

Lineage No.: **NORFOLK 11**

Group Title: **American Beacon**

Variant 01: The American Beacon and Commercial Diary

Publication Data: August 7, 1815 to August 24, 1816 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Shields & Shepherd

IVP Associates: Hamilton Shields (380), Samuel Shepherd (379), Henry Ashburn (015)

Notes: Shepherd, a printer in the *Richmond Commercial Compiler* office of Shields' brother, came to Norfolk in April 1815 to join Shields in issuing a similar mercantile paper there. They began publishing a thrice-weekly country edition in January 1816 as simply *The American Beacon* (LCCN no. 85-025810). In April 1816, Shields & Shepherd made Ashburn, their shop foreman, a partner in the press office producing the *American Beacon*.

References: LCCN no. 95-067610; Brigham II: 1122-1123.

Variant 02: The American Beacon and Commercial Diary

Publication Data: August 26, 1816 to March 15, 1817 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Shields, Charlton & Co.

IVP Associates: Hamilton Shields (380), William C. Shields (381), Seymour P. Charlton (089), Henry Ashburn (015)

Notes: In August 1816, Samuel Shepherd sold his interest in the *American Beacon* and returned to Richmond to become a proprietor the *Commercial Compiler*; just before that William C. Shields sold his interest in that paper in order to join his brother in Norfolk; the brothers added Charlton to the concern in order to acquire Ashburn's share of the press office; the three became equal partners in the *Beacon*, with Ashburn still conducting their office.

References: LCCN no. 95-067610; Brigham II: 1122-1123.

Variant 03: The American Beacon

Publication Data: March 17, 1817 to April 2, 1817 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Shields, Charlton & Co.

IVP Associates: Hamilton Shields (380), William C. Shields (381), Seymour P. Charlton (089), Henry Ashburn (015)

Notes: Paper shortage forced a reduction in *Beacon's* page size for 16 days; title was simplified to maximize space available for content; former format resumed on April 3, 1817.

References: LCCN no. 95-067610; Brigham II: 1122-1123.

Variant 04: The American Beacon and Commercial Diary

Publication Data: April 3, 1817 to August 6, 1818 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Shields, Charlton & Co.

IVP Associates: Hamilton Shields (380), William C. Shields (381), Seymour P. Charlton (089), Henry Ashburn (015)

Notes: With issue of April 3, 1817, the *Beacon* resumed format used before paper shortage.

References: LCCN no. 84-024723; Brigham II: 1122-1123.

Variant 05: The American Beacon and Norfolk & Portsmouth Daily Advertiser

Publication Data: August 7, 1818 to August 15, 1818 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Shields, Charlton & Co.

IVP Associates: Hamilton Shields (380), William C. Shields (381), Seymour P. Charlton (089), Henry Ashburn (015)

Notes: With issue of August 7, 1818, first number of their third volume, the firm increased the sheet size of the *American Beacon* from Royal to Super-Royal, with concurrent change in its title to reflect market they intended to serve.

References: LCCN no. 84-024509; Brigham II: 1122-1123.

Variant 06: The American Commercial Beacon and Norfolk & Portsmouth Daily Advertiser

Publication Data: August 17, 1818 to December 31, 1819 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Shields, Charlton & Co.

IVP Associates: Hamilton Shields (380), William C. Shields (381), Seymour P. Charlton (089), Henry Ashburn (015)

Notes: With issue of August 17, 1818, the firm added a type-ornament to the masthead between words "American" and "Beacon" creating main title of *American Commercial Beacon*; title on editorial block inside remained *American Beacon*; form continued until July 1827.

References: LCCN no. 84-024724; Brigham II: 1122-1123.

Variant 07: The American Commercial Beacon and Norfolk & Portsmouth Daily Advertiser

Publication Data: January 1, 1820 to June 30, 1823 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Shields, Ashburn, & Co.

IVP Associates: Hamilton Shields (380), William C. Shields (381), Henry Ashburn (015)

Notes: Following issue of December 31, 1819, Charlton retired from the firm, selling his interest to Ashburn, creating firm of Shields, Ashburn, & Co.; the *Beacon's* country edition was renamed with ownership change, becoming *The American Beacon for the Country* (LCCN no. 85-025811).

References: LCCN no. 84-024724; Brigham II: 1122-1123; Cappon 914.

Variant 08: The American Commercial Beacon and Norfolk & Portsmouth Daily Advertiser

Publication Data: July 1, 1823 to June 30, 1827 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Shields & Ashburn

IVP Associates: Hamilton Shields (380), Henry Ashburn (015)

Notes: Following issue of June 30, 1823, William C. Shields retired from the firm, selling his share to his partners, creating firm of Shields & Ashburn; the *Beacon's* country edition was renamed with ownership change, becoming *The American Beacon and Virginia and North Carolina Gazette* (LCCN no. 85-025812).

References: LCCN no. 84-024724; Brigham II: 1122-1123; Cappon 914.

Variant 09: The American Beacon and Norfolk and Portsmouth Daily Advertiser

Publication Data: July 2, 1827 to September 30, 1834 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Shields & Ashburn

IVP Associates: Hamilton Shields (380), Henry Ashburn (015)

Notes: With issue of July 2, 1827, the partners retired the type-ornament "*Commercial*" from the paper's masthead, shortening title; the *Beacon* retained this form until November 1851.

References: LCCN no. 86-071774; Cappon 914.

Variant 10: The American Beacon and Norfolk and Portsmouth Daily Advertiser

Publication Data: October 1, 1834 to December 30, 1837 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Ashburn & Grigsby

IVP Associates: Henry Ashburn (015)

Notes: Following issue of September 30, 1834, Hamilton Shields retired from the firm, selling his interest to Hugh Blair Grigsby, creating firm of Ashburn & Grigsby; printer Ashburn died unexpectedly in September 1836; editor Grigsby conducted business in combination with Ashburn's estate until December 30, 1837.

References: LCCN no. 86-071774; Cappon 914.

Variant 11: The American Beacon and Norfolk and Portsmouth Daily Advertiser

Publication Data: January 1, 1838 to September 30, 1840 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Hugh Blair Grigsby & Co.

IVP Associates:

Notes: Grigsby took full control of the *American Beacon* from Ashburn's estate with the issue of January 1, 1838; his purchase was financed by William D. Bagnall, whose brother, Henry B. Bagnall, was employed in the *Beacon* office, alongside printer Thomas F. Boothby.

References: LCCN no. 86-071774; Cappon 914.

Variant 12: The American Beacon and Norfolk and Portsmouth Daily Advertiser

Publication Data: October 1, 1840 to September 30, 1848 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: William E. Cunningham & Co.

IVP Associates:

Notes: With issue of October 1, 1840, William E. Cunningham gained control of the *Beacon* from Grigsby, purportedly for \$60,000. Cunningham retained Bagnall and Boothby in his office; that publishing plant was destroyed by fire on November 27, 1847; Bagnall and Boothby attempted to take control of the *Beacon* immediately after the fire by printing the paper in Baltimore with assistance of editor John H. Hewitt; Cunningham countered the ploy by publishing the *Beacon* from the office of *Virginia Temperance Advocate* in Norfolk a day before the Bagnall & Boothby version was issued on December 1st; the competition was resolved with Bagnall and Boothby selling their shares in the *Beacon* to Cunningham.

References: LCCN no. 86-071774; Cappon 914.

Variant 13: The American Beacon and Norfolk and Portsmouth Daily Advertiser

Publication Data: October 1, 1848 to November 3, 1851 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Cunningham & Gatewood

IVP Associates:

Notes: With issue of October 1, 1848, Cunningham added Gatewood as a partner, so refinancing the operation following departure of Bagnall and Boothby.

References: LCCN no. 86-071775; Cappon 914.

Variant 14: The American Beacon

Publication Data: November 4, 1851 to January 7, 1854 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Cunningham & Gatewood

IVP Associates:

Notes: With issue of November 4, 1851, Cunningham & Gatewood proclaimed the *Beacon* to be a partisan journal (Whig/Know Nothing) after 36 years as an avowedly non-partisan daily, with an appropriate shortening of its title to remove former commercial focus. In February 1852, they began issuing a weekly edition of the *Beacon* () in addition to the tri-weekly one issued since January 1816; no copies of that variant are known extant.

References: LCCN no. 86-071775; Cappon 914.

Variant 15: The American Beacon and Daily Commercial Advertiser

Publication Data: January 9, 1854 to January 16, 1855 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Cunningham & Gatewood

IVP Associates:

Notes: With issue of January 9, 1854, Cunningham & Gatewood reinstated the commercial focus abandoned in November 1851 to the *Beacon's* title. At about this same time, they also renamed that tri-weekly country edition as *The American Beacon and Virginia and North Carolina Tri-Weekly Gazette* (LCCN No. 99-066775).

References: LCCN no. 92-061764; Cappon 914.

Variant 16: The American Beacon

Publication Data: January 17, 1855 to March 27, 1856 Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Cunningham & Gatewood

IVP Associates:

Notes: With issue of January 17, 1855, Cunningham & Gatewood trimmed the *American Beacon's* title once again, apparently in anticipation of the 1856 election cycle. However, neither partner would see that election as both men died in Norfolk's 1855 yellow fever epidemic (Cunningham on September 3; Gatewood on September 8); paper went into suspension as a result and possibly never issued again until after their press office was sold at public auction on March 27, 1856; end date reflects that sale by their estate administrators. Last issue of the *American Beacon* known extant antedates the yellow-fever outbreak.

References: LCCN no. 92-061764; Cappon 914.

Variant 17: The American Beacon

Publication Data: March 28, 1856 To sometime in 1858. Daily (ex. Sunday)

Proprietors: Uncertain

IVP Associates:

Notes: Following sale of *Beacon* office, the daily was issued until at least August 1858, based on references to paper elsewhere. Recovery of business was hampered by another fire which destroyed publishing plant on November 11, 1856; that was likely an arson fire as the office was targeted almost annually from 1852 on. Cappon suggests Bagnall and Boothby had a hand in the post-1856 publication, but both men were dead by then, Boothby in the yellow-fever outbreak; he also suggests that the firm of Bisbie & Hathaway was involved for a time, but it is more likely Hathaway was only part of the new *Norfolk Day Book* which started in October 1857. Paper evidently ceased publication in late 1858, as its office and proprietors are not list the Norfolk's 1859 city directory, issued early that year.

References: LCCN no. 92-061764; Cappon 914.
