

409 TEMPLE, PHILIP

Publisher

Fredericksburg

Publisher of the *Fredericksburgh News-Letter* (1801-02).

Temple was publisher of a Fredericksburg paper issued in support of the newly-installed Jefferson administration. His twice-weekly journal was the latest in a series of challengers to the Federalist-oriented *Virginia Herald* of Timothy Green (194), which then dominated the Rappahannock Valley. And as with his predecessors, his challenge ultimately failed.

The young publisher was a member of a sizeable family with extensive land-holdings in the counties surrounding Fredericksburg. He was the youngest son of Samuel Temple (1742-98) and Frances Redd (1746-1801) of Caroline County; his grandfather, Joseph Temple (1699-1749), had acquired large tracts in King William, King & Queen, Spotsylvania, and Caroline counties, and had distributed those holdings among his children at his death. His father, thus, was an elite figure in Caroline when the Revolutionary War erupted, serving as captain of a county-militia company during the war, rising to command of the Caroline regiment after the war as a colonel. His brother John (1768-1814) added to this familial prestige by following the traditional second-son path into a life as a clergyman.

Seeking his own course in life, Temple drew on both that prestige and the family fortune. He set out to publish a paper in Fredericksburg in 1801 apparently using a legacy recently received his late father's estate. The venture was certainly a gamble, as he put himself into competition with another new journal having a similar political view. *The Courier* of James Walker (425) inherited the mantle of Republican journalism in Fredericksburg the preceding fall on the death of Robert Mercer (301), the Commonwealth Attorney for the state courts that met there; Mercer helped to fund the ill-fated *Republican Citizen* (1796-97) of Lancelot Mullin (307), then bought that idle press to issue his *Genius of Liberty* (1797-1800); Walker had printed the *Genius* for Mercer and now conducted the *Courier* as its successor.

Evidently, Temple thought Walker's partisan mannerisms inappropriate for the time. The prospectus he offered for his *Fredericksburgh News-Letter* drew on the conciliatory tone of Jefferson's inaugural address and its assessment that "We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists." For Temple, the peaceful transfer of power from Adams to Jefferson offered "the pleasing prospects of returning Unity" to the country; hence he tendered

"the opinion that it is high time to draw a veil over the scenes which have for a considerable time agitated the public mind, and conceives it would accord with republican principles, for the party which has been aggrieved to forgive the persecutions with which they have been afflicted, and endeavor by paying the strictest regard to Elections, to guard against such evils in future."

Conciliation would be the guiding principle for his *News-Letter*, even as it supported the new administration. Temple's approach clearly found an audience once he began issuing his paper in May 1801. By mid-November, Walker found it prudent to suspended publication of his *Courier*, indicating that Temple had drawn off a sizeable portion of his business, likely

both in subscription and advertising revenue; yet he remained in town, conducting a job-printing office, awaiting a better time to restart his paper.

The field cleared, Temple was now established as the local alternative to Green's *Herald*; but apparently ill health brought the project to an abrupt end after just a year. Sometime in late May or early June 1802, Temple ceased publishing his *News-Letter*, and then advertised the sale of his Fredericksburg printing office on June 21st from his King William residence; almost exactly two months later the young publisher died. It may be that he retired from journalism because of financial problems, as had the earlier Republican publishers, but his death at such a young age so shortly after his journal's demise suggests otherwise.

In either case, it would be nearly a year before another pro-Jefferson paper arose to take the place of Temple's *News-Letter*. In May 1803, Samuel Chiles (092), a Caroline County planter with political ambitions, and Isham Burch (062), a journeyman from the press offices in Richmond, began issuing the *Virginia Express*. But their effort was soon in competition with another Republican sheet, as Walker resurrected his twice-weekly paper as the *Apollo* in September 1803, in an apparent attempt to undercut Chiles & Burch in the same way that Temple had undercut him before. Financial circumstances, however, once again sank Walker's hopes, forcing a suspension of the *Apollo* after just six months. Yet his withdrawal did little to help the *Virginia Express*; two months later, Chiles left the concern, leaving his printer-partner to struggle on with the aid of his brother, Elisha Burch (061). Like Walker, they too gave up the effort in fiscal distress in March 1805. All three journeymen soon left the Rappahannock River port, while Chiles continued his political career in nearby Caroline. Fredericksburg did not again see a Republican paper until 1811.

Personal Data

Born: Jan. 1 1780 Caroline County, Virginia.

Died: Aug. 26 1802 King William County, Virginia.

Apparently died unmarried and without issue.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; prospectus in [Richmond] *Virginia Argus* (May 26, 1801); office-sale notice in [Fredericksburg] *Virginia Herald* (June 21, 1802); genealogical data from Temple family material in *Tyler's Quarterly* and the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, and at temple-genealogy.com, with thanks to its owner, Park Temple.