

020 BARBOUR, JAMES M.

Publisher

Morgantown

Practical printer and publisher of the short-lived *Monongalia Herald* in partnership with William Barbour (022), apparently a relative.

Barbour is an enigmatic figure in the history of the American printing trade. Under the name of "James M. Barbour," he evinces a presence only in Morgantown from 1819 to 1822. Yet genealogical records reveal that he was a native of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and so certainly the "James Barbour" who printed a Republican newspaper in nearby Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, over the prior six years. Those records also reveal that three of his six sons were born in Morgantown before he moved to Brownsville, Pennsylvania in about 1825.

The timing of his move from Huntingdon to Morgantown in 1819, and his overt association subsequently with Nicolas B. Madera (276), one of the partners in the firm that published *The Monongalia Spectator*, suggests that Barbour was persuaded to relocate by Madera and others after the unexpected demise of the *Spectator* in May 1819. That journal was printed by William McGranahan (288) for Madera and Ralph Berkshire (032), two of Morgantown's more prominent merchants, and had secured a stable financial base over the preceding five years. But a falling out between the printer and his financiers in the spring of 1819 induced McGranahan to leave Morgantown for nearby Clarksburg to establish a new weekly paper there in August 1819. Barbour discontinued his *Huntingdon Republican* (née *Intelligencer*) that same month, just as Madera and Berkshire were lobbying to retain the license issued to the *Spectator* in 1818 by U.S. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams to print the laws of Congress, a essential subsidy that had saved the paper financially. By bringing Barbour to Morgantown in the midst of that effort, it seems Madera and Berkshire were demonstrating to Adams that the *Spectator* was a viable journal, though now in suspension as a result of McGranahan's departure. But when Adams allowed McGranahan to retain that license for his new *Independent Virginian*, the merchants' attempts to resurrect the *Spectator* came to an abrupt end. But Barbour was evidently now in control of the printing office set up next door to Berkshire's dry-goods store, and conducted it as a job-press for the next year.

During that year, Barbour organized an effort to publish a new weekly in Morgantown in the place of the *Spectator*. He faced a significant challenge in doing so. McGranahan's *Virginian* was now the journal-of-record for Monongalia and Harrison counties alike, as well as the region's sole advertising outlet, and when combined with his federal license, his newspaper had a financial foundation not seen in the Monongahela Valley previously. Moreover, his journal served as the political voice of James Pindall (1783-1825), the region's Federalist representative in Congress. But it appears Barbour was encouraged to pursue the project by Pindall's unexpected resignation from Congress in July 1820, which – in combination with the appointment of John George Jackson (1777-1825), the Republican leader there, to the U.S. District Court in 1819 – left the political situation and the parties' newspaper alliances in the valley in confusion.

Barbour's new *Monongalia Herald* appeared in December 1820 under the corporate name of "James M. Barbour for William Barbour." Who William Barbour was is undetermined; one

would presume that at age 25, the publisher's partner would have been his brother or his father, but neither of those relatives were Williams; the only William clearly associated with Barbour was an infant son, so making him an unlikely partner; so it is likely that he was a family member from Chambersburg, who was never again part of the Virginia print trade.

Ominously, the introduction of Barbour's his new weekly was not auspicious. After one side of the sheet for the first issue had been printed, his ink supply had been exhausted, forcing a week's delay in its publication until more was procured. Still, Barbour was undaunted. In his introductory address, he said he understood that the record of such ventures there was "almost sufficient to operate as a bug-a-boo." Recognizing that the continual scarcity of specie in the area made the enterprise problematic for him financially, he offered to take agricultural produce as in-kind payments for his newspaper. Moreover, he would present a non-partisan stance in the weekly's pages in order to reach the greatest circulation possible; he proclaimed from the *Herald's* masthead that "Ours are the plans of fair, delightful peace, unwarped by party rage, to live like brothers." Notwithstanding this hopeful introduction, Barbour's experience was like that of his Morgantown predecessors; the *Herald* had ceased its publication by the following July – a six-month run.

After that closing, Barbour remained in Morgantown, operating his job-printing office while waiting for the next opportunity to publish a newspaper there. That time came in February 1822, when his *North-Western Journal* appeared. This time his financial partner was Nicolas B. Madera; he promptly secured appointment as Morgantown's postmaster in March 1822, understanding that he could exchange their new paper with any other publisher *gratis* while also exerting better control of the distribution of the paper. But once again, it seems that there was insufficient currency in circulation then to sustain the paper for more than a few months; hence the *Journal* ceased publication after July 1822, possibly as late as October or November of that year, and was never resumed. Morgantown did not see another weekly issued there until 1825. Evidently the town's proximity to Pittsburgh and its competition with a series of Clarksburg papers made publishing a paper there impracticable, at least until its population had grown significantly.

In about 1825, Barbour returned to Pennsylvania. As he landed in Brownsville, it seems that he became a part of a new weekly issued there that year, the *American Observer*. But it also appears that, as that journal evolved into the highly-partisan *Jacksonian Galaxy*, Barbour moved on again in 1826 to Franklin, Pennsylvania, north of Pittsburgh, There he died in October 1828, just thirty-three years of age, a young tradesman deprived of a future.

Personal Data

Born:	In	1795	Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.
Married:	About	1815	Mary Ramsey @ Huntington, Pennsylvania.
Died:	Oct. 6	1828	Franklin, Verdugo County, Pennsylvania.
Children:	Samuel S. G.; Elick; John; William; James H. K.		

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Norona & Shetler; Callahan, *Morgantown*; Wiley, *Monongalia*; genealogical data posted on Genealogy.com (October 2014).