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## Historic Newspapers : St. John [New Brunswick] Globe : 1884 : 01 : 17

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**Historic Newspapers:**  
*St. John [New Brunswick] Globe*

A Collection Guide by  
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## Introduction to the Collection

In October 2003, Paula Thomas Baker donated an original 17 January 1884 edition of the *St. John Globe*. This broadside newspaper—with a Mark Twain passage on the front page—offers an excellent example of nineteenth century newspaper design in Canada. The donor’s spouse, M. E. “Buddy” Baker, formerly worked in the Media Relations office at USF St. Petersburg.

## Preservation Note

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## Provenance of the *St. John Globe*

This collection falls under the Journalism provenance of the Special Collections and Archives department, Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, USF St. Petersburg.

## Scope and Contents

This collection contains one issue of *St. John Globe* (New Brunswick) dated 17 January 1884, representing volume XXVI, issue 14.

## Descriptive Notes

The typical readers of this newspaper would have had a strong grasp of the English language and likely an appreciation for literature. Business, pleasure, and culture are closely linked throughout this paper. Fashion, business sense, literary sensibility, and quality leisure time are all mutually reinforcing building blocks to living a good, productive life.

Advertisements announced the sale of typewriters and pens, presumably targeted towards literary types as well as professionals and government workers. The fashion section, which had no illustrations, resorted to lengthy, detailed descriptions. Even the advertisements, which occupy the first five columns of the front page, were remarkably verbose. An advertisement for foot muffs read: “Any Lady or Gentleman who has once enjoyed the comfort of the FOOT MUFF during a long sleigh drive, will not again be willingly without them.” Here, as elsewhere, an elaborate description of the product omitted the cost and the name and location of the store were understated.

The paper conveys a “Renaissance attitude,” especially in the article depicting Mark Twain’s visit to New York City. In this article, literary convention and style were subordinated to the economic conditions under which the author wrote. To write successfully, an author must have ample leisure time, not be constrained by pressures, and be financially stable enough to not rely upon the next publication for sustenance and thus have the time and resources to negotiate a fair price for a manuscript. Twain’s financial stability allowed him to write at his own

pace and rise above commercial pressures. For example, he took three years to write Innocents Abroad, but he enjoyed himself throughout the process.

The author of the Mark Twain article was leery of corporate business practices. Nevertheless, he believed that the way to beat the corporations was to do better than them at their own game, as Twain has done. Twain's success derived from being a businessman first and a writer second: "Mark Twain's use of his pen is professional [...] but his making of books is quite mercantile." Confidence was the key. Twain has "no intention of accepting the usual conditions, which are that the author shall assume all the risk of loss and take only about 10 per cent of the receipts." Rather, by engaging himself in virtually every aspect of the book publishing process, Twain received nearly 50%. One of Twain's tactics was to publish in London one day before he published in the United States. By English Law in the nineteenth century, this allowed him to maintain possession of the copyright in England and thereby reap more profits overseas. As a result of his shrewd business sense, Twain was "the only writer who controls his writings throughout the English-speaking world." The columnist expressed confidence that if Mark Twain could do it, so could the reader.

The paper's format allowed readers to remain aware of government developments and also inform them on how to participate in economic enterprises. "Local" and "Common Council" events are described in long, legalistic, official sentences. Among recent developments listed are "the question of having Quebec made the eastern summer terminus and St. John and Halifax the winter terminus of the Canada Pacific Railway" as well as a motion to "erect poles on the streets on which to stretch electric light wires." Presumably, weather prevented easy rail access to Quebec in the winter, and electricity had just started to make its way into the town. Not much else was revealed about industry, beyond civic improvements such as the building of bridges and canals.

Local columnists did not shy away from controversy. At a local government meeting, an alderman was accused of having "exceeded his duty lately in giving the contract for pile driving at the east side ferry slip [...] without consulting the committee." The accuser said he knew of a lower bidder, and referred to someone, presumably the accused, as a "silvery tongued orator from Wellington Ward." A letter to the editor also complained that electric lighting at a skating rink had been promised as an inducement to "subscribers" (investors) but had not yet been supplied, proving that broken promises by authorities are not a recent phenomenon.

The paper was also preoccupied with shipping, trade, and travel. Principal modes of transportation included rail, horse and buggy or sleigh, and ships designed for the Great Lakes, Canals, and perhaps the ocean. Waterways were central to life at New Brunswick. Citizens knew the names of the ships that come to port. A ship that did not arrive on schedule caused great concern.

Imports far and wide, from interior Canada to the United States, Germany, and England, suggested cosmopolitan pretenses. Typical readers of this paper would also have been interested in St. John's place in a larger national and Atlantic context. A certain allegiance to England is apparent, although in keeping up with competing nations a certain admiration for customs of other nations is not unusual. Readers are assumed to have knowledge of British as well as American government. The telegraph provides information from overseas. In order to be printed, foreign events usually had to have some bearing on local developments. For example, the telegraph announces that a bill has been introduced to the United States House of Representatives that "provides for the construction of a ship canal around the Niagara Falls, to connect the navigable waters of the Lakes Erie and Ontario."

Cold winter weather was another dominant theme. The trick to keeping warm and in style was for readers to purchase the latest fashions in coats, boots, furs, and foot muffs. Mark Twain was credited with donning a shabby fur overcoat to good effect. Several varieties of coal for use in self-feeders and cooking stoves appeared in advertisements, including Anthracite, Caledonia Soft, Reserve Mines, Old Mines Sydney, and White Ash Foundry. Coal also came in different sizes, including Stove, Nut, and Chestnut.