

W. S. GILMAN  
Aroostook Pioneer, 1859-1885

GEORGE GILMAN  
Aroostook Pioneer, 1885-1906

THEODORE CARY  
Aroostook Times, 1860-1898

S. H. HANSON  
Aroostook Times, 1898-1906

CHARLES A. LYONS  
Aroostook Pioneer, 1906-1916

CHARLES H. FOGG  
Aroostook Times, 1907-1917  
Houlton Times, 1917-1932

ALBERT K. STETSON  
Aroostook Pioneer, 1918-1930

BERNARD E. ESTERS  
Aroostook Pioneer 1930-32  
Houlton Pioneer Times, 1933—

## Pioneer Times, Oldest Aroostook Business, Has Served County Well

### Newspaper Has Had Many Editors, Won Several State, National Prizes

By Bernard E. Esters  
Editor and Publisher, Houlton Pioneer Times

The history of any community served by a conscientious newspaper is best learned through the columns of that newspaper.

In this respect the town of Houlton was for many years doubly fortunate.

Not only has it been the beneficiary of good newspaper service for a century, but for 64 years of that time it had two weekly newspapers faithfully to inscribe for all time, the story of its progress.

For many years Houlton was the only town in Maine wherein two newspapers were published by separate companies and without any collusion whatsoever as to policy or management.

This duplication came to an end January 1, 1933 with the birth of the Houlton Pioneer Times from the joint publications, the Aroostook Pioneer and the Houlton Times. But at that time each had

there will be several Counties constructed of the territory now embraced in the County of Aroostook, and it may be very probable that the settlement of Fort Kent may be the shire town of one of them, but for the present it is not, we think, consistent with the best good of the whole, to have our County divided—it seems to be of more practical benefit, for the present, to have our large plantations incorporated into towns."

#### RAILROAD IS URGED

A decidedly militant point of view was expressed by the editor of the Aroostook Pioneer, in the very early days of his newspaper's life, in behalf of the extension of the railroad into the young and growing county of Aroostook.

The result of this exhortation did not, of course, have early results. It was not until 35 years later that the tracks and regular railroad service from within Maine reached Houlton. Service had come from Canada but the voice of the Aroostook press was consistently and vociferously raised to urge a Maine project.

Early in 1858, Editor Hall laid, the alternative on the line for all

with eight years of local experience behind it and guided by the capable hands and mind of Theodore Cary, its founder.

#### ROOM FOR BOTH

There apparently was room for both newspapers because each continued to flourish and prosper as neighbors for the 64 years that followed, up to the time of their ultimate merger.

stretch of time between its founding and the present day, that a newspaper bearing the name of Pioneer as either all or part of its title, did not make a weekly appearance in Aroostook County. The Aroostook Times did appear as usual during that period, which maintains the present newspaper's succession of uninterrupted existence.

Reason for the cessation of

only until the end of the following year. With the issue of January 2, 1908, there came an announcement of another change of ownership. Charles Lyons had acquired the interest of his partner, A. W. Hall and would, in the future "be the sole owner".

#### COMMENTS ON NEW STATUS

On this occasion Mr. Lyons was moved to prove his editorial

**A PROMISE WAS KEPT**  
It is fair to say that Charles Lyons kept his promise to the best of his ability. For the next ten years or more, he maintained the business in the Court street establishment, adjoining the Exchange Hotel. On the completion of the Hamilton block on Main street, the more modern quarters were hard to resist and the machines and type and equipment were moved to the store at the eastern end of that block.

Mrs. Eunice Lyons, wife of the publisher, was active in the business and there was a time, following his death in 1916, when she had sole charge of the newspaper, with the assistance of the late Albert K. Stetson who later purchased it.

Stetson had first been employed for a period with the Aroostook Times during his summer vacations from Colby College and this had evidently decided him on his future career. He became associated with the Aroostook Pioneer some time after his graduation and became its publisher soon after the death of Charles Lyons.

He was the sole owner of the

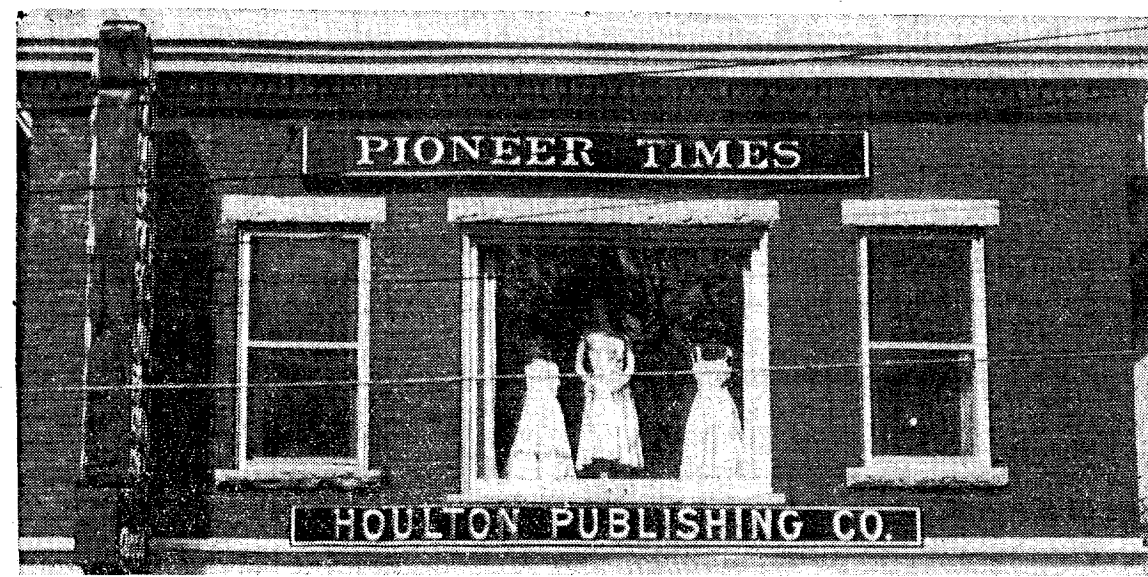
activities to such an extent that he decided to sell and, on Feb. 8, 1898, Stephen H. Hanson and J. Alton Reed became the owners. Theodore Cary died four years later, in 1902. He had married twice and left one son, Walter Cary, for many years a practicing lawyer in Houlton.

The firm of Hanson and Reed conducted the business for the next two years. Reed retired in 1900 and at that time Hanson became the sole proprietor for several years.

#### NEXT OWNERSHIP CHANGE

The next change of ownership was when Hanson sold out to a partnership composed of Charles E. Dunn, and Llewellyn M. Felch, a former principal of Ricker. This partnership was of brief duration and the property changed hands again, in 1907, when it was purchased by the late Charles H. Fogg.

More progressive than some of his immediate predecessors, Charles Fogg took an immense pride in his community and in his newspaper and, conceiving that the paper could be of great help to the town, he applied himself





the Houlton Pioneer Times from the joint publications, the Aroostook Pioneer and the Houlton Times. But at that time each had its individual standing in the Maine journalistic world.

#### TWO EXCELLENT RECORDS

Each had made excellent records; each was highly regarded everywhere. It was the inexorable impact of an adverse economy in Aroostook County that led the two managements to agree to merge their interests into one company in the hope of achieving substantial savings.

The Houlton Pioneer Times under that name has been the aggressive and, we hope, enlightened voice of this community for almost a quarter of a century. Its management has not yet had cause to be other than proud of what it has meant to Houlton and what it has consistently tried to do for this community.

We could think of no more sincere wish at this point, in a century old career, than that the Houlton Pioneer Times, always abreast of whatever progress develops in the field of newspaper publishing shall acquit itself equally well over the next one hundred years . . . both for itself and for its community.

Contrary to what may be general opinion, the Aroostook Pioneer, which is the oldest newspaper in Aroostook County, did not first see the light of day in the Shiretown.

It was founded in 1857 in Presque Isle. Its first editor was Joseph B. Hall and it was published by W. S. Gilman. It took its name, obviously, from the fact that it was a "pioneer" in journalism in this then young county. Its first issue was dated December 1, 1857.

#### OLDEST COUNTY BUSINESS

Thus, the Houlton Pioneer Times, of which the Aroostook Pioneer was the beginning, is now in its 100th year of successive weekly publication. It will reach the venerable age of a century in a little less than three months. It is believed to be the oldest business firm in Aroostook County, having been continuously operating for 100 years. This fact also gives equal age to the Houlton Publishing Company that publishes it, an outgrowth of all its predecessors.

The early days of the Aroostook Pioneer were interesting ones. Its first editor, the late Joseph B. Hall, being then also a clerk in the Maine House of Rep-

readily available to his colleagues of that era.

To be sure he did not overlook this advantage with the result that the young Aroostook Pioneer frequently carried news stories of far more than local interest. Not only the county but the state was the arena for Joe Hall. This was a factor of some importance to a budding young newspaper in an era when transportation was very slow at best and news took a long time to travel any great distance.

In those days, however, time did not seem to be as much a consideration as did the text of the story. Regardless of its age, the story usually found its way into print. That is, if it had any merit at all.

Less store was set on timeliness a century ago.

#### MOST NORTHERLY PAPER

The flourishing young newspaper, which took pains to point out in an early issue that "The Aroostook Pioneer is the most northerly newspaper in the United States" sometimes brashly, sometimes with well directed vigor, took a position on most questions of the day, whether for or against.

Among its earlier discussions was one which considered the division of Aroostook County into two parts. And this less than 35 years after Maine had become a state and less than 20 years from the time of Aroostook's founding as a county and its 6800 square miles of area measured off and identified.

The idea, which came to naught as did so many similar suggestions which followed during the next century, was to draw a line east and west at a point somewhat south of Fort Kent with the land north of that line to be known as Madawaska County and with Fort Kent as the Shire town.

#### NO ORGANIZED TOWN

Editor Hall somewhat wryly commented on the proposal as "a novel mode of procedure, to say the least for parties to petition for a new county, when on the territory they propose to take, there is not a single incorporated town, and, what is more, no plantation even, whose inhabitants are willing to be incorporated".

He added, further on, the opinion that "the origin of these petitions is farther south than Madawaska."

In a vein of prophecy that failed to come true, the editor made the forecast that "We do not doubt but that eventually

consistently and vociferously raised to urge a Maine project.

Early in 1858, Editor Hall laid the alternative on the line for all to read. Said he, "If the State of Maine ever intends to open this rich region to settlement and occupation, she must do something to open a railroad as a thoroughfare to it, or it never can be effectually done".

#### POST OFFICE BERATED

Neither was the post office department and its service safe from the pen of the Aroostook Pioneer's crusading editor. In a vein that has a familiar ring and might well have been uttered in this very year, he reports a petition submitted to the post office department, through their congressmen, for daily mail service between Presque Isle and Houlton, has been denied because, "The condition of the finances of the department will not justify a further expenditure for additional trips on the route (between Houlton and Presque Isle) and; besides, the revenue derived from the offices falls short of paying for the present service. The application is therefore denied."

Editor Hall comments thusly, ". . . if all routes in the United States had service only so far as the offices located on them paid the bills, we are of the opinion that many of them would be deficient for a good portion of the time."

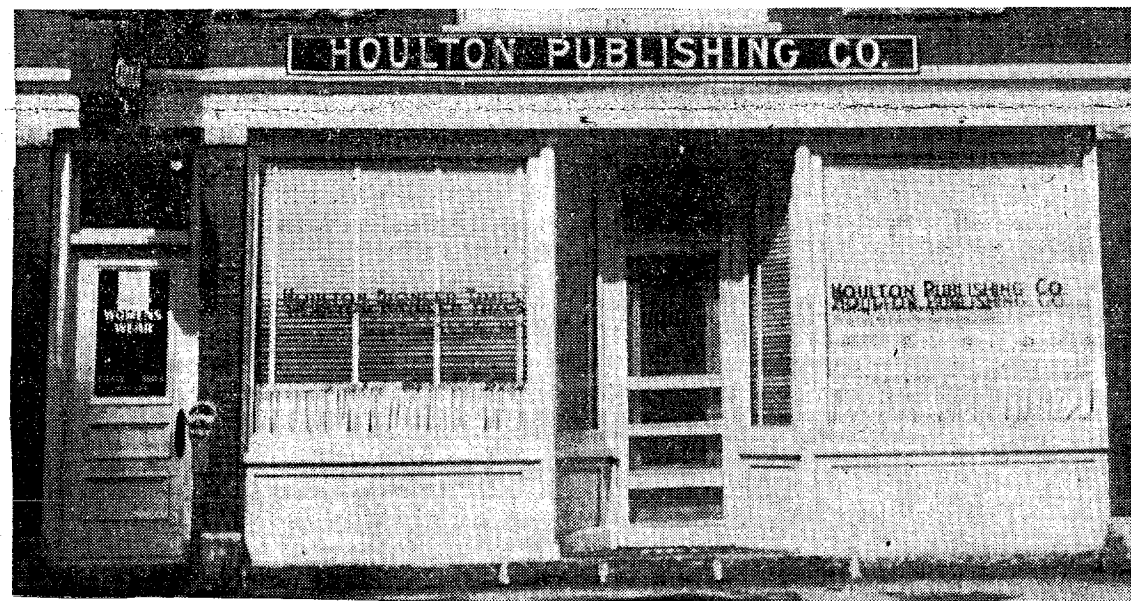
And so it went in the early years of this newspaper.

The pioneer territory in which it was published had a pioneer champion with a vigorous and articulate voice in defense of its future.

#### DID NOT LAST LONG

Editor Hall did not last long in that position. His political affiliations may have been responsible but, in any event, after seeing the paper firmly launched, he soon found other fields. He sold out his interest to W. S. Gilman but apparently could not dispose of his interest in Aroostook. He returned to Presque Isle in 1883 and re-established the Aroostook Herald of which he was editor until his death, July 5, 1889 at the age of 64.

W. S. Gilman then took active charge of the Aroostook Pioneer and continued as its editor and publisher in Presque Isle until 1868 when, for a reason that has never been satisfactorily explained, moved the publishing and printing business, lock, stock and barrel, to Houlton where he set up shop just across the street



This familiar building has been the home of the Houlton Pioneer Times since January 1, 1933 and, prior to that time, of the Houlton Times. It is interesting to note that it adjoins the building in which the Aroostook Times was printed for more than sixty years and is almost exactly across the street from where once sat the building in which the Aroostook Pioneer was printed from 1868, when it was moved to Houlton, to about 1916.

from the Aroostook Times, then The elder Gilman maintained his firm grip on the newspaper as well as on his printing business until, in its issue March 12, 1884, there appeared this terse announcement in the Aroostook Times, "The Pioneer this week announces a business change in their publication. Mr. George Gilman has been taken into partnership by his father, in the newspaper and job printing departments. The firm name now is W. S. Gilman and Son."

Whether this move was inspired by declining health, by vision of the future or just plain family expediency, is not known. But subsequent events soon were to prove its timeliness.

YOUNGER GILMAN IN CHARGE

The following year, in 1885, W. S. Gilman passed to his reward and his son, who was to develop into one of the most colorful characters of Aroostook journalism, assumed control of the business. The younger Gilman was a more vigorous personality than his father and the Aroostook Pioneer bore the definite stamp of his personality until his death in March, 1906.

It is an odd circumstance that the obituary of George Gilman never appeared in his own newspaper. His death occurred following publication of the last issue in March 1906 and there follows a period of two months when no issues were printed. So

far as is known, this is the only publication was reportedly the situation of the estate of the deceased publisher and it was considered the wisest course to suspend until matters could be settled.

#### NEW OWNERS TAKE OVER

At the time of these occurrences, Charles A. Lyons, who had previously been foreman of the plant of the Aroostook Republican in Caribou, was conducting a job printing business in Houlton known as Lyons' Printery. Two months after the demise of the younger Gilman, Mr. Lyons turned up, with A. W. Hall as a partner, owning the business. Hall, it appears, must have had the editorial responsibility because he had served as editor of the Aroostook Republican previously. It is safe to speculate that the two may have been associated as employees of the Caribou newspaper. In any event, the printing business was consolidated with the newspaper and publication of the Aroostook Pioneer, in its shop on Court street, adjoining the Court House, was soon resumed.

The new enterprise bespoke "the continuance of the patronage of friends and customers, assuring the same painstaking care of their orders in the future which has characterized the same in the past".

The partnership was a short lived one, however, continuing

ability in commenting on the significance of the event he had just made public, together with its bearing on the past. He admitted with appealing candor that "The Pioneer from the first has been a firm believer in the resources of Aroostook and has been a live medium in making known the merits of our fertile and healthy county. It has been the means of attracting within its borders thousands of citizens, and has always been an ardent and consistent advocate of its development".

While all of Aroostook was growing and developing, the new editor was pleased to note that "The Pioneer, too, has developed some. It has increased in size and importance nearly as much as the community in which it exists, and we hope in the near future, to develop it still more."

He closed with these words: "The patronage accorded the paper in the past has been of a liberal nature and the present proprietor hopes it may continue and increase in the future. We promise our subscribers and the people of this section just as good a paper as the patronage accorded us will warrant. Further than this we have few promises to make, but it will be our aim to make the Pioneer a power in the community in which it exists, and to represent the best element of citizenship in all things concerning the public at large".

uation and became its publisher soon after the death of Charles Lyons.

He was the sole owner of the property from that time until his death in February, 1930.

#### AROOSTOOK TIMES BUSY

While all this journalistic history was being written about the Aroostook Pioneer, the Aroostook Times, just across the street, was far from inactive in the field and was busy carving out, in its own right, a record of accomplishment within the community.

The Aroostook Times had been founded in 1860 by a man with no previous newspaper training. Theodore Cary was a member of a famous family that had played a conspicuous part in the affairs of Aroostook County and Houlton. He was the son of former Congressman Shepard and Susan Cary and was born in Houlton, April 9, 1835. He was only 25 years of age when he brought out on the streets of Houlton, its first weekly newspaper.

The first issue, printed April 13, 1860, was only 100 copies and it was laboriously produced on an old George Washington hand press, a contraption that had to be pulled by hand for every single page. This old press remained in the shop until the twenties, when it was sold to Henry Ford for his museum at Dearborn, Mich.

The locale for this ambitious venture was in the Cary home-stead, then located on the south side of Military street but long since gone. These quarters were soon found to be inadequate and the young business was moved to Court street and operated for a time on the site now occupied by the Heywood Apartments. The next move was to the building now occupied by the Salvation Army, which Mr. Cary bought for himself and occupied for many years.

#### FIRST PRINTING PLANT

In connection with the newspaper publishing enterprise, the young editor also brought into existence the first printing plant in Houlton, his first press arriving here in 1858, prior to launching his newspaper.

For 38 years, between 1860 and 1898, Theodore Cary was active in the publishing business in Houlton. He also found time to serve in many other local capacities, including town clerk, an incorporator of the Houlton Savings Bank, trustee of Ricker and in various other positions of trust.

Toward the end of the century his health began to fail him and he was obliged to curtail his ac-

newspaper and, conceiving that the paper could be of great help to the town, he applied himself to its improvement. Not too many years after his purchase of the business, he saw a chance to move into his own building. Accordingly he purchased the land adjoining, had a brick building erected and moved the entire plant in.

#### NAME CHANGED IN 1917

For ten years after he became the proprietor of the Aroostook Times, he maintained that name. With the first issue of January, 1917, however, the new name of the Houlton Times appeared on the masthead and the editor explained to his readers that the switch was made on the theory that Houlton Times would mean more to the community than Aroostook Times.

Fogg continued as the active publisher of the Houlton Times until 1932, a span of 25 years. He was less active between that time and his death in 1935.

During his ownership the newspaper improved sufficiently to win one national prize for its front page make-up and a lesser award for its editorial page.

#### COMBINED TWO OFFICES

Present publisher of the newspaper which was formed by the merger of two in January, 1933, is Bernard E. Esters, who has been editor since 1930 and has combined the positions of editor and publisher since 1935.

A native of Houlton, his first association with the Houlton journalistic picture came about in 1921, soon after his graduation from Colby College, when he joined the staff of the Houlton Times. Previously he had done some special work for the Aroostook Pioneer and, while in college, had been a regular correspondent for several newspapers, including the Boston Herald, Boston Post, Portland Press Herald and Waterville Sentinel.

He remained with the newspaper until 1922, when he joined the Springfield Republican and was later in the public relations, sales promotion and advertising business, in and around Boston. He returned to Houlton to rejoin the Houlton Times staff in 1928.

#### BUSINESS PURCHASED

Two years later, on the sudden death of Albert K. Stetson, then sole proprietor of the Aroostook Pioneer, Esters was able to secure the assistance of a group of local business men to join with him in the purchase of that newspaper. Two years more elapsed when, with the approach of what seemed