

History and Background on The Vermont Standard

Introduction

The *Vermont Standard* is Windsor County's largest and oldest weekly newspaper. It is the hometown newspaper of Vermont's only Congressman Peter Welch of Hartland. The *Standard* serves the towns of Barnard, Bridgewater, Hartland, Killington, Plymouth, Pomfret, Reading, Quechee, West Windsor and Woodstock. The weekly estimated readership is 12,000. It is also read throughout the United States by former residents and people interested in the central Vermont region.

The *Vermont Standard* was founded in 1853. Originally, conceived as The *Vermont Temperance Standard*, an anti-alcohol publication, it quickly transitioned into the paper of record for the Woodstock region, outperforming and outliving 13 other publications, which existed during the second half of the 19th century.

Through its 157 year history the *Standard* has never missed publication. Not even the burning of the newspaper's offices in 1867 or a flood in 1973, which destroyed the entire pre-press and press operations, could prevent the newspaper from arriving on the stands.

Originally located in the Village of Woodstock under the local funeral parlor, presses were regularly interrupted out of reverence for the ceremony going on above. In 1969, the newspaper relocated outside of the village in West Woodstock and has resided there ever since. Major renovations were completed in 2006, greatly improving the organizational flow and work atmosphere.

The *Standard* publishes every Thursday. With an average page count of 40–48 broadsheet pages, made up of four sections, including: **Section A**, which is hard news content. **Section B** is devoted to local sports coverage and a section called Town News, which is a section that has existed since the first edition and contains weekly updates from amateur writers reporting on local news and social events from their particular communities. **Section C** is primarily an entertainment section, which includes a large local calendar, entitled, Area Briefs. **Section D**, contains editorial and other commentary content, living (social) pages, business, real estate, and classified pages.

The *Standard* has a robust Special Advertising Promotion schedule, with over 40 ROP and stand-alone supplements. These separate sections include large summer and fall Home & Garden broadsheet supplement, a Spring Bridal section, a high school graduation section, and a Holiday Greetings supplement.

In addition to our weekly broadsheet publication, the *Standard* publishes a visitor's guide to the Woodstock Region, called *Destination Vermont*. *Destination Vermont* is a magazine, published twice a year in the summer and fall, with plans underway to launch a Winter edition. This product highlights the many visitor destinations in our regional including, the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Park (Vermont's first and only National Park, which is located in Woodstock), Woodstock's Billings Farm and Museum, VINS, the Vermont Institute of Natural Science, which is located in Quechee, the President Calvin Coolidge Birthplace and Homestead, in Plymouth Notch and many other local attractions.

The *Vermont Standard* management structure is made up of the Publisher, a General Manager, Editor, a Business Manager and Production Manager. Other staff include an Assistant Editor/Reporter, a Classified/Circulation Coordinator, who also handles reception and billing, two Sales Representatives, a staff Photographer and a delivery person.

Philosophy

"We hold up a mirror to the community," has been a sort of motto for our coverage of local issues over the years. Like politics, all things at the *Standard* are local. We offer coverage that the dailies either miss or deliberately avoid. We have had a strong commitment to photography and endeavor to weave several photo features into the flow of the newspaper each week. Hopefully each of these features will tell a story with pictures instead of exclusively with words.

We are also committed to being an active participant in our community and it's future. One good example of this was our decision in 2003. On the occasion of the newspapers 150th anniversary a discussion took place as to how this event should be commemorated. In the end it was decided that we would organize a series of community meetings to discuss Woodstock's future, which was the catalyst for several new community-based initiatives. Also, rather than focus on the *Standard*, we published a special edition covering the last 150 years of Woodstock's history and not just the newspaper's.

Our commitment to community service organizations is virtually unprecedented in publishing. We actively support and interact with more than 50 non-profit organizations, offering free public service promotion through our Area Briefs and many times complimentary advertising to give these groups an extra boost.

Reader Demographic

The *Vermont Standard's* readership base includes highly educated and affluent readers. The towns of Barnard, Pomfret, West Windsor, Hartland and Woodstock statistically are some of the best educated and affluent in the state. Our regular subscriber base averages 1,600 and all those subscriptions are delivered by mail. The remainder of readers purchase the newspaper via some 60 vendors in Woodstock and the surrounding communities.

Advertising Demographic

The Vermont Standard is located in what is known as the "Route 4 Corridor" of Vermont. This is the only central east to west highway across the state. To the west of Woodstock is Killington Resort, one of the largest ski resorts in North America and beyond that Rutland, Vermont's second largest city. To the east is Quechee, the home of the Quechee Gorge, which is the number one visitor destination in Vermont and also, the internationally known Simon Pearce glassworks. Beyond Quechee is what is known as the "Upper Valley." This includes Hartford, White River Junction, Norwich, Lebanon, West Lebanon and Hanover, NH. Hanover is about 20 minutes from Woodstock and the home of the Ivy League Dartmouth College and also, Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, the largest medical center north of Boston. More than 50 percent of our advertising base is drawn from the Upper Valley area. These clients include realtors, banks, auto dealers, large chain or box store, and restaurant and entertainment related ventures. Non-profits provide approximately 20 percent advertising activity, primarily due to a thriving arts community supported by various organizations in the regional.

Looking Ahead

A new website is being developed that will compliment, but not duplicate the print version of the *Standard*. This site will give the reader an opportunity to interact and comment on various news stories and important local issues through blogging and special interactive surveys. It will also be a vital link to all of the major non-profit organizations such as our regional high school, hockey arena, libraries, arts councils and various museums, parks, local chambers of commerce and other important points of interest. We will have video of local events, meetings and sporting events.

A Solid Foundation

The *Vermont Standard* has been independently owned for 157 years. It is presently owned by its Publisher, Phillip Cabot Camp Sr., who purchased the newspaper 29 years ago.

The *Standard's* small, but experienced staff has over 200 years of expertise in the newspaper industry. Our employee retention rate is extremely high. Most of the present staff have been with the business for an average of 20 years.

The sustained profitability of the newspaper is due in part to its vigorous commitment to community enterprises and businesses. While many papers across the country are struggling to maintain a 25 percent advertising to news ratio, the *Standard* seldom has an advertising ratio percentage below 50 percent.

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