

## 011 ANDERSON, LEROY

Editor & Publisher

Richmond, Williamsburg

Original editor of Richmond's first successful daily newspaper, *The Daily Compiler* (1813-15), and so a partner to Philip DuVal (155) and William C. Shields (381), his brother in law.

Anderson was one of many early Virginia journalists who had once been schoolmasters, evidently a highly regarded trait for newspaper and magazine editors of that era. Born in Williamsburg, Leroy was the second son of James Anderson, the gunsmith and blacksmith who became the state's Public Armourer during the Revolutionary War. This tradesman's son was first, and foremost, a scholar and teacher. He attained a classical education early in life, in part, as a result of a residence in Philadelphia; there he met his first wife, one Nancy Shields; that association would also draw two of her younger brothers – Hamilton (380) and William – to Virginia and the printing trade there.

On his return to the former state capital, he and his sister, Nancy Camp (sometimes spelled Kemp, the widow of George, d. 1797), operated a school for young women in two wooden buildings situated on their father's oversized lot at the corner of Duke of Gloucester and Botetourt streets. Following father James' death in 1798, Leroy acquired the house on the east side of the lot, Nancy that on the west side. Mrs. Camp used her abode as a boarding house for Leroy's school, one situated in the building that he also used as a store that sold books, musical instruments, sheet music, and patent medicines. And when their father's far-flung estate was finally settled in 1806, both siblings retained life-tenancy rights to the Williamsburg houses where they then lived.

Anderson's literary reputation continued to grow after his father's passing, bringing an invitation to write the commemorative ode that was presented at the bicentennial celebration of the Jamestown settlement in 1807. But his attachment to Williamsburg waned with the death of his wife Nancy in September 1808. Anderson relocated his school to Richmond, taking up residence in a property originally owned by his father. Eventually, his sister Nancy joined him, though both continued to live in Williamsburg during the breaks in their school's terms. Their new "Cornelia Academy" operated until 1819.

That familial venture, however, was overshadowed by the traumatic loss Anderson suffered in the Richmond Theater fire of December 1811. He attended the ill-fated performance that night with his two daughters, but escaped the flames with just his youngest one. Daughter Margaret was lost, as were six of his teen-aged pupils, in a conflagration that claimed seventy-six lives in just ten minutes. In the wake of this tragedy, he quickly remarried, taking as his second wife the widow Hannah Wright Southgate of Richmond, who had lost a brother in the fire; theirs was prolific marriage, bringing five children to adulthood, despite numerous infant deaths that followed their antecedent theater-fire grief.

After the fire, Anderson also determined to take on a high-minded journalistic venture: *The Daily Compiler*. His 1813 prospectus promised an unbiased non-partisan newspaper that would present news of the then ongoing war with Great Britain in a more timely and less opinionated fashion than could Richmond's three twice-weekly journals; its motto would be

*Audi et alteram partem* ("and hear the other side"). Anderson was also shrewd enough to realize that his new daily newspaper could be sustained by the advertising essential to the growing merchant trade in what he called the "emporium of Virginia." He enlisted Philip DuVal (155) to produce the paper as his financial and printing partner; and its first number appeared May 1, 1813. But theirs was a problematic relationship. DuVal had access to the capital needed for their venture, as his late father, Samuel DuVal, a major Henrico County planter, left him a considerable estate; still Philip proved, as one historian has noted, "the only son unable to prove himself" in life; by August, the partnership had collapsed as Duval refocused his energies on publishing a less stressful (though less successful) weekly paper in Staunton. Meanwhile, Anderson employed various Richmond job-printing offices to print his daily for him over the next two years. At the end of 1814, he entered into a new association with William C. Shields, the brother of his first wife, who was also a Philadelphia-trained printer who had worked in Richmond since at least 1811.

Despite his success, Anderson tired of the editorial grind as the War of 1812 drew to a close. In the summer of 1815 he handed over the reins of the *Compiler* to another noted Virginia literary figure, Louis Hue Girardin (180), formerly Professor of Modern Languages, History, and Geography at the College of William & Mary, who was then conducting the Hallerian Academy in Richmond. The daily continued under various guises until 1853, when its relatively objective stance finally killed its readership during the growing sectional crisis.

Anderson returned to the regular seasonality of teaching in Richmond in winter and writing in Williamsburg in summer, but without his sister; Nancy Camp opened her own "Ladies Select School" on Capitol Square in 1815. Meanwhile, Anderson and his new wife operated their "Lyceum Grammar School for Females" until at least 1820; then he established an "Elementary and Classical School" for boys, which continued until at least 1824. And as his commitment to education increased, he proposed (without success) publishing a monthly magazine, *The Parnassian*, to promote his pedagogical approach. He also abandoned his non-partisan perspective in 1824, actively embracing the candidacy of John Quincy Adams for president in opposition to the ill-educated Andrew Jackson, joining with men who later became the foundation of Virginia's Whig party. By 1829, he was conducting a school in Portsmouth, nearby his daughter Harriet, who in 1822 had married Henry Ashburn (015), the partner to her uncles Hamilton and William Shields in Norfolk's *American Beacon*.

In 1835, the aging Anderson was persuaded to move to Alabama to direct the troubled Pineland Academy there. He did not see his beloved Virginia again, dying unexpectedly in Mobile in November 1837 at the age of sixty-seven. He left his wife, five children, and a multitude of former students behind – but few took notice back home. Outside of Alabama, his passing was reported only by the *National Intelligencer* and the *Richmond Whig*.

### ***Personal Data***

Born:	Dec. 6	1770	Williamsburg, Virginia.
Married [1]:	Sept. 23	1798	Nancy Shields @ Auburn Seat, Pennsylvania.
Married[2]:	Feb. 5	1812	Hannah Southgate @ Richmond, Virginia.

Died: Nov. 21 1837 Mobile, Alabama.

Children: By Nancy: Margaret (d. 1811); Harriet Sophia (m. 1822);  
By Hannah: Leroy Hammond (b. 1814); William Henry (b. 1820);  
Washington Franklin (b. 1823); Louisa Virginia (m. 1828); several  
other children died in childhood.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cappon; Hubbard on Richmond; house-site reports on the James Anderson property (Block 10), and Robert Anderson Papers, Rockefeller Library, CWF; Baker, *Richmond Theater Fire*; genealogical data from Anderson family charts in *William & Mary Quarterly* (1903).