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Vermont Newspapers during Ratification

In the late 1780s and early 1790s Vermont had two weekly newspapers, both begun in 1783. Anthony Haswell and David Russell printed *The Vermont Gazette* in Bennington on Mondays during the period 1787–91, when the state debates over ratification were taking place. During the late 1780s the masthead read: “*With generous Freedom for our constant Guide,—We scorn Controul, and print for every Side.*” That couplet disappeared with the issue of 20 July 1789. Following a period with no couplet in the masthead, a more elaborate masthead with a new couplet appeared on 14 December: “*While DECENCY and CANDOUR guide the PEN—Our PRESS shall SCORN the IMPERIOUS FROWN of MEN.*” All of the issues of the *Gazette* for the period from September 1787 through February 1791 are extant.

George Hough and Alden Spooner published *The Vermont Journal, and the Universal Advertiser*, which was printed in Windsor on Mondays from September 1787 through June 1789, on Wednesdays from July 1789 through June 1790, and on Tuesdays from July 1790 through February 1791. Only four issues of the *Journal* for this period are not extant. The paper’s masthead contained the words “Vermont: Freedom & Unity.” Though Hough retired in December 1788, leaving Spooner as the publisher, the title of the paper did not change to *Spooner’s Vermont Journal* until 20 March 1792. Spooner was also the state printer until an act passed in October 1790 provided that the state laws would be printed by either Spooner or Haswell-Russell, depending on which side of the mountains the legislature was sitting.

The full report of the Constitutional Convention, including the text of the Constitution and related documents, was published in both newspapers in October 1787. Both newspapers carried a great deal of information dealing with the dispute between New York and Vermont. The newspapers also printed many advertisements announcing tax delinquencies for property, state laws, the gubernatorial proclamations announcing a day of thanksgiving, and the debates in the first federal Congress under the new Constitution. Between 10 January and 14 February 1791, the *Vermont Gazette* printed the debates that took place in the Vermont ratifying Convention.

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