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Maryland Newspapers during Ratification

From September 1787 through July 1788, four newspapers were published in Maryland at one time or another. Two newspapers, the *Maryland Gazette* and the *Maryland Journal*, were printed in Baltimore. The third newspaper, the *Maryland Chronicle*, was printed in Frederick. The last newspaper, also titled the *Maryland Gazette*, was based in Annapolis—the state capital and meeting place of both the state legislature and Maryland Convention. The Baltimore newspapers were published semiweekly on Tuesday and Friday, while the Annapolis and Frederick newspapers appeared weekly, the Annapolis paper on Thursday and the Frederick paper on Wednesday. The Baltimore and the Annapolis newspapers have almost complete runs from September 1787 through July 1788. The Frederick newspaper has nearly a complete run for September through December 1787 and almost no extant issues for 1788.

The numerous arguments in Maryland's ratification debate were well covered in the two Baltimore newspapers—the *Maryland Gazette* and the *Maryland Journal*. The Federalist and Antifederalist positions were well represented in both newspapers. These two newspapers printed many major original pieces and both, especially the *Journal*, reprinted major pieces from the newspapers of other states. The Annapolis *Maryland Gazette* was not a major participant in the debate, while not enough issues of the *Maryland Chronicle* exist to determine its status in the debate. In analyzing advertisements in the *Maryland Journal* and the Annapolis *Maryland Gazette* for 1773, historian Clarence P. Gould concluded that “the Annapolis newspaper circulated only along the tidewater” while the Baltimore paper circulated “chiefly in the western country.” “A Republican,” *Maryland Journal*, 6 May 1788, had reached the same conclusion. He asserted that the Annapolis paper “has a very confined circulation” while the two Baltimore papers did not circulate on the Eastern Shore. “A Republican” also believed that, although the Baltimore newspapers circulated “through the different counties of the Western Shore,” they “are read by, comparatively, few of the common class of the people.”

Given the proximity of Philadelphia to Maryland, many of that city's newspapers (and broadsides and pamphlets) circulated in Maryland. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* was probably the most popular Philadelphia newspaper in Maryland. In November 1787, William Tilghman, a prominent merchant and politician, remarked that the Philadelphia newspapers had “a much more extensive circulation” in Chestertown than the local newspaper ever had. Between the numerous original and reprinted items that appeared in the Maryland newspapers and those that appeared in the Philadelphia newspapers circulating in Maryland, Marylanders were thoroughly informed in the ratification debate.

The oldest Maryland newspaper was the Annapolis *Maryland Gazette*. Established in 1745 by Jonas Green, the *Gazette* remained in the Green family for three generations. When Jonas

died in 1767, his wife Anne Catherine ran the newspaper until 1775 when she died. Her son Frederick took over the paper. He was joined by his brother Samuel in 1779. From the Stamp Act crisis in 1765 through the American Revolution, the *Gazette*, deeply involved in the revolutionary struggle, was known for its fierce anti-British fervor. Frederick Green (1750–1811) and his brother Samuel (1757–1811) also served as postmaster from time to time, while Frederick was clerk of the Maryland Senate during the Revolution and state printer from 1775 until his death.

Despite the Annapolis *Maryland Gazette*'s location and its history, it was not an important factor in the debate over the ratification of the Constitution from September 1787 through July 1788, by which time eleven states had ratified the Constitution. The *Gazette* printed only two significant original essays and reprinted only three major pieces or articles from newspapers outside Maryland in the debate. It did print a listing of Maryland Convention delegates, a few brief reports of the Convention's proceedings, the address of the Antifederalist Convention minority, and two brief comments on the address. It rarely reported on the ratification debate in other states, although it faithfully reprinted rumors and reports of events in other states, especially the actual ratifications of the Constitution by state conventions. The *Gazette* was especially thorough reporting on the proceedings of the New York Convention which ratified the Constitution on 26 July 1788, making New York the eleventh one to ratify.

The Maryland Gazette; or, the Baltimore Advertiser was established on 16 May 1783 by John Hayes. On 27 February 1787 it became a semiweekly and remained so until 6 January 1792. The *Maryland Gazette* thrived in Baltimore despite stiff competition from the *Maryland Journal*, run by the Goddards (see below). The rivalry was generally a friendly one except when, in the mid-1780s, Hayes broke Goddard's monopoly over the almanac business.

Hayes printed or reprinted a mix of Federalist and Antifederalist material. Prior to 28 December 1787 Hayes printed no original Antifederalist pieces but reprinted several important items from out-of-state newspapers. On the 28th Hayes printed the first installment of Luther Martin's voluminous and vigorous Antifederalist essays entitled *Genuine Information*. The series concluded when the twelfth installment appeared on 8 February 1788. A week later the Baltimore *Maryland Gazette* started its publication of the rabidly Antifederalist essays by "A Farmer" (possibly written by John Francis Mercer). When the series ended on 25 April, the *Gazette* had printed seven numbers of "A Farmer" in fourteen parts. The amount of space that Hayes devoted to these two series crowded out most other original Antifederalist essays (if any were submitted for publication) and all Antifederalist material that could have been reprinted from out-of-state newspapers.

The Federalist items that appeared in the Baltimore *Maryland Gazette* were slightly skewed toward out-of-state material. The original Federalist items tended to be shorter pieces, with several series of two or three essays and the rest single items by individual authors. The out-of-state material was dominated by the reprinting of the four "An American Citizen" and nine "Fabius" essays. All of the reprinted Federalist essays were quality pieces.

The *Maryland Gazette* printed pieces addressed to the voters in Anne Arundel and Baltimore counties and Baltimore Town in the run-up to the election of state Convention delegates in April 1788, the amendments presented by William Paca in the Convention, the Address of the Antifederalist minority in the Convention, an account of the Federal Procession in Baltimore celebrating

Maryland's ratification, and several essays on the Constitution and Maryland's ratification in the summer of 1788.

The impartiality of the Baltimore *Maryland Gazette* was questioned by some Marylanders and Hayes often defended his paper's impartiality. On 11 January 1788, the day the fifth installment of *Genuine Information* appeared in the *Gazette* Hayes firmly, and publicly, stated his editorial policy:

When subjects of the greatest magnitude are before the public, the strictest impartiality becomes the duty of every printer in conducting his press.—To preserve that most invaluable privilege, its liberty, it becomes necessary to admit the pieces of writers on both sides of a question, when they are intended to inform the public mind, and not to be the vehicle of personal reflections and slander—Impressed with these sentiments, the Editor of the *Maryland Gazette*, &c. would always wish to oblige his friends and correspondence—as much of his paper as can possibly be spared, will always be at their service, and he will endeavour to insert their pieces correctly and in the best manner—While it is thus his endeavour to please, he flatters himself that every candid and enlightened mind, will pardon any involuntary error, and kindly afford him encouragement and support in this his arduous business.—Original compositions will at all times be particularly acceptable.

On 15 February, when Hayes started publishing the Antifederalist essays by “A Farmer,” he expressed “his gratitude to his literary friends, for the numerous instances of their patronage—The many original pieces which he constantly receives from every part of the State, sufficiently evinces their approbation of his conduct, in the publication of his paper, which he has now the happiness to find extensively established. He must assure them of his determined resolution to support the dignity and liberty of the press, by an impartial admission of pieces, on both sides of those great political questions, that are intimately connected with the public welfare.”

On 27 June Hayes elaborated upon his publication policy of the past and outlined his policy in the future with respect to personally offensive articles. He stated that:

From a desire to protect the reputation or good name of our fellow-citizens, we have frequently taken the liberty when any pieces have been too acrimonious and personal, to obliterate or soften the exceptionable passages, and in so doing, have sometimes gained the approbation of the writers themselves: for men, in the ardor of contention, are apt to be unguarded, and to use expressions which in their cooler moments they would disapprove.—The insertion of pieces, relative to private characters, are of all others the most disagreeable to a publisher, and being generally uninteresting to the public, it becomes necessary to require a pecuniary emolument for such performances.—The Editor, therefore, wishing to preserve and promote the harmony of the community, and also to give a check to the progress of defamation, gives notice, that all pieces of a private personal nature, must be paid for previous to their admission, and the name of the writer left with him.

On 4 July Hayes published his most definitive policy statement:

“Good name, in man or woman is the immediate jewel of the soul.” Convinced of the propriety of this sentiment, the Editor has been extremely desirous to preserve the

peace of the community, and impartially to protect, to the utmost of his power, as a printer, the reputation of individuals.—This has been the ruling principle of his conduct, and he is greatly chagrined to find his endeavours to stop the progress of defamation, and to blunt the edge of public calumny, has been misconstrued.—The ideas of men, respecting the liberty of the press, and the conducting of the printing business, are various, and the line between liberty and licentiousness, is not always clearly discriminated—But every printer must consider himself as a servant of that community, with whom he resides, and whose reputation and honor must be endeared to him from motives of gratitude and friendship.—The Editor of this paper must now most pointedly declare, that if gentlemen are determined openly and without disguise, to attack the reputation of each other, and, not content with the strictures on professional merit, which alone can interest the public, will disclose the infirmities of private life—*they must hereafter* sign their names to their performances, and pay for them previous to insertion; for the Editor cannot deem it worth his while to make entries in his books of such disagreeable business.

In his very next issue, Hayes refused to print “Celius” who had not followed the above procedure.

The Maryland Journal, and Baltimore Advertiser was established in 1773 by William Goddard (1740–1817), a native of Connecticut, who had worked as a printer or who had owned newspapers in Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York City, and Philadelphia. Soon after establishing the *Journal*, Goddard left for Philadelphia where he established a new postal service to get around the Crown’s postal service. Before departing for Philadelphia, Goddard left his sister, Mary Katherine Goddard, in charge of the *Journal*. William Goddard helped to establish the U.S. Post Office but was given only a low-level position in it. He failed to get a commission in the Continental Army. Consequently, he returned to Baltimore but his sister’s name remained on the masthead until January 1784. During that time her brother exerted much influence, but remained in the background. William Goddard was involved in several disputes with the government and the public over material that the *Journal* printed. In these disputes, he successfully defended the liberty of the press against the influence and interference of government and the pressure of public opinion. His defense of his publications, caused some to charge that he was loyal to the Crown. Throughout his life, Goddard exhibited a violent temper. He had numerous quarrels with his partners and the public, but according to his contemporary Isaiah Thomas, a prominent and prolific newspaper owner and the historian of early American newspapers, “Few could conduct a newspaper better than Goddard.” Such conduct probably led “T” to assert in the *Maryland Journal* of 11 January 1788 that the *Journal* was a “useful and agreeable Paper [that] seems to circulate in as a great extent as any Paper on this Continent.”

From September to December 1787, the *Maryland Journal* reprinted several major Antifederalist items from out-of-state newspapers but no significant original Antifederalist pieces. On the Federalist side, Goddard printed several original pieces and reprinted a few out-of-state items. In the first four months of 1788, the *Maryland Journal* continued to publish original and reprinted Federalist items. This prompted a Baltimore gentleman to declare that: “Mr. Goddard, hitherto against the new constitution, is now by the force of the arguments published in his own paper, become highly and truly federal.” This observation, however, overstated the balance of Federalist

and Antifederalist items in Goddard's paper. He printed six items by Luther Martin and reprinted several major Antifederalist pieces from New York and Pennsylvania newspapers.

The *Maryland Journal* printed pieces addressed to the voters in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Talbot counties and Baltimore Town in the run-up to the election of state Convention delegates in April 1788, the amendments presented by William Paca in the Convention, the Address of the Antifederalist minority in the Convention, an account of the Federal Procession in Baltimore celebrating Maryland's ratification, an account of the celebration in Dorchester, and several essays on the Constitution and Maryland's ratification in the summer of 1788.

By the end of February 1788, Goddard began to complain of a problem that printers had encountered before the American Revolution—the prohibition of newspapers going through the mail. On 29 February Goddard reminded his readers that the prohibition had been tried before the Revolution and “was very severely reprobated and resented throughout the Continent.” The prohibition was intended “to endanger Public Liberty.” Massachusetts printers complained that they had not received the *Maryland Journal* since the beginning of 1788. On 11 March Goddard's communications from the North had not “been *permitted* to come in the last Northern Mail, though, we are assured, they contain much Information interesting to the Public.” On 18 March Goddard printed an article by “Manco” extolling the liberty of the press as the “*best* vehicles of intelligence and information, respecting public affairs” and “the shackling of the Press” was “the first symptom of a design on the liberties of America.” “Tom Peep,” which appeared in the *Maryland Journal* on 21 March, criticized “Manco” for his “inflammatory insinuations.”

In 1777 Matthias Bartgis (1750–1825), a native of Lancaster, Pa., and a descendant of German immigrants, established presses in Lancaster and Frederick, Maryland. On 4 January 1786 he began printing a weekly newspaper in Frederick, called *The Maryland Chronicle, or the Universal Advertiser*. At about the same time, he also established a German-language newspaper in Frederick that lasted for about a year. In 1787 he branched out further and established weekly newspapers in Winchester, Virginia, and York, Pennsylvania. The last known issue of the *Maryland Chronicle* was 28 May 1788. No issues of the York paper have been found later than that of 7 March 1788, while the Winchester paper was in operation until 1791.

All but two issues of the *Maryland Chronicle* exist for 1787 after 17 September, the day the Constitutional Convention adopted the Constitution. For 1788, only the issues of 21 and 28 May are extant. On 26 September and 3 October 1787, Bartgis printed the report of the Constitutional Convention that included the Constitution. In October and November Bartgis reprinted, mostly from Philadelphia newspapers, considerable news about the Constitution in other states, particularly Pennsylvania and Virginia. He reprinted from a Boston paper only two major articles, namely “Social Compact,” *New Haven Gazette*, 4 October, and Elbridge Gerry's objections to the Constitution included in a letter to the Massachusetts legislature.

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