

WINCHESTER 09: Republican

- 01: Republican Constellation (1810-1819)
 - 02: Winchester Republican (1819-1824)
 - 03: Winchester Virginia Republican (1824-1843)
 - 04: Winchester Republican (1843-1862)
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The ninth newspaper published in Winchester before 1820 was the first Republican journal to effectively challenge the town's long-established Federalist weekly. Like that rival, it lived a long life because of the ability of its successive proprietors to adapt to the evolution of partisan journalism in the antebellum era, before the paper expired during the Civil War.

The ready availability today of nineteenth-century histories of Winchester in digital formats has led to a general acceptance of those often-flawed accounts as being accurate, especially in non-professional online settings. Most problematic are the conflation of proprietors and titles commonly seen in those works. However, the extensive catalog records and digitized periodical collections now available allow scholars to correct such faulty descriptions, as is presented here. Accordingly, this account does not conform to those archaic histories.

Antecedents

For most of the 1790s, the *Winchester Gazette* of Richard Bowen (045) was the only paper published in this market town, and so it became the primary Federalist journal in the lower Valley of Virginia. Local Republicans initially contested Bowen's primacy in July 1799 by embracing the plan of George Trisler (419) to publish his *Triumph of Liberty* in conjunction with one John Hass (205). On Hass's retirement in early 1803, Trisler engaged journeyman Peter Isler (235) to conduct his press for him; later that year, Trisler closed his weekly and sold his office to Isler and Joseph Harmer (201), his former apprentice. The new firm of Isler & Harmer offered the next challenger to the *Gazette* in March 1804; but their *Independent Register* lasted just a year, closing when Harmer left Virginia in early 1805. Isler then sold the press he acquired from Trisler to his shop foreman, Joseph A. Lingan (266), who issued a new contender, *The Philanthropist*, in March 1806, initially in partnership with Matthias E. Bartgis (025), son of Frederick, Maryland, publishing entrepreneur Matthias Bartgis (024), and then with the father; when the elder Bartgis withdrew from the venture in March 1809, Lingan regrouped and issued a partisan successor in June 1809: the *Democratic Lamp or Winchester Aurora*.

Lingan's *Democratic Lamp* was relatively short-lived, published for perhaps nine months, but it was built on the experience he had gained in conducting the *Philanthropist* in alliance with the Bartgis family. Over their three years together, they garnered a reputation among Republicans in the lower Valley of Virginia that their predecessors lacked – and evidently a list of subscribers that they would have envied. Many of those readers were drawn to their journal by the increasingly strident tone of the Federalist *Gazette*; founder Bowen had died in June 1808, leaving his business in shambles, in consequence of failing to draft a will; his

successor was William Heiskell (211), a native German-speaker whose writings in English were grammatically tortured and full of overexcited comments on anything relating to the Republicans. So as the authority of the *Winchester Gazette* started to wane, that of the *Philanthropist* waxed, and that influence was inherited by the *Democratic Lamp*.

Lingan's press and paper also benefitted from the trade and editorial skills of Jonathan Foster (168); a native of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, he trained with the elder Bartgis in Frederick before finding found work in the printing offices of District of Columbia while conducting a school in Alexandria; in removing to Winchester in fall 1807, Foster repeated that pattern, opening a school there while also working on Lingan's press in place of Bartgis's son, who had left the office that spring. Thus both his literary and craft expertise promptly became a part of Lingan's *Philanthropist*, and then of his *Democratic Lamp*.

Beginnings

Foster's presence and political leanings allowed Lingan to retire from partisan journalism in late 1809. The master had apparently learned of business opportunities in the recently-established seat of Clark County in the Indiana Territory on the Ohio River, the new home of Jonathan Jennings (1783-1834), the land agent who would become the first governor of the state of Indiana; hence Lingan decided to liquidate his Virginia assets and move west to pursue those opportunities. In December 1809, he closed the *Democratic Lamp* and sold his well-used press to his journeyman. On January 2, 1810, Foster issued the first number of his new *Republican Constellation*.

One nineteenth-century history of Winchester reports that this sheet was established by Peter Printz (1791-1866), a merchant and forwarding agent in the town, but that account mistakes the removal of the *Constellation* office in 1821 to a Loudoun Street house that Printz had inherited from his father for an ownership connection to the weekly, a claim that is not substantiated by the imprint itself. Rather, Foster was plainly its founder; he reported several years later that his acquisition of Lingan's office had been facilitated by a group of Republican leaders in the county, though he did not identify them individually. By that time, he had credited Frederick County's two Republican delegates to the Assembly – Archibald Magill (1764-1821) and Joseph Sexton (1795-1841) – with regularly providing him with detailed reports of the legislature's debates; thus they were likely a part of that group, as perhaps were the three other Republican delegates elected to the General Assembly during his proprietorship: Charles Brent Jr. (1735-1822), William Castleman (1762-1832), and Jared Williams (1766-1831); so too may have been the eminent jurist Henry St. George Tucker (1780-1848), whose travels were often reported in Foster's paper.

Despite such respectable support, the *Constellation* office was plainly smaller than that of the competing *Gazette*, and so more dependent on the revenues generated by the weekly than was Heiskell's. To help ease that constraint, Foster relied on the aid of his eldest son, Thomas (169), initially issuing his new sheet under the proprietary name of J. Foster & Son. At nineteen years-of-age, the scion was a journeyman printer in his own right, probably trained by his father and Lingan over the previous three years. Although the elder Foster removed the term "& Son" from his paper's colophon that summer, his son continued as a

part of the town's printing trade well into the 1830s, and so likely remained in the office until at least 1819, when his father sold the business.

Even so limited, the *Republican Constellation* was a quick success, and thus proved a turning point for William Heiskell. Stressed by the effects of his *Gazette's* waning revenues while still settling Bowen's affairs, it seems that he tired of the effort he now needed to expend to conduct the weekly; consequently, sometime between December 4, 1810 and October 8, 1811 – the dates of the only surviving issues of the *Gazette* from this period – the proprietor sold the paper to his elder brother, printer John Heiskell (210), and retired from journalism altogether; his sibling would be in conflict with Foster for the ensuing eight years, and with this partisan weekly for fifteen. As a result, the *Constellation* developed into an influential publication in both the region and the state by robustly challenging the reports published in the Heiskells' long-standing Federalist journal.

No better examples of Foster's skillful criticisms can be found than those that he offered during the War of 1812. Of particular note was his questioning in August 1813 of the logic and motives evinced by John Heiskell in his censure of the appointment of William Duane (1706-1835), editor of the highly-partisan Philadelphia *Aurora*, to an administrative position in the U.S. Army, though lacking military experience. Foster found that it was:

"... not a little surprising that the editor of the Gazette should have worked himself into such a passion merely because Duane has been appointed an adjutant general? What sudden impulse of *patriotism* can have given rise to his tender solicitude in the bosom of our editor for the honour and respectability of the public service? Has he not pronounced the war unjust and unholy, and attempted to cast a stain on the character of every man engaged in it? Can he be serious when he solicits the Administration to call the 'virtue and talents of the nation' to their aid, without respect to political distinction? We should be happy to understand whether the *virtue, piety, and talents*, the Gazette talks so much about, would be willing actively to engage in a war so unjust, ruinous, and unnecessary? If not, which we believe to be the fact, we hope the Federalists will have no objection to Mr. Madison's giving offices to such 'creatures as Duane.'"

Regardless of such condemnations of his editorializing, it was only following the invasion of the Chesapeake by the British and the burning of Washington just two weeks later that Heiskell's commentaries on the conduct of the war became muted.

However influential his paper was, though, Foster was constantly faced with the challenge of publishing a journal that was continually in financial distress as a result of his cash-poor readers' failure to pay for their subscriptions with any regularity. This difficulty was relieved, in part, by patronage from the Madison administration; in May 1813, the Secretary of State, James Monroe, granted Foster one of the licenses reserved for three Virginia newspapers to print in their pages the laws enacted in each session of Congress, at the paper's established advertising rates, a plum that represented a substantial subsidy for any journal holding such a license; Foster kept his license until late in 1818, when Monroe's Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, reassigned most such grants in the country along geographical lines, rather than in line with patronage considerations as before.

The concomitant claim on the limited space in his paper that came with his lucrative license meant that Foster was obliged to delay publishing or completely disregard items that would previously have readily found a place in his pages. In February 1814, he apologized for this neglect; he observed that, if those who felt aggrieved by his choices fully understood the extent of the demands on the capacity of his weekly, resulting from the torrent of war news and official notices, "they would not have uttered a solitary complaint." Still, there were complaints, as well as items for which he was never able to find space. Consequently, Foster decided, shortly after offering that apology, that he needed to increase the frequency of the publication of his journal to twice-weekly in order to accommodate the wishes of his local patrons while meeting the requirements of his crucial commission; it was a pace that he sustained for the next two years.

That accelerated pace also meant that Foster needed to increase the size of his office and its staff. In 1816, he reported, in passing, that his office employed two journeymen and an apprentice with a clerk managing its accounts. Later that summer, Foster acquired a second press, which allowed him to produce imprints "in a style equal to any printing done in the State of Virginia"; that new tool likely required more staff to operate as well. Nevertheless, the identities of Foster's workers remain largely a mystery, despite their importance to his business. He acknowledged only two of them in print in the eight years that he conducted the *Constellation*. Foster's first "assistant" is known from the death notice he published in 1818; John Revell (352) was a twenty-five-year-old journeyman when he joined Foster in early 1814, evidently as part of the publisher's plan to increase the pace of his journal's production; Revell's connection to the *Constellation* apparently lasted a year before he removed to Baltimore; there he worked on several of that city's presses while organizing his fellow journeymen into a typographical union before he suffered an early death.

Foster's only other identifiable employee was an apprentice whose flight from his employer was reported in early 1818; John Harris McKennie (239) was purportedly a nineteen-year-old trainee noted for his skill as a compositor; while he absconded in October 1817, Foster did not advertise for his capture and return until the following January, once he had learned that others had aided McKennie's departure and were then harboring him. While this turn of events seems to suggest that local Federalists had decided to bring about an end of his *Constellation* by undermining his business from within, it is more likely that McKennie fled Winchester to join his trade-mentor, James Caldwell, Foster's recently departed foreman, in Warrenton, where an unnamed McKennie became Caldwell's partner in the *Palladium of Liberty* in March 1818, a month after Foster ceased publishing notices of McKennie's flight. That probability is furthered by the fact that the absconded McKennie began publishing the *Central Gazette* in Charlottesville in January 1820 in partnership with his brother Clement P. McKennie (292), apparently with monies that he garnered in a year-long association with Caldwell in Warrenton.

Financial Challenges

Still, the threats to the survival of Foster's business mounted by Heiskell and his supporters paled in comparison to those embodied in his continuing problems with unpaid debts, from subscribers and advertisers alike. A key problem was one of his own making. In announcing

the increase of publication frequency from weekly to twice-weekly in February 1814, Foster offered existing subscribers the option of declining delivery his "second paper" each week, so that he did not to burden them with the additional expense; apparently most of his patrons accepted that offer. That situation meant that he published two editions each week while charging the majority of his patrons for just one, thereby consuming more of his resources – monetary and material – than he could sustain in the long run, especially when those readers failed to pay for the single paper they received. At the center of both Foster's offer and subscribers' arrearages was the dearth of currency in western Virginia, whether paper money or specie. That scarcity started with the 1807 Embargo and was exacerbated by the decline in the export trade that accompanied the War of 1812; after the war, the areas west of the Blue Ridge in Virginia were the last to see an increase in currency, only to see another rapid contraction with the Panic of 1817. As a result, Foster struggled to make ends meet for the entirety of his eight-year-long proprietorship. The simplest way out of his dilemma would have been to sell an interest in his journal to a partner, thereby injecting new capital into the operation. Yet advertising for such an investor in both February 1816 and August 1817 did not draw the interest of a partner that he deemed suitable, and so Foster was left to pursue other options to sustain his business.

The first casualty in his lengthy struggle was his poorly-received "second paper." In late March 1816, Foster announced that, as of the first week in April, the *Constellation* would revert to its former weekly pace until the first week in December; it would then resume its twice-weekly pace until the first week of the ensuing April, when it would again be issued weekly – thus matching its frequency to the sessions of Congress and so the requirements of his federal license. But on November 30, 1816, Foster announced that he was unable to resume the twice-weekly schedule as originally planned.

"The extreme scarcity of money — the dearth of *interesting, bloodied news* — the want of ambition on the part of the people to know the *present peaceful passing events* — and the reluctance of others punctually to pay the '*miserable pittance*,' which we claim of them for our labors, have rendered our patronage such as will not warrant our continuing the expense of an additional paper during four months, without an *additional compensation*."

Foster may have contributed to this winter-time crisis by acquiring his second press earlier that fall. It is clear that he intended the purchase to provide added income to his business in the form of book-printing services being offered in addition to the job-press ones available from the office's opening in 1810. As part of that purchase, he bought an expensive "fount of handsome types for our paper," as well as buying a supply of paper that was "of a quality superior to any ever used for New Papers in this part of the State." But the notes he had signed to complete the purchase came due in May 1817, leading him to make a desperate appeal in February 1817 to those who owed him money:

"It would be useless now to inform you, as you must know it to be the case, that it is impossible for me to carry on my business, and to maintain my family and my credit, without punctual attention on the part of my patrons, to pay off their accounts, at least yearly. ... Longer indulgence cannot be given without inevitable ruin to myself,

as many of my creditors will not give me any farther indulgence; nor can I, with propriety, solicit such favors, when it is known to most of them, that I have more than enough due me to pay off all I owe. I, therefore, repeat it — you must pay me or I shall be ruined, as I have no other resources at present to meet the demands against me than what is due from my patrons."

The fact that Foster was able to continue publication of the *Constellation* that year, as well as print several new religious titles, shows that this appeal was at least partially successful. But it did not resolve the problem of arrearages, especially as currency became ever-more scarce in 1818. All through that year, he frequently appealed to his patrons to settle their accounts, citing his dire financial circumstances.

As he had made his problems known so openly, it is little surprising that rumors abounded concerning the fate of his *Republican Constellation*. One such rumor in October 1818 drew a resounding retort from Foster:

"A report having obtained partial circulation, that the editor of this paper has parted with, or is about to part with his office and establishment, and to transfer the *Constellation* into the hands of a *little man* who was an entire stranger, and whose moral or political character is unknown in the town and county, he deems it his duty to inform his numerous friends and patrons, that he should consider such a line of conduct altogether incompatible with the character he has ever honestly endeavored to maintain among them. They may therefore rest assured, that so long as he continues to retain the confidence, reposed in him by his fellow citizens, which he feels [that] he has never knowingly, by a single act, forfeited, the republican paper, in Winchester, shall never lose that character, it is well-known to have obtained, through the persevering and indefatigable industry of its editor, by being transferred to an unknown character..."

Still, the main reason that Foster was able to stave off financial ruin again and again lay in his prized license to publish "the laws of the Union" in his paper. Unfortunately, he lost that subsidy with the start of second session of the 15th Congress in November 1818. That loss was not an action directed at Foster personally, but rather one taken by the new Monroe administration to assign the state's three licenses geographically, east to west; Winchester was supplanted by Morgantown as the western assignment, with Warrenton and Norfolk being the locales chosen to the east of the Blue Ridge.

That reassignment, however, devastated Foster, and made it clear that his fiscal insecurity would soon sink the *Constellation*. So in December 1818, he began to advertise the sale or lease of his paper, so as to "enable the Editor ... to devote his attention to the settling and collecting his outstanding accounts, and to make sale of the books he has published..." This notice demonstrates that he was willing to resume its management at a later date, if a suitable offer was made; but more importantly, the advertisement is convincing evidence that Foster was determined to divorce this partisan journal from his personal finances and so save the well-regarded Republican organ.

Transitions

Foster was successful in this effort. At the close of March 1819, he transferred ownership of the *Constellation* to one George McGlassin (287), "late of the army." He was a Philadelphia-trained printer who had worked on the Republican presses there; in March 1812, fully three months before war was declared, he enlisted in a Pennsylvania infantry unit and served for the duration of the War of 1812, rising through the ranks from lieutenant to major in fairly short order as a result of his diligence and gallantry; yet he attained a national prominence via his exploits in the Battle of Plattsburgh in September 1814, which were widely heralded in American papers. Although he was retained in the U.S. Army after the war because of his competence, McGlassin's military career came to an undignified end in May 1818 when he was cashiered for abusing the men under his command (by unlawfully ordering whippings). Hence, his purchase of the *Constellation* represented both a return to his pre-war trade and an attempt to restore his reputation as a virtuous Republican.

McGlassin issued his first number of this established weekly on April 3, 1819, and quickly put his own mark on its content. The extent of his editorial alterations is masked by the scarcity of extant copies of the weekly while it was under his care (only two survive), even as it was often cited in other papers. Still, the transfer of this sheet to an outsider evidently split the group of Frederick Republicans behind the *Constellation*. Indeed, the prospect of McGlassin's acquisition of the journal may have been the basis for the rumor that Foster felt compelled to quash the preceding fall. Moreover, it seems that McGlassin hired an entirely new staff to produce the weekly for him, so displacing two young, locally-trained printers then working in the office – Peter Klipstine (253) and Joseph F. Caldwell (073) – both sons of respected community leaders. These factors evidently convinced several of Foster's former patrons to support a new Republican weekly that appeared in Winchester just three weeks after McGlassin's first number issued. Bearing the title of *The Virginia Reformer and Herald of the Valley*, that partisan paper was offered initially by the firm of Russell & Klipstine, and then by that of Russell & Caldwell; the proprietor engaging the two young journeymen was likely Elisha E. Russell, a local militia captain who opened a reading room in the tavern/hotel that he operated with William Pack at exactly the moment that this new weekly made its initial appearance.

With the Republican-leaning readership in Frederick County now divided between the two journals, the survival of each one was decidedly uncertain. McGlassin attempted to assert his priority in this competition by changing the title of his paper in September 1819. In using the name *Winchester Republican*, he laid claim to being both the authoritative party organ in the region and the defender of the party's foundational principles in the face of a splinter group that would "reform" those doctrines. Yet his weekly continued to support the reform of Virginia's state constitution endorsed by the Staunton Convention of 1816, as Foster had before him, so blurring the distinction between his *Republican* and the *Virginia Reformer*.

As the 1820 election campaign dawned, it appears that local Republican leaders negotiated an end to this intraparty competition. In April 1820, at the close of the *Virginia Reformer's* first volume/year, they facilitated the sale of that paper and its subscriber list to McGlassin; journeyman Caldwell was then offered the opportunity to start a new *Herald of the Valley* in

the Botetourt County seat of Fincastle, who then issued its first number in July; with those assets in hand, McGlassin launched an advertising campaign in Republican papers nearby designed to expand his subscription list further. His language was notably introspective:

"The subscriber has chosen his residence here in consequence of its central situation to the seat of the national legislature, from whence the most early information will always be received. He will endeavor to continue his press with circumspection and usefulness — ever mindful of the medium between liberty and licentiousness — a mean subservience to men and a manly exposé of the measures they may deem applicable to institutions of this Republic, under the present state of governments."

Nonetheless, this merger was apparently a temporary, election-year-only solution for those party leaders who had encouraged the sale of the *Reformer*; McGlassin was still very much a controversial figure who clearly lacked a Virginia perspective; so they began searching for a replacement, preferably one who better understood the place and its agrarian public.

By September 1820, a permanent solution had been arranged. McGlassin had agreed to sell the *Republican* at year's end to Samuel H. Davis (126), formerly publisher of the *Columbian Telescope* in Alexandria. Davis had been an active figure in that town's printing trade since the end of the War of 1812; his literary journal and its accompanying job-press bridged the partisan divides there, with the Republican *Alexandria Herald* and the Federalist *Alexandria Gazette* both engaging his office as a sub-contractor now and then. The fact that he was known as an impartial tradesman can be seen in the mildly-Republican Davis being asked to serve as titular proprietor of the *Alexandria Gazette* for four months in late 1819, while its owner, Samuel Snowden (393), regrouped financially to avert bankruptcy; now Davis was being offered the chance to help revive the well-known *Winchester Republican* as well.

Davis evidently began looking for such an opportunity after closing his *Columbian Telescope* in mid-May 1820; the deal with his Winchester backers was in place by the time that he sold his Alexandria press in mid-September; shortly thereafter, he moved to Winchester to take control of the *Republican* in advance of the actual transfer of ownership on the last day of 1820. McGlassin did not immediately leave the area, settling on a farm in southern Berkeley County while petitioning for reinstatement as a field officer in the Army; while that appeal was rebuffed, he did obtain an appointment as the surveyor and inspector of revenue for the ports along the St. John River in the district of St. Augustine, as the Florida Territory was then known; he died of yellow fever in September 1822 while serving in that role, and so has faded into obscurity, unlike other heroic figures from the war with Great Britain.

Evolution

The first number of the *Republican* published by Davis alone issued on January 6, 1821. Its perspective remained one favoring the incumbent administration of James Monroe, and so of the so-called Democratic-Republican party. But as Foster had discovered previously, the absence of any compelling national or international news, combined with the continuing currency shortage, led his patrons to neglect their overdue accounts with him. However, Davis employed a sterner tone in his appeals for payments than his predecessor ever had; at the end of June 1821, he published the first of what were essentially ultimatums:

"Six months have elapsed since the present editor of the Republican came in possession of the establishment; and agreeable to the terms of the paper, payment for the year must now be made.—The editor will personally visit a good part of his subscribers in the course of a few days, and he sincerely hopes they will be prepared to pay their subscriptions. His receipts so far, amount to little more than half his expenses; and, and lest his summer collections are ample, he will certainly fall through.—If such is to be his fate—a fate so different from what he believes he deserves—there shall be some mortifying disclosures made in his subscription list."

His veiled warnings obviously had the desired effect, as Davis would continue to publish his weekly for another ten years.

That continuation is particularly noteworthy given the momentous changes in the political landscape that transformed American journalism during the 1820s. That transformation was set free in the summer of 1823 when William H. Crawford, the leading candidate to succeed Monroe as president, suffered a stroke. With Crawford's viability ruined, three alternative choices promptly emerged: Secretary of States John Quincy Adams; Speaker of the House of Representatives Henry Clay; and Tennessee Senator Andrew Jackson. While Jackson was a popular figure in consequence of his exploits during the War of 1812, many of the partisan journalists of that day were unconvinced of his suitability for the presidential office. Hence, there was no clear favorite being advanced by the newspapers long associated with either one of the established political parties of the early-Republic era. Davis made careful note of this uncertainty in March 1824 in detailing the preferences of the state's journals:

"We frequently hear of the state of parties in the different states and legislatures. ... Why not count presses as well as noses? Let us try. In Virginia there are 35 newspapers; of these, Mr. Crawford has 3, Mr. Clay 2, Mr. Adams 6, Gen. Jackson 1. The rest are equivocal, save one; the editor of which says his press is in favor of *Mr. Crawford*, but that he himself is in favor of *Mr. Adams*."

In Winchester, the long-lived Federalist *Gazette* was one of those few Virginia papers to commit early to an alternative to Crawford; the weekly had been sold out of the Heiskell family in the summer of 1823 to Thomas Jones, "a London gentleman" who had recently settled in Virginia; under his control, the sheet came to support the candidate who was the least popular in the area – John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts. Meanwhile, Davis and his *Republican* remained uncommitted for some time after his Crawford's stroke, apparently in hopes that he would recover sufficiently to make his candidacy viable once again; but when he did not, Davis put his *Winchester Republican* in the ranks of those papers supporting Clay, a native-born Virginian like Crawford.

Such difficult choices were faced by all of Virginia's partisan journalists in 1824, with the fraternity of Republican editors being torn by disagreements over which candidate best represented "the principles of '98" – meaning the ideals voiced by Jefferson and Madison in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions. Adams proved the odd man out in these decisions, with most editors choosing to support either Jackson, the populist, or Clay, the pragmatist. Those decisions set the stage for a new round of partisan rivalry between the populists (soon called the Democrats) and the pragmatists (later known as the Whigs), with each side

supporting journals that advocated their views.

Following the controversial election of Adams by a vote in the House of Representatives in February 1825, Davis supported the new administration; but that support came more from his reaction to the furious assaults on Adams by Jackson's supporters than from agreement with the policies of that administration. Those assaults helped Davis turn his formerly anti-authoritarian weekly into a decidedly anti-Jackson paper. However, for much of the 1820s, he still argued that his perspective was the one most consistent with the principles of the Revolutionary generation than were those being advanced by editors in Jackson's camp.

An apt example of Davis's approach can be seen in a brief commentary that he printed in January 1826 concerning an essay that William Branch Giles (1762-1830) had published in the *Richmond Enquirer* of Thomas Ritchie (360) after having been denied reelection to the U.S. Senate by the 1825-26 General Assembly. Ritchie's paper had emerged as an influential Jacksonian journal during the 1824 elections and so became a vocal critic of Adams and his policies thereafter; upon Giles's defeat, Ritchie gave the late senator an opportunity to vent his spleen against the president in his pages. Davis took exception to those comments and expounded on the inconsistencies he found in them:

"Mr. Giles, in the *Richmond Enquirer*, is pouring out his venom upon Mr. Adams. There are no terms too disrespectful for his pen or the columns of that paper. It is a matter of doubt whether this absurd course is more complimentary to the head or the heart of the writer. The sympathy of the virtuous is touched by the wreck of mind and the inconsistency of principle displayed in these 'preliminary remarks.' That Mr. G. has librated from the Republican orbit—has long since 'madly shot from his sphere'—the voice of the state has informed him in language not to be misunderstood. A place in the Senate of the United States, has been exchanged by the mandate of the people for [his] retirement [to] his 'Wigwam' [*i.e.* his Amelia County estate]. Who would suppose that the man who is now dipping his pen in poison, would have once spoken thus of Mr. Adams?"

Davis then addended the text of a speech Giles had made lauding Adams's character in the face of criticisms leveled against him by Massachusetts Federalists for his support of the Embargo Act of 1807.

Despite such reasoned and well-supported commentaries, Davis and his *Republican* were unable to stem the rising tide of Jacksonianism in the northern Valley. He was not helped by the fact that the weakened *Winchester Gazette* had been hijacked by local supporters of the Tennessee war-hero in 1826 and converted into a strident advocate for Jackson's election in 1828 under the title of the *Winchester Virginian*. But at the same time, Davis developed his weekly into an important vehicle for the emerging Whig Party in Virginia, one that had close ties to the *Richmond Whig* and *Lynchburg Virginian*, both founded by editor John Hampden Pleasants (330), a son of James Pleasants (1769-1836), the Virginia governor often seen as a founder of this new party in the state.

Still, Davis was capable offering an emotional response to political events, especially when his sense of justice and equanimity was offended. Such a response was engendered by the removal of several long-serving federal officials in Alexandria in October 1829 by the new

Jackson administration – an example of the "spoils system" of presidential patronage that was initiated with the Tennessean's inauguration. Davis knew these displaced individuals personally from his days in the port town, and so understood the devastating impact that their terminations had on their families; it was also unjust, he believed, to treat these aging veterans of the Revolutionary War, as they all were, with such cavalier disregard:

"Our readers will pardon our enthusiasm. We cannot look coldly on, and see men, whose characters we know to be pure as the snows of heaven—men whom we have been proud to esteem our friends—whose courtesies we have shared, and in whose families we have met the smile of welcome, while the social endearments of the domestic circle have presented to our eyes living pictures of earthly happiness;—we cannot look coldly on, and see these scenes of happiness converted into a desolate waste—gray-haired men plunged at once from competency to ruin—and their families reduced to beggary, and turned to drift on the cold charities of the world—without expressing our detestation of the act, and of the statesman who caused it."

Over time, however, the effort required to keep the *Winchester Republican* both relevant and afloat began to wear on Davis. It appears that by early 1831 he had decided to retire from the journalistic wars before he was inextricably drawn into the contest over Jackson's reelection in 1832. Davis employed the common ruse of "ill-health" to justify his retirement, though he would live another eighteen years and edit daily newspapers in both Wheeling and Peoria, Illinois, before his death. Samuel Snowden, his long-ago partner in Alexandria, reported on his retirement with apparent envy, noting that the editor could now "leave the cares of public life, with a competency earned from honest industry and perseverance."

Successions

Davis's retirement at end of July 1831 does not appear to have diminished the weight of the *Winchester Republican's* political influence. Indeed, Davis left behind a journal that was the epitome of Whig ideology, evincing continued fidelity to the nationalist ideals articulated by Henry Clay, even after the Kentuckian's death in 1852.

In leaving, Davis sold a controlling interest in his weekly to New York City journalist James Gordon Brooks (1801-41), although evidently retaining a minority interest in the paper until late 1834, when he began arranging to buy the *Wheeling Gazette*. Brooks was an interesting choice, representative of the rapidly shifting alignments of political loyalties in the Jackson era; he had partnered with James Watson Webb (1802-84) to buy the *Morning Courier* from its incapacitated founder John B. Skillman (1797-1831) in 1827; that New York City daily was a zealous supporter of Jackson during the 1828 election, but once the victor assumed the presidency, Webb and Brooks were infuriated with his anti-Northern attitudes and policies; thus their paper drifted into the ranks of opposition journals, like the *Republican*; indeed, it was Webb who first insisted that Jackson's opponents to call themselves "Whigs," thereby creating a conceptual link to the historic and patriotic adversaries of the Royalist Tories in the English Civil War and the American Revolution. By 1831, Brooks was also well-known as fashionable poet, whose prose writings brought vitality to the ponderous political discourse often seen in American newspapers. Consequently, this newly-minted Whig was, at once, a

marketable commodity, a reliable partisan, and an experienced editor.

But while Jackson's opponents were numerous, they were not organized into a functioning political party until 1834, and then there were still sectional and ideological divisions within that faction. As a result, the party fielded four candidates in the 1836 presidential election, in a vain hope of throwing the contest into the House of Representatives as in 1824; but that strategy led to an overwhelming electoral-vote majority for Vice President Martin Van Buren, even though he barely carried 50% of the popular vote.

Those divisions appear to have been the cause of Brooks' departure from the *Republican* in the summer before that election. The majority of Virginia's anti-Jackson newspapers were following the lead of the *Richmond Whig* in backing the candidacy of Hugh Lawson White (1773-1840), the Democratic Senator from Tennessee who had broken with Jackson over his violation of the "states' rights" during the Nullification Crisis; his running-mate was former Virginia governor and U.S. Senator John Tyler (1790-1862), who had broken with Jackson as well for the same reasons, and who had close political ties to the Pleasants family and their journals. However, Brooks' northern roots and anti-Masonic views evidently persuaded him to favor William Henry Harrison (1773-1841), the military hero of the War of 1812 who had served as governor of the Indiana Territory, as did many of his colleagues in New York. With Virginia's Whig leaders keeping Harrison's name off the state's ballot, Brooks now found himself in the perilous position of being asked to push for a candidate with whom he did not agree; hence those leaders sought an editorial assistant for Brooks, and found one in the office of the *Richmond Whig*. Charles J. D. Freeland (1809-40), a junior editorial writer in that office, originally from neighboring Manchester, arrived in Winchester in March 1836 to chart the *Republican's* course through that fall's elections. Brooks put as good a face on the addition as he could, saying that Freeland's services were required because "the fact of his northern birth had restrained him from taking an active part in Politics." But in being forced into this secondary role, while purportedly the weekly's sole proprietor, Brooks recognized that his future in Virginia was bleak, and so began seeking a new situation in the North.

In early August 1836, Brooks sold his interest in the *Republican* to William Towers (1808-82), a journeyman printer then employed in his office, and returned to New York; there he served as editor of *Albany Daily Advertiser* until his death in early 1841. Freeland evidently remained with the *Republican* until the 1836 elections were decided, returning to Richmond and the *Whig* during the ensuing winter; but his declining health soon induced him move to New Orleans, where his eldest brother, John (1802-72), conducted a profitable tobacco and cotton trading company; the editor died there in March 1840.

Towers is the most enigmatic of all the proprietors of the *Republican*, as only ten numbers of the paper survive from his nearly seven-year-long tenure. Therefore, almost nothing can be said about his management of the weekly or about his editorial assistants. It is clear, however, that Towers had a long and sometimes controversial career as a printer, although largely in Washington and not Winchester. He was a brother to John T. Thomas (1811-56), a job-printer in the national capital who had worked in the offices of Jacksonians Duff Green (1791-1875) and Thomas Allen (1813-82) when they served as printers to the U.S. Senate in the 1830s; during that service, he broke with the Democrats over Jackson's aggrandizement

of power, as did many future Whigs; it was a path brother William also followed, leading to his being posted to Winchester to assist Brooks in publishing the *Republican*, possibly as early as 1831 when Davis retired. It seems that this familial connection was the reason that Towers left Winchester at the end of 1842, as brother John was then organizing a new Whig daily in Washington (*The Whig Standard*) and the Winchester printer became part of that new project. He remained in Washington for the rest of his life, serving as chief clerk to the Superintendent of Public Printing – the first one being his brother John – after that office's establishment in 1852; while employed in this precursor to the modern-day Government Printing Office, Towers was suspected of disloyalty during the Civil War and of postal fraud during Reconstruction, though he was cleared in both instances; he died in his Washington home in November 1882.

Faced with Towers' plan to leave to Winchester, the network of Whig journalists in Virginia cast about for a suitable replacement. They found one in Robert H. Gallaher (1821-95), the eldest son of the celebrated Whig journalist and politician, John S. Gallaher (1777). The son had trained in the Charlestown office of his father's *Virginia Free Press* and was apparently working at the *Richmond Whig* – which his father edited from 1836 to 1840 – when he was called to Winchester. There, young Gallaher issued his initial number of the *Republican* on January 7, 1843, first Saturday of that year.

Still, the fate of the *Republican* and both Gallahers was linked to that of the *Richmond Whig* and its founder, John Hampden Pleasants, at this time. The unexpected ascension of John Tyler to the presidency in April 1841, brought pressure on Pleasants to move to Washington to publish a pro-administration paper; in doing so, he was compelled to yield control of the *Whig* to Alexander Moseley (1807-81); Moseley then employed young Gallaher, so allowing the senior Gallaher to return to Jefferson County to resume his political career, using his old *Free Press*, now conducted by other family members, to effect his election to the General Assembly through 1847. But the unpopularity of Pleasants's presidential patron ate into the *Whig's* financial foundation, despite its founder's absence from the journal. So in the spring of 1845, Moseley decided to sell the newspaper to others in order to settle its debts, just as Foster had done in 1819 with this Winchester paper. Seeing the sale as an opportunity for greater prominence, young Gallaher resolved to trade the *Republican* for the *Whig*; on July 1, 1845, he became that paper's lead proprietor, with Pleasants returning to the fold as his editor. That relationship was brief, as Pleasants was soon embroiled in the dispute with the sons of Thomas Ritchie, who now conducted his *Enquirer*, that resulted in his death in a duel in February 1846. Gallaher and Pleasants parted company before that unhappy event, with Richard H. Toler (1800-48), the editor and proprietor of the *Lynchburg Virginian*, assuming editorial responsibility for the *Whig*. Their alliance was even shorter, as Gallaher withdrew from the firm in June 1846 to start a new Whig paper in Richmond with a brother and two cousins – the *Richmond Republican*.

To realize the original trade, however, the junior Gallaher was obliged to sell the *Winchester Republican* not yet three years into his tenure. Nonetheless, his father saw this necessity as an opportunity as well; the Gallaher family already controlled two influential Whig journals in the state, and by acquiring the *Republican* from his son, that influence would expand by at least half again when his son bought the *Whig*. Moreover, that broad influence continued

through the 1848 election campaign, even as the son exchanged one Richmond paper for another. Yet in terms of the Winchester weekly, the elder Gallaher was a bit too effective in promoting the Whig candidate in that election. In October 1849, he was appointed to a post in the Treasury Department by the new president, Zachary Taylor; that posting meant that he would be obliged to move to Washington, as Pleasants had been, which compelled him to sell his *Republican*. Accordingly, Gallaher bid farewell to his many patrons in the issue of February 16, 1850, transferred control of the weekly to the firm of Senseney & Coffroth, and left Winchester for his new assignment.

In the end, the sale actually kept the *Winchester Republican* in the Gallaher family in the person of George E. Senseney (1827-69), the foreman of that press; he soon married Mary Helen Gallaher (1824-1903), a daughter of his former master, and a sister to the Richmond publisher. He had deep roots in the community, being a son of a prominent merchant there and descending from the earliest German settlers in the area. That continuity suggests that Senseney began his training in the *Republican* office under Towers and remained with the press through the tenures of the two Gallahers. His partner in this concern was Charles A. B. Coffroth (1812-84), a journeyman from Hagerstown, Maryland. The fifteen-year difference in the partners' ages suggests that Coffroth provided the means for Senseney to acquire his master's press and paper, while he emerged from the shadows of the *Maryland Herald* office conducted by his masters, John R. Sneary and Thomas E. Mittag. So too does the fact that Coffroth sold his interest in the *Republican* to Senseney at the end of 1855 in order to accept the job of Clerk for Winchester's Corporation Court, indicating that Senseney was the principal in their firm.

Endings

Senseney conducted the *Republican* for slightly more than ten years. That permanence is remarkable in that the Whigs collapsed as a national party after the 1852 elections – largely as a consequence of sectional divisions over the Compromise of 1850. Generally, Virginia's Whig journals supported that compromise as a necessary measure to assure that the Union would not be rendered by such differences; but that viewpoint was ever-less popular in the Commonwealth, particularly when the Northern states refused to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law that was a part of that accord. The *Republican* fell into that category, though the paper also epitomized the views of residents in the state's western counties, which were regularly at odds with those of the conservative Democrats who controlled the state's government, even after the electoral reforms contained in the 1851 state constitution – a realization, at last, of the aspirations of the 1816 Staunton Convention.

During the 1852 elections, Senseney's *Republican* concurred with the opinion of the other Gallaher family papers – the *Richmond Republican* and Charlestown's *Virginia Free Press* – in supporting the candidacy of Millard Fillmore, the "accidental" president who had agreed to Henry Clay's last compromise; consequently, they were all unenthusiastic about the ill-fated campaign of Gen. Winfield Scott, the nominee finally selected by that summer's contentious national convention. After Scott's defeat, however, it seems that Senseney followed his own counsel, focusing his editorial labors on state and local political affairs, with only passing references to national ones. Of particular import to him, and so of his backers as well, was

the refusal of the General Assembly to authorize new railroad lines in the Valley, preferring to pour more public funds into the long-delayed and still-incomplete canal linking the James River to the Kanawha rather than this newer and less-expensive technology; he editorialized frequently about the wastefulness of that policy and the negative effect that approach had on the economic development of the lower Valley. Indeed, in one commentary in 1859, he suggested that Winchester had become merely a suburb of Baltimore as a result of the lagging growth of the town:

"Instead of cultivating a feeling of mutual dependence and keeping up a proper reciprocity of trade and business, if a ninepence can be saved by purchasing in Baltimore, that purchase is made. No wonder, then, that the town is drained, and that balance of trade is against us."

It did not help that for the latter half of the 1850s, the region around Winchester suffered from a drought that reduced crop yields, and so the export trade that was long the basis of the town's commerce.

By focusing his *Republican* on vital local issues, Senseney was evidently able to stand aloof from the brief dalliance that many of Virginia's Whig journals entertained after 1852 with the nativist cause embodied by the new American Party, popularly known as the "Known Nothings" for the secrecy of their organizational activities. The zenith of that movement's sway in Virginia came in 1855 with a convention in Winchester to nominate candidates for state office; while the *Republican* reported on that event, neither Senseney or Coffroth are recorded as having participated in the meeting; and though they subsequently supported the candidacy of the convention's choice for governor, Henry A. Wise (1806-76), they did so out of a manifest distaste for the increasingly secessionist Democratic Party, represented locally by the *Winchester Virginian* of Edward C. Bruce (1825-1900). Still, Wise had defected from the Democratic ranks to gain that nomination, and so was of suspect loyalties; after his election, Wise pursued policies that Senseney found abhorrent (Coffroth having retired from their concern) and so offered his readers a mock prospectus for printing a collection of Wise's words and writings, in three volumes: one showing him as a Whig, a second showing him as a "Chrysalis," and a third showing him as the Democrat he had always been.

Still, the declining fortunes of Virginia's Whigs, combined with the financial distress then generally felt in the area, began to wear on the fiscal viability of the *Republican*. So in early 1859, the proprietor tendered an appeal to his patrons to pay their arrearages – the first seen in the paper since the 1830s – by presenting a simple lesson in mathematics:

"The present proprietor has been connected with [this paper] nine years, and finds on his books many names to which *not one cent* has been credited. Some persons owe one, two, three, and up to nine years. Let one of the latter forgetful *friends* accompany us in a calculation. Nine years' expenses of paper and printing may be set down *in cash* at one dollar each. Here is an actual outlay of *nine dollars*. Suppose one thousand *friends* should think that we needed no money for nine years; we then would have expended *nine thousand dollars*. How long would it take to break up any concern by such a process? We should need a gold placer in California to stand it."

His appeal obviously had some effect, as Senseney published the *Republican* for another

eighteen months. But in that time, he was faced with the eroding import of his weekly. The idea of secession was gaining currency in Virginia, with the state's Democratic journals at least validating the proposition, if not actually advocating for such a course, especially after John Brown's raid on the nearby Harper's Ferry Arsenal in October 1859. In reaction to the raid, South Carolina's legislature called for a convention of the Southern states to formulate demands that would protect their interests under threat of collective secession; when their envoy, C. G. Memminger (1803-88), arrived in Richmond in January 1860 to persuade the Assembly to join that project, Senseney made a point of instructing those legislators on the provisions of Article I, Section 10, of the federal constitution – that "*no state shall ... enter into any arrangement or compact with any other State, or with a foreign power*" – and suggested they "remember that they are sworn to support the Constitution of which this clause forms a part." That message apparently applied as well to concurrent negotiations with the French government concerning investment in (and completion of) the James River and Kanawha Canal, in exchange for exclusive trade privileges for Virginia merchants.

That anti-secessionist stance was also evinced in the *Republican's* support of the candidates nominated by the assembly of old Whigs in Baltimore in May 1860 under the banner of the Constitutional Union Party: John Bell and Edward Everett. However, Senseney was plainly distressed by the ensuing collapse of the bipartisan political process, when sectional parties nominated three sets of candidates to oppose Bell and Everett. That outcome offered the prospect of disunion in the wake of an ugly and bitter contest between such self-interested actors, and the editor did not want to contribute to that result. So after that summer's party conventions, he sold the *Republican* and retired from journalism.

The new proprietor was John D. Ridenour, Jr. (1839-81), a journeyman printer who was the son of a highly-regarded Hagerstown merchant, and who likely then worked in the office. In acquiring the *Republican*, he made Henry D. Beall (1837-1902), a lawyer and journalist from nearby Charlestown, the paper's new editor, with a minority interest in the weekly. They supported the Constitutional Union candidates that fall, as Senseney had. As a result, the pair helped deliver Frederick County to Bell and Everett, who received more than two-thirds of the votes cast, while the neighboring counties (and the state generally) were carried by the Southern Democratic candidates, John C. Breckenridge and Joseph Lane.

Of course, neither set of Southern contenders prevailed in that election; Abraham Lincoln of Illinois garnered a majority of the votes in the electoral college in consequence of the larger population of the Northern states; that result induced the secession of seven states in the deep South even before Lincoln was inaugurated in March 1861. The crusade for Virginia to join the movement amplified, particularly in the slave-heavy counties east of the Blue Ridge; but the Valley remained divided, as demonstrated by the differing opinions of Winchester's two weekly papers: the Unionist *Republican* and the Secessionist *Virginian*. Still, following the Harper's Ferry raid, physical assaults on supposed abolitionist sympathizers grew in the lower Valley. Ridenour apparently thought himself threatened by this violence, especially after an unruly public meeting in Winchester in January 1861 that had been organized to consider the calling of a secession convention in Virginia; so on February 1, 1861, Ridenour sold his controlling interest in the *Republican* to attorney Nathaniel B. Meade (1828-88) and returned to his subordinate role as its printer – indicating that he retained the press itself. If

later accounts are correct, Meade kept Beall as his editor, so giving the *Republican's* content a sense of continuity.

The *Republican's* new owner was a nephew of Rev. William Meade (1789-1862), the famed cleric who helped transform the old Anglican church into an American Episcopal one. The younger Meade evidently shared his uncle's beliefs that, while the states had rights under the federal constitution, secession was inherently unconstitutional; but he was also a realist who understood that the tide was turning against the Unionist outlook offered in his weekly by his predecessors. Once a secession convention was convened in Richmond that spring, Meade and Beall turned the reasoning of the secessionists back on those proponents of disunion, suggesting:

"...that should the ordinance of secession be adopted, then Virginia will have declared herself out of the old Federal Union, and will become a provisional member of the Southern Confederacy. — After the war is over, and the independence of the Southern States is fully recognized, it will be then for Virginia to determine whether she will unite her destiny permanently with the Southern Confederacy or not."

Such qualifiers disappeared, however, once "Lincoln's myrmidons" occupied Alexandria and other locales along the Potomac immediately after Virginia embraced secession that May.

The distinctions between Winchester's rival newspapers all but disappeared with that act, although the *Republican* appears to have been more circumspect about reporting details of the organization and movement of state militia units in the region than was the *Virginian*. Consequently, both journals became targets for invading Federal forces when they occupied the town in March 1862. The offices of both papers were seized by the occupiers, bringing the publication of each to an abrupt end, which left Winchester without a journal for the duration of the war.

Meade retired to his Clarke County farm until war's end, returning to his former pursuits for a time as proprietor of the *Winchester Sentinel*, before removing to Alexandria where he served as a justice of the Corporation Court until just before his death. Ridenour returned to Hagerstown after the loss of his press, and worked as a job-printer there until his death in 1881. Beall went on to a lengthy career as a journalist; after being displaced in Winchester, he was a correspondent for Richmond's papers while serving in the 12th Virginia Cavalry; after the war, Beall edited journals in Richmond and Chicago, before settling in Baltimore, where he was a part of the editorial staff of the legendary *Sun* for nearly thirty years.

Epilogue

As was the case with the seized press of the *Winchester Virginian*, that of the *Winchester Republican* was employed by printers in one of the Federal military units then occupying the town to publish a newspaper of their own. This publication was better known than the one issued from the *Virginian* press, largely because Southern papers promptly, and indignantly, reported the participation of a well-known abolitionist in its production.

The *Republican* press was appropriated by printers in the 10th Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment; that unit's chaplain was Rev. Charles Wheeler Denison (1809-81), and was noted

as "editor" of the "Winchester Republican—New Series," which issued its only number on May 23, 1862, two days before that unit withdrew from Winchester. Denison was notorious in the South at that time, though largely forgotten today. He was a Baptist minister from Connecticut who was the first editor of *The Emancipator* in New York City (1833), as well as a founder of the militant American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society – which saw women as slaves as well – with the Tappan brothers in 1840, co-editor of the feminist *Olive Branch* in Boston (1845-56), and a marriage relation to the despised Grimké sisters, the exiled South Carolinians who fled slave society in their youth and denounced it thereafter. As a result, many Southern editors reprinted parts of that one issue with condescending commentaries obligingly appended.

An 1880 article in the *Portland Daily Press* paints a different picture of this journal, noting that two printers from that Maine town were the project's real instigators, and not Denison, who had only a passing acquaintance with the Pine Tree state:

"The sheet was edited by W.W. Knight and A.D. Newbold, and bears the date of May 23, 1862. When the regiment went into camp at Winchester, they found a paper edited in the interest of the rebels. The publication of this was stopped, but with the material Knight and Newbold, two Portland printers, aided by other members of the regiment, began the issue of the Republican."

As that Maine unit was assigned to guard the rear of the withdrawal of Federal forces that began two days later, it is most likely that Ridenour's press was then destroyed, rather than carried away, as many other such seized presses were during the war.

Sources: LCCN nos. 85-025315, 84-024627, 86-071897, & 86-071898; Brigham II: 1164-65; Cappon 1707; Morton, *Winchester*; Russell, *Winchester*; Cartmell, *Shenandoah Valley Pioneers*; Aler, *History of Martinsburg*; name authority file, Handley Memorial Library, Winchester; Wust, "Matthias Bartgis"; Scharf, *Western Maryland*; Thomas, *History of Printing*; Kerr, *History of Government Printing Office*; notices in [Washington] *National Intelligencer* (1819-66), [Leesburg] *Genius of Liberty* (1820-22), *Alexandria Gazette* (1820-75), *Alexandria Herald* (1820-22), *Baltimore Patriot* (1821-26), *Richmond Enquirer* (1820-50), *New York Spectator* (1831), *Richmond Whig* (1831-73), [Hagerstown] *Torch Light* (1837-62), *Baltimore Gazette* (1837), *Boston Weekly Magazine* (1841), *Baltimore Sun* (1850-1902), *New York Times* (1854-95), *New London Chronicle* (1862), *Newark Daily Advertiser* (1866), and *Portland Daily Press* (1880), as well as the *Republican Constellation* (1813-19) and *Winchester Republican* (1819-42); dates for post-1820 individuals derived from grave markers, when possible, as recorded at *findagrave.com*.