

418 TRICE, THOMAS

Publisher

Shepherdstown

Publisher of *The Informer & Advertiser* (1820) at Shepherdstown.

Trice was evidently a trained printer who rose to ownership of two short-lived newspapers in the upper Potomac River valley. But the brevity of those ventures masks his identity, as it does the place of his imprints in their locales.

Little is known of Trice other than what can be discerned from indirect references to him. His appearances in the American print trade suggest that he was a trained printer, while a lengthy presence in the area between Frederick, Maryland, and Martinsburg implies that he was trained in one of those regional printing centers and so remained part of their trade networks for much of his life. The only direct evidence of Trice's life comes from notices in Maryland papers that record his participation in Whig political organizing in Williamsport in the mid-1830s, as well as his death there in 1845 at age fifty-one.

Trice first appears in the bibliographic record in July 1820 as the proprietor of the *Informer and Weekly Advertiser* in Shepherdstown. His paper was evidently a venture that continued efforts by locals to produce a journal to compete with Jefferson County's established paper-of-record, *The Farmer's Repository*, published by Richard Williams (447) at Charlestown. His Republican sheet was challenged at least twice by Federalist weeklies in the three years before the *Informer* appeared: *The American Eagle* conducted initially (1816-17) by John N. Snider (392), and then (1817-19) by the firm of Maxwell & Harper (283 & 202); the partners closed their *Eagle* in the spring of 1819 to recast it as the *Potomack Register*, but that iteration was also dead by the time that the *Informer* appeared.

In August 1819, the firm of G.W. Sappington & Co. began publication of the *Informer & Advertiser*. As its titular proprietor, Sappington appears to have been its financier and/or editor as his subsequent occupations show close connections with the mercantile interests of Jefferson County, where he lived out most of his life. The timing of the *Informer's* start suggests that Sappington, then just nineteen or twenty, drew on friends and neighbors to acquire the Maxwell & Harper press in order to attempt a third challenger to Williams. Such would have made him an employer of printers – and that a twenty-five year-old Trice may have been with him from the start.

Only one issue of the *Informer* has survived, suggesting just how marginal the paper was, and that survivor was produced by Trice; as that issue was number 45 of the first (and only) volume, it seems that Sappington may have been a part of the venture for just six months before he transferred ownership to a like-minded Trice – as both were Whig political figures in the 1830s. Another paper emerged in Shepherdstown in September 1820 – *The Virginia Monitor* of Maryland physician Edward Bell (029) – indicating that Trice sold his newly-acquired, though financially-troubled office at the end of that volume in August 1820.

Trice next appears in the bibliographic record in January 1830 as the silent, printer-partner in the *Republican Banner and Weekly Advertiser* in Williamsport, Maryland, about twenty miles upriver from Shepherdstown. There he joined with Daniel Weisel, an attorney who

was active in Whig politics and who later served as a justice of the state's Court of Appeals. The duration of that paper is uncertain; local histories report that it "did not continue many years" while that paper's file at the Maryland Archives and the University of Maryland have but scattered issues through 1831. Even though the *Banner* was Williamsport's first paper, there was a printing office in the town well before that, and Trice may have conducted that office before, during, and after the *Banner's* short life – though that is a suggestion that lacks any evidentiary support.

It is clear that Trice remained in Williamsport, marrying there in about 1844 to a very young second wife, before dying there in 1845. His obituary in the *Baltimore Sun* indicates that the *Banner* was still in print then, called the *Williamsport Banner* then, and that Trice was its editor right up until his death. However, no issues after 1831 have survived, so taking with them any potential information on Trice's public and private lives.

Personal Data

Born:	ca. 1794	Potomac River Valley?
Married [1]:	ca. 1815	Unnamed [dead by 1840].
Married [2]:	ca. 1844	Elizabeth Snyder @ Williamsport, Maryland.
Died:	Oct. 2 1845	Williamsport, Maryland.
Children:	No record of children yet discovered, though federal census reports two possible sons younger than 10 in 1820.	

Sources: Brigham; Norona & Shetler; Federal Decennial Census (1820); Williams, *Washington County, Maryland*; data on Snyder from family history posted on Ancestry.com (April 2013).