

**351 REINHART, E. W. – [ELHANAN WINCHESTER REINHART]**

**Publisher**

**Danville, Charlottesville**

Publisher of first newspaper issued in Danville, *The Courier* (1818-19); later publisher of the *Virginia Advocate* (1830-31) in Charlottesville.

Reinhart was a Pennsylvania-born printer who fostered a reputation as a resolute supporter of Andrew Jackson while editing a series of newspapers in Massachusetts, Maryland, and Virginia. In doing so, he became part of the circle of Albemarle County Republicans that was long associated with Thomas Jefferson.

**Beginnings**

Where Reinhart was raised and trained in uncertain, though the state of his birth is noted in the histories of the town of Danville, where he established his first independent venture in the printing trade. In early 1818, he was convinced to move to this very small town – then a rude village of about 50 structures and 400 people – by local leaders, including James Lanier (261); Lanier had a vision of Danville as a regional commercial center, and so was an early advocate for publication of a weekly mercantile advertiser there; Reinhart's *Danville Courier* was the result, issuing its first number in June 1818. The journal eschewed controversy, as Reinhart clearly stated in his prospectus:

"Politics will not be the primary object of the *Courier*. It will be devoted to Religion and Commerce, Manufactures and internal Improvements. It will be diversified with gleanings from works of literature and science with selections of a nature instructive and amusing."

But the printer soured on the locale after about a year; it appears that he closed the *Courier* in June 1819. A new weekly – the *Roanoke Sentinel* – appearing in the *Courier's* place that August, with Lanier as its publisher. The businessman obviously conducted the *Sentinel* in conjunction with unnamed tradesmen, perhaps even Reinhart, as his press was still in town in 1828. But Lanier's Federalist perspective clearly did not match Reinhart's Republican one and so by 1822 the printer had removed from Danville to Massachusetts.

Between 1823 and 1826, Reinhart attempted to establish a trade presence in the Merrimac River towns of Haverhill, Chelmsford, and Lowell. The effort began with his purchase of an interest in the *Haverhill Gazette and Essex Patriot* in April 1823; this Republican paper had been formed from the merger of the *Gazette* of Nathan Burrill and the *Patriot* of William Hastings two months before; Hastings' subsequent retirement opened a door for Reinhart, who was then working as a journeyman in Boston. His association with the paper continued until July 1825 when he was apparently forced out for his political views; he had started publishing the *Merrimack Magazine and Monthly Register* that January, but its Jacksonian perspective found few subscribers in the state that was the home of then President John Quincy Adams; Reinhart closed the magazine, sold his share of the *Gazette & Patriot*, and moved upriver to Chelmsford. There he bought the flagging *Chelmsford Courier* in August and re-launched the weekly as the *Chelmsford Phoenix*; in early 1826, he moved his office

across the river into the newly-incorporated mill-town of Lowell and restyled his *Phoenix* as the *Merrimack Journal*. But once again, his politics did not suit the tastes of the town fathers – who were associated with the mill-owning Boston Associates then building the town – and he was forced to sell the *Journal* in March.

Undaunted, Reinhart returned to Boston and began planning for a new paper "for the dissemination of genuine Jeffersonian principles and support [of] Gen. Jackson" there; the *North American Democrat* did not come to fruition, however, in that Federalist bastion; indeed, Reinhart had been barred in July 1825 from marrying a daughter of the town, Mary Lemarr Hooten, by her father, a result of his well-known views and questionable finances.

### **Jacksonian Stalwart**

Reinhart now turned southward, seeking more hospitable climes for his political rhetoric. In May 1827, he was the founding editor of the *Baltimore Republican*, presenting a recognized public face for an anonymous group of like-minded financiers. Still, he was reconciliatory in his approach. Writing in the daily's first issue, he stated that "in our political principles, we are democratic republican. Not illiberal or intolerant, yet firm, decided, and unwavering," but that the new paper would also be, echoing the tone of his long-dead *Courier*,

"in all things unconnected with [that] great question ... open to all men of all parties. Not for violent or scurrilous communications, or personal altercation; but for fair, temperate, and general discussion."

Yet Reinhart remained in Baltimore only until the following August. He was summoned to Charlottesville, or so it seems, to assist in publishing the *Virginia Advocate* there. Founded in July 1827 out of the ruins of the *Central Gazette*, the new office had obtained Reinhart's old Danville press in pursuing the venture, and its owner with it as an investor and printer. Conducted by long-time Jefferson loyalists Thomas W. Gilmer and John A. G. Davis, the *Advocate* would ultimately reach Reinhart's hands in January 1830, after passing through those of Nicholas P Trist and Francis Carr in 1828 and 1829 respectively. These associations were deepened when he married the eldest daughter of the late Dabney Minor (1774-1824), Catherine Henrietta, in April 1828, so becoming intimately involved in the extensive litigation over the dispersal of this father-in-law's property holdings, both real and chattel.

Reinhart's journalism career came to an end with his labors in Charlottesville. In mid-1831, he was appointed to a clerkship in the General Land Office in Washington, a patronage grant that was the result of a decade of editorial work in support of the military hero. In advocating such a grant earlier, a former Massachusetts colleague wrote that,

"If any one of Gen. Jackson's friends deserves to be rewarded for personal services in reference to the last presidential election, for an early, bold, and manly support of the General, Reinhart is undoubtedly the deserving individual. He for a long time stood alone as a Jackson man, in this part of the country, and in justice should be regarded as the founder of the Jackson party in this State, if not in New England."

For the remainder of his life, Reinhart was an undeniable exemplar of the so-called "spoils system," and evidently benefitted from the role he was awarded. In the 1830s, he acquired

several properties in the heart of Washington proper, as well as a sizable farm in adjacent Montgomery County, Maryland. He also apparently dabbled in real-estate speculations there, based on law suits filed in the District's courts over promissory notes left unpaid in those transactions. Thus it is likely that he would have lived out a comfortable retirement once the Whigs assumed power in the capital in early 1841. But Reinhart did not achieve such comfort. He died in his Washington home in May 1841, just two weeks after the death of William Henry Harrison, succumbing to "a long and severe illness" at the age of forty-five, so avoiding his displacement by a new set of partisan spoils-men.

### ***Personal Data***

Born:            In 1796    in Pennsylvania.  
Married:    Apr. 16 1828    Catherine H. Minor @ Charlottesville, Virginia.  
Died:        May 17 1841    Washington, District of Columbia.  
Children:    Andrew Jackson (b. 1832); Elhanan Winchester Jr. (b. 1833); William Wirt Minor (b. 1840).

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cappon; Clement, *Pittsylvania County*; Aaron, *Pittsylvania County*; Woods, *Albemarle County*; Tyler Family Papers, Swem Library Special Collections, William & Mary; Cowley, *History of Lowell* (1868); Chase, *History of Haverhill* (1861); newspaper notices in Boston (1822-30), Haverhill (1823-41), Richmond (1827-41), and Washington (1827-43); genealogical data from Minor family charts posted on Ancestry.com (February 2013).

Brigham makes a distinction between the *Courier* and the subsequent *Roanoke Sentinel* from concurrent references to each in Norfolk newspapers in 1820; yet Cappon did not report the *Courier* as a post-1820 title, nor is Brigham's *Courier* reference one conclusively associated with Danville. As surviving copies of both journals are from different, consecutive years, it is more likely that they were successive iterations of the same paper. Given that they issued from such a small town, with limited readership and resources, the possibility of two papers issuing there at the same time is remote, if not implausible; hence, the report here of the *Sentinel* as essentially a continuation the *Courier* with a change of ownership in 1819.