.

Wanted telegraph
First issues of The Canadian Champion of Milton are not available. The earliest copy known to exist is dated 1862 and there we learn "The sum of \$200 was subscribed last week by a few of the inhabitants of Milton for the purpose of getting a telegraph communication to the different points of the province. The County and Town Councils have given \$50 each. We are now certain the project will proceed."

From those earliest issues published by the founder, through the thousands of weekly issues since published by a long list of successors, the history of Milton has been written and recorded.

Early papers, including The Canadian Champion, had outspoken political views. Beginning a new publication year in 1862, Mr. Campbell elaborated, "Our continual aim will be to make our paper a true exponent of sound Reform principles, to cripple extravagance in all departmental affairs and sue for the initiation of a just and economical system of disbursing the public revenue and the proper disposing of the patronage of the State; we shall consequently work vigilantly for the purpose of overthrowing the present corrupt administration whose every act has been at variance with these views."

We can only suspect what may have been in the mind of James Campbell when he had completed the publication of his first issue. No copy of it remains to introduce us to the man or provide his earliest thoughts.

Next to mill

At that time The Champion was being published every Wednesday at the office in the "yellow buildings next to the Grist Mill, Mill on and on Guelph St., Georgetown."

Milton editors W. G. Culloden of the New Era and James A. Campbell of The Canadian Champion were at the meeting November 27, 1862 in Hamilton for the founding of The Canadian Press Association. Discussion topics at that gathering included postal rates, advertising and subscription rates.

Mr. Campbell summed up his early years with The Champion when he announced its sale in August, 1864, to Messrs. Matheson and Hunter.

"Our readers can but imagine the pain it gives us to even say to them on paper—farewell," the publisher and founder wrote.

"During our control of The Champion we have had ups and downs as have all other journalists but we are happy to state that at the present time this paper is enjoying a patronage second to no other newspaper in the province and therefore it is not on account of a proper support that we change our present field of labor... Domestic affairs alone are those which compel us to quit our connection with such true and valued friends as we have ever found in the numerous supporters of The Champion. We are happy to state that we do not leave Halton as have done most of our predecessors. Instead of losing money in the enterprise, we have made a little and at the same time feel that we can go away leaving behind us but a few personal enemies."

Hard to trace

The first change in the ownership of The Champion was well covered in the columns. Later changes were sometimes difficult to trace as only a name on the "masthead" might be the indication.

News for the local press in those days consisted mainly of national and international coverage with but a small amount of local news. The theory was always that people knew what was happening locally, but since they subscribed to only one paper, the weekly must provide the summary of national, international and local news.

Evidence of this is found in the "Prospectus" issued by the first purchasers to follow Mr. Campbell.

"We rejoice to hear of any measure for ameliorating the condition of the down trodden millions whether the surfs of Russia or the slaves of America... As a newspaper, our constant and strenuous endeavours shall be to come up with the high style of journalism allotted to the country press instead of asking our readers to wade through the telegrams and overloading of our columns with the trashy and contradictory statements that daily press over the wires receive. We will in each issue condense into compass of a column or two, a resume of the news of interest to our importance, divided into three leading

heads, Canadian, Foreign and American... We will endeavour to make the article on the news of the week an authority as to the state of the world at the date of each issue."

More changes

Moving a newspaper office was apparently not a difficult task. From the yellow buildings next to the grist mill, the offices were moved to "the commodious brick building next to Mr. Hollinrake's store, Main St. in April 1866." The next move came in April 2, 1868 to "the premises

over Bones' Cabinet Shop, opposite the town hall next door to Lyon's store."

In a Peel-Halton Directory published in 1866-67 The Canadian Champion publishers were listed as Matheson and Hunter. The paper was referred to as "the only one there is in the County. The care with which it is edited together with the judicious selection of reading matter it contains has obtained for it a circulation greater by far than that of most papers published outside of cities or large towns." Other records, however, indicate there were other papers being published then too. Since directory

editors often relied on the editor of a local newspaper for the community description, it may have been the article originated in the office of The Champion—and the editor didn't feel it was necessary to recognize his competitors.

Population of the town then was about 1,000 and stages left town every morning, returning the same day from Bronte and Georgetown connecting with the Great Western and the Grand Trunk railways.

The July 4, 1867 issue of The Champion indicated the paper's support for Confederation and reported "Confederation day was quietly but loyally kept in the good town of Milton... Flags were flying in different parts of the town, among others over the residences of Dr. Carter, Mr. White and Mr. Racey whose place was brilliantly illuminated in the evening. After this followed a bonfire on the Market Square and the midnight performance of the Swiss bell-ringers closed the day."

Town Hall work

In the meantime the council was haggling with Mr. Joseph Martin over the payment of \$5,000 for the construction of the Town Hall with the completion of the work and the payment for extras in dispute.

In October, 1867, the name of Robert Matheson was introduced to the paper's masthead. In August, 1869, however, Robert Matheson evidently sold to J. D. Matheson. It was then we learn J. D. Matheson had been acting as editor for

some time. An announcement of August 26, 1869, noted that "this arrangement will make no difference in the editorial management of the paper and we will state that there will be no change in the political views of The Champion."

Changes in the proprietors of The Champion seemed to come thick and fast. In January, 1870, an announcement pointed out that C. E. Keeling, formerly of Guelph, had formed a partnership with J. D. Matheson, who had purchased the paper a few months before. Mr. Keeling was evidently a practical printer and was to superintend the job department.

Two years later in January, 1872, the partnership of Matheson and Keeling was dissolved. Two more years passed and J. D. Matheson sold to George Wilson.

On June 18, 1874, Mr. Wilson gave a detailed outline of the policy he would promote in politics, temperance, local news and general news.

The Milton of the late sixties and early seventies was vividly described by Miss Anna Ruddy writing to The Champion in 1935.

Says Miss Ruddy, "Milton in the late sixties or early seventies, which is as far back as I remember, was a little town of about one thousand persons. The nearest railway was at Bronte. Street lights were unknown and when it rained, the town was a sea of mud. Sewing machines were an innovation and people were still rejoicing over the great improvement in the coal-oil lamp over the tallow candle. On the farms nearby, the old ways still held. As a small child I can remember seeing Mr. Johnson Harrison sowing his wheat by hand. Even now I can close my eyes and see his tall figure untiringly walking up and down the rows, rhythmically scattering first one hand, then the other, the grain which was later to be reaped with a cradle and threshed by horse power or perhaps with a flail."

A gap in the large bound books of copies of The Canadian Champion obscures the next change in ownership. We learn that in July, 1880, the Champion was being published by Pantou and Rixon in an office on Main St. opposite the Thompson House. These publishers continued to at least October, 1882. The paper was then sold to a partnership of D. W. Campbell and William Pantou Junior.

Mr. Campbell dies

The Campbell and Pantou partnership continued until April, 1896, when Mr. Campbell, a county treasurer as well as the senior partner in the firm of Campbell and Pantou, died at his residence.

At one time the town had at least three newspapers. The Champion had been started in 1861, The Halton New Era in 1859 and the Halton News was founded in 1872—continuing and amalgamating with the Milton Sun January 6, 1888. The Sun had been published since the early 1880s as a Conservative paper. And in 1885 William Brothers and Richard White founded the Milton Reformer as another Liberal paper competing with The Champion. It was amalgamated with The Champion December 31, 1931.

On January 19, 1899 The Milton Reformer reported "The first number of the Halton Standard, the new Conservative organ, was issued from the office in Milton last week. It is a newsy, well printed sheet and our Conservative friends have no reason to feel ashamed of it."

Three newspaper

"who says now that Milton is not the centre of wealth, beauty and intelligence, especially the latter? Show us another town in Ontario the size of Milton that can boast of three local newspapers. We are the people." (Obviously The Milton Reformer, The Canadian Champion and the new Halton Standard. The Halton Standard amalgamated with The Champion in January 1901.)

By 1878 The Champion was being published in an office "opposite the Thompson House" which is the building currently occupied by Classical Glass.

The editor wrote, "In our county but little of importance has happened... Our town appears to be progressing nothwithstanding."

(Continued on Pg. D3)

Milton's newspapers

	First Issue	Last Known Issue	Founder
Halton Journal	July 5, 1854	April 23, 1888	Samuel Clarke R. Rowe
Halton New Era	May 1859	1880's. (Name changed 1899)	W. G. Culloden
The Canadian Champion	May 13, 1861		James Campbell
The Sun	Aug. 6, 1868	Amalgamated with Halton News June 6, 1888	W. J. Watson
Halton News	July 26, 1877	Amalgamated with The Sun, June 6, 1888	T. J. Starrett
Milton Reformer	Nov. 5, 1865	Amalgamated with The Champion, Jan. 1, 1932.	W. D. Brothers Richard White
Halton Standard	Jan. 12, 1899	Amalgamated with The Champion Jan. 1901	?



The Champion, 1954. Jim Dills unloads papers from the company's first truck, in front of the original building built in 1922. The office at right, then a tele-

phone exchange and later a delicatessen, was joined to the first building in 1975 and remodelled for a newsroom.



The Champion today. The colonial styling outside blends with the Tudor design of the interior. The most recent renovations were carried out in 1975.

Publishers in 120 years

Publishers of The Canadian Champion:

- 1861-1864 - James A. Campbell
- 1864-1867 - Matheson & Hunter
- 1867-1869 - Robert Matheson
- 1869-1870 - J. D. Matheson
- 1870-1872 - J. D. Matheson & C. E. Keeling
- 1872-1874 - J. D. Matheson
- 1874 - George Wilson
- 1882 - Pantou & Rixon
- 1882-1896 - D. W. Campbell & Wm. Pantou Jr.
- 1896-1927 - Wm. Pantou Jr.
- 1927-1943 - Blight & White
- 1943-1954 - G. A. Dills
- 1954-1978 - Dills Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd.
- 1978-1981 - Inland Publishing Co. Limited
- 1981 - Metrospan Community Newspapers