WILLIAMSBURG 02: VIRGINIA GAZETTE II

01: Rind's Virginia Gazette (1766)

02: The Virginia Gazette (1766-1776)

The second newspaper published in Williamsburg was initiated as a competitor to the first, with both being the only journals then issued in Virginia. But its dependence on the public treasury and its ties to an activist faction in the Assembly made it a problematic venture, so never attaining the influence of its pre-existing rival. Consequently, this weekly declined and expired after its governmental support was removed in 1775.

The title *Virginia Gazette* has been one adopted by numerous papers in the state, especially during the "long eighteenth century." That label was essentially an assertion by its publisher for the legitimacy of the journal's content, and has its origins in the manuscript newsletters circulated among government officials in the Renaissance era that conveyed authoritative information. In British North America, the first journals printed in each colony were closely tied to the imperial administration of that colony and so embraced the term "gazette" out of course, leading to our current understanding of the word as an "official publication of a government organization or institution, listing appointments and other public notices" [per *O.E.D*]. That definition fits the intended role of this weekly when it was started in 1766.

Prologue

The conventional history of this journal is based largely on Thomas Jefferson's inaccurate assertion some fifty years later that "We procured [William] Rind to come from Maryland to publish a free paper." Jefferson had little to do with the process, which began before his days in Williamsburg and which involved persons not in his circle of associates at that time. Moreover, its publisher was a peripheral figure himself at first, an unforeseen substitute for a proprietor that was the focus of a lengthy attempt to bring a second press to the colonial capital, one that was beyond the influence of the colonial governor.

That effort began in late 1761, after the death of William Hunter Sr. (230), the colony's public printer. He had left Virginia for three years (1756-59) to seek medical care in England during the contentious administration of Governor Robert Dinwiddie, leaving his office in the hands of his bookbinder, John Stretch (407); during that absence, Stretch opened the pages of the official *Virginia Gazette* to Dinwiddie's political opponents, so presenting the views of his paymasters in the Assembly rather than just those of the imperial government. After Dinwiddie's recall, Hunter returned hastily to Virginia with two journeymen – Joseph Royle (368) and Alexander Purdie (345) – to replace Stretch and those then working in the Williamsburg office; with this house-cleaning, the pages of his *Virginia Gazette* were closed to anyone dissenting from the policies of the new governor, Francis Fauquier. Led by the noted Northern Neck politicians Landon Carter and Richard Bland, those dissidents tried to buy a new and hitherto unused press from Hunter's estate for Stretch's use, but they were stymied in the attempt when it was sold to John Holt (222), Williamsburg's one-time mayor,

who was then setting up a new printing office (and dissident newspaper) in New York City, leaving Royle, now Hunter's brother-in-law, as the only functioning printer in Virginia. But before the dissident Burgesses could find and buy another press, Stretch died in Maryland, requiring them to find a replacement printer as well.

William Rind (358) became that substitute. During the turmoil in 1765 attending the Stamp Act, Landon Carter, among others, employed the Annapolis press of Jonas Green, an ardent opponent of the act, as an alternative to Royle's to publish his fiery political tracts, both out of his concern over possible suppressions ordered by Fauquier and out of his unwillingness to allow Royle to profit from his pamphlets. In doing so, he became acquainted with Rind, then Green's shop foreman and his partner in the *Maryland Gazette*. When publication of all American papers was suspended on November 1, 1765 – in protest of each paper being required to use tax stamps under the provisions of the Stamp Act – Green was persuaded to allow Rind to leave Annapolis for Williamsburg, with the suspension period giving Green the time needed to find new hands for his press. For Rind, the daily presence of Green's three young sons (William, Frederick, and Samuel) as the probable heirs to his master's business likely piqued his interest in the dissidents' offer, and their promise that he would be elected as Virginia's public printer in the near future probably sealed the deal.

Troubled Start

In Williamsburg, Rind was now his own man for the first time; yet the newly independent tradesman was quickly beset by financial troubles, even as he easily filled the role which had been offered him. Those troubles evidently began even before he set up shop in the town. A planned start for his new office for February or March 1766, when publication of unstamped American newspapers resumed, was delayed by an inability to obtain the press and type needed for the venture. When such materials finally arrived from England, and he could finally start his rival *Virginia Gazette* in May 1766, Rind faced a new competitor who had also distanced himself from the government of Francis Fauquier.

Joseph Royle died after a lengthy illness in January 1766 with his *Gazette* still in suspension; like Hunter had before him, he left his printing office in the hands of his foreman, Alexander Purdie, who was thus thought to be simply another tool of Fauquier's. Yet Purdie clearly understood the situation better than the dissidents allowed. On Royle's death, he forged an alliance with the majority faction of the Assembly, then largely the elite planters of the old tidewater led by Robert Carter Nicholas. So when the original *Virginia Gazette* reappeared in March 1766 under his care, it was the voice of that faction and not that of the governor, undermining claims that Rind's new *Gazette* was the only Virginia newspaper opposed to the intrusions of King and Parliament. Furthermore, Purdie benefitted from publishing his paper for two months without competition from Rind, a period which saw news both of the repeal of the Stamp Act arrive in Virginia and of the death of John Robinson, the long-time Speaker of the House of Burgesses and Treasurer of the colony, whose bankrupt estate threatened to devastate Virginia's treasury; Purdie's published accounts of the events gave him a new reputation as a reliable and independent source of public information.

Still, Rind chose to immediately dive into publishing a newspaper – the most extensive and

intensive drain on a colonial-era printing office's resources possible – at the insistence of his dissident supporters, fully six months before they could grant him the prized public printing concession that November. In his initial issue, Rind presented an introductory address that focused on what he and his backers thought were the journalistic needs that were not being met by Purdie's competing weekly:

> "To enter into a minute Detail of the Advantages of a well conducted NEWSPAPER, would, at any time, be impertinent, but most especially at a Crisis, which makes a quick Circulation of Intelligence particularly interesting to all of the AMERICAN COLONIES. It will be more to the Purpose therefore to communicate to the Public a brief Account of the Nature of our Plan, than to enter into a formal Proof of its Utility, which we esteem little less than self-evident."

This passage suggested that the other *Gazette* consciously restricted its content to matters that concerned few Virginians, an imperfection that Rind's paper would correct. He went on to imply that by limiting his paper's focus, Purdie – and by extension, Fauquier – was aiding attempts to suppress both the autonomy of the General Assembly and the colony's growing number of dissenting religious sects:

> "The interests of RELIGION and LIBERTY, we shall ever think it our particular Duty to support; and, at the same Time, to treat with aversion the intemperate Effusions of factious Zealotry, whether religious or political, as Enemies to Virtue, and the Pests of Civil Order."

Rind's address was followed by a letter relating the actions of a group from Westmoreland County in February 1766 who prevented the departure of a shipment of grain from the port of Tappahannock, then called Hobb's Hole, which would have required the use of papers affixed with tax-stamps obliged by the still-unrepealed Stamp Act. Rind printed this account in the wake of charges made against Purdie in March – the month when Rind's *Gazette* was originally expected to start – that he had suppressed the letter; but his protestations at that time, as well as his published reaction to Rind's publication of this letter, indicate that this event was part of an effort to discredit his *Gazette*, and so establish Rind's as the true voice of the people of Virginia. So from the start of his *Gazette*, Rind was engaged in a journalistic conflict with Purdie that contradicted his claim that his paper would avoid factionalism.

Yet while that dated missive launched this competition, it was the election campaign that summer for representatives to the General Assembly that dominated their papers at first. Hoping that the repeal of the Stamp Act had cooled political passions, Fauquier called an election for a new Assembly, and individuals favoring the dissidents' partisan agenda were elected to a majority. Throughout that summer the two competing *Gazettes* presented a lively debate between the old elite and the dissidents, unfettered by Fauquier's hand. Still, very few items unfavorable to the dissidents' agenda found a place in Rind's paper. Purdie, however, took a more moderate course, trying to present all sides in the ongoing debates; that approach led to the defeat of dissident Richard Henry Lee in the election of a new Speaker of the House of Burgesses – in Robinson's place – when the Assembly met in November; Purdie's course largely guaranteed Rind's election as public printer that fall.

Rind soon found that the prized government contract, however valuable, was not sufficient

to long keep his press office afloat. His chief difficulty was that he was not well capitalized when he began work in Virginia, even after having liquidating his Annapolis holdings, so his cash flow was severely limited. And his *Gazette* provided too little return to make up the difference. Rind's weekly found fewer subscribers than did Purdie's established one, which was regularly issued in numbers three or four times that of his *Gazette*, making the entirety of his business financially problematic.

That inferiority was reinforced by the sad fact that Rind could not control the system that distributed his papers at a distance from Williamsburg. The colonial postal system was directed in the southern colonies by John Foxcroft, formerly Fauquier's private secretary; he had assigned management of Virginia's post routes to John Dixon Sr. (140), then a respected merchant in the capital; later on, Dixon formed a partnership with Purdie to separate the Williamsburg printing office and the original *Gazette* from Royle's estate. Dixon thus had a vested interest in limiting the distribution of Rind's paper, and apparently did so as a heated exchange in print between the two journal proprietors in late 1766 indicates; however, Rind achieved no relief through his complaints, and so was forced to build a private distribution network that ate further into his dicey finances. Lacking other revenue sources, such as job-printing and bookselling, Rind's office was overly dependent upon its newspaper income to support the office's operation, when his government salary covered only his public labors. Consequently, a shortage of subscribers forced him to juggle suppliers and payments with disastrous effects for his family's fortunes. Within a year of his relocation to Virginia, he was being sued by his creditors, losing at least twelve such suits over the ensuing six years.

Political Perspective

Despite such travails, Rind's *Gazette* served the legislative faction that had convinced him to come to Virginia as best he could. Its pages frequently carried contributions from members of that faction, or from their allies. The chief concern voiced in such letters was the growing domination of the colony's economy by British merchants who benefited from the laws that Parliament passed to keep colonial produce under their control, via the so-called Navigation Acts. Those acts increased the size of the imperial administration, with its attendant costs being passed on to colonists; then with the expansion of Britain's North American territory resulting from the treaty that ended the Seven Years War came an unprecedented attempt to tax colonists directly – the Stamp Act – that also threatened to drain the scarce currency available in the seaboard colonies. But the repeal of that revenue law did not help colonists to either increase such needed capital or reduce their dependence on British merchants. In Virginia, westward expansion had always provided an important local currency in the form of land warrants and notes issued in land transactions. Many of Rind's patrons were men who thought Virginia's economy could only be saved from the threats it faced by expanding settlement into the Ohio River valley; such growth would increase the amount of currency in circulation, as well as diversify its agricultural produce, making the colony less susceptible to the vagaries of markets and the whims of distant merchants.

This expansionist faction was led by Landon Carter, Richard Bland, and Richard Henry Lee, among others. Their sense of the colony's long-term interests clashed with that held by the old tidewater elites that controlled the Governor's Council, men who favored restrictions on

new land grants in order to stabilize the values of their eastern land-holdings and keep the colony's free-white laborers from migrating to the western frontier. Hence, when the royal government in London issued its proclamation barring Euroamerican settlement west of the Appalachian Ridge in 1763, the action split the colony politically. The Stamp Act controversy helped bridge that divide by creating a common opposition to that extraordinary assertion of Parliamentary power; but with its repeal, the expansionists feared that the drift toward the colony's "enslavement" by politically-connected persons in the imperial capital would resume and likely accelerate. Accordingly, Rind's *Gazette* became an indispensable vehicle for them to disseminate their opinions and marshal resistance to further encroachments on the colonists' rights and privileges.

That partiality was not lost on many Virginians, as one correspondent told Rind in a letter sent to him near the end of the Assembly session that granted him his prized public post. Therein, "A Man of Principle" in Norfolk took exception to Rind's use of "Virginia Gazette" as a title and "Open to All Parties, but Influence by None" as his motto; neither usage rang true to him:

> "Several of your readers are solicitous to know what authority you have for publishing a paper now, more than formerly. Some, I suppose the most intelligent, allege that because you have had the good fortune (for certainly you cannot ascribe it to anything else) to be chosen Publick Printer, that that gives you an exclusive privilege. If this was really so, the arrogating your superb title might be somewhat excusable; but others say this is so far from being the case that any one who has a mind to publish a Virginia Gazette may use the same title, with equal propriety. Others, again, are of the opinion that you have obtained a patent. As for my part, I cannot pretend to say anything of the matter; nor indeed do I think that you are accountable, to the generality of your readers, for the motives that influenced you conduct. But, if you think proper, you may give this a place in your next, as well as condescend to satisfy the publick, otherwise it will be understood as a refusal."

That Rind did not publish this incisive letter – leaving that task to Purdie & Dixon three weeks later – is clear evidence that both he and his patrons were unwilling to acknowledge that his *Gazette* was anything but the authoritative voice of the colony's population.

One of Rind's early contributors was Dr. Arthur Lee (1740-92), the youngest brother of the expansionist leader. Trained in Edinburgh, Lee returned to Virginia to practice medicine in Williamsburg just after Rind began issuing his *Gazette*; he had already published a pamphlet in London in 1764 (*An Essay in Vindication of the Continental Colonies of America*) disputing the views on slavery that Adam Smith had expressed in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759 – a work wherein Lee defended the American variant of the "peculiar institution" while deriding the inhuman avarice embodied in the British slave trade. Yet by March 1767, he had concluded that abolishing slavery was consistent with the principle that government required "a constant endeavor to give every man his right," especially given recent refusals by the London government to permit the Virginia Assembly to regulate the importation of slaves into the colony. Lee made his case in a widely-reprinted article in Rind's *Gazette*:

> "Long and serious reflections upon the nature and consequences of slavery have

> convinced me that it is a violation both of justice and religion; that it is dangerous to the safety of the community in which it prevails; that it is destructive to the growth of arts and sciences; and lastly, that it produces a numerous and very fatal train of vices, both in the slave and in his master."

It is unclear from the few surviving issues of Rind's paper from 1767 whether Lee found sympathetic readers for his arguments or not; indeed, he probably did not, as discussions of the abolition of slavery struck directly at the colony's economic foundations. But it is clear that Lee had attained a reputation as a practiced political commentator by then, leading to an invitation to publish a series of pseudonymous letters in Rind's *Gazette* in 1768 under the pen-name "Monitor."

This series emerged just after the last of John Dickinson's twelve "Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania" was published in Philadelphia's *Pennsylvania Gazette*; both *Virginia Gazettes* republished those letters, ones advocating a coordinated continent-wide response to the Townsend Duties and Parliament's attempts to rule in the place of the colonial assemblies. Now Lee offered a set of ten shorter missives that laid out the options then available to the American colonials to build the unified response that Dickinson had encouraged, based on examples in classical history, and playing on the dictum that Parliament was determined to "Divide & Tyrannize." The Monitor letters were republished throughout North America, but apparently not as widely as Dickinson's had been, leading John Holt – the former mayor of Williamsburg and John Dixon's brother-in-law – to print a complaint in his *New-York Journal* about the apathetic response of too many colonists to Parliament's intrusion on the rights and privileges of British citizens on this side of the Atlantic.

Rind apparently understood this as well, and so published a combined volume of both series of letters in June 1769, one of the very few non-official, non-newspaper titles issued from his Williamsburg press. His motivation reflected the complaint in Holt's paper:

> "Notwithstanding [that] these letters have already been published, yet here, they have only been seen in the Gazettes, which, from the incertainty of their dispersion, and the length of time passing between the reception of newspapers in the country, may probably have prevented much of the benefit to be derived from a collective, uninterrupted view of the manly reasoning, the timely information, and the true constitutional principles of liberty with which these letters every where abound."

Remarkably, Lee was unable to take advantage of this broader exposure, having returned to Britain in mid-1768 to study the law, intending to use the precedents therein to litigate for American rights in English courts. There he published a new series of political commentaries under the pen-name of "Junius Americanus" from 1769 to 1774. Rind, like other colonial journalists, republished those letters in his *Gazette*.

Still, the tepid response to the Monitor letters convinced Rind to limit future obligations to his essayists to two-part letters printed in succeeding weeks. That choice gave his *Gazette* a more timely face, as such were most frequently penned in response to a relatively recent occurrence, rather than being protracted expositions printed over a longer period that were subject to a loss of interest among his readers. But as political events progressed from the Townsend Duties (June 1767) to the Tea Act (May 1773), the once-sharp contrast between

his *Gazette* and that of Purdie & Dixon dulled significantly, as their distinct sets of patrons generally began to come together to defy the imperial authorities. So by mid-1773, the sole advantage held by Rind's *Gazette* was its role as the colony's journal-of-record as a result of his appointment as the public printer.

Problematic Transition

Thus it is unsurprising that the financial problems William Rind faced were left unresolved when he unexpectedly died in August 1773, not yet forty. And so the widowed Clementina Grierson Rind (356) was forced into the role of administrator of both her husband's public contract and private estate, serving as the *de facto* public printer in her husband's stead. It was likely a difficult undertaking, after having recently given birth to (or about to do so) an infant daughter, the sixth child born to the Rinds in their seven years in Williamsburg. But she was assisted in these roles by printer John Pinkney (325), then the foreman of the Rind office and apparently a relative of hers or her late husband.

The effectual, if unprofitable, functioning of their alliance meant that when the Assembly next met in May 1774, Rind could argue for her continuance in the position out of both suitable public performance and private charity; the enormous debt left by her husband, amounting to five times the inventoried value of his property, meant that the impoverished family would need financial support for several years to come. And though one-third of the Burgesses voted that she should hold the position in conjunction with either Purdie or Dixon, the remaining legislators evidently believed her continued employment of Pinkney was sufficient guarantee that the public work could be completed without her necessarily partaking in the actual production. Moreover, her appointment meant that this *Virginia Gazette* could also continue serving as the voice of the Assembly's majority faction, as the "Boston Tea Party" of the previous winter gave way to the "Intolerable Acts" of Parliament that spring. Thus Rind's election as public printer was one based in mutual self-interest that would provide sustenance for a brood of young children.

Over the ensuing thirteen months, Rind would publish occasional essays in her *Gazette* on subjects she found it fitting to comment upon. But the only ones she openly acknowledged were signed pieces in which she defended her decisions to decline publishing contributions that she thought to be disreputable. The best example of this is the justification she offered in December 1773 concerning an article that purportedly addressed "the Misconduct of Great Men" in the Fairfax County port of Colchester:

> "The one which I am accused of suppressing contains a detail of facts of a very interesting nature, which relate to individuals only. The affair is certainly cognizable in a court of law, where it must be more fully determined in the injured party's favor than by any publication in the newspaper; besides, as I am in some measure amenable to the public for what appears in my Gazette, I cannot think myself authorized to publish an anonymous piece, which, notwithstanding its merit, points at private characters, and will probably give a mortal stab to the piece of some respectable persons, who are nearly, and perhaps very tenderly connected, both with the aggressor and the aggrieved. When the author gives up his name, it shall, however

> repugnant to my inclination, have a place in this paper, as the principles upon which I set out will then, I flatter myself, plead my excuse with every party."

As Purdie & Dixon also apparently declined publishing the piece, Rind was no doubt correct in suggesting that the controversy was better suited to litigation than to publication.

Yet the most frequently published items bearing Rind's signature were the appeals made to her patrons to settle their accounts, so that she could "make a tolerable provision for myself and children." The lengthiest of those appeals appeared immediately before the start of the Assembly that confirmed her in the role of public printer:

> "The printer hereof having lately considerably enlarged her paper, and expecting shortly an elegant set of types from London, of a much smaller size than those used at present, together with other materials relative to the printing business, and being extremely desirous of supporting the dignity of her Gazette, and keeping it had a fixed standard, earnestly requests, that in order to maintain it on this footing, those who may please to favor her with their commands will be punctual in their payments, either to send cash, or settle at the next general court after she receives their orders. Pay for the paper she by no means requires at the above stated period; to remit that yearly will be sufficient, at which time she hopes none of her subscribers will neglect her. But advertisements, blanks, and many other kinds of printing work, she ardently hopes, may be discharged at the general courts, which will enable her the better to carry on her paper with that spirit which is so necessary to such an undertaking."

For these reasons then, Rind is little evident in the pages of her *Gazette* in 1773 and 1774; it seems that her children were the focus of her life, and not this journal, as should not be surprising for a mother of so large and so young of a family. Her weekly carried both news and commentary fitting the agendas of the *Gazette's* patrons, evincing her husband's legacy to the Virginia print-trade. From 1773 on, each press office established in the Old Dominion would have a certain secular or sectarian patron, even as each of them regularly proclaimed themselves to be "open to all Parties, but influenced by none" as decreed in the masthead of the Rinds' *Gazette*. Consequently, their paper showed little change in content or tone in the transition from husband to wife as its publisher.

In August 1774, Rind made another such appeal to her patrons on the first anniversary of her husband's death; however, that notice implied that all was not well with her then; after asking for payments of arrearages, Rind indicated "that she shall shortly, *should Providence be pleased to preserve her* health, [be] able to conduct your business with more ease." The phrase proved an ominous portent, as Rind died barely a month later, suggesting that her health was already in decline when she had dunned her customers for one last time.

Final Years

Pinkney announced Rind's death four days later, in the *Gazette* he issued on September 29, 1774. The brevity of his notice hints at both the unexpectedness of her passing and the grief that now gripped her successor:

> "It ill beseems the printer, he apprehends, as being a relation, to pretend to characterize her. The public, who must in general have been acquainted with her, knew her qualifications. It shall, however, be his most ardent study to protect her children, for which purpose, he hopes that those who have hitherto favored this office, will not now discontinue their kindness. The public will, ere long, be made acquainted with the manner in which this paper will be conducted, and likewise with the plan which the printer intends to pursue should he meet with sufficient encouragement."

That number bore a colophon stating that the paper was now "Printed by John Pinkney for the Benefit of Clementina Rind's Estate." But as he was promptly named administrator for the estates of both husband and wife, as well as guardian of their six minor children, the next week that colophon read "for the Benefit of Clementina Rind's Children" and continued to do so until he bought the business from her estate on April 1, 1775. This was likely a pre-arranged plan as the *Gazette* continued without missing a beat despite Rind's death.

Still, it was not until early December 1774 that Pinkney offered the *Gazette's* patrons any sense of how he intended to conduct the weekly; and then he did so only in the context of explaining why he was then printing a lengthy communication from one Samuel Calvert that involved an assault on Calvert's reputation published in the *Norfolk Intelligencer*, that port town's newly-established Loyalist weekly. A key to this decision was the open identity of the writer, who had been assailed by someone hiding behind a pseudonym; for Pinkney, such duplicity required a correction:

> "…whenever a man has been injured in his public concerns, and would wish to lay his cause openly before the public at large, and will condescend to subjoin his name to his publications, so such a one will always be allowed the privilege of this paper. Nor shall those pieces that serve to encrease, or render conspicuous, the valuable tendencies of morality, or any other useful subjects, be disregarded; on the contrary, they shall meet with the most agreeable reception. And, in order to illustrate the upright cause of this my native country, and to defeat the detestable machinations of those who would willingly defeat her internal or commercial interests, this Gazette shall ever be open to all pieces which may boast of so laudable an end."

While this editorial approach differed from the one that Rind had stated just a year before, Pinkney was clearly reacting to the ever more personal reproaches that attended the ever more raucous political debate that developed that winter. He was also setting the stage for his own election as the public printer when the next Assembly met in May 1775, employing the same rationale that Rind had used in gaining that post after her husband's death:

> "It may not probably be amiss, while I am descanting so particularly, to inform the friends of the late Mrs. Rind, that, according to her last request, I have taken every step in my power for the protection of her children. The ties of relationship demanded it of me, and I have submitted to the trial without murmuring; nor shall futurity, even if the honourable HOUSE OF BURGESSES should reject me as their servant, prevent me from having a watchful eye over their conduct, and affording whatever relief I may be able to give them. It would be the height of ingratitude, that, after experiencing the most cordial affection from their parents, and who were nearly

> related to myself, that I should abandon or forsake them. Providence, whose gracious hand is put them under my direction, shall not, as far as I am able, be disappointed in its choice."

However, a letter that he printed in February 1775 suggests that many Virginians believed that his claim was a ruse designed to keep public funds flowing into the family's coffers. Indeed, until the next Assembly met, he continued in that role as the *de facto* printer to the colony – just as had Alexander Purdie in 1766 and Clementina Rind in 1773 – resulting in such monies flowing into to Pinkney's hands for another eight months. So from the start of his tenure in command of the former Rind press, Pinkney's reputation was under scrutiny, and so was often tarnished by his scrutinizers. Yet he did manage to find fitting placements for the Rind children, with sons William Alexander (359), John Grierson, Charles, and James (357) all receiving educations funded by their father's Masonic brethren in Williamsburg.

Pinkney faced the further complication that the Rind press had been a marginal operation from its inception in 1766, and was heavily dependent on partisan subsidies and the public work, even after its owners' deaths. And so the survival of his business was imperiled when the public-printing concession was granted to Purdie in June 1775, substantially reducing his already-stressed revenues. In an apparent attempt to reduce his expenses, Pinkney moved his press to a much smaller office "almost opposite Benjamin Waller's, esquire" on the east end of Francis Street that October.

Yet Pinkney's was not the only business whose existence was threatened during 1775. The reality was that the political situation had undermined existing commercial relationships; the so-called Continental Association of October 1774 was implemented as a way to force concessions from London, even as it disrupted the supply networks of American printers. By the end of 1775, all three of Williamsburg's printing offices faced paper shortages triggered by that boycott of British goods. That December, Pinkney dealt with the developing problem by both reducing the size of his *Gazette* to a half-sheet, four-page format, and increasing its frequency to twice-weekly, making his journal the first to be issued at that pace in Virginia; in contrast, the original *Virginia Gazette*, now published by the rival press of John Dixon and William Hunter Jr. (231), kept its foregoing format, although printing it reduced quantities, until a new round of shortages the following summer forced a reduction in its page size as well; only Purdie's new *Virginia Gazette* retained its standard large-folio format, though sometimes on a slightly smaller sheet, in consequence of its now being Virginia's journal-of-record; still, all three Williamsburg *Gazettes* issued occasional supplements that made up for the loss of content-space whenever news of recent events dictated.

In Pinkney's case, these circumstances created a downward spiral. As his page-space shrank, the ratio of advertisements to editorial content rose, squeezing news out of his *Gazette* in favor of items that provided him ready cash; but as the news content shrank, so too did the demand for his journal, even as it provided needed support for the commercial ventures at the heart of Virginia's economy. In January 1776, after just seven weeks as a smaller twice-weekly, Pinkney was forced to suspend its publication for one week for want of paper, even as he expected "in a short time" a "very considerable quantity" which would allow him "to make up for all deficiencies." But only one number is known to have issued after that short

suspension – the issue for February 3, 1776 – implying that the supply he finally received was insufficient (or too uncertain) to continue publishing his *Virginia Gazette* thereafter. That inference is supported by a notice published in Dixon & Hunter's *Gazette* that April by Williamsburg merchant Jacob Bruce, who was acting as collector both for the Rinds' estates and for Pinkney's business, clear evidence that his *Gazette* had ceased publication by then; Bruce noted that Pinkney had printed sixteen months of the paper after Clementina Rind's death, a count showing that the February 3rd number was most likely the last issued.

Now lacking the revenue produced by his weekly paper, the fate of Pinkney's business was sealed. Several historians, the celebrated Douglas McMurtrie among them, have seen this failure as the "result of its publisher's poor management." Yet there is no real evidence to support such a conclusion. As Pinkney eventually left Williamsburg, he was required to post a debtor-bond before leaving; but such bonds are not evidence of malpractice in and of themselves; indeed, they were quite common, given the indebtedness of all Virginians then, an unintended consequence of the Continental Association. Moreover, Pinkney conducted the former Rind press as a job-printing concern until May or June 1777, when he closed his shop in preparation for removing it to Halifax, North Carolina; there he would assume the position of that state's public printer, replacing James Davis (123), a former Williamsburg journeyman trained long-ago by William Parks (321). Yet, Pinkney's bad luck followed him south; he died there that August before ever restarting his business.

Sources: LCCN No. 84-024740 & 84-024741; Brigham II: 1161; Rawson, "Guardians," chaps. 3 & 4; dossiers on Rinds & Pinkney in Williamsburg People files and York County Project files, Colonial Williamsburg Research Dept.; Wroth, *Maryland Printing*; McMurtrie, *Beginnings of Printing in Virginia*; Goodwin, *Bruton Church;* Weeks, *Press of North Carolina;* and notices all three Williamsburg *Virginia Gazettes* (1764-77).