

# NEWS THAT'S OFF THE WALL

## HISTORY HIDDEN IN THE PAPER WORLD OF EPHEMERA

They may be on your refrigerator door. Perhaps someone slipped one underneath the windshield wiper of your family's car. Maybe you've seen them plastered on a telephone pole or taped to a store window. They're everywhere and come in all colors and sizes. We see them every day. What are they? Broadside, of course.

A broadside is a single sheet of paper printed on one side and posted in a public place. Today we call them



Charles Lester in front of a wall of broadsides at the Lowell Lake Lodge, Londonderry, Vermont, c.1890

posters. These public notices were the eighteenth and nineteenth century equivalent of our radio announcements, television commercials, and telephone business directories.

Our ancestors depended on broadsides to **inform** them of important public matters and **urgent** news as well as fairs, meetings, new products and services. Merchants, railroad companies, circus **promoters**, politicians, and other groups and individuals used broadsides to get out the word on all manner of subjects and doings. Whatever the topic, if the public needed to know, broadsides spread the news.

More people were likely to see and remember a large, bold, and well-placed broadside than an ad in a newspaper of long ago. But even with today's daily newspapers, telephones, and news broadcasts on TV and radio, we still use broadsides **extensively** to advertise everything from a school production of "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" to a reward for a lost dog.

People called billposters pasted broadsides on buildings, telegraph poles, covered bridges, and along fences. Sometimes billposters were considered a nuisance when they tacked broadsides where they were not wanted, so people often put up signs that said "Post no bills." Perhaps you have seen these signs or heard this expression.

Broadsides were, and still are, designed to use and then throw away. Because of this, many old broadsides are gone forever. Those we still have tell us a lot about community social life, industry, and **commerce**. Through them we **witness** church suppers, community corn roasts, and July 4 parades. We read about the newest talent at the local Grange Hall **pageant**. We see farm machinery and household appliances advertised as wondrous new developments that saved time and money for all wise enough to buy them. Notices for medicinal cure-alls give us a **glimpse** of a time when fantastic and unbelievable claims went unchallenged. Even faraway events of historic **significance**, like the death of President Abraham Lincoln, were reported on broadsides and posted for everyone to see.

The success of a broadside depended on its ability to catch the public's eye and interest. On a wall plastered

**WARNING!**  
**FISHING POX**  
 VERY CONTAGIOUS TO ADULT MALES

**SYMPTOMS--** Continual complaint as to need of fresh air and relaxation. Patient has blank expression, sometimes deaf to wife and kids. Has no taste for work of any kind. Frequent checking of tackle catalogues. Hangs out in Sporting Goods Stores longer than usual. Secret night Phone calls to fishing pals. Mumbles to self. Lies to everyone.

**NO KNOWN CURE**

**TREATMENT---** Medication is useless. Disease is not fatal. Victim should go fishing as often as possible.

**WANTED! BIG MAPLE TREES** John Rowell, Chelsea, Vt.

with posters the one most likely to dazzle the eye was first to be read. To achieve this, printers used fancy borders and lettering. The language included exaggerated and **unfounded** claims to get the public to attend an event or buy a special new product. Humor **enticed** passersby to stop and read. Do you think more people read John Rowell's ad for maple trees than would have if he'd left out his fishing pox **gimmick**?

Broadsides from traveling sideshows were designed to make the public curious. A show at the Bradford Hotel tempted readers to come and see eight live rattlesnakes, and all for an admission price of only six cents. "Some of these snakes," read the broadside, "are over 20 years old and nearly 4 feet in length. The owner will take them out several times in the course of the day and handle them with bare hands."

Another **oddy** was the "living skeleton." The little Calvin Edson was five feet, three inches tall and weighed only fifty-three pounds. According to the notice, there was "nothing in his dress or appearance to alarm the most delicate."

Looking at old broadsides also helps us to learn about printing and graphic design. Early broadsides were printed by hand on large presses. Unlike modern photographic copy machines that produce copies quickly, early


presses were heavy to use and slow to operate. Type for the words was set by hand, letter by letter and illustrations had to be specially carved from blocks of wood. Today paper is relatively cheap and plentiful, but in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, paper was handmade from rags. Because of its **scarcity**, broadsides were often recycled to make new paper or simply flipped over so people could use their blank backsides for writing paper.

*Extraordinary and Wonderful*

**Curiosity,**  
*Myrtle Hill*

*New to be seen at*

**LIVING**



**SKELLETON!**

**CALVIN EDSON,**  
 THE LIVING

**Skeleton.**

In 1777, when Vermont declared itself an independent republic, a need arose to print and post timely news and other public matters. To solve the problem a printing press was brought to Vermont by oxcart from Connecticut to the town of Dresden, now Hanover, New



THE  
Wonder of the Age!

No One Should Miss It!

THE  
Edison Electric Phonograph

WILL EXHIBIT AT

School House Hall,  
Jan. 7th. --- at 8 P M.  
15 New Selections.

The majority of people who have never heard the Phonograph have formed an erroneous idea in regard to it, they thinking that it is hard to hear like the telephone. The phonograph can be distinctly heard all over the hall. The entertainment will consist of thirty selections, including Full Band, Cornet, Trombone, Piccolo, Drum, and Xylophone solos: also songs, quartets, pathetic and humorous recitations. The Band selections are from the noted Baldwin's Cadet Band, and Cooper's Military Band of Boston. Also several selections by the well-known Ethiopian comedian, "Hank White."

At each entertainment a selection will be taken and immediately reproduced on the Phonograph.

Admission, 20 cts. Children under 12 yrs., 10 cts.

WILKINS & EMERSON.

Hampshire. The Spooner brothers operated the press and in 1778 began printing Vermont's first broadsides and

pamphlets. This Dresden Press is now on display at the Vermont Historical Society.

For more than two hundred years, Vermonters have used and enjoyed broadsides. We continue the tradition today. Just as the old broadsides help us to understand earlier times, modern broadsides will give our great-grandchildren clues to what our lives are like today. They'll know what shows we went to, what rock bands came to perform nearby, and the price of this year's maple sugar crop. Maybe they'll even learn about the bake sale the Little League put on to raise money for new uniforms or the penny drive that the Derby Line Junior Historians held to help save the Long Trail.

**DR. L. ROBERTS,**

**SURGEON DENTIST,**

WOULD respectfully announce to the People of this vicinity, that he has taken Rooms at

and wishes to solicit the attention of the Public to the following notice:

**HE WILL INSERT TEETH,**

OF THE BEST QUALITY, AND IN THE BEST IMPROVED STYLE,

as well as can be done in Boston or New-York, for those who are destitute of those beautiful organs, on the most liberal terms. He is prepared to

**INSERT TEETH ON GOLD PLATE,**

FROM ONE TO A FULL SET, SO AS TO SATISFY THE MOST FASTIDIOUS.

FILLING TEETH WITH FINE GOLD,  
WILL BE PERFORMED IN THE LATEST & BEST APPROVED STYLE.

**Satisfaction Guaranteed in all Cases.**

His experience has been such that he makes no hesitancy in stating that those who patronize him will feel that they have got the worth of their money.

He has a REMEDY WHICH NEVER FAILS TO CURE THE HARDEST TOOTH-ACHE, in a few minutes, without causing any pain.

PLEASE CALL.

Today's posters are another piece of the puzzle we can leave behind for future Junior Historians to put together. So save a poster and help someone know just a little bit more about us and how we live today.

**HEY, LOOK**

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**BABE RUTH** *The Home Run King*

AND THE

**BOSTON RED SOX**

WILL PLAY THE

**RUTLAND BASE BALL TEAM**

AT THE FAIR GROUNDS

**RUTLAND, VT.**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5**

GAME CALLED AT 3 P. M. *1909*

The Biggest Base Ball Attraction that ever played in the Green Mountains.

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TO COVER THE TREMENDOUS EXPENSE

Score Cards, \$1.00; War Tax, 10c. - - - - \$1.10

Autos, 45c.; War Tax, 5c. - - - - .50

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The Rutland team will include some big leaguers. Also, returns from World's Series games in front of Grand Stand.

## VOCABULARY

**inform**—to tell  
**urgent**—needing immediate attention  
**promoter**—advertiser or salesperson  
**extensively**—a lot, a great deal  
**commerce**—business  
**witness**—to see  
**pageant**—a dramatic performance or play  
**glimpse**—a quick look  
**significance**—importance  
**unfounded**—not based on fact  
**entice**—to lure  
**gimmick**—trick  
**odddity**—strange thing  
**scarcity**—shortage

**JUST OUT FOR THE HOLIDAYS!**

*The Patent Indestructible*

**WOODEN JOINTED DOLL.**

BALL AND SOCKET JOINTS.

**The Most Perfect Doll Made.**

ENTIRELY NEW AND ORIGINAL.

*JOINTS in the Neck.*  
*JOINTS in the Shoulders.*  
*JOINTS in the Elbows.*  
*JOINTS in the Hips.*  
*JOINTS in the Knees.*

THIS BEAUTIFUL

**Jointed Doll**

IS THE COMING

**Great Amusement**

For the Millions of Little Ones.

We also furnish an improved Jointed Doll, with an elastic body so designed as to fit all kinds of American manufacture.

**Cheapest Doll**

On the Market.

For sale by all Wholesale Toy and Notion Dealers.

PRICE: \$7 per doz., regular 80 days, 10 per cent. off, 90 days, and 5 " 10 "



**IT IS VERY LIGHT.**

Weighting only 3/4 ounces.

Twelve inches long, and of beautiful form.

Painting on the head warranted NOT TO WASH OFF.

J. S. PATTON,  
 WM. H. H. SLACK.

**JOINTED DOLL COMPANY,**  
 SPRINGFIELD, VERMONT.