

# MORE THAN SOMETHING TO WRITE ON

It's cheap. It's plentiful. We use it to write and draw on, wrap packages with, paste on our walls, and to start fires. Eggs and milk are packaged in it. Maybe you bring your lunch to school in a sack made of it. In the 1970s some clothes were even made from this material. What is it? Paper.

Our ancestors never treated paper casually. It was expensive to buy and so was used carefully and **sparingly**. Only the very wealthy would crumple up a piece of paper they were writing on so that they could start over on a fresh sheet.



Today we each commonly go through thousands of sheets a year with hardly a thought. Consider, for example, how much paper is used each day in your school. Figure out how much you use by counting, or weighing, the paper in your desk. Then ask your classmates and teacher to do the same. Add all the figures together. Ask the other classes in your school to do it too. Be sure to add the figures from the school

office, library, and art room. It may surprise you to learn how much paper your school uses in just one day, let alone in a school year. Think of ways that you can cut down on the amount paper that is thrown out. Can you recycle it? What other uses might it have?

Certainly Vermont children going to school in the 1800s did not consume so much paper. They used slates to do their lessons. Paper was reserved for very special letters and the printing of newspapers and **broad-sides**.

Vermont's first paper mill opened in 1784 in Bennington. The Walloomsac River provided the power it needed. Soon other mills opened in different parts of the state. Their product, however, was **crude** by today's standards and those who could afford to bought imported papers from Europe.

The mills used old cotton and linen rags to produce paper. Newspapers ran many advertisements asking for rags. The following notice appeared in the November 29, 1784, *Vermont Gazette*:

The inhabitants of Vermont, are earnestly requested to be particularly careful in saving all sorts of cotton and linen rags, for which cash, or any kind of paper will be given in exchange.

Ten years later papermakers tried a new ingredient. The October 28, 1794, issue of the *Farmer's Library* of Rutland was printed on paper made from a combination of rags and basswood bark. The newspaper said:

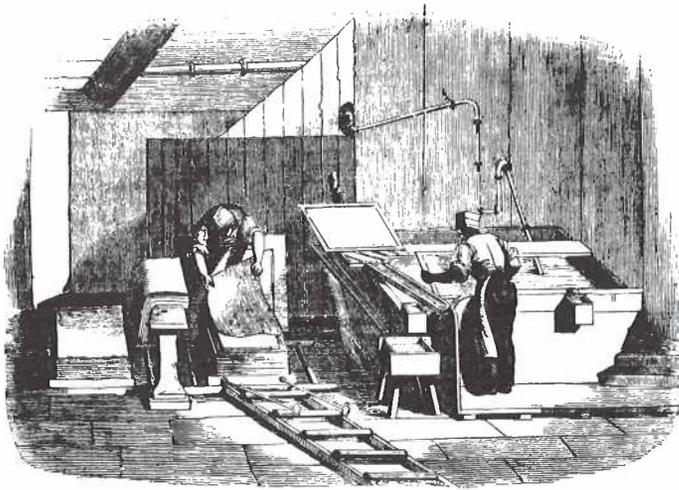
We have the pleasure here to present to the public, a specimen of printing paper, manufactured from the Bark of the Basswood Tree, together with an equal proportion of common course rags: - This is a new discovery, made by Col. Lyon, of

---

**“RAGS make paper. PAPER makes money. MONEY makes banks. BANKS make loans. LOANS make beggars. BEGGARS make RAGS.”** - *Anonymous 18th century writer*

Fairhaven, and promises fairly, to **accelerate** the paper making business in this country, as the cost of the Bark, which **abounds** in great plenty, is not more than one third as much as the cost of rags.

Other advances followed. They helped to improve the quality of paper and lower its price. In time, wood-pulp-produced paper was more common than paper made from rags. The paper made from wood, however, yellowed because of the acids in the pulp.



Early papermaking operation

## VOCABULARY

**sparingly** - thriftily, economically

**broadside** - a sheet of paper, printed on one side, usually used as an announcement or advertisement

**crude** - rough or coarse

**accelerate** - to speed up

**abound** - to have a large number or amount