

Read All About It! Maine Newspaper Collections

By Russell C. Farnham, CG

[The United States Newspaper Program](#) (USNP) is an ongoing cooperative national effort among the states and the federal government to locate, catalog, and preserve on microfilm newspapers published in the United States from the eighteenth century to the present. Funding is by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, with technical assistance by the Library of Congress.

The USNP has supported projects in each of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Each project is conducted by a single organization within a state or territory, usually the state's largest newspaper repository. Staff then will inventory holdings in public libraries, county courthouses, newspaper offices, historical museums, college and university libraries, archives, and historical societies. Catalog records are entered into a national database maintained by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), that are accessible through more than 15,000 dedicated computer terminals worldwide. Microfilm copies of newspapers produced under this program are available to researchers anywhere in the country through interlibrary loan.

Within Maine, this project is being overseen by Janet Roberts, project coordinator of the Maine Newspaper Project (MNP) for the Maine State Library, who is focused on finding collections throughout the state that will be integrated into this system. The Maine project team has completed its inventory work, and preliminary overview information on newspaper titles and holdings for each county has been sent to every library, historical society, and museum in that county. MNP hopes to be able to place this information on a searchable database on the Internet in the near future.

Newspapers are universally recognized as a valuable tool to genealogists, who often find themselves stymied in the search for information of elusive ancestors. Obituaries often provide answers. Finding an obituary in an old newspaper is usually not a difficult chore if the researcher knows the date and place of death, and is able to access the paper. It is often necessary to review many reels of unindexed film, if the newspaper is even available on film. Of secondary interest is the desire to learn more about lifestyles of the past. Possibly a major event or newsworthy subject is the interest. Whatever it may be, the newspaper can provide the genealogist with detailed information that will permit a more realistic picture of the times that our ancestor lived in.

That is the easy part. Then the researcher must determine what newspapers survived and where newspaper collections can be found in order to conduct a search. Fortunately, various Maine repositories decided long ago to begin collecting newspapers, or to siphon data out of these papers that would be useful to genealogists. There is no single source or document that provides the Maine genealogist a broad view of the newspaper resources in the state. It is not the intent to offer in this article anything resembling an all-inclusive look at such a list or document, but rather to highlight the core newspaper collections in the state of Maine. These collections can be found at the Maine State Library (MSL) in Augusta, the Fogler Library at the University of Maine in Orono, and in Portland, the Portland Public Library, and Maine Historical Society.

[Maine State Library](#)

State House Station # 64

Augusta, Maine 04333

207-287-5600

Most of the older paper copies of newspapers at the MSL are stored off-site, so they need to be ordered a day in advance of a planned visit. The MSL has an extensive microfilm collection, but genealogists are encouraged to contact the library by phone to determine if the paper being sought is available. Requests must be very specific, i.e., "*Kennebec Journal* of February 21, 1876."

[Fogler Library](#)

University of Maine

5729 Raymond H. Fogler Library

Orono, ME 04469

(207) 581-1661

A listing of the core collection available at the Fogler Library can be found in the [Special Collections page](#) of their website. Once the Special Collections page has been accessed look to the lower right side of the page for a link titled “Maine Newspapers.” From this page you will see two links at the top of the page that permit the researcher to view the newspapers either by “title” or “location of publisher” of the paper. The most common usage of interest to the genealogist is the “location of publisher” option, as most genealogists (myself included) have little or no idea which paper was putting out the news 100 or 150 years ago. But we most definitely are tuned in to the “location” of our research problem!

By clicking on this option, a listing of the newspapers appears, sorted alphabetically by town or city, which also shows the dates (by year of publication) that are available at the library. The list shows, for instance, twenty-one papers available in the city of Augusta, ranging from specialized interest papers (*Maine State Labor News*) and religious newspapers (*Gospel Banner and Maine Christian Pilot*) to traditional newspapers such as the *Kennebec Journal* and the *Kennebec Weekly Journal*. Most of the Augusta newspapers are not on microfilm, so access to the original copies must be ordered at the Fogler Library a week in advance through the Special Collections Department (email them at spc@umit.maine.edu or call at the number above). The earliest *Journal* newspapers available commence from 1825 (*Kennebec Weekly Journal*), with scattered issues. A more complete collection of the *Kennebec Journal* is found from 1870 to the present.

Eighteen Bangor newspapers are listed under a variety of names, some of which (as with any paper) may be the same paper, but under new owners or management and with a new name. Only a small number of issues of some papers are available. As expected, the deepest newspaper collections are from the metropolitan areas. In Augusta it was the *Kennebec Journal* and the *Kennebec Weekly Journal*. The library has the *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* on microfilm from 1836 to 1900 and the *Bangor Daily News* from 1900 to the present. The *Bangor Commercial* offers an opportunity for a further look into the late nineteenth century (1872-1956), although it may lack human-interest stories owing to its title. These newspapers can also be found at the Bangor Public Library (see below for more information). This highlights an important point: do not give up if the paper you seek is not at a certain location—you may find it at a different repository. There may be other institutions that extracted information from the same common source. Small local libraries and historical or genealogical societies should not be overlooked as they often have select issues of paper copies, or have compiled their own abstracts (indices) of local residents for their archival collections.

The following list represents selected towns and city newspapers that are included in the collection at the Fogler Library, showing the earliest date *any* newspaper from these locations is available. This may only consist of a single issue or the collection may jump to a later date. For instance, you may only find a single issue of a Kennebunk newspaper in 1802 before jumping ten years to 1812. Typically, researchers will wish to access the Fogler Library website (or contact library staff), to determine the precise issues available. As in any situation, it is wise to do your homework before traveling to the library.

Town	Earliest date of newspaper
Alfred	1915
Auburn	1880
Augusta	1825
Bangor	1836
Bar Harbor	1881
Bath	1820
Belfast	1820
Biddeford	1860
Brunswick	1820
Calais	1832
Camden	1869
Caribou	1880
Castine	1809
Clinton	1879
Damariscotta	1860
Dover-Foxcroft	1828

Eastport	1819
Ellsworth	1851
Farmington	1840
Gardiner	1826
Hallowell	1810
Houlton	1860
Kennebunk	1802
Lewiston	1847
Machias	1823
Norridgewock	1844
Norway	1824
Old Town	1875
Paris	1827
Pittsfield	1882
Portland	1798
Presque Isle	1857
Rockland	1852
Rumford	1893
Saco	1845
Sanford	1923
Skowhegan	1842
South Paris	1833
Thomaston	1832
Waldoboro	1873
Waterville	1849
Westbrook	1901
Wilton	1881
Wiscasset	1859
York	1901

In addition to these original newspapers, the Fogler Library also keeps numerous published resources containing abstracted information of death notices, marriages, and divorces. The published books do not contain copies of obituaries.

Published books on the subject are:

- *Abstracts of Death Notices 1833-1852 and Miscellaneous News Items from the Maine Farmer 1833-1924*, David C. Young and Benjamin Lewis Keene (Heritage Books, Bowie, MD 1997).
- *Death Notices from Freewill Baptist Publications, 1811-1851*, David C. Young and Robert L. Taylor, (Heritage Books, 1985).
- *Machias Marriages and Deaths 1853-1891 compiled from the Machias Union and Machias Republican*. Typescript, Clarence Albert Day, n.d. at the Porter Memorial Library, Machias, and Maine State Library, Augusta.
- *Marriage and Divorce Records from Freewill Baptist Publications 1819-1851*, David C. Young and Elizabeth Keene Young (Heritage Books, 1994).
- *Marriage Notices from The Maine Farmer* , Elizabeth Keene Young and Benjamin Lewis Keene (Heritage Books, 1995).
- *Index to Portland (ME) Newspapers 1785-1835*, William B. Jordan, Jr., (Heritage Books, 1994).
- *Vital Records from Maine Newspapers, 1785-1820* , David C. Young and Elizabeth Keene Young (Heritage Books, 1993).
- *Vital Records from the Eastport Sentinel of Eastport, Maine 1818-1900*, Kenneth L. Willey, compiler, (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1996).

The Portland Public Library

5 Monument Sq
Portland, ME 04101
207-871-1700

The Portland Public Library keeps a “Maine News Index” of articles that appear in the following newspapers and magazines (none of which are focused solely on obituaries). The index was started in 1945, and can be searched by business name, individual’s name, and subject. It also includes an abstract of the article. The index for 1945-1992 is in a card catalog, with 1993 to the present on computer.

Newspaper	Dates Available
Casco Bay <i>Weekly</i>	1988 to present
<i>Down East</i>	1954 to present
<i>Island Journal</i>	1984 to present
Maine <i>Sunday Telegram</i>	1945 to present
Portland <i>Chronicle</i>	1981-1983
Portland <i>Evening Express</i>	1978-1991
Portland <i>Independent</i>	1978-1979
Portland <i>Monthly</i>	1986 to present
Portland <i>Press Herald</i>	1945 to present
Portland <i>Sunday Telegram</i>	Successor to Maine <i>Sunday Telegram</i>
<i>Salt Magazine</i>	1974 to present
<i>Southern Maine Business Digest</i>	

There is also a broad collection of approximately 186 different Maine newspapers at the library, the majority of which are from Portland. While there are far too many newspapers to show here, the PPL collection ranges from the early issues of the first newspaper in Maine, the *Falmouth Gazette* (1788), to recent issues of current Portland newspapers. Many newspapers are on microfilm, as shown below, and none are indexed. Newspapers for towns beyond Portland at the PPL are as follows:

Augusta

The *Age* 1861-1863
Kennebec Journal weekly 1870-1887
Kennebec Journal, daily 1833-1884
Maine *Republican* Trunk, 1957
National Democrat, daily 1879
Maine *Farmer*, weekly 1839-1840; 1914; 1920-1923

Belfast

Republican Journal, weekly 1829

Buxton

Gazette of Maine, 1810

Cape Elizabeth

Coast Watch, 1895-1915

Cornish*Yankee Farmer**New England Cultivator*, 1835-36**Farmington***Daily Patriot*, 1863**Hallowell***American Advocate*, 1818-1820**Lewiston**Maine *Democrat*, monthly 1957-1958**Limerick***Ossipee Valley Herald*, weekly 1908-1913**Skowhegan***World in a Nutshell* 1833**Saco***Freeman's Friend*, 1807-1810**Westbrook***Chronicle-Gazette*, weekly 1900-1903*Globe-Star*, weekly, 1893-1903*Star*, weekly, 1894**Wiscasset***Seaside Oracle*, 1871, 1874, 1876-1877.

Portland Library Newspapers On Microfilm

Newspaper	Dates Available	Frequency/Remarks
<i>Cumberland Gazette</i>	1786-1791	
<i>Eastern Argus</i>	1835-1921	daily
<i>Eastern Argus</i>	1803-1884	weekly
<i>Eastern Herald</i>	1792-1804	weekly and semi-weekly
<i>Falmouth Gazette</i>	1785-1786	weekly and semi-weekly
<i>Maine Sunday Telegram</i>	1968-date	
<i>Oriental Trumpet</i>	1796-1800	an old film
<i>Portland Advertiser</i>	1831-1909	daily
<i>Portland Advertiser</i>	1824-1838	semi-weekly
<i>Portland Daily Press</i>	1862-1878 (33 reels)	daily, paper copy to 1921
<i>Portland Evening Express</i>	1930 to date	daily
<i>Portland Evening News</i>	1927-1938	daily
<i>Portland Gazette</i>	1798-1824	weekly
<i>Portland Pleasure Boat</i>	1845-1860	
<i>Portland Press Herald</i>	1921-date	daily

Portland <i>Sunday Telegram</i>	1920-1929; 1944-1948	weekly
Portland <i>Sunday Times</i>	1875-1909	weekly
Portland <i>Transcript</i>	1837-1901	1837-1899 on microfilm
Topsham <i>Maine Times</i>	1968 +	weekly

Bangor Public Library

145 Harlow St.

Bangor, Maine 04401

207-947-8336

email: bplill@bpl.lib.me.us

This library has an extensive unindexed collection of newspapers on microfilm. The following papers have been indexed:

Newspaper	Dates Available	Remarks
Bangor <i>Daily News</i>	1900 to date	3 x 5 card file
Bangor <i>Commercial</i>	1875 to date	ditto, but with few names of use to genealogists.

Bethel Historical Society

Bethel Regional History Center

10-14 Broad Street, P.O. Box 12

Bethel, ME 04217-0012

207-824-2908 / 800-824-2910

email: info@bethelhistorical.org

In the late 1970s, the Bethel Historical Society began a project to extract vital records and other information from local newspapers. For instance, a selected index to the Oxford *Democrat* for the years 1833-1892 was created on 3 x 5 cards, which have since been retyped into notebooks. Although this special index contains many names, they are not connected to birth, death, or marriage notices that appeared in the paper. Nevertheless, the index has proven to be of great value to historians and genealogists. In addition to this index, there is another large card file of vital records extracted from numerous western Maine papers for selected years. The following is a general list of the newspapers and extracts that can be found at the Bethel Regional History Center:

Newspaper	Index Dates	Remarks
Bethel <i>Citizen</i>	1908-1988	deaths
Bethel <i>Courier</i>	1858-1861	births, deaths and marriages
Bethel <i>News</i>	1895-1900	births and marriages, deaths (1895-1908)
Farmington <i>The Chronicle</i>	1845-1857	births, deaths, and marriages
Farmington <i>Chronicle</i>	1857-1911	births, 1857-1886; 1888-1911;
		deaths and marriages: 1857-1881, 1883-1886, 1888-1893, 1897-1903, 1908, 1910-1911
Franklin <i>Patriot</i>	1858-1864	births, deaths and marriages
Franklin <i>Register</i>	1840-1842	births, deaths and marriages
Norway/Oxford <i>County</i>	23 Jun 1882-1884	births, deaths and marriages

<i>Advertiser</i>		
<i>Oxford Observer</i>	1824-1828	deaths and marriages
<i>Oxford Democrat</i>		births 1863-1867, 1899-1907; deaths 1833-1867, 1899-1907; marriages 1845-1867, 1899-1907
<i>Rumford Citizen</i>	1906-1908	births, deaths and marriages
<i>Sandy River Yeoman</i>	1831	births, deaths and marriages

Because of its small staff, the Bethel Historical Society is generally unable to respond to detailed requests for genealogical and/or historical information by mail. However, for a prepaid non-refundable fee of \$10 per hour (maximum \$30 per request), members of the research library committee will search for specific information in appropriate catalogs, card files, genealogies, town histories, published vital records, and directories. They are unable to search in manuscript material or unindexed publications. For each hour of contracted research, up to ten photocopies are provided (additional copies will be 25 cents per sheet) of pertinent material with notice of sources consulted, etc. In a letter (no e-mails), indicate clearly what information is being sought, and sources already checked. Include a business size SASE with the remittance (payable to the "Bethel Historical Society") and send to the Society at P.O. Box 12, Bethel, ME 04217. Requests are usually answered within four to six weeks.

Sagadahoc History & Genealogy Room

Patten Free Library
33 Summer St.
Bath, Maine 04530
207-443-5141

This library keeps a searchable index in three-ring binders of the following Bath newspapers:

Newspaper	Dates Available	Remarks
<i>American Sentinel</i>	1869-1892	incomplete
<i>Bath Anvil</i>	1906-1909	
<i>Bath Enterprise</i>	1889-1903	incomplete
<i>Bath Independent</i>	1894-1961	
<i>Daily Northern Tribune</i>	1847-1848	
<i>Daily Sentinel & Times</i>	1862-1868	
<i>Daily Times</i>	1869-1967	
<i>Daily Tribune</i>	1855-1858	
<i>Eastern Times</i>	1850-1856	
<i>Lincoln Telegraph</i>	1838-1842	
<i>Maine Inquirer</i>	1824-1833	incomplete
<i>Maine Times</i>	1986-1995	
<i>The Times Record</i>	1967-present	

Abbott Memorial Library

One Church St.

Dexter, ME 04930

The Abbott Memorial Library at Dexter features a searchable obituary database on their website . The obituaries are extracted from the *Eastern Gazette*, but are not limited to the Dexter area. You may view obituaries by date (1858-2000), by last name, or perform a search. Places of birth or death on this site are not restricted to Dexter or Maine, but one of the events must have occurred in Maine. For instance, there are individuals who were born in California, but died in Maine or born in Maine, but died in Massachusetts, making this a very useful site.

New England Old Newspaper Index Project of Maine

Apparently this worthwhile project has been put on the backburner. However, their web page contains useful information of various Maine newspaper collections (some of it duplicated here) and information about collections beyond Maine.

The Maine Historical Society

489 Congress St
Portland, ME 04101
207-774-1822

The MHS is a major source for genealogical research, and it has an extensive newspaper collection among their vast holdings. A large number of papers are available on microfilm, and most, if not all, paper copies are kept off-site in a controlled environment. There is no inventory of the newspaper collection. However, a 3 x 5 card file is available in the reading room containing an inclusive list of newspapers in their collection, by name of the paper, town, and year. An index of selected obituaries of prominent individuals from 1900-1950 is available. In the 1950s, and up until 1963, the card file was expanded to include an index of names compiled from "clippings."

As in any case when looking for newspapers, it is important that researchers be very specific when making inquiries. It is important to specify the name of the paper you are seeking, the town, and the date, when phoning in advance of a visit.