

RICHMOND 19: Compiler

- 01: The Daily Compiler (1813-1815)
 - 02: The Daily Compiler and Richmond Commercial Register (1815-1816)
 - 03: The Richmond Commercial Compiler (1816-1835)
 - 04: The Richmond Compiler (1835)
 - 05: Richmond Courier and Daily Compiler (1835-1837)
 - 06: The Richmond Compiler (1837-1844)
 - 07: The Times and Compiler (1844-1849)
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 - 10: The Evening Bulletin (1853-1854)
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The first successful daily newspaper issued in Richmond was also the nineteenth journal to be published in the capital city before 1820. Its avowed purpose was report current events and commercial intelligence in a more timely fashion without partisan bias. Over time, the paper's continued apolitical outlook eroded its readership, forcing its proprietors to adopt a partisan stance, which brought an end to its life during the sectional crisis of the 1850s.

In the decade before the War of 1812, journalism in Richmond was dominated by three partisan papers: the moderately-Republican *Virginia Argus* of Samuel Pleasants (331), the incumbent public printer; the ardently-Federalist *Virginia Patriot* of Augustine Davis (119), formerly the public printer; and the fervently-Republican *Enquirer* of Thomas Ritchie (360), soon-to-be public printer. Their associations with the state's political factions guaranteed each newspaper a considerable readership and the promise of sustenance from the public coffers as "printer to the Commonwealth" when their faction triumphed at the polls. Yet all three faced challenges during their lifetimes from journals offering more militant political opinions, as well as from a few that eschewed partisanship altogether. Of those challengers, only the *Richmond Compiler* survived beyond the brief periods in which those particular agendas gained an initial currency. Its four-decade run as a principally apolitical broadsheet evinces a practical utility that that it's partisan competitors lacked.

Early Days

The founder of the *Richmond Compiler* was Leroy Anderson (011). A noted literary figure in early-Republic Virginia, he was a respected schoolmaster in the city. His turn to journalism seems to have been driven by the communitarian response to the Richmond Theater Fire of December 26, 1811, an event that took the lives of his daughter and five of his students. In the wake of the tragedy, Anderson took particular notice of the bridging of partisan divides that encompassed the ensuing relief efforts and the construction of a Monumental Church on the site of the fire. As a result, the rapid return to political discord in the state, embodied in the disagreements the ensuing spring over declaring war with Britain, troubled Anderson

greatly, as did the subsequent disputes over the conduct of that war. By the winter of 1812-13, he had determined to publish a newspaper that could bridge the partisan divisions by focusing on common needs and purposes in the city, thereby instilling the same sense of civic unity experienced after the fire, though on a larger scale.

On February 15, 1813, Anderson offered a prospectus for *The Daily Compiler*, the first daily to be attempted in the capital since the demise of the short-lived *Virginia Gazette and Richmond Daily Advertiser* in early 1793. He had enlisted Philip DuVal (155) to produce the sheet as his financial and printing partner; DuVal had access to the capital needed for their venture, as his late father, Samuel DuVal, a major Henrico County merchant-planter, left him a sizeable estate; moreover, the printer had long been a part of the Republican trade-circle developed in Richmond after 1798 by Meriwether Jones (242), Samuel Pleasants, and Thomas Ritchie, a well-trained and interconnected group that now pervaded the city's press offices. So between Anderson's literary ability and DuVal's trade experience, the prospects for the success of the proposed daily were bright, provided that it found a distinctive niche among Richmond's other papers.

The *Compiler's* 1813 prospectus offered a tri-partite argument for the paper's existence. First, the partners made a case for timeliness in reporting news of the ongoing war with Britain:

"It is a crisis that involuntarily affects all classes of society; and "*What is the news?*" is a question which all who go out hasten to ask, and everyone that comes in is expected to answer. It is to this interesting enquiry that we propose to give a daily response."

Secondly, they declared that the twice-weekly pace of their competitors' papers created a "tedious interval of two or three days, during which no gazette appears, to gratify curiosity, or relieve suspense." Their daily pace would fill that void:

"[Many] have long wished for the establishment of a *Daily Paper*, to remedy the evil. We believe there are hundreds in this situation to whom such a paper would be highly acceptable; and to men of business, in town or country, whose commercial pursuits would be so much aided by access to a *Daily Advertiser*, there can be no doubt of its convenience and utility."

The secondary interest in this passage was the junction on which the entire project hinged. Not only did the city's existing papers promote divisiveness, the space they devoted to such partisan interests detracted from advertising that could enhance Richmond's development as the "emporium of Virginia."

"In peaceful times, their patronage alone would amply support it and, borne with the ease on the buoyant current of their trade, it would float light as a feather, on the stream of their prosperity."

But to achieve such an outcome, the partners needed to maintain an unbiased perspective, their final rationale. Noting that nearly every newspaper in the country,

"has espoused the cause of some party, admits with facility what favors the views of that, and seldom gives "fair play" to the opposite side. This partiality we are determined to avoid. Our motto speaks our intention to respect the sentiments of all, in

the title of our paper declares the mode we shall adopt to represent them truly and fairly."

The motto mentioned was *Audi et alteram partem* ("hear the other side"), one that would adorn the *Compiler's* masthead for the duration of Anderson's proprietorship. And in the tradition of a true journalistic compilation, the daily would offer "a copious Marine Head; an authentic Price Current; and generally, whatever may affect the commercial Agricultural interests of Virginia," items not seen previously with any regularity in Richmond papers.

As a practical matter, the *Compiler* was recognizably a bargain; Anderson and DuVal set the subscription price for the daily at \$5.00 per annum, the same as that charged by Richmond's twice-weekly papers then for a journal that would issue three times more frequently than its competitors; furthermore, it would be printed in a size matching that of both the *Argus* and the *Enquirer*, and exceeding that of the *Patriot* – a half-sheet of super-royal paper that resulted in a 10.5" x 13.5" page. As they indicated that publication would begin once 500 subscribers were obtained, the fact that they announced a start date just three weeks later evinces the perceived value of their proposed venture. Consequently, the first number of the *Daily Compiler* made its appearance on May 1, 1813, a Saturday, not quite two months after that start date was announced.

Still, not all had gone as planned by then. In finding ready support for the venture by March, Anderson & DuVal were encouraged to offer a country edition of the daily as well, one to "be published three times a week; continuing the whole impression of the DAILY COMPILER, except the advertisements." However, when the daily was finally issued, they had deferred publishing that thrice-weekly edition, apparently because of a lack of support for a variant that did not inform those in the countryside of goods and services available in the city.

Such a cautious approach is also evident in the partnership Anderson formed with DuVal. The printer's association with the project ended in November 1813, though the exact date of the change is unclear as a result of the few surviving numbers from this early period. His departure after just six months indicates DuVal had committed to a short-term agreement with Anderson, a common practice in the trade given the speculative nature of such new ventures. But his withdrawal had little, if any effect on the *Compiler*; the daily continued to be published without interruption, although it did not bear a credit for its printing for the ensuing year; only Anderson is recorded as its proprietor, evincing his use of unnamed job-presses in the city to print his newspaper for him.

Subsequent events suggest that the *Compiler* was printed in the office of the *Virginia Argus* over that year; it was then the foremost printing business in Richmond, comprising the only three-press office operating in Virginia. DuVal had been associated with that concern earlier in his career and Anderson's next partner – William C. Shields (381), a Philadelphia-trained printer who was a brother to his deceased first wife – seems to have been employed there as well from 1811 on. Shields became co-proprietor of the *Compiler* with issue of November 11, 1814, five weeks after the death of Samuel Pleasants, owner of the *Argus*, and just days after the December sale of that large office was advertised by his widow and administrator, Deborah (328). As she would then sell the entirety of her husband's business to a new firm formed by DuVal and John McDonald Burke (065), the foreman of the *Argus* press, Shields

was about to be barred as Pleasants's successor, so making a business alliance with kinsman Anderson both viable and attractive. Together, they appear to have established a new press office of their own, one that employed another former Pleasants hand, Samuel Cary (085).

Despite his success, Anderson tired of the editorial grind as the War of 1812 drew to a close. Once the Treaty of Ghent was ratified in February 1815, the editor began to actively search for a successor. His friends convinced him that a transfer of the paper to Louis Hue Girardin (180) would preserve the *Compiler's* impartiality and ensure its survival. Anderson already knew Girardin well; a refugee from the French Revolution, Girardin was also a noted literary figure in Virginia, once the Professor of Modern Languages, History, and Geography at the College of William & Mary, who was now conducting the Hallerian Academy in Richmond. Girardin was evidently persuaded to accept Anderson's offer because the daily came with a trained printer as his partner in Shields. So in May 1815, Anderson sold his interest in the daily to Girardin and retired from journalism to return to his former pursuits of teaching in Richmond in winter and writing in Williamsburg in summer. The new partners promptly lengthened the paper's title to the *Daily Compiler and Richmond Commercial Register* so as to fit their plans for the journal; they also began publishing a twice-weekly "country edition" shortly after ownership change, finally realizing the plan Anderson abandoned in 1813.

Their alliance, while profitable, lasted just a year, as both Girardin and Shields soon changed focus. In March 1816, their office was destroyed in a fire; although they were able to save their press and its supplies before the building was consumed, the partners were pressed to find new quarters on very short and expensive notice. Soon thereafter, Shields made it known that he wanted to sell his interest in their firm so that he could to join his brother, Hamilton (380), in Norfolk as partner in his *American Beacon* – a successful imitation of the *Compiler*. Meanwhile, the group of Pleasants's tradesmen who acquired the various parts of his estate from the firm of Duval & Burke in early 1815 began to come apart when DuVal withdrew from the combine in April 1816. This left Burke, now the owner of the *Argus*, seeking an experienced and respected editor to maintain his newspaper's credibility, and Girardin was his choice. For a time that spring, the Frenchman held the editorial desk in both journals, but the burden proved unsustainable. So after the issue of May 15, 1816, the year-old firm of Girardin & Shields was dissolved by mutual consent, with the partnership's assets being sold to new firm formed by DuVal and Daniel Trueheart (420), foreman of the *Richmond Enquirer* office of Thomas Ritchie, so allowing both men to move on to their new publishing venues. For Girardin, the choice was an unfortunate one; Burke's nascent empire collapsed financially that fall, with the *Argus* ceasing publication in October 1816, two years after its founder's death.

Maturity

The sale of the *Compiler* to the new concern of DuVal, Trueheart, & Company demonstrates that it had succeeded in finding a unique place among Richmond's newspapers and so was a desirable acquisition for astute tradesmen. Yet the transaction also placed the non-partisan daily in the hands of a decidedly-partisan editor: Thomas Ritchie. Over the next seventeen years, he was the anonymous "& Company" in the succession of proprietary arrangements that owned the *Compiler*. The death of Samuel Pleasants had brought Ritchie into office as

public printer, so making his *Enquirer* the state's journal of record; in that role, the government laid claim to the limited advertising space in his twice-weekly journal before all others, which reduced the revenues that it generated for Ritchie. Thus the acquisition of the *Compiler*, through a partnership with DuVal and Trueheart, was a way for him to offset the losses being experienced by the *Enquirer*. Contemporaries – such as Samuel Mordecai, the chronicler of antebellum Richmond – misunderstood Ritchie's purpose however, seeing the purchase a simple case of expanding his reach into the pockets of the city's merchants:

"Such was the success of the 'Enquirer,' that Mr. Ritchie found it expedient to attach to it a sort of tender, as a vehicle for city advertisements, and so he purchased 'The Compiler,' which had been commenced by Leroy Anderson."

While *The Compiler* was an advertising sheet that provided sustenance for the more famous *Enquirer*, it was also a key part of Ritchie's promotion of his home state and its assets. And so over time, the daily began to shift from being a compilation of items from other persons and places to a vehicle for essays written by the editor and his associates intended to breed consensus among Virginians on the state's economic growth; meanwhile, his *Enquirer* spoke to more controversial political topics, both national and regional, thereby giving safe cover to this essential financial resource.

With their purchase of the *Compiler* office, the three partners also acquired the services of its foreman, Samuel Cary, who would eventually become a proprietor as well. And with the issue of August 5, 1816, they shortened the title of their daily to the one that it would bear for the following twenty years: *The Richmond Compiler*. At same time, the frequency of the "country edition" was increased to thrice-weekly with an even simpler title of *The Compiler*.

Still, over the course of Ritchie's involvement, there were changes in the daily's partnership arrangement, ones coming every two years on average. The first of these alterations came when DuVal retired from the print trade in 1819; he was in his late 50s when he became a part of the dissolution of the *Argus* office, and was now sixty-two years-of-age and hoping to enjoy the fruits of his labors before he died; so following the issue of October 27, 1819, DuVal sold his interest in the job-press that he and Ritchie purchased from the Pleasants estate in 1815 to Ritchie, and his considerable interest in the *Compiler* to Cary.

The new firm of Trueheart, Cary & Co. maintained a substantial operation for the four years of its existence. The 1820 federal census offers a remarkable view of the "Cary & Trueheart" office. While the proprietors resided elsewhere, they provided quarters for their staff at the office in Madison Ward, where all ten individuals there were recorded as being "engaged in manufactures." The roster included seven free-white journeyman under twenty-five years of age, one free-white apprentice under fifteen, and two enslaved women over twenty-five; those women were likely domestic servants in this male lodging house, yet the enumeration suggests that they performed print-trade tasks as well, a departure from contemporary practices where enslaved printing-office laborers were male pressmen.

This successful arrangement came to an end in 1823 with the retirement from the printing trade of both Trueheart and Cary. To effect this transition, Ritchie turned to another former employee, William Pollard (336). Pollard had left the *Enquirer* office in late 1816 to establish a new job-printing office with Samuel Shepherd (379), who had returned to his hometown

from Norfolk after a year conducting the *American Beacon* there with the Shields brothers. Ritchie promptly patronized the new Pollard & Shepherd press by subcontracting some of his requisite government work to their care, setting Shepherd on the path to a long career as Richmond's chief law printer. With the proceeds that he garnered from his seven-year partnership with Shepherd, Pollard bought Trueheart's interest in the *Compiler* after the issue of March 27, 1823, allowing Trueheart to invest his accumulated wealth in other ventures. Then, following the issue of July 10, 1823, Pollard acquired Cary's interest in the newspaper as well, thereby allowing Cary to turn to the papermaking business.

Pollard's subsequent retirement from the printing trade was effected in a similar manner, one also orchestrated by Ritchie. In May 1826, Pollard sold a partial interest in the *Compiler* to printer Robert Mosby (1801-39), yet another former Ritchie journeyman; a year later, he sold the rest of his interest in the daily to Mosby, indicating a one-year agreement between the partners; he also sold Shepherd his remaining interest in their job-printing concern. As Pollard promptly disappears from both the bibliographic and historical record, it may be that ill-health forced him out of this intensive endeavor and that his death soon followed.

Mosby remained Ritchie's trade partner for nearly four years; but the editor's associations thereafter were far shorter in length, apparently evincing a restlessness in those tradesmen that conducting the profitable *Compiler* was unable to subdue. In early 1831, Mosby set out to establish himself as a tradesman independent of the Ritchie operation; consequently, he sold his interest in the daily to John A. Lacy [Sr.] (1800-87), yet another Ritchie journeyman, after the issue of March 8, 1831. This change in his career path did not succeed, however, forcing the printer into subservient roles in other Richmond press offices; Mosby died an early and unexpected death in 1839 having never published another paper or started a job-press with a reputation that outlived him. Lacy also altered his course just sixteen months later; in September 1832, he sold his interest in the paper to one Thomas Keeran, Jr. (dates unknown), the last Ritchie journeyman to become a partner to his master, to supervise the business of the *Enquirer* instead; Lacy served in that role until well after the Civil War, being the sole remaining link to that newspaper's founder after the sale of the *Enquirer* out of the Ritchie family in 1860.

Keeran is the most enigmatic of Ritchie's partners in the *Compiler*, as well as the tradesman with whom he shared the business with for the shortest time. Nine months after Keeran became a proprietor of the daily, Ritchie sold the *Compiler* – lock, stock, and barrel – to a lawyer from Fluvanna County named Merritt Moore Robinson (1810-50).

On June 11, 1833, the *Compiler* recorded the unexpected change with a valedictory address from Ritchie and an introductory one from Robinson. It was "the first and the last time" that Ritchie presented himself to the public "as the Editor of the 'Richmond Compiler'," evidently feeling the need to explain the abrupt termination of his long association with the daily.

"I may perhaps be excused for saying, that connected as I was with another Establishment, nothing could have enabled me to withstand the arduous labors which I have passed through, than a mind trained to early and indefatigable habits of industry. What sacrifices I have made of my own case for the sake of this paper, it is unnecessary to state. — But with all my exertions, this paper has never been what

you had a right to expect it. I am sufficiently aware, that departments of its business had been neglected, which are essential to the value of a Daily Paper. — Yet has the Compiler possessed stamina enough to survive all competition and all defects. It must have struck its roots deeply in the affections of this City. It has extended its circulation and enlarged its size. Indeed, it is amusing enough to look back at the diminutive appearance which it wore in 1818; and comparison with the decent size which it now exhibits, and the still more handsome sheet which it will assume this day under the auspices of its new Proprietor."

Such an admission of regret is remarkable for someone usually so self-assured. Yet it is clear that the distractions Ritchie had experienced in defending the Jackson administration in the *Enquirer* over the preceding five years had undermined the consensus-building purpose of the *Compiler*. In transferring the paper to Robinson, Ritchie assured the daily's readers that:

"I have earnestly advised my respectable successor... to connect the prosperity of his paper with that of the city—to study well her resources, and to press all of them into the most energetic use—to relax no effort, especially, which may be in his power, to assist in the development of our great Western Enterprise. I have advised him, also, most earnestly to attend to those departments of the Compiler which have been already too much neglected—to establish communications for obtaining the earliest news—to attend more particularly to his Markets and to his Marine Lists—to gather up everything connected with the statistics and commerce of the city, and even of the State—to collect every local incident that may interest or amuse you—to lay before you all the important trials in the Courts, and all the proceedings of your public associations—to invite the aid of the liberal and the literary for his columns—and to eschew all party politics and all sectarian theology. Following out these ideas, assisted as they will be by the taste and energy which he possesses, I will not permit myself to entertain a doubt of his generous support and triumphant success."

This enumeration matched the objectives articulated for the *Compiler* by Leroy Anderson some twenty years before, meaning the sale served as a return to first principles for Ritchie. But it also provided the journalist an opportunity to modernize the office of his *Enquirer*. That same day, he announced in that older paper that he had:

"ordered an Adam's press, which will strike 900 copies an hour, so as to enable us to furnish all our subscribers with the latest news, and by the earliest mails. We shall add a little to the length of our columns—we shall diversify the contents of our paper—and we may say, that considering the quantity of its matter, it is one of the cheapest papers on the continent. In fact, nothing but its extensive circulation could enable us to afford it at \$5 per annum."

The upgrade to his printing office suggests that the *Compiler* would continue to be printed in that establishment as well, as Robinson was not himself a printer; but subsequent events indicate that it would now be issued from the job-printing office of James C. Walker (1808-72), so fully severing the paper's long ties to Ritchie and the *Enquirer*.

Discontinuity and Discord

The new proprietor struck a confident pose in his introductory address to the journal's readers, asserting his intention to hew to the non-partisan principles laid out by his editorial predecessors. However, the 1834 election cycle altered Robinson's resolve, resulting in the daily becoming a decidedly anti-Jackson sheet at that time.

Having studied law under Henry St. George Tucker (1780-1848), Robinson held the states' rights views of both his mentor and Tucker's brother Beverley (1784-1851), ones asserting that the expansion of Federal power under Andrew Jackson and John C. Calhoun's counter-theory of nullification were both manifestly unconstitutional; thus, Robinson's *Compiler* advocated the election of candidates to the Assembly and Congress in 1834 who held those views as well. The apparent result was a decline in patronage for the *Compiler* from among Virginians who agreed with either Jackson or Calhoun. Consequently, Robinson decided to sell the daily in February 1835 and start publishing a "Literary Journal" as an alternative to the *Southern Literary Messenger* begun the preceding August by Thomas Willis White (442), a nephew of the late Augustine Davis; that magazine never issued, however, and Robinson soon relocated to Louisiana where he had a successful, albeit brief, career as a supreme-court reporter in the style of Virginian William Waller Hening (213).

The firm of Gallaher & Walker became the new proprietors of the *Compiler* with the issue of February 9, 1835; John S. Gallaher (177) had previously conducted the *Virginia Free Press* at Harper's Ferry and Charlestown, leading to his election as a Whig delegate from Jefferson County in the 1834-35 Assembly; after that session adjourned, Gallaher remained in the city to join with Walker to purchase the *Compiler* with the avowed intention of returning the daily to its original non-partisan purpose. The partners began by shortening its title to the *Richmond Compiler* to distance the newspaper from its Robinsonian past; they also reined in the expense of conducting the paper by reducing the frequency of their "country edition" from thrice-weekly to twice-weekly. Then in May 1835, they altered the title once again, to *Richmond Courier and Daily Compiler*, in an apparent attempt to place their stamp on the venerable paper's identity.

Gallaher, as editor, emerged as the motive force behind these changes shortly after that May alteration. Walker sold his share of the *Compiler* to William H. Davis (1808-70), another Richmond job-printer, following the issue of June 27, 1835, having served just four months as the paper's printer; he immediately formed a partnership with John Hampden Pleasants (330), editor and proprietor of the *Richmond Whig*, in a new job-printing business. (Their first patron was to be Robinson and his planned *Literary Journal*.) This early retirement suggests that Walker had held a minority interest in the *Compiler* during Robinson's tenure and that he and Gallaher had agreed that the editor would purchase the printer's share after they had acquired the daily jointly; Walker then used the proceeds he realized from that ensuing sale to help capitalize the press that he conducted with Pleasants. Walker left Richmond in 1840 and eventually moved on to Washington, where he served as reading clerk in the House of Representatives during the Civil War.

The succeeding firm of Gallaher & Davis soon came to grief, however. It appears that Davis exercised more authority over the *Compiler's* content than had Walker before him, and that he insisted on keeping to the newspaper's unique apolitical purpose. Nonetheless, Gallaher, a rising star in the state's Whig party, wanted their paper to openly support the presidential candidacy of Senator Hugh Lawson White (1773-1840) of Tennessee in a race that offered three Whig contenders. Gallaher yielded to Davis's inflexibility on the matter in an apparent effort to support the Whig agenda without backing a specific candidate, even as their press was the source of handbills printed for the state party. But once the election was over, the disagreement between the partners led to a divorce; after the issue of November 19, 1836, Gallaher sold his interest in the *Compiler* to Davis and moved on to take an editorial role at the *Whig*, acquiring a one-third interest in Pleasants's journal in the process.

Davis thus became the *Compiler's* sole proprietor for the ensuing seven weeks before he secured a new editorial partner. That new colleague was James A. Cowardin (1811-82); he had learned the printing trade in Danville and Lynchburg before becoming Thomas Ritchie's chief clerk (i.e. private secretary) in 1834; while the two became good friends, their political views plainly diverged, making Cowardin a suitable choice to succeed Gallaher as editor of the *Compiler*. In marking the editorial transition, the new partners resumed using the short title form employed briefly by Gallaher & Walker in 1835. Yet the journal's financial state also required that they increase the price of its long-term advertising contracts from \$40 to \$50 per annum, potentially undermining the new regime.

At the outset, Cowardin & Davis were able to maintain the *Compiler's* status as a "neutral" paper, even as the editor gradually gave the journal a sharper political edge in response to the Panic of 1837. The fiscal policies that Jackson had promulgated, and that "Martin Van Ruin" was left to administer, devastated the state's principal commercial banks, particularly when most banks in the country ceased redeeming paper currency in coin as a result of the demands of the Specie Circular. The disruptions to commerce, manufacturing, and internal improvements in Virginia caused by this banking crisis became a key issue for Cowardin in both his editorials and in his choices of articles to reprint. His solution, as announced in the winter of 1837-38, was to urge the re-authorization of the Bank of the United States or the creation of a similar institution; he argued that such was essential for dispersing monies that gravitated to the cities of the East in the regular course of business to new enterprises in the South and West, rather than depending on less-capitalized state banks, which were more prone to speculation and embezzlement; indeed, the articles most often reprinted elsewhere from the *Compiler* before 1840 were items detailing the embezzling of funds from the Bank of Virginia, which threatened a default of the state government.

This stand put Cowardin on the Whig side of the dispute over the so-called "sub-treasuries" that marked the ensuing presidential campaign. Hence, the *Compiler* was now perceived as a political paper by those most actively engaged in that argument. Those journalists who vigorously supported Van Buren labeled the paper a "Federalist" sheet, while Whig editors regularly described it as being a "judicious" and "well-conducted" journal, even as many others of both political stripes found its content politically "neutral in the most extensive sense of the term." Yet the most accurate description of the *Compiler* during the Van Buren

years seems that offered by Thomas Ritchie, who characterized the paper as "semi-Whig."

Cowardin's pivotal decision "to assume declared ground relative to the vexed question of the currency" prompted competition with the *Richmond Whig* of Pleasants and Gallaher as well. While they often agreed with his editorials, the partisan operatives were also often annoyed at Cowardin's reluctance to wholly embrace the Whig platform in 1840 and the party's two nominees, William Henry Harrison and John Tyler – deviations Ritchie frequently reported in his *Enquirer*. However, his most exasperated critic was Edgar Snowden of the *Alexandria Gazette*, a close friend of Henry Clay, the national party leader; he bridled at the use of the term "Democratic" in Cowardin's descriptions of the Van Buren faction, arguing that the Whigs were the real advocates of democracy and not the party in power across the Potomac River. Still, this dissonance is clear evidence that, well before the 1840 election, the *Compiler* had moved from the realm of simply reporting current events and intelligence without bias, as Anderson and Girardin had set out to do, into that of opinion- and policy-making, as nearly all of the paper's contemporaries had by then. After the election, though, the *Compiler's* political content was minimized as its traditional emphasis on current events and commercial intelligence was renewed.

This cyclic pattern continued for the next decade; the daily carried primarily business news in the years between presidential elections, material that focused on the state's and the capital's economic development; the journal then adopted a moderately-Whig perspective in election years, embracing whatever part of the national party's platform that promoted commerce generally, and in Virginia particularly. All the same, the daily's proprietors were conscious that offering the paper as a "compiler" was ever less an accurate depiction of its purpose and content. So in the midst of the 1844 election, Cowardin & Davis adopted a new title for their daily, *The Times and Compiler*, and restyled the twice-weekly "country edition" as simply the *Richmond Times*, foreshadowing a like change for the parent paper in 1849.

By that time, however, Cowardin had retired from the *Compiler*. Always an advocate for commercial development, he decided in 1848 to join with his brother-in-law in a Richmond-based banking and brokerage concern that aided such development. His change in career was facilitated by the fact that Cowardin & Davis had brought in William Cabell Carrington (1821-51), a lawyer from Charlotte County, as a full partner in the firm and primary editor of the paper in April 1845. Hugh Blair Grigsby, a friend and journalistic contemporary, reported Carrington "conducted the Richmond Times with an ability and a grace that were instantly recognized abroad, and duly appreciated at home." Such a testimonial suggests the aging daily had suffered a slow decline after 1840, probably an unintended result of its alternating between political and apolitical content. Consequently, adding Carrington to the daily's staff effectively reinvigorated the paper by eliminating the political ambiguity; under Carrington, the journal finally abandoned any pretensions to being an impartial entity by adopting the new title of *Daily Richmond Times* sometime in July 1849.

Relieved of the responsibility of editing the paper daily, Cowardin promptly took on a more active role in local politics, eventually serving as a Whig delegate in the 1853-54 Assembly; but his career in business paled as compared to that he had experienced as a journalist, inducing Cowardin to return to his former pursuit in October 1850; in conjunction with

Davis as his trade partner once again, Cowardin published the city's first "penny print," the *Daily Dispatch*. The timing of this new project indicates that Carrington and Davis parted company shortly before the *Dispatch* issued, though the bibliographic and imprint records do not record the date of the separation from an absence of surviving issues of their daily. Still, the ensuing period under Carrington's care appear to be ones that mark the height of the popularity of the former *Richmond Compiler* after 1840.

Decline and Demise

Yet Carrington's time as sole owner of the venerable daily was comparatively brief; he died unexpectedly on December 25, 1851, at just thirty years of age, throwing the affairs of his *Richmond Times* into confusion. The few scattered issues of the paper that survive from the months after his death have led to erroneous attributions of its subsequent ownership and the duration of its continued publication. But references to the *Times* in other newspapers allow for a more complete account of its life after Carrington.

Following his death, the *Times* was conducted by, and then sold by Carrington's estate, clear evidence that Davis had withdrawn from the concern prior to his death, most likely before the *Daily Dispatch* issued, as simultaneously overseeing the production of two daily papers would have been an incredibly difficult proposition for any one tradesman. Early in February 1852, six weeks after Carrington's death, his executors sold the *Richmond Times* to a new firm comprised of Dr. Carter H. Irving (1817-95) and the brothers Dr. Martin P. (1822-1904) and John (1820-1907) Scott. But success in conducting the established paper was not at all assured for this neophyte trio.

With the introduction of the *Daily Dispatch* in the fall of 1850, Richmond now hosted four daily papers in addition to the *Times*, all conducted by seasoned journalists (the others were the *Whig*, the *Enquirer*, and the *Republican*, founded in 1846 by the Gallaher family). And in the five years before Carrington died, two other dailies – the *Daily Southerner* and the *Daily Star* – had succumbed in the face of the competition that those sheets embodied. With few surviving numbers from this period, evidence of shorter print runs, it appears that the *Times* now struggled against their rivals as well. The last number known is that for June 20, 1853, some sixteen months after Irving, Scott, & Co. acquired the *Times*, leading to suggestions by several authorities that it ceased publication at about that time. But reports published in Alexandria and Washington newspapers in October 1853 show that the Scott brothers sold their shares in the *Times* to printer Thomas Bailie (1816-57) and lawyer Alexander H. Sands (1828-87) at that time, with Irving retaining an interest in the new firm of Thomas Bailie & Co. as editor of the daily. As Bailie was the head of that concern, it seems clear that he had also succeeded Davis as the daily's printer in 1850, after having conducted a job-press in Richmond for more than a decade; Now Bailie was rewarded with its ownership, evidently employing financing provided by Sands.

This transition was more than just a simple change in proprietors, however; it constituted a radical reconstruction of the journal. Beginning on October 11, 1853, the daily was reduced in page-size to make it over into a "penny print" and began to be issued as an evening paper under the title of the *Evening Bulletin* – changes that apparently recognized the threat to its

existence posed by the newer morning daily of Cowardin & Davis. Nevertheless, Irving was not the talent that Cowardin was as an editor, meaning that these major alterations did not succeed in reviving the newspaper's fortunes. Consequently, the firm of Thomas Bailie & Co. was dissolved by mutual consent on December 1, 1854, bringing an end to the publication of Richmond's first successful daily paper.

Sources: LCCN nos. 85-026177, 85-026845, 85-026858, 84-024698, 85-026859, 84-054476, 85-038619, 94-060030, 85-026857, 91-066171, 86-071855, 94-060040, & 84-024697; Brigham II: 1137; Cappon 1246 & 1224; Hubbard on Richmond; Rawson, "Guardians," chap. 6; various notices in the *Virginia Argus* (1813-16), the *Richmond Enquirer* (1813-53), the [Norfolk] *American Beacon* (1815-37), the *Richmond Whig* (1836-53), and the *Alexandria Gazette* (1836-54), as well as in the successive iterations of the *Richmond Compiler* (1816-53).