There are, no doubt, many ways of looking at the centennial history of any community institution like the Lake Placid News. I’m going to look at it from two angles: as a succession of publishers and editors, and as an evolution of product.

LPN pre-history
Lake Placid’s first newspaper was the Mountain Mirror. Today, only one copy of one issue of the Mirror survives.

We have information about the Mirror, however, from three different sources. One of those sources says that the Mirror was published by Allie Vosburg; the other says the publisher’s name was either A.H. Townsend or Ralph Townsend.

No conflict exists, however, about when the first issue of the Mountain Mirror was published: Dec. 8, 1893.

A direct predecessor to the Lake Placid News was The Adirondack, which started publication in 1895. It was published out of the printing plant in Saranac Lake that also produced the Adirondack Enterprise — which was where the man who would create the Lake Placid News comes into our story.

Dan Winters, 1905-1925
A man named Daniel Winters published the first issue of the Lake Placid News in May 1905 — on either the 1st or the 5th, depending upon which source you consult.

Dan Winters was born near Cornwall, Ontario, on Aug. 26, 1876, the son of Joseph and Elizabeth (McGuire) Winters. He moved across the border into the U.S. at about age 18, in 1894. Winters settled in Saranac Lake, where he became an apprentice pressman at the Adirondack Enterprise. In Saranac Lake he met Margaret Morgan, who had moved there from New York City. The couple married in 1904.

It was shortly after the Winters set up housekeeping that Dan Winters began considering the idea of publishing his own newspaper in Lake Placid.

He had already been working on The Adirondack for some time, but taking the risk to run his own paper was a big step.

When Winters sold the paper in 1925, he recollected what he had been told when he first announced his plan to start the Lake Placid News.

“They said that a newspaper could not be made a success financially — and, for a while, [I] almost believed [I] was told the cold, hard truth,” he recalled, “but pluck and perseverance finally won out, and today the News holds a high standing with the best weekly papers throughout the state.”

For a few years, starting in March 1916, Winters took on a partner, UVM graduate Leon W. Dean. Winters assured his readers on March 17 that, though a new editor was coming aboard, “The paper will continue to be primarily a local sheet, with news of, and news for, the people of Lake Placid and those interested in her welfare. It is believed that such news is more acceptable than news that is but a repetition of a city daily. Lake Placid news first, Adirondack news second, world news third.”

The Lattimer era, 1925-1960
By July 22, 1921, the paper’s masthead was once again showing only Daniel Winters at the helm. Perhaps the job was simply too big for Winters alone; on June 26, 1925, the Lake Placid News announced its sale to George M. Lattimer, of Newark, N.J., effective July 1.

Lattimer was no stranger to either Lake Placid or the LPN. The summer following his graduation in 1912 from Colgate University in Hamilton, Lattimer had worked for Winters as an LPN reporter. At the end of that summer, he had married a local girl, Grace Chatfield, the daughter of Mrs. F.A. Isham.

Lattimer taught college English for several years and worked in advertising
Loeb & Tubby, 1960-1970

The Sept. 16, 1960 issue of the Lake Placid News announced its sale to the Adirondack Publishing Company, whose owners James Loeb and Roger Tubby had bought the Adirondack Daily Enterprise less than a decade before. Both Loeb and Tubby had careers in public service as diplomats — Loeb serving as U.S. ambassador to Guinea and Peru, Tubby as the American representative to United Nations operations in Lausanne, Switzerland — making them probably the most distinguished newspaper publishers in the region, but also making it difficult for them to really oversee the two papers.

One of the first things the Adirondack Publishing Company did upon purchasing the Lake Placid News was to hire a wrecking company to come to the old LPN office at the bottom of Mill Hill to demolish the paper’s ancient letter press, which had been in steady use since 1912.

Shortly thereafter, Loeb & Tubby’s new editor Marge Lamy moved the News into the old Masonic Building on central Main Street.

“Though our address will change to 103 Main St.,” a notice in the paper read, “our telephone is still 118.”

By all accounts, the LPN had some very good years under Lamy, a Lake Placid native and Enterprise veteran.

“Marge Wilson Lamy ... not only wrote the copy, but sold the ads and laid out the paper with an efficiency rarely equaled since,” wrote LPN staff writer Laura Viscome in 1978 while recounting the paper’s history.

From 1966 to 1970, the Lake Placid News was run by a series of editors in relatively rapid succession:

Bill McLaughlin, from the Enterprise, followed Lamy. When he returned to Saranac Lake, Howard Riley stepped in for the first time as interim LPN editor.

McLaughlin was followed around 1967 by Faye Fishel Howard, who “leaned to the literary” according to Viscome. Howard moved the Lake Placid News from the Masonic Building basement to offices on the second floor of North Elba Town Hall.

In rapid succession after Faye Howard came John Griebsch, then Bob Goetz, previous sports editor at the Enterprise and later sports editor at the Press Republican in Plattsburgh. Howard Riley stepped in again as interim editor after Goetz’s departure in 1970, assisted by Laura Viscome as LPN city editor.

The last Lake Placid News editor under Loeb & Tubby was also the first editor under its new ownership. Ellen George, editor from 1970 to 1971, was “a true reporter and fine editor” according to Viscome. “Ellen was probably the most controversial editor of that era.” George left the News for the Maine Times before entering law school, but was still LPN editor in 1970 when Loeb & Tubby sold the paper.

The Doolittles, 1970-1974

After owning the paper for some 10 years, semi-absentee owners James Loeb and Roger Tubby sold the Adirondack Daily Enterprise and the Lake Placid News in the latter part of
1970 to William and Susan Doolittle. Bill Doolittle had a strong background in the newspaper business; at the time of the LPN purchase, he was the education editor of the Newark Evening News.

Editor Ellen George stayed on for a few months after the News was sold, but a new editor was brought on in 1971: Lisa Forrest, of Gloversville, who had “apprenticed” under George. Under Forrest, the Lake Placid News made the technological jump from “hot lead” type to “cold type,” or offset printing. Forrest left the News in 1973 for the Press Republican.

At that time, Suzie Doolittle took over as LPN editor, making two momentous — some would say disastrous — decisions.

First, according to Viscome, Suzie Doolittle “found it easier to operate the News from the Enterprise office in Saranac Lake, and for the first time in its history the Lake Placid News lost its Lake Placid home and its telephone.”

Second, during her year as editor, Doolittle had the LPN printed in the tabloid format, like the New York Daily News.

Placid folks didn’t take either innovation well; by mid-1974, some people were saying that the Lake Placid News was done for.

The Hales, 1974-1978

In the nick of time, the Lake Placid News was bought by Ed and Bobby Hale, who probably saved Lake Placid’s newspaper. The transaction was affected on Oct. 4, 1974, and the LPN was immediately brought “home” from Saranac Lake to a small office in the building owned by Dr. George Hart near the Lake Placid Post Office on Main Street. Less than a year later, in Sept. 1975, the Hales moved the paper again, this time into a house they had refurbished on Mill Hill that still serves nearly three decades later as the newspaper’s editorial home.

The Hales, who were natives of Ridgewood, N.J., did much to reinvigorate the Lake Placid News during their short term of ownership, but they sold the paper after holding it for just a little more than three years.

Ogden Newspapers Inc., 1978 to present

“As of Sunday, Jan. 29,” wrote Laura Viscome in a brief 1978 history of the LPN, “Lake Placid News Inc. ceased to exist.” The paper, Viscome reported had been bought by Ogden Newspapers Inc., a century-old, family-owned newspaper company with headquarters in Wheeling, W.Va. The company brought in Neil Chaffie, a newspaperman and freelance reporter, to edit the Lake Placid News for its first year under the new ownership.

In January 1979, the News got its first long-term editor since the end of the Lattimer era in 1960: Ron Landfried, of Harrisburg, Pa. Landfried came from The Inter-Mountain, an Ogden-owned paper in Elkins, W.Va.

Interestingly, Bill Doolittle again became publisher of the Lake Placid News later that year. Ogden bought the Adirondack Daily Enterprise in 1979, keeping Doolittle on as publisher of both the ADE and the LPN for 10 more years. Landfried and Doolittle appear to have gotten along well; Landfried didn’t leave until Doolittle did.

The current publisher of the Lake Placid News under Ogden ownership is Catherine Moore, who took the job on in 1989. Under her, a succession of journalists have edited the LPN: Tom Keegan, Kristin Young, Erin Doolittle, Julie Stowell, Shir Filler, Tom Henecker, Andy Flynn, Jennifer Coffey, “Red” Thompson, Ryan Brenizer, Pat Hendricks.

The current editor of the Lake Placid News is Ed Forbes, a 2002 graduate of St. Lawrence University and previously the features editor of the Adirondack Daily Enterprise. Forbes came to the LPN in September 2003.
When we first started talking early this year about the Lake Placid News centennial, I saw one big problem: Nobody really had any idea of what had happened to the News — where it had started, what it had looked like over the years, how it had changed, and why.

Given a world without deadlines or dinner bells, I could have spent a whole year reading through the LPN microfilms — which date back to January 1914 — taking notes, organizing data and forming impressions of the patterns I found in the paper’s development.

I did not, however, have an infinite amount of time for digging into LPN back issues. Every week there were new town board meetings, new conflicts in E’town, new trails to be hiked, new people to meet — and new stories to write about it all. Hundredth anniversary or not, we still had a paper to put out.

I came up with a compromise: I would print out the anniversary issue — the issue published May 1 or immediately thereafter — for every fifth year. Using those samples, I would check out what the paper looked like in the beginning, and I would document the ways in which it had changed every 5 years.

MAY 7, 1915

I had to start with 1915, the LPN’s 10th anniversary year, because no copies of the paper dated any earlier than January 2, 1914, had survived — fires, evidently, had wiped out the early records of the News.

Still, there probably weren’t that many differences between the paper in 1905 and in 1915. The page had seven columns, each one built up line-by-line with moveable type, a form of printing that did not change one bit at the LPN until 1960. No illustrations. Gray as a battleship (or the Wall Street Journal). Anchoring three of the four corners of Page 1 were — you’ll never guess — advertisements, something anathema to modern newspaper design rules for front pages.

Page 2 was national and “world” news — and by “world,” I mean news from Western Europe and Mexico. Page 3 was state news. How these stories were gathered, I don’t know. There must have been some equivalent of the Associated Press wire service from which the editor drew material.

Some of the abiding elements of the inside pages: “personals,” or notes about the doings of individuals throughout the community, and “locals,” or short updates on what’s going on in outlying communities.

I saw some humorous elements in the 1915 Lake Placid News, things that I knew were typical of newspapers then that you’d never see today. One such
element was the boosterism the LPN’s editor felt himself bound to infuse the paper with. Here’s an example, from the lead to a story about the ground-breaking for the Bank of Lake Placid building on Main Street (now an NBT branch):

“Just as numerous and well cared for church edifices and schools evidence the moral and educational progress and welfare of a community, so modern and well appointed bank buildings proclaim to visitors and the passing throng the material condition of a village. It should, therefore, be a source of pride and satisfaction to Lake Placid people that our village will soon possess one of the most modernly equipped, handsome and adequate of bank buildings, ground having been broken this week on the Green lot, so known, just south of the Lake Placid Pharmacy, fronting on Main street, for the new home of the Bank of Lake Placid.”

Another element common in the 1915 newspaper that would seem either funny or criminal in today’s paper: advertisements masquerading as news articles — and they were everywhere, all through the Lake Placid News. Here’s one with a headline reading, “Farmer’s Wife Too Ill to Work”:

“Kasota, Minn. — ‘I am glad to say that Lydia Pinkham’s Vegetable Compound has done more for me than anything else, and I had the best physician here. I was so weak and nervous that I could not do my work and suffered with pains . . . ’ ”

Well, you get the idea.

A third fairly common element in the 1915 newspaper — one that I really found disturbing (and you probably would, too) — was the presence of blatantly racist “humor” that was clearly considered acceptable 90 years ago. I won’t repeat any examples of these because they are, frankly, just wrong. I’m glad that this particular element did not continue long in the Lake Placid News.

JULY 22, 1921

The papers for 1920 and the first half of 1921 could not be located when microfilms were being made of the old LPNs, so the closest I could get to the next 5-year anniversary issue was July 22, 1921.

The only new element in this issue was the “Club Colum” with news from the Lake Placid Club. The name was spelled using LPC founder Melvil Dewey’s (in)famous “simplified spelling.”

Advertisements were gone from the front page.

MAY 1, 1925

Several new items made their appearance in this issue. One was apropos of the Prohibition era, which ran from 1920 to 1933: the “WCTU Column,” essentially a weekly opinion piece from the local chapter of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union.

Two entertainment items also made their first appearance in this issue: a crossword puzzle and a lone comic strip, “What’s The Use.”

Advertisements had snuck back onto Page 1, but now without box frames or special graphic headlines; they just looked like “filler” dropped at the bottom of a column after a story ended.

MAY 2, 1930

Five years after George M. Lattimer bought the Lake Placid News from founder Dan Winters, he was going
great guns. The front page had no more ads, and the inside pages had no more wire stories about state, national or “world” news — it was all local, local, local. The Lake Placid News, for its time, had really come of age.

**MAY 3, 1935**

Lattimer was starting to experiment with some of the design devices that help readers tell the difference between big stories and minor stories. On Page 1, he was running headlines for a couple of major items across the top of two or three columns, and grouping the copy for those stories underneath those heads. Other stories, also grouped together, started beneath them. This was the beginning of “modular” page design, something most of us take for granted when we pick up a modern newspaper.

One editorial irony in this issue, published in the depths of the Great Depression: The NRA eagle, symbolic of FDR’s New Deal programs, and the motto “We Do Our Part” appeared prominently on the editorial page masthead — but on the page before that, a news story featured a prominent headline, “Banker Says Relief Destroys Character” (the corollary to which might be, “Grinding Poverty Builds Character”).

A few new items appear in this issue that remained staples of the Lake Placid News for some years: the heading “News of This County and the Next” topped one- or two-line briefs about Franklin and Clinton county news; the “Lake Placid Personals” heading went over local “social” items; “It Happened 20 Years Ago” drew items from the 1915 newspaper; only one or two letters to the editor were published, appearing under the heading of “The Idea as I See It”; and a “Weather” column listed high and low temperatures recorded during the previous week, comparing them with the same data for the same week a year before.

This was the first anniversary issue that actually made mention of the LPN’s anniversary, with an editorial titled “Thirty Candles.”

**MAY 4, 1945**

Aside from all the war news in this issue, published just 4 days before the Allies declared victory in Europe, one oddity jumps out: the volume number for the 1940 anniversary issue was 36, meaning it was the beginning of the LPN’s 36th year of publication. For some reason, the volume number of the 1945 anniversary issue, 5 years later, is 35, although it should be 41. What happened to those 6 years, huh?! The volume-number change occurred after the death of George Lattimer Sr. in 1940, when the late editor’s wife Grace took over the paper, and wasn’t corrected until the mid-1970s.

**MAY 5, 1950**

This issue of the News, published 10 years after George Lattimer’s death, shows too many signs of it being a moribund newspaper. Ads have returned to the front page. Instead of local news on Page 2, there are only “legals,” the kinds of advertisements that towns and businesses are required by law to take out when they have some kind of announcement that must be publicized. On other inside pages, the ads are “stacked high,” with very little room for the few news stories still published — and most of those stories are taken from press releases, not new, original reporting. This is a paper that has run out of steam, and a publisher who is milking the LPN for all it’s worth with little care shown for the reader or for the community at large.

**MAY 6, 1955**

The News has pulled back somewhat from death’s doors in this issue — there’s a higher ratio of news space to advertising inches, and more real news items.

But the look of the paper on its 50th anniversary is virtually identical to the way it must have appeared when it was first published in 1905. No investment has been made in bringing the Lake Placid News into the modern, post-war world.

**MAY 3, 1940**

No changes.

**MAY 4, 1945**

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**MAY 6, 1960**

On the threshold of Jack Kennedy’s New Frontier, there is still no change in the LPN. It’s time for this paper to find new ownership, new ideas and new investment capital — which is exactly what happened less than 5 months after this issue was published, when James Loeb and Roger Tubby bought the Lake Placid News and installed a new editor, Margaret Wilson Lamy.

**MAY 6, 1965**

Nearly 5 years later, the News had clearly been brought several big steps into the modern world. The 8-column page was made up with the newest typesetting equipment and the latest presses at Saranac Lake — well, maybe not the very newest and latest, but certainly more up-to-date than the equipment the Lattimers had been using, which had been purchased by Dan Winters around 1912 (no kidding!).

**MAY 7, 1970**

The News had improved even more by this time, with really enhanced local content. There were lots more locally written columns, especially on the editorial page. The editors were experimenting — perhaps a little too much — with the use of photo pages; for this issue, they had bought two full-page photo essays from AP Newsfeatures, one of a group of performing motorcycle cops from Mexico, the other of industrial innovations in the economic exploitation of the Canadian Arctic. “Too much” or not — at least they were trying new things.

**MAY 1, 1975**

This is, objectively, one of the two best issues out of the 19 representative samples we studied for this centennial overview of the Lake Placid News. It shows the extraordinary progress brought to the News by Ed and Bobby Hale, published just 7 months after they purchased the paper.

The nameplate design on the top of Page 1 is the one we still use at the LPN, with just a few minor changes. The Hales were the first page designers to really take advantage of the concept of “the grid,” which helps you keep sto-
ries together in a coherent, attractive way. The writing was modern, too; news stories took every advantage of their “feature-y” elements, and the accompanying graphics helped readers “enter” the stories. A first-person (albeit unsigned) editorial essay mused on the possible return of the Adirondack Railroad — and the chances of building a bike path on the railroad right-of-way if the train was not able to return.

And, for the first time in 30 years or more, the volume number was correct! The Hales did a great job during the short time they ran the Lake Placid News.

MAY 1, 1980

This was another one of the LPN’s two best issues reviewed for this story. Edited by Ron Landfried after he had been on the job here for a little over a year, and just 3 months after the thrilling — but exhausting — job of covering a Winter Olympics, this paper marked the 75th anniversary of the News with a front-page story and an archival photo to put readers in the anniversary mood.

There was lots of good, original writing in this issue, too — and good use of photography. In addition to the anniversary story on Page 1, there were three bylined news stories, all of which “jumped” to the inside. There was also a real “photo story” on the bottom of the page, with three panels showing a canoe “spill” that occurred during the previous weekend’s annual Whitewater Derby on the East Branch of the Au Sable River.

Page 2 was almost another Page 1. In what ways? For one, it was an “open” page — that is, it had no advertisements — something almost unheard of for an inside page in earlier years of the News. It had five real news stories, two “stand-alone” photograph stories, and only one “brief.”

Of the remaining 10 pages in this special issue, three were special ad pages where local residents and businesses congratulated the LPN on its anniversary, and one was a mock-up of what Page 1 of the May 1, 1905 issue might have looked like. Of the six remaining regular pages, one was for legal ads and “jumps” (the back ends of stories that started on Page 1). That left four more “editorial” pages for stories, essays and photos. Of those four, two were “open” like Page 2 had been. Readers were getting very, very good value from the LPN at this time.

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY issue was probably the best example of the kind of work done at the LPN since being bought by Ogden Newspapers Inc. in 1978. Since then, there have been ups, and there have been downs — but the Lake Placid News has looked, more or less, pretty much the same.

* * *

The Lake Placid News wishes to express its ongoing gratitude to the Lake Placid Public Library, which serves as the repository of the microfilms containing all the surviving back issues of the paper before 1982. These precious historical resources are available for use by any researcher, any day of the week, free of charge.