

## 048 BRADFORD, THOMAS GRAYSON

Editor, Publisher

Warrenton?

Well-travelled newspaper publisher who was possibly involved with James Caldwell (071) in the *Palladium of Liberty* (1817-21) in Warrenton.

Although born in Virginia, Bradford became the key chronicler of Andrew Jackson's military career from his newspaper office in Nashville. Where or if he trained in the printing trade is uncertain; he first appears in the bibliographic record when just nineteen as editor of the Georgetown, D.C., *Columbian Repository* in 1803 with one B. Burgess, apparently a practical printer not seen in the record again; their venture lasted about six months. That experience obviously did not deter Bradford as he is next seen starting the *Ohio Herald* in Chillicothe in July 1805; he sold that weekly at the end of 1806 to a partnership which recast the paper as *The Fredonian*. That sale was evidently prompted by the plans of his cousin, Benjamin J. Bradford, to acquire the remnants of the short-lived *Nashville Gazette or Impartial Review* in that Tennessee town. Their new weekly *Clarion* appeared at the start of 1808 and quickly became the state's Democratic voice. Benjamin made Thomas a partner in mid-1808 and then sold the entirety of their venture to his cousin in mid-1809; Thomas remained the spirited heart of this paper – surviving the destruction of his office in an 1814 fire – until he retired to Virginia in the summer of 1820.

Over the intervening years, Bradford was a part of Tennessee's militia (as well as being the state's most prolific publisher), rising to the rank of Major, so becoming both a confidant and correspondent of Jackson; the General even recommended his colleague for federal posts in the Old Southwest before 1820. Between 1808 and 1816, Bradford reported, at length, on Jackson's activities, both political and military. As such, his *Clarion* became a leading source for news of Jackson's campaign against the Creeks (1813-14) and his defense of the Mississippi (1814-15), just as it had been for reports on Indian affairs in the region before the War of 1812. As part of those efforts, Bradford started a weekly at Huntsville, Alabama, the *Madison Gazette* in 1812, that town's first paper; still, it was a problematic project that he abandoned when the Creek War erupted the following year.

Similarly, Bradford abandoned Nashville as well following the death of his wife Chloe in early 1820; he sold his interest in the *Clarion* and returned to his Fauquier County roots. At just that moment, James Caldwell, publisher of the *Palladium of Liberty* at Warrenton, the Fauquier County seat, lost his financier – a large landowner from neighboring Albemarle County named McKennie (291). In Caldwell's business restructuring that summer, Bradford may have played a part, though evidence is anecdotal. But what is clear is that Caldwell closed the *Palladium* a year later, at the end of what could have been a one-year agreement with Bradford; he also remained in Warrenton operating a job press there until about 1825, likely expecting to be able to resurrect his weekly in time. But then Caldwell relocated to Culpeper County in 1826; Bradford quickly returned to journalism, opening Warrenton's next paper – *The Virginia Gazette* (1826-29) – to counter the rising Whig sentiment in the area against his friend Jackson.

Bradford was rewarded for his loyalty, becoming one of Jackson's "spoils-men" in the new administration. From 1830 to 1841, he was as a supervising clerk in the Department of the Treasury, one step below the Treasury Secretary. In 1841, when the Whig administration of Harrison and Tyler came into office, Bradford was brushed aside; he lived out his days in Washington, engaged in publishing maps and geography texts, dying there in early 1850.

***Personal Data***

Born: April 20 1784 Fauquier County, Virginia.

Married [1]: Sept. 1 1808 Chloe B. Thomas @ Nashville, Tennessee.

Married [2]: Nov. 22 1822 Catherine Sinclair @ Fauquier County, Va.

Died: February 1850 Fauquier County, Virginia.

Children: William G. (b. 1811), Caroline F. (b. 1813), Matilda L. (b. 1815),  
Caroline A. (b. 1817), Thomas O. (b. 1819).

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cappon; newspaper advertising in Washington (1803-25) and Chillicothe (1806); news reports in Baltimore (1814), Alexandria (1828), and Columbus (1841); and the *Annual Register of Federal Officials* (1831-39); genealogical data from Bradford family charts posted on Ancestry.com (August 2012).