

WARRENTON 01: Palladium of Liberty

01: Palladium of Liberty (1817-1822)

02: Warrenton Gazette (1822-1825)?

The only newspaper issued in Warrenton before 1820 was a Republican journal published by a transplant from Frederick County. The duration of its life is uncertain because of a scarcity of surviving numbers, which infer that it expired sometime between 1822 and 1825, though it may have continued under a new name after 1822.

The *Palladium of Liberty* was the first weekly issued independently by James Caldwell (071). He came to Warrenton, known as Fauquier Court House until 1810, from Winchester where he had worked in the *Republican Constellation* office of Jonathan Foster (168); Caldwell may have had an interest in Foster's business, as he set up a press office in Warrenton during the winter of 1816-17 without known partners, indicating that he then had some means. As his new paper appeared in fairly short order thereafter – on March 22, 1817 – it seems clear that Caldwell's intent was to provide a journal-of-record for Fauquier County, so ending the county's reliance on journals in Leesburg and Winchester for that authoritative function.

In March 1818, at the end of the weekly's first volume/year, Caldwell brought in a partner who was identified only by the surname of McKennie (291); he was undoubtedly one of the three sons of the late Fauquier County physician Matthew McKennie, but circumstances suggest he was specifically John Harris McKennie (239), a young printer who Caldwell had trained while working for Foster in Winchester; that McKennie absconded from his master's employ in October 1817, but Foster only publicized that flight in print in January 1818, after he learned that others close by were harboring his fugitive apprentice. As this unnamed McKennie became Caldwell's partner just a month after Foster ceased publishing notices of J. H. McKennie's flight, it seems that the apprentice returned to his Fauquier County home, repaying his mentor with familial investment in the new paper. Still, one cannot completely discount the possibility that another son of Mary & Matthew McKennie was Caldwell's partner here. In January 1820, John H. McKennie founded Charlottesville's first weekly, *The Central Gazette*, in conjunction with his younger brother Clement P. McKennie (292); as Clement has often been identified as the tradesman in the brothers' ensuing Charlottesville venture, he may also have been the unnamed partner. Since the partnership with Caldwell lasted just a single year, the McKennie involved was undoubtedly one of the Charlottesville pair, as the sale of that interest in the *Palladium of Liberty* in March 1819 would have readily provided the means to start a new weekly elsewhere.

It is interesting to note that a newspaper that was financially troubled before this partner's investment then survived his withdrawal. In November 1818, Caldwell was granted one of three licenses given to Virginia newspapers to publish the laws of Congress in their pages at their going advertising rates – a substantial subsidy for any publisher having such a license; moreover, it was the one previous held by Jonathan Foster, and its withdrawal compelled him to sell his weekly that winter. At the time of the grant, the McKennie brothers owned Albemarle County farms, near the Fauquier County border, neighboring the estate of James

Monroe, the president of the United States who approved such licenses at that time. In now holding that license, Caldwell could buy out his unidentified partner in March 1819 when a year-long contract would have expired, and still continue to publish a marginal weekly. Thus it is also unsurprising that the McKennie brothers filed an application for that same license once their Charlottesville paper became a reality. However, Caldwell retained that license until it was reassigned to the *Lynchburg Press* before the 17th Congress met in late 1821. Thus the *Palladium* remained a workable venture well into 1822.

Still, it is unclear just how long the *Palladium of Liberty* continued in print; the number that was issued on June 7, 1822, is the latest now known. Yet, a combination of recent assertions with the scarce imprint evidence imply it continued until the end of 1825, when Caldwell sold the weekly to Thomas G. Bradford (048); Bradford was a native of Fauquier County who had trained as a printer in the offices of the District of Columbia; by 1807, he had moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where his weekly *Clarion* chronicled the military and political career of Andrew Jackson; in mid-1820, Bradford returned to Fauquier following the death of his wife. After 1821, a Warrenton journal is often cited in newspapers elsewhere, but under the title of the *Warrenton Gazette*; as Bradford is known to have started publishing a *Virginia Gazette* in the town in January 1826, it appears that he invested in Caldwell's *Palladium* on his return to the area, and that sometime after June 1822, the paper adopted the new title of *Warrenton Gazette*; then at the end of 1825, Bradford acquired Caldwell's interest in the paper outright and became its sole proprietor under the title *Virginia Gazette*.

This scenario is consistent with the claim made by today's *Fauquier Times* that it is a direct descendant of Caldwell's *Palladium*, issued without a significant interruption in publication, though with several changes in title. Meanwhile, a recent history of Rappahannock County, then a part of Culpeper County, reports that the parent county's first paper – the *Culpeper Gazette* – was initially issued in March 1827 "by the then-editor of Warrenton's *Palladium of Liberty*." As the *Palladium* was evidently long out of print by that time, these unsourced accounts indicate that in advance of the 1828 election Caldwell and Bradford had made a concerted attempt to broaden Jackson's journalistic base in northern Virginia – where the incumbent John Quincy Adams was popular – by publishing two Jacksonian papers along the main road south from Alexandria to Lynchburg; to do so, Caldwell moved to Culpeper Court House (then called Fairfax) in late 1826 and began publishing the *Culpeper Gazette* the next spring, while Bradford continued the *Virginia Gazette* in Warrenton until 1829.

However, there is not an imprint record to confirm this suggested succession. Rather, the standard authorities report all three of these papers as independent entities, with extended intervals between their dates of publication; and modern digital resources do not contradict that long-standing account. Consequently, this Index presumes that the *Palladium of Liberty* ceased publishing sometime between June 1822, when the last known number was issued, and February 1823, when references to an ensuing *Warrenton Gazette* first appear.

Caldwell had returned to Warrenton by 1831, when he built a large and prominent house in the market-town's center, one of the few buildings in Warrenton today that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was in that residence that Caldwell passed away unexpectedly the following year, just forty years old. His business died with him. Bradford,

in contrast, went on to a lengthy career as a government clerk in Washington, reaping the rewards of three decades of service in the cause of Jacksonian democracy.

Sources: LCCN No. 84-024614; Brigham II: 1158; Cappon 1628, 1636 & 369; *Bicentennial History of Fauquier County*; Morton, *Winchester*; Woods, *Albemarle County*; Papers of Department of the Secretary of State (National Archives RG 59.2); U.S. Newspaper Directory, Library of Congress; *Fauquier Times* (June 19, 2013); and *Rappahannock News* (Dec. 12, 2013).