

LYNCHBURG 04: Lynchburg Press

- 01: The Lynchburg Press (1809-1818)
 - 02: The Lynchburg Press and Public Advertiser (1818-1820)
 - 03: The Lynchburg Press (1820-1822)
 - 04: The Virginian (1822-1893)
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The fourth newspaper issued in Lynchburg was one that strove to bridge the political gap between Republicans and Federalists by drawing in moderates on each side of the partisan divide. In doing so, it became one of the earliest Whig papers in Virginia as the parties of the Jeffersonian period evolved into those of the Jacksonian era.

Lynchburg's initial papers were all partisan ones; first came the Federalist-aligned *Lynchburg and Farmer's Gazette* (1793-1796) and *Lynchburg Gazette* (1797-1805), then a Republican-oriented *Lynchburg Star* (1805-1814). The 1808 presidential election opened a split in the Republican ranks, especially in Virginia, between those favoring James Madison as Jefferson's successor and those preferring James Monroe in that role. After Madison's was elected, an uneasy truce was forged among those ranks, one obligated by the continuing Federalist attacks on the "pro-France" foreign policy of their party's new president and his secretary of state. At the same time, Lynchburg was divided by a conflict between Christian evangelicals and established churches there, with the *Lynchburg Star* of Dr. James Graham (183) denigrating the evangelicals' practice of irregularly staging camp meetings rather than establishing regular churches in the town. Such sectarian strife was a particular problem for Republican leaders there, as the followers of the evangelical ministers were also more likely to share their political interests; but with the *Star* deriding emotionalist religious practices locally, the Federalists' habitual depiction of Republicans as being godless atheists was made more credible. Following Madison's inauguration in early 1809, some of those local leaders decided to support a new weekly they hoped would put an end to the religious and political divisions in their neighborhood. The *Lynchburg Press* was the means to that end.

Beginnings

The key player in this new venture turned out to be the journal's editor, Samuel Kennedy Jennings (236), and not its publisher, Fleming Grantland (185). Jennings was a respected physician like Graham, though hailing from nearby New London; but unlike Graham, he was also a religious leader, named a deacon in the Methodist Church by Bishop Asbury in 1805, shortly before the *Lynchburg Star* first appeared. Later that same year, Jennings published a pamphlet in Richmond defending the practice of holding the camp meetings that were the central feature of the Methodist revivals that had brought Lorenzo Dow (148) to the area in 1804, probably in response to Graham's criticisms of those meetings. Contemporaries later reported that Jennings used a "lucid, pointed, logical style" in his writing that had a great effect on readers. With such a talented writer involved in their project, it was apparently a simple task for the new paper's backers to persuade Grantland to relocate to Lynchburg to produce the weekly for them. The printer was the younger of two brothers trained for the

print trade in Richmond's Republican press offices; during the 1808 presidential campaign, he had helped his brother, Seaton Grantland (186), publish a twice-weekly campaign paper, *The Virginian*, supporting Monroe's candidacy. That experience gave him the confidence to strike out on his own; in early spring 1809, Fleming left Seaton's employ to conduct his own newspaper in Lynchburg with the assistance of Jennings.

The first number of the *Lynchburg Press* issued on May 6, 1809, two months into Madison's presidency. Only three numbers of the first year of the weekly are known extant; but they provide four lengthy essays penned by Jennings that laid out the course that the partners were intending to follow. His introductory address to the paper's readers was printed on the first page for the first month. Therein, Jennings presented a succinct statement of their principles, eschewing a long prospective essay, trusting that the commentaries he wrote in subsequent issues would conform to those simple strictures:

"We utterly detest the practice of those who in an ostentatious prospectus address themselves to the public with the flattering appellation of "An enlightened people," and afterwards presume to entertain the same "enlightened people" with obscenity and defamation. We hope never to excite a blush on the cheek of modesty. We are determined not to trouble our readers with personal contention, family bickering's or neighbourhood broils."

The following week, Jennings presented his definition of patriotism, one that denied that such a virtue could be claimed by any one partisan group, whatever the strain:

"True patriotism is a complex idea. Its existence depends on an association of ideas which commences with our earliest perceptions. Our first attachment is felt towards our parents and members of their family. As our minds enlarge, we begin to include their friends and neighbours. As our views and interests are extended, we begin to feel concern for the safety of that country which contains and protects all that we hold dear to us. The first emotions are almost entirely selfish. Those of the second and more expanded grade are considered more benevolent. And even those of the third are but the commencement of patriotic emotion. Nothing short of that grand affection, which consults the safety and happiness of all the families and individuals of our common country can properly deserve the sublime appellation of *patriotism*."

Yet where Jennings's initial commentaries were directed at partisan papers and attitudes, his third editorial was a combination of an evangelical's reproach of overt materialism and a professor's lecture on political economy. He noted that, shortly after the Revolutionary War had ended,

"...the stable commodity of our country arose in value, to an unusual height. 40 shillings per hundred for Tobacco was indeed a flattering price. And almost every man felt himself rich by anticipation. Immediately an inundation of British and other foreign articles of commerce flowed into our country. A fatal charm seemed to blind the eyes and becloud the understanding of the people, whilst the enchanting sounds of '*cheap goods and 40 shillings for tobacco*' were sounded in the ears of men, women, and children. That which to thousands ought to have '*grated harsh thunder*' was the thought more sweetly melodious than the harp of Orpheus. The grateful jar

of the quick returning card—the delightful buzzing of the wheel—the animating well-time something of the little were all brushed into silence. All nature seem to listen to the fascinating sound of '*cheap goods and 40 shillings for Tobacco!*'"

Jennings went on to argue that a dependence on foreign goods, whatever their origin, made the country a dependent nation, not an independent one. The solution, he said, was a combination of individual frugality and domestic manufacturing, then "shall we indeed, be a wealthy and independent people."

This initial burst of literary production is all the evidence that we now have of the period of Jennings's association with Grantland. After the issues of the paper's first month, the next surviving number of the *Lynchburg Press* is from July 1810, after both founders had left its office. Starting a new weekly in a place with an established paper was a gamble at best, and printers like Grantland usually hedged their bets by committing only to short-term contracts with the new journal's financiers. In this case, it appears that Grantland agreed to a simple one-year contract with the local backers behind his paper, one that expired in May 1810. At that time, the printer sold his interest in the venture to William Waller Gray (193), a good friend and fellow former Richmond journeyman who had deep family ties to the Lynchburg area; Grantland then removed to Georgia to join the new Milledgeville office of his brother Seaton (186), who had recently been named that state's public printer.

Transitions

Only three numbers of the *Press* are known extant for the period of Gray's tenure; yet it is clear in that spare record that Jennings did not serve as his editor. The paper continued to be an outlet for Methodists, as previously, but Gray's connections to the state's Republican leadership in Richmond – especially his uncle, William Waller Hening (213), and his cousins, Henry and Gerard Banks (019) – allowed him to make the *Press* more partisan than Jennings had intended at the outset, a difference that apparently led to a parting of Jennings from Gray at the beginning of the printer's proprietorship. Still, Jennings would not be long away from the editorial chair in the *Press* office. Like Grantland, Gray evidently agreed to a simple one-year contract with the paper's backers as well, as he did not establish a separate household, living instead in his parents' Lynchburg home while conducting the *Press*. Thus when Gray's contract expired in May 1811, he also sold his interest in the paper and left town, in his case, in order to return to the press offices of Richmond.

Over the next four years, the *Lynchburg Press* was conducted as a tri-partite alliance, though the corporate name was simply Haas & Lamb. It appears that Jacob Haas (196) was a printer from Shenandoah County who had trained at the legendary Henkel Press in New Market; he would hold the majority interest in the *Press* until 1819. His financial partner was Dr. John F. Lamb (259), a Campbell County physician who was also a member of Jennings's Methodist congregation. The pair ostensibly "employed" Jennings as their editor, though he likely held a financial interest in the business as an inducement to return to the office. Evidently, Lamb also contributed content during Jennings's ministerial absences from Lynchburg.

While this partnership was the proprietors' first newspaper venture, it proved a successful one for just over four years, surviving the widespread disruptions of the War of 1812, even

as it promoted the interests of local Republicans, though less ardently than it had under Gray. The shift away from the non-partisan tone of the first year of the *Lynchburg Press* was one that Jennings readily embraced, given the unceasing focus of Federalists on trade with Great Britain, the source of the corrupting materialistic influences that he had disparaged in 1809. Yet Jennings also continued to offer a spiritual message in the weekly that was hoped to bridge the sectarian divides in that neighborhood; indeed, the *Press* office was something of an ecumenical operation now, with Haas professing a Lutheran faith, while Lamb slowly became a Presbyterian adherent. Hence, Jennings assured that the firm issued imprints that advanced the Christian perspective so important to him. Of particular note was the firm's publication of two new works by Lorenzo Dow in 1812: his often-reprinted tract *Dialogue between Two Characters; Curious and Singular!!* and *A Journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, or The Road to Peace and True Happiness*, a 250-page opus which was the most substantial imprint that the Haas & Lamb office of ever produced. Those works are clear evidence of the job-printing capacity of the *Press* office as well, which likely contributed to the demise of the *Lynchburg Star* in the summer or fall of 1814.

By 1815, however, both Lamb and Jennings voiced preferences for medicine over journalism and moved to turn exclusively to their practices. That summer, Jennings left Lynchburg for Norfolk, where he then manufactured and marketed a patented "portable warm and hot bath" for therapeutic use, while preaching at the invitation of Methodist congregations on the Southside; eventually, he became an eminent medical and religious figure in Baltimore. Lamb found similar professional recognition in Pennsylvania where he became president of the Philadelphia County Medical Society in 1853. Neither Lamb nor Jennings was involved again in publishing a newspaper after 1815.

The withdrawal of his partners meant a rapid reorganization of the *Press* office for Haas. In October 1815, he induced Lamb to sell his interest in the *Press* to Samuel Bransford (050), a local merchant with extensive familial and commercial connections in the neighborhood; he was also a cousin to Lynchburg's first journalist, Robert Mosby Bransford (049), publisher of the *Lynchburg and Farmer's Gazette*. It appears that Bransford saw this opportunity as a lucrative investment for his growing business portfolio; so he forged a two-year partnership agreement with Haas; how much content that Bransford contributed to the *Press* is unclear. What is clear, from surviving issues from this period, is that Haas & Bransford did not stray far from the path followed by Haas & Lamb previously, despite Jennings's departure.

When his agreement with Bransford expired in October 1817, Haas brought in Dr. Samuel G. Dawson (131) as his new financial partner. This transfer differed from the preceding ones in that Dawson was both a neighbor and marriage relation to Haas. Then a physician practicing in Salem, the seat of Roanoke County, Dawson was a nephew to Haas, the husband of his mother's sister. Accordingly, the *Lynchburg Press* became a family business under the name of Haas & Dawson on October 31, 1817, with Haas still conducting the press and Dawson assuming the editorial chair once occupied by Jennings.

This change evidently reflects Haas's ambition to share the rewards of a successful business with family members. But his subsequent moves seem to have unsettled the journal's hard-won stability. Beginning with the issue of September 21, 1818, Haas & Dawson made the

weekly *Lynchburg Press* into the twice-weekly *Lynchburg Press and Public Advertiser*. Such escalations in the pace of production for any newspaper at this time also brought significant increases in the cost of supplies and labor. Over the ensuing six months, it became evident that the capital Haas had accrued during his tenure as proprietor of the journal was now threatened by a fast-deteriorating financial situation. With the decade-old journal wanting reorganization and reinvigoration, it appears Haas decided that selling his paper was the most appropriate course. So in the spring of 1819, the *Press* once again changed hands.

The buyer was William Duffy (150). It seems he was Philadelphia-trained printer who moved to Georgetown in the District of Columbia in 1816; there he became the semi-official printer to Georgetown College (now University) and to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Baltimore, Leonard Neale, a former president of the college. Duffy evidently prospered from this new relationship, but he plainly wanted to publish a paper, a project that was unworkable while he remained a client of the Catholic Church. So his Georgetown days ended in early 1819 when he offered to buy out Haas & Dawson with the monies he had garnered in three years in the capital. His purchase of the *Lynchburg Press* required two distinct transactions; after the April 19th issue, Dawson sold his interest in the paper to Duffy, creating the firm of Haas & Duffy; then after the May 31st issue, Haas sold his interest to Duffy and retired from the print trade forever.

It seems, however, that Duffy was pressed financially from the start. Unlike Haas & Dawson, he had unnamed financial backers, as the corporate name of William Duffy & Co. evinces, meaning that there was always a drain on his resources from satisfying his financiers. Just who those persons were is unclear; but within a year, Duffy was openly associated with the family of James Pleasants (1769-1836), then one of Virginia's two U.S. Senators and soon to be governor of the Commonwealth; it was an association that rescued him from fiscal ruin. Pleasants was savvy enough to understand that when he did finally run for governor, he was not guaranteed the support of the principal Republican journal in Virginia, the *Richmond Enquirer* of Thomas Ritchie (360). So in 1820, Pleasants started to build his own newspaper base in Lynchburg with Duffy's help. It was a decision that made the *Press* into an overtly partisan paper for the first time since Gray's departure in 1811.

As with Duffy's purchase of the *Press* in 1819, divesting himself of his interest in the paper in 1820 was a two-part process as well. Following the issue of April 25th, Duffy sold a half-interest in his paper to John Hampden Pleasants (330), a son of the senator who was then practicing law in Lynchburg; the resulting firm of Duffy & Pleasants simplified the paper's lengthy title by reverting to its original 1809 form: the *Lynchburg Press*. Five months later, after the issue of September 22nd, Duffy sold his residual interest to the younger Pleasants as well – placing the paper firmly in the Pleasants family's hands – and retired permanently from the trade, becoming a brewer. As neither father nor son were trained printers, the departure of Duffy marked a pivotal transition for the *Press*, where the well-established printer-publisher foundation of the original paper was supplanted by an editor-publisher one that lacked any guarantee of future longevity.

Still, at the end of his first year as the journal's owner, J. H. Pleasants made his brother-in-law, Marcellus Smith (d. 1829), his partner in the publishing concern; the firm of Pleasants &

Smith issued the widely-recognized paper from September 13, 1821, to January 11, 1822. Over the course of those few months, their paper found itself in competition with a new Republican journal there, one adopting the old *Lynchburg Gazette* name, one espousing the views of Republican leaders in Richmond, and so one challenging the Pleasants clan.

Conversion

In early 1822, James Pleasants decided he would offer himself as a candidate for governor at the General Assembly in November that year. That decision led to a reorganization of the *Press* by John Hampden Pleasants that brought a veteran political journalist into the mix. Joseph Butler (069) had long been a part of the Republican press circle in Richmond, and so had close ties to financier-editor Philip DuVal (155) and the late printer-publisher Samuel Pleasants (331), who it seems introduced him to political journalism. Butler spent much of his newspaper career in the shadows in the state capital, but had taken a visible role in the very short-lived *The Observer* in Staunton in 1814 with DuVal and Republican editor Gerard Banks; he would now do so again in Lynchburg.

After the issue of January 11, 1822, J. H. Pleasants induced brother-in-law Smith, who was a marriage relation to Butler as well, to sell his interest in the *Press* to the Richmond-based journalist. The new combination of Pleasants, Butler & Co. then moved to consolidate their position in the southwestern piedmont by eliminating their competition there; at the end of July, they acquired the new *Lynchburg Gazette* and its press, significantly expanding both their productive capacity and readership. The two journals were promptly merged into one new weekly with a broader appeal in the state; the first number of *The Virginian* issued on August 6th, just four days after the last number of the *Lynchburg Press* appeared.

The Virginian openly supported the campaign agenda of the father – principally advocating greater representation for the state's fast-growing western population in the Assembly, a proposition long resisted by the eastern counties of the Tidewater. That December, James Pleasants was elected to the first of three consecutive terms as Virginia's governor, helped by the new campaign platform now conducted by his son.

By the end of 1823, however, the governor found himself increasingly at odds with Ritchie and his *Enquirer*, even as he was re-elected that December. The 1824 election would select a successor to President James Monroe. Initially, Pleasants and Ritchie both supported the candidacy of Virginia-born William H. Crawford, then Secretary of the Treasury; however, Crawford's stroke in mid-1823 undercut his chances, inducing the Republican congressional caucus to choose House Speaker Henry Clay of Kentucky as their new candidate. That choice was rejected by most rank-and-file Republicans; Ritchie and the Richmond Junto moved in the direction of the populist war-hero Andrew Jackson, while the Pleasants faction backed Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. That divergence meant that Ritchie's *Enquirer* would no longer present the governor's views unfiltered to the voters of the state. The deepening intraparty schism impelled John Hampden Pleasants to move to Richmond to engage Ritchie and party leaders there directly. In December 1823, the firm of Pleasants & Butler circulated proposals for publishing another political journal in Richmond entitled the *Constitutional Whig*. Finding enough subscribers to convince them that more would soon follow, the pair

sold a controlling interest in *The Virginian* in early January 1824 to editor Richard H. Toler (1800-48) and printer John B. Colin (d. 1856) and moved to the state capital. The *Whig* issued there for the first time on January 27, 1824. Contemporaries report that Pleasants did not realize a profit from the journal until Virginians evinced disaffection with Jackson over his reversing position on states' rights during the nullification controversy, circa 1834. Still, Pleasants apparently retained an interest in the *Virginian* until about 1829, when his father served in the 1829/30 Constitutional Convention, where he attempted to focus debate on principles espoused by both the old *Press* and the new *Virginian*. But more importantly, that vestigial linkage meant the *Whig* and *Virginian* exchanged personnel well into the 1850s as key parts of the small circle of Whig publishers in the state.

In January 1825, Colin withdrew from the *Virginian* office and removed to Richmond, where he was long associated with Samuel Shepherd (379), son-in-law of the Federalist publisher Augustine Davis (119) and the tradesman favored by Whigs to supplant Ritchie as the public printer. Toler then joined with Elijah Fletcher (1789-1858), a Vermont-born educator and land agent in Lynchburg, to publish the *Virginian* for the ensuing sixteen years. That lengthy alliance gave their twice-weekly paper a steadfast perspective in an era that experienced rapid change politically – the Jacksonian period. Fletcher and Toler advocated the American System of Henry Clay and opposed Jackson's "war" on the Bank of the United States. Yet even with the support of local merchants, the *Virginian's* proprietors could not overcome the influence of the directors of the James River and Kanawha Canal Company and so bring a railroad line to Lynchburg in the 1830s.

During their tenure, Fletcher & Toler gradually increased the frequency of their paper from a weekly pace to twice-weekly and then to thrice-weekly. While that multiplication of space and content evinces the profitability of the *Virginian*, it also shows that the partners were willing to use such profits to stave off new challengers. Between 1824 and 1836, they faced three opposing political journals: *The Herald* (1824), *The Jeffersonian* (1828-32), and *The Democrat* (1834-36), all weeklies that expired after attempting to increase their frequency of production. It was not until 1840 that a stable Jacksonian paper finally emerged there, *The Republican*, demonstrating that Fletcher & Toler understood their locale well enough to lead public opinion with their journal, rather than follow it, as many papers then did.

Following the election of a Whig president in 1840, Fletcher began planning for retirement, having bought a plantation near Lynchburg that he called Sweet Briar (which later became the site of Sweet Briar College); in November 1841, he sold his half-interest in the paper and settled into a life of a gentleman farmer. Toler promptly brought in two new partners to succeed him – Kelita Ball Townley (b. 1797) and Charles W. Statham (1819-89) – even as he continued to edit the paper, providing an essential editorial continuity for the respected and widely-cited journal. But events in Richmond involving Pleasants would eventually end Toler's long-standing association with the *Virginian* as well.

The election of William Henry Harrison in 1840, and the abrupt succession to John Tyler of Virginia in April 1841, brought pressure on Pleasants to relocate to Washington to conduct a pro-administration paper there. In the end, Pleasants reluctantly agreed; that September, he sold his interest in the *Whig* to Alexander Moseley (1806-81), before starting publication

of a new *The Independent* in Washington in December; that paper lasted barely six months, finding as little support locally as Tyler found nationally, compelling its closure at the end of June 1842. Pleasants returned to Richmond as to edit the *Whig* for Moseley and his successor Robert H. Gallaher (1821-95), son of John S. Gallaher (177), Pleasants's former partner. However, his return generated an ever increasing tension between the *Whig* and Ritchie's *Enquirer*. After James K. Polk was elected as Tyler's successor in 1844, Ritchie was called to Washington to publish a pro-administration journal for Polk, leaving his beloved *Enquirer* in the care of his two sons, Thomas Jr. and William Foushee Ritchie. Neither son had any love for Pleasants, despite their father's long relationship with both James and John Hampden. As a result, the rhetoric in the *Enquirer* began to heat up, targeting Pleasants by linking him directly to northern abolitionists. In February 1846, the escalating war of words boiled over into a duel, one in which Pleasants died at the hands of Thomas Ritchie, Jr.

The journalistic combat between Pleasants and the *Enquirer* had undermined the credibility of the *Whig* to the point that its founder cut his ties to the journal at the end of 1845 to give Gallaher and his supporters some distance from his growing troubles. But as a result, the *Whig* now needed another respected editorial voice, and so Gallaher turned to Toler. Just days before the duel, the *Whig* announced that Toler would assume the paper's editorial chair on March 1, 1846. That assignment meant that Toler would, unhappily, have to end his twenty-three-year-long association with the *Virginian*.

Rearrangements

Toler's departure opened a decade of short-term arrangements in the management of the *Virginian*. In this 1846 reordering, Toler readily found a replacement in William Matthews Blackford (1801-1864); he had been editor of Fredericksburg's first Whig paper, *The Political Arena*, from 1825 to 1842; Tyler dispatched Blackford to Bogota as the U.S. ambassador to Colombia in 1842, from whence he had returned after the 1844 election. The jobless editor gratefully embraced the opportunity and arrived in Lynchburg shortly after Toler had left. Blackford's partnership group included two new figures: Charles W. Statham (1819-1889) and a man named Dillard, likely a member of a large family from Amherst County with Whig proclivities; this alliance continued until November 1847, when Statham sold his interest in the paper to K. B. Townley, who had retired from the project with Toler's departure.

Blackford's association with the *Virginian* lasted four years; he withdrew from the concern in February 1850, making Townley the senior partner. Townley quickly added John Camden Shields (1820-1902) as the junior partner in the firm of Townley, Dillard, & Shields. Within months, the new combine had put to rest a competing Whig journal, the *Virginia Patriot*, which had appeared in March 1848 to challenge to Blackford directly; the *Patriot* issued its last number in July, with Townley, Dillard, & Shields buying its office and tools in August. Yet it seems that Townley was more determined to provide a patrimony for his son – John W. Townley (1830-1857) – one this particular situation could not provide. So in late 1850, barely nine months after Blackford's parting, Townley arranged a trade of newspapers with Abner W.C. Terry (1815-1851) of Buckingham County; on November 4th, Terry acquired Townley's majority interest in the *Virginian* before then turning over sole ownership in his *Danville Register* to K. B. Townley & Son on November 8th. In the process, the *Virginian*

became a production of the firm of Terry & Shields, with partner Dillard vanishing from the bibliographic and historic record.

Terry had an even shorter tenure as majority partner in the *Virginian* than did Townley. In early June 1851, he printed a commentary that disparaged the views of James T. Saunders, a respected Lynchburg physician. Within days, Terry was assaulted in the public market by the doctor's son, James D. Saunders; Terry pulled out his pistol in self-defense, which drew a similar response from Saunders, resulting in the deaths of both combatants. In the wake of this sad event, a new player entered the scene in the *Virginian* office; James McDonald (1824-1893) immediately assumed the editorial chair that Terry had filled and would edit the admired Whig journal for the ensuing six years. Three weeks after Terry's death, the paper carried a notice stating that the *Virginian* would continue to be produced by the firm of Terry & Shields, with Terry's widow and administratrix acting in his stead. It is unclear just how long this transitory arrangement lasted, but it seems to have come to an end by August 1852; at that time, the thrice-weekly journal adopted a daily schedule for the first time, a pace that would have required a significant infusion of capital, suggesting that Terry's estate had been settled and that new funding had been found.

The *Virginian* emerged from this cloud of uncertainty in February 1854 as the twice-weekly publication of the firm of McDonald & Peters. The pairing of Stephen T. Peters (1821-1903) with McDonald, as well as the incumbent editor's new ownership role, is clear evidence that the legal complications attending Terry's death had been resolved. Their new partnership was also necessitated by the withdrawal of J. C. Shields, who became the latest Lynchburg-trained proprietor of the *Richmond Whig* in April 1854. As Fletcher & Toler had done before, McDonald & Peters cautiously increased the pace of their production, returning the paper to a thrice-weekly pace in April 1855 and then to a daily pace in 1856. That acceleration may have resulted from the introduction of a third Lynchburg paper during the Terry settlement: the *Daily Express*. It seems, however, that issuing a paper at such an intense frequency from its start doomed the venture, especially in the face of two established political papers – the Jacksonian *Republican* and the Whig *Virginian* – that increased their pace after it appeared.

The *Virginian* did not see another change in management and ownership until April 1857. It was one that was again triggered by the senior partner departing to take up another Whig journal elsewhere. Here, the long-time proprietor of the venerable *Petersburg Intelligencer*, John Syme (1811-65), bought the *Raleigh [NC] Register* founded by the celebrated Joseph Gales, Sr. McDonald was approached by Frederick W. Page (1826-1913) of Charlotte County to form a partnership to acquire the *Intelligencer* from Syme; they assumed control of that paper on April 16, 1857; a week later, McDonald & Peters sold their Lynchburg *Virginian* to Charles W. Button (1822-1894), with Peters retiring permanently from journalism then.

War and Peace

Under Button, the *Virginian* adopted a new masthead motto: "The Rights of the States, and the Union of the States" and a more confrontational stance. It was a choice that evinced the political turbulence that now enveloped this Whig journal. Like Toler before him, Button had served in the Assembly as a Whig delegate after forging an identity as a journalist,

contributing frequently to the *Virginia Free Press* in Charlestown. His brother Joseph bought an interest in the *Bedford Sentinel* in the winter of 1856-57, which drew Button to Bedford County, west of Lynchburg, to assist him in that production. But when McDonald decided to remove to Petersburg, the two brothers quickly moved to take his place in Lynchburg, with Charles, the eldest, assuming the role of proprietor and publisher of the *Virginian* on April 24, 1857. By 1860, Button employed three of his brothers (George, Robert, and Joseph) and four journeymen, indicating the scale and success of his new venture.

Unfortunately, Button was faced with the declining fortunes of the Whig party in the South. As the national political situation fragmented, he aligned with pro-slavery Southern Whigs who split from their anti-slavery Northern brethren in 1860. Thus, Button supported the Constitutional Union candidates (John Bell of Tennessee for President; Edward Everett of Massachusetts for Vice President), drawing the ire of the rival *Lynchburg Republican*, which supported the Southern Democratic candidates (John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky for President; North Carolina native Joseph Lane for Vice President). In June 1860, the ongoing exchanges between the two journals devolved into highly-personal attacks over the conduct of Lynchburg's postmaster, Robert H. Glass, who was a minority partner in the *Republican*. When Joseph Button was accused of having defamed in print George W. Hardwicke, the *Republican's* senior partner, and then refused to retract the offensive comment, Hardwicke and his brother William confronted the four Button brothers on a Lynchburg street on the afternoon of June 23rd. The ensuing exchange of pistol shots left Joseph Button mortally wounded from a shot taken by George Hardwicke and Robert Button severely wounded by one fired by William Hardwicke. Even though it was clear that the Hardwicke brothers had initiated the gun-fight, and so left unscathed by the confused return fire from the Buttons, both were acquitted of all charges that November by a jury sympathetic to the secessionist views that their *Republican* now espoused in the wake of the election of Lincoln.

Remarkably, both newspapers continued to publish throughout the Civil War that soon followed the deadly street confrontation. As that war progressed, Button was compelled to reduce both the size and frequency of the *Virginian*, but he never completely suspended its publication. As a result, his paper published the first Southern account of the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at nearby Appomattox Court House in April 1865.

After the war, Button gradually returned the *Virginian* to its pre-war daily schedule. He also retained his pre-war motto as a mark of both continuity and defiance. His *Virginian* now became the voice for conservatives in the state, opposing suffrage for freed slaves and the Reconstruction policies of Northern Republicans. Button's approach better matched the sentiments of Virginians residing in the upper James River valley then, allowing the *Virginian* to eclipse the rival *Republican*, now burdened with a name that white Southerners found onerous. Accordingly, Button clearly delighted in a substantial measure of *Schadenfreude* in November 1875 when he bought the *Lynchburg Republican* and folded that printing office into his own, never again to be antagonized by his brother's killers.

Still, the post-war period was arduous for Button and his family of printer-publishers. He found himself frequently at odds with the military government in the late 1860s, and then again with Readjusters in the 1880s. In July 1885, he was named Lynchburg's postmaster by

Democratic president Grover Cleveland, and so obligated to give up control of the *Virginian* to sons Charles Fletcher and Joseph; but he found that confirmation of his appointment had been blocked by Senator William Mahone, a leader of the Readjusters; so after an eighteen-month fight, Button resigned that prized post to conduct his journal again. Yet it appears that the aging publisher was also actively considering retirement. Within weeks of his return to the *Virginian*, Button sold the paper to a consortium of Lynchburg businessmen headed by Alexander McDonald and W. W. Wysor.

As a result, the *Virginian* faded into obscurity, no longer the well-known and widely-cited political voice of the antebellum period. Eventually, the consortium sold their paper and its office to a Democratic daily that was founded there in 1866: *The News*. Ironically, the senior partner in that publishing concern was Carter Glass (1858-1946), a son of the Lynchburg postmaster whose "neglect" of office led to the Button brothers' deadly confrontation with the Hardwicke brothers in 1860.

Sources: LCCN nos. 85-025527, 87-060378, & 86-071709; Brigham II: 1120-1121; Cappon 792; Margaret Couch Cabell, *Sketches and Recollections of Lynchburg* (1858); Edward Pollock, *Sketchbook of Lynchburg, Virginia* (1887); W. Asbury Christian, *Lynchburg and its People* (1900); Rosa Faulkner Yancey, *Lynchburg and its Neighbors* (1935); and notices in *Alexandria Gazette* (1809-1860), *National Intelligencer* (1816-1850), [Norfolk] *American Beacon and Commercial Diary* (1817-1860), *Alexandria Herald* (1820), *Richmond Enquirer* (1821-1848), *Richmond Whig* (1824-1857), [Washington] *The Republic* (1851), and [Richmond] *Daily Dispatch* (1860), as well as from *Lynchburg Press/Virginian* (1809-1893).