

356 RIND, CLEMENTINA – [CLEMENTINA GRIERSON RIND]

Publisher

Williamsburg

Public printer for the Virginia colony (1773-74), as successor to her husband William Rind (358), and publisher of his second *Virginia Gazette* (1773-74) at Williamsburg; mother of James Rind (357) and William Alexander Rind (359); employer of John Pinkney (325).

Clementina Rind was the first and only woman to hold the position of public printer for the Virginia colony, even though not a trained printer herself. That distinction has made her an iconographic figure in American women's history despite indications that she had little, if any, influence over the newspaper issued from her press. Rather, hers was an unexpected role, taken on out of the necessity of supporting a family of as many as six minor children after the untimely death of her tradesman husband.

Born Clementina Grierson in about 1740, Rind became associated with the American print trade by her marriage to William Rind, a journeyman printer heading up the Annapolis office of Jonas Green and his partner in the weekly *Maryland Gazette*. In early 1766, her husband accepted an offer from dissident Burgesses in Virginia to establish a press and newspaper in Williamsburg that would oppose the imperial policies of Lieutenant Governor Francis Fauquier. Over the ensuing seven years, Rind's press served as the voice of partisan faction led by Northern Neck political luminaries Landon Carter, Richard Bland, and Richard Henry Lee, while the tradesman himself served as printer to the colonial government. But in providing such service, William Rind found that the government contract, however valuable, was not sufficient to keep his press office afloat for long, nor was a paper whose circulation was dwarfed (and impeded) by the competing *Virginia Gazette* published by Alexander Purdie (345) and John Dixon Sr. (140) and whose readers rarely paid for their subscriptions. The result was a debt-ridden enterprise that only survived by the infusion of cash supplied by the politicians who employed his *Gazette* for their particular ends.

The financial problems that William Rind faced were left unresolved when he unexpectedly died in August 1773, not yet forty. The widowed Clementina Rind was thus forced into the role of administrator of both her husband's public and private estates. It was likely a difficult turn, having recently given (or about to give) birth to an infant daughter, the sixth child born to the Rinds in their seven years in Williamsburg. Now head of their household, she became the *de facto* public printer in her husband's stead, employing John Pinkney, her husband's shop foreman, as her manager and tradesman. The effectual, if unprofitable functioning of their alliance meant that when the Assembly next met in May 1774, she could argue for her continuance in the position out of both suitable public performance and private charity; the enormous debt left by her husband – amounting to five times the inventoried value of his property – meant that the impoverished family would need financial support for several years to come. It was an effective argument, as she was granted the post of public printer in her own right on May 14, 1774, in what was essentially a unanimous vote.

Although one-third of the Burgesses voted that she should hold the position in conjunction with either Alexander Purdie or John Dixon, who were now conducting separate presses,

the remaining voters seem to have believed that her continued employment of Pinkney was sufficient guarantee that the public business could be conducted without her partaking in the actual production. Moreover, her appointment meant that Rind's *Virginia Gazette* could also continue to serve as the voice of the majority faction in the Assembly. Her election was one based in mutual self-interest that would, from Clementina's perspective, provide what her husband had been unable to provide, sustenance for a brood of young children.

Over the thirteen months that she was proprietor of the Rind *Gazette*, she would publish occasional essays on subjects she found it fitting to comment upon; but for the most part, it seems that her children were the focus of her life, and not the journal; her weekly carried news and commentary fitting the political agenda of the *Gazette's* fiscal backers. This was her husband's legacy to the Virginia printing trade. From 1773 on, each press established in the Old Dominion would have a particular secular or sectarian patron, even as each of them regularly proclaimed themselves to be "open to all, but influenced by none" as originally decreed in the masthead of the Rind *Gazette*.

However, Clementina Rind was not long a part of that trade. She followed her husband to the grave in September 1774, not yet thirty-five, leaving six children still under nine years of age. Pinkney became the *de facto* public printer, just as she had before him, until the next meeting of the Assembly in March 1775; he also conducted the family's *Gazette* "for the benefit of Clementina Rind's children." But his appeal to the Assembly for continuance in office under the same terms that she had argued in May 1774 – suitable public performance and private charity for the children – fell on deaf ears in the midst of the opening days of the Revolutionary conflict. Purdie received the public grant instead, and Pinkney bought the press from the Rind estate to conduct the paper for his own benefit. Thus the children were left to the charity of the family's Williamsburg neighbors, with the two eldest boys, William and John, being provided an education by the local Masonic Lodge in which their father had once been a member. Despite such a tragic end, Clementina Rind has been remembered and memorialized for her unprecedented appointment, not for any accomplishments.

Personal Data

Born:	ca. 1740	In or near Annapolis, Maryland.
Married:	ca. 1765	William Rind @ Annapolis, Maryland.
Died:	Sept. 25 1774	Williamsburg, Virginia.
Children:	William Alexander (b. 1766); John Grierson (b. 1767); Charles (b. 1768); Sarah (b. 1769); James (b. 1771); Maria (b. 1773).	

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Rawson, "Guardians," chaps. 3 & 4; Williamsburg People files and York County Project files, Colonial Williamsburg Research Dept.; Wroth, *Maryland Printing*; Goodwin, *Bruton Church*.