

1970

Publication of Le Messenger [Articles]

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'TIMES ARE CHANGING'

Le Messenger, Silent For Months, Disappears From Twin Cities, Completely

By SANDRA SHAW

"Times are changing," says Albert Rowbotham, one-time publisher of Lewiston's French-language newspaper, "Le Messenger," which ceased publication nearly two years ago.

He spoke as he stood in the nearly empty first-floor offices at 235 Lisbon Street, an area which once housed the presses which printed "Le Messenger" as well as 30 other area newspapers, among them the Bridgton News, the Rangeley Highlander and the Wilton Times.

The presses are gone now. And the last of the printing equipment was moved out Wednesday morning.

"Papers are changing over from letter press to offset printing," Rowbotham observed. "I've decided to do the same."

Rowbotham has owned and published the Rumford Times for a number of years. From now on, he said, that the paper will be published in Norway, on offset presses. It is the only economic, convenient way to do business, he said.

Today Rowbotham moved the rest of the printing equipment from Lisbon Street out to

Rumford, where he plans to open a shop.

He spoke with a bit of nostalgia of the days when "Le Messenger" was in circulation. The paper, he points out, was the last French language newspaper in New England. It was published over 80 years.

Never Another

He believes firmly there will never be another French newspaper in Lewiston.

"The young French population doesn't even speak French, let alone read it," he explained. "The language taught in the schools is to meet college requirements. It's elementary."

A survey he conducted two years ago, among 300 young people in the Franco-American community showed that only three of 300 were able to read French, he said.

Historically, of the 800 French-language papers that existed in the United States in 1930, less than 100 remain today.

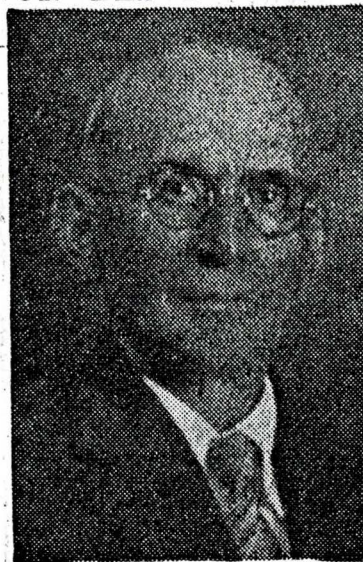
Those usually located in large urban centers, such as Boston, and New York City.

For their historical value, Rowbotham has turned over microfilm copies of "Le Messenger" to the State Library at Augusta.

"There just might be a day when there will be an interest in it," he explained.

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UN DES PREMIERS



M. Joseph-L. Gagné

M. Joseph-L. Gagné, de Topsham, âgé de 83 ans, est un lecteur assidu du Messenger et il est abonné à notre journal solxantenaire depuis la publication du premier numéro, en 1880.