

204 HARROW, JAMES D.

Printer & Publisher

Fredericksburg

Printer and publisher of the *Virginia Herald* at Fredericksburg, first as partner (1817-18) to founder Timothy Green (194), then independently (1820-51).

Harrow was a trained printer who rose to the ownership of his master's press and paper. He was the son of Gilbert Harrow, "professor of mathematics" at the Fredericksburg Academy. Local histories report that Harrow was born there as well, but in the year of his birth (1789), his father conducted a private school in Alexandria, one then attended by two of George Washington's nephews; the family's relocation to Fredericksburg appears to have happened in about 1796, when advertisements for the Alexandria school disappear from that town's newspapers. In Fredericksburg, the young Harrow trained in the office of Timothy Green IV, the transplanted Connecticut printer-publisher and scion of the Green family of American printers, who would later be Harrow's partner in publishing the *Virginia Herald*.

Harrow's eventual acquisition of the *Herald* was part of several-years-long search by Green for a viable successor and partner for his diverse business – a newspaper, job-printing press, and a bookstore. After twenty-five years of conducting that business independently, Green was thinking about retirement in late 1811. By then he had engaged William Fairfax Gray (192), the youngest of a trio of Alexandria bookselling brothers, as his bookstore manager; now Green induced Ebenezer P. Cady (070), a practical printer and bookseller employed in brother Samuel Green's New London, Connecticut press office, to come to Fredericksburg as partner in the *Herald*. Cady helped steer the journal profitably through the travails of the War of 1812, so giving him the inside track to the succession. But Cady turned away from journalism in 1815 to become a merchant in Fredericksburg. Green then looked to Gray, selling him the paper in July 1815, while retaining control of the bookstore and press. After two years of this arrangement, the financially-challenged Gray sold the *Herald* back to Green in order to run his own independent bookstore in Fredericksburg.

Harrow was apparently the press office foreman throughout these transitions, and so now became the new heir-apparent to Green; in July 1817, he appeared as co-proprietor of the *Herald* beside Green. The aging proprietor now obviously favored Harrow's succession, but that plan was shelved in January 1819, temporarily, when Green turned his entire business over to Gray and retired from the trade. Evidently Harrow did not have the wherewithal to buy out his former master at that time. But Gray also wanted out of journalism, and sold the operation to Harrow just a year later, turning eventually to the practice law, which led to later fame in Texas. Despite the turmoil over the preceding nine years, Harrow proved to be the most stable and reliable of Green's three potential successors; he would conduct this established office for just over thirty years, longer than had his former master and partner. That lengthy proprietorship was also the result of trade continuity in his office, where one Jesse White directed the press from 1820 until shortly before his master's death.

In the years that Harrow owned the *Virginia Herald*, it became less of a political paper and more of the mercantile one that had marked its birth in 1787. It seems that he had learned circumspection as a result of his association with the *Herald* during the War of 1812, a time

when Cady, its openly-Federalist editor, was compelled to sleep in the *Herald's* office "with his pistols by his side, often being threatened with tar and feathers." At his death in 1851, one memorialist reported that Harrow "wrote but little, and that little never offensive or tinged with personality." It was a comment that suggests that the Virginia-born Harrow was better attuned to local sensibilities than were the two Connecticut-born printers who had preceded him, despite their obvious financial success. As a result, Harrow had cultivated "no enemies" as he had successfully "passed through life, infringing no one's rights, and no one disposed to trespass on his." Hence, this respected citizen and stalwart of the Presbyterian church was buried with considerable ceremony in the town's Masonic burying ground. His *Virginia Herald* was promptly sold to Maj. J. Harrison Kelly, who conducted the venerable paper until 1875, despite a nearly four-year-long suspension wrought by the devastation that the Civil War visited on Fredericksburg in late 1862.

Personal Data

Born: Dec. 15 1789 Alexandria, Virginia

Died: Aug. 22 1851 Fredericksburg, Virginia

A life-long bachelor who died without issue.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cappon; Quenzel, *Fredericksburg Checklist*; Quinn, *Fredericksburg*; Jett, *Minor Sketches of Major Folk*; Cady-Sturges, *Reminiscences of a Long Life*; notices in Alexandria newspapers (1789-96).