

## **British Canadian (Sandwich)**

### **Publication Dates**

1856: Oct. 22? (Vol. 1: no. 1) – 1857: Oct. 14? (vol. 1: no. 52)

### **Frequency**

Weekly

### **Subsequent Title**

The [Western Mercury \(Sandwich\)](#) may continue the British Canadian. The two newspapers shared a business office. On page 2 of the Feb. 25, 1858 issue of the Western Mercury, the editor writes “All parties indebted to this office for the 1<sup>st</sup> vol., *British Canadian* or for printing, or advertising, are requested to make immediate payment.” The newspapers also share the same motto: Our country’s welfare first, and then, we stand by honest party men. Furthermore, the numbering of the Western Mercury seems to continue the numbering of the British Canadian. However, the two newspapers have different editors, different political perspectives (based on content in existing issues), and were published on different days.

### **Online Holdings**

1857: Feb. 18      (Vol. 1: no. 18)      4p.      2 copies

### **Source of our Digitized Holdings**

Windsor Community Museum

## Description

The British Canadian was a four page weekly newspaper published in Sandwich every Wednesday morning at a subscription cost of 10 shillings per annum. It first appeared in October 1856 and may have been continued by the Western Mercury in about November 1857. The editor was W. H. Wilson and it was published through his company, W. H. Wilson and Company.

The newspaper's motto was "Our country's welfare first, and then we stand by honest party men". W. Meikle's Canadian newspaper directory of 1858 (updated to Spring/Summer 1857) wrote of the British Canadian: "This sheet is moderate on political matters, rather inclining to Reform. It is quiet on points of religion, holding a somewhat neutral position. It has a circulation approaching to 500, chiefly within the county, besides not a few in Western Canada and different parts of the United States". Indeed, a lot of the newspaper was taken up with small, local advertisements, notices, and a good dose of poetry and prose. National and international news stories were reprinted from other newspapers, and there seemed to be relatively little (although sometimes still contentious) local reporting.

During this time, there was considerable rivalry among newspapers. Some of it was friendly, some not so friendly. The Windsor Herald of November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1856 (p.2) had a lot to say about the British Canadian. The Herald began by making fun of the super tabloid size (greater than 24x36 inches!) of the British Canadian's first few issues and its claim to the title of "largest" newspaper in the County: "It is now reduced to the common size of the others and feels itself a little more comfortable in consequence, as there is less matter to supply, less wages to pay, and less trash for the half dozen readers to wade through." "We cannot say that the improvement is visible, unless a change from maudlin imbecility to malignant and vulgar writing may be considered as such." The British Canadian had apparently been very critical of the Herald and the 2 newspapers seemed to disagree on locally based controversies, for example, the latest legal woes of Colonel John Prince.

The Windsor Herald stated that there were 3 men (the Editor, "Veritas", and "Publicola") behind the British Canadian and implied that they had pretensions to classical learning. They could be: William Henry Wilson, his brother George Wilson, and their cousin William Mercer Wilson (a lawyer, later judge, and high-ranking free Mason). They emigrated together from Scotland and settled in Simcoe, Norfolk County in 1832. They do not appear, however, to have spent very much time in Sandwich. In 1840, William Mercer Wilson imported the first printing press into the Simcoe area and published the Norfolk Observer from 1840-1842. It appears possible that they may also have been involved in a Simcoe "British Canadian" newspaper (History of Canadian Journalism, 1908). An extant Extra (1862) is devoted to an address by William Mercer Wilson, then Warden of the County of Norfolk. In the early 1860s, there were also "British Canadian" newspapers in Port Hope and Sarnia, although it is unclear if, or how, any of them were connected.

Updated: Katharine Ball, January 20, 2021