

## 289 MCINTYRE, PATRICK

Printer & Publisher

Leesburg

Publisher of the *True American* (1800-03) and of *The Washingtonian* (1808-40) at Leesburg.

McIntyre is something of an enigmatic figure even though his newspapers had a long history in Leesburg. Local records suggest that he was a native son of Loudoun County, the son of a moderately-wealthy planter named Alexander McIntyre (d. 1788). As his first appearance in the print trade there comes with his purchase of a newspaper founded by Matthias Bartgis (024) – the publishing entrepreneur based in nearby Frederick, Maryland – it is likely that McIntyre was trained by Bartgis in either Frederick or Leesburg.

In the 1780s and 1790s, Bartgis operated a series of journals in Virginia and Maryland from his Frederick base by forming partnerships with a printer or editor who lived at that distant locale; he began the *True American* in Leesburg in 1798 in partnership with Wyllys Silliman (541), a young Connecticut lawyer. But by early in 1800, Bartgis's Jeffersonian inclinations apparently created conflict with his Federalist editorial partner, which led to the paper's sale to McIntyre, then evidently their foreman. It may be that Silliman continued to edit the paper for him, but McIntyre now became the paper's face with the sale. Yet his conduct of the weekly was hampered by supply problems, likely linked to ongoing fiscal issues, despite the backing of Loudoun County Federalists. The last number of 1800, one of two surviving issues, evinces a smaller page-size and coarser typeface as compared to the papers of his contemporaries. Therein, McIntyre promised a larger page-size and sharper typography in the future, as a result of his growing subscriber base. Whether he achieved that goal is uncertain, as no other issue of his *True American* survives after that one number. He may have closed the paper as early as the spring of 1801, if Silliman's departure as editor then was a contributing factor, or as late as the winter of 1802-03, just before a new Federalist paper was publishing there – the *Impartial Journal* of Valentine M. Mason (282), or at some time between those bookends.

Following the demise of the *Impartial Journal* in the fall of 1804, Leesburg was without its own newspaper until 1808. Yet it seems that McIntyre continued to operate a job-printing office there in the interim, rather than abandoning the town as others, like Mason, often did on the demise of their papers. Thus McIntyre was in a position to begin a new journal in December 1808, following that fall's election of James Madison as Jefferson's successor. Embracing the name of *The Washingtonian*, McIntyre was now a part of an effort by some Federalists to re-associate their partisan perspective with George Washington so leaving the controversies of the Adams years and the war behind them. He thus became the first of five publishers who embraced that title for new political journals during Madison's presidency (beside Leesburg, two in Pennsylvania, one each in Vermont and New York). McIntyre began publishing his new paper about December 6, 1808, one month after Madison's election. This approach evidently suited McIntyre's intended subscribers in Loudoun County, as his weekly would survive the Civil War, making it the focus of the rest of his journalistic career.

One of the area's self-styled Washingtonians was Charles Fenton Mercer, a young lawyer then emerging as the county's chief Federalist voice; Mercer promptly adopted McIntyre's

*Washingtonian* as a platform for partisan organizing and campaigning, indicating he was one of the paper's financial backers, if not the primary one. In that role, *The Washingtonian* helped Mercer win elective office continuously from 1810 to 1839, starting with his election to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1810, and then to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1816. In that first campaign, McIntyre and Mercer faced a new competing Republican paper published by John Newton (313); however, that short-lived *Republican Press* (issued from March 1810 to May 1811) had little if any effect on the polls; Mercer and his Federalist colleague, William Noland, quadrupled the small vote for their Jeffersonian opponents.

Over the course of the next two years – a period from which all of the surviving pre-1820 numbers originated – *The Washingtonian* was a paper that mostly reprinted the long and acerbic speeches of the Federalists then in Congress and commentaries from the major anti-Madison journals in Washington and Baltimore. Yet despite the violence loosed on those source papers in June 1812, at the start of the war with Britain, McIntyre's weekly appears to have escaped such popular retribution; indeed, Mercer was a leading figure among those who commanded militia units from Loudoun County in the War of 1812. However, a clear assessment of the tone and content of *The Washingtonian* during the war is impracticable, as only one issue of the journal survives from the 1812-1820 period.

What little that can be discerned about *The Washingtonian* comes from contemporaries to McIntyre's paper. The most important of those other papers is a Republican one started in Leesburg by Samuel B. T. Caldwell (074) in 1817: the *Genius of Liberty*. Caldwell was actually a transplanted Federalist from Massachusetts who came to Leesburg in 1816 to conduct a mercantile concern; but once in Virginia, Caldwell was radicalized by the immediate loss of his accustomed political rights, particularly that of suffrage, ensuing from his non-property-holding status. He began writing essays on the subject, but found that employing others to publish his arguments was ineffectual, leading him to become his own publisher.

The trigger for Caldwell's decision was apparently Mercer's election to Congress in 1816; he had defeated Armistead Thompson Mason, a young militia general who carried Loudoun's Republican standard, by a vote of 782 to 706; in Mercer's column were many non-resident property owners, who were allowed to vote wherever they owned property, while residents like Caldwell were not. So in January 1817, fully two months before Mercer took his seat, Caldwell launched his Republican alternative to McIntyre's *Washingtonian*, and immediately questioned the legitimacy of Virginia's electoral process and the efficacy of the state's 1776 constitution. Being a New Englander, Loudoun's Federalists were suspicious of his motives, especially when it became known that Mason backed Caldwell, just as Mercer had backed McIntyre. Loudoun's Republicans challenged the 1816 vote when the 15th Congress opened in March 1817, with Caldwell and McIntyre printing charge and countercharge between Mason and Mercer over most of the year. So when Congress certified Mercer's election that November, Mason shifted his focus to actual non-resident voters, including his Federalist cousin, John Mason McCarty, who had voted in Leesburg while he lived in Washington. The exchange between them was even more vitriolic than had been Mason's with Mercer, with McCarty defending himself in *The Washingtonian*. The interest that this clash generated led each Leesburg publisher to reprint the exchanges in carefully-edited pamphlets in late 1818, which increased their sales and kept the animosity alive; hence, this personal and political

conflict eventually drew challenges to a duel, with Mason dying at McCarty's hand on the infamous Bladensburg dueling ground in February 1819.

This two-year-long episode was clearly a key to the survival of both papers in the post-war years. It also reveals the localist base that sustained *The Washingtonian*. Following the war, Federalist papers faded in popularity in consequence of their opposition to a conflict that ended favorably and heroically in the minds of most Americans. McIntyre's paper was now nourished by the sustenance that he had drawn on since its founding – a well-organized political and commercial circle. And so long as Mercer held public favor in the community, *The Washingtonian* would continue publication, regardless of the national party's fortunes. In contrast, Caldwell retired from this perilous trade within months of the duel, selling his paper to Brook Watson Sower (396), a grandson of the first German-language printer in America. So the *Genius of Liberty* continued to compete with *The Washingtonian* until 1841, with the Republican journal evolving into a Jacksonian one in the 1820s as McIntyre's became a Whig journal. But Caldwell's withdrawal gave McIntyre primacy for Loudoun County's job-printing work, which had always been a solid foundation for his business.

McIntyre, however, did not long benefit from this financial and political victory. In July 1821, he died unexpectedly, leaving a young wife, Mary, and a minor son, Christopher. His will directed his executors to continue operating the press office with his new partner, Patrick J. Hawe (206) – apparently a journeyman lately from Alexandria – and to involve his son in the business for as long as it remained a profitable endeavor. Hawe had left the *Washingtonian* by the time he married in Leesburg in December 1822, suggesting that a one-year-long partnership agreement with McIntyre had expired in the interim. But his departure from the office did not doom the paper; it continued for two more decades, possibly in the hands of his executors for all those years, before his son, now called C. C. McIntyre, took control of the *Washingtonian* in the midst of the hotly-contested presidential election of 1840.

C. C. McIntyre conducted his father's journal energetically until 1851. The Whig victory of 1840 brought about the end of the competing *Genius of Liberty* as Democratic partisans began to divide themselves along sectional lines. After 1851, *The Washingtonian* became an ever-more strident voice of secession, and so has been regularly identified as a Democratic paper, an identification that has been carried back, incorrectly, to its earliest days. The newspaper that McIntyre's son sold in 1851 was far removed from the one that he had established in 1808. Yet both iterations of *The Washingtonian* truly represented the views of a majority of Loudoun County's readers. Such unflinching popularity gives evidence of both the father's and the son's proficiency as attentive journalists. It may also explain the dearth of surviving copies of this once popular paper: it was simply read into oblivion.

### ***Personal Data***

Died: July 1821 Leesburg, Virginia.

Survived by a wife, Mary, and one son, Christopher C. McIntyre

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cappon; Reid, *Inside Loudoun*; Poland, *Frontier to Suburbia*; genealogical data from McIntyre family files at Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg.