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csac.history.wisc.edu > Document Collections > Popular Culture and Ratification >
American Newspapers during Ratification > South Carolina

South Carolina Newspapers during Ratification

Four newspapers, all in Charleston, were published in South Carolina between September 1787 and June 1788. The *Charleston Morning Post*, which was renamed the *City Gazette* on 6 November 1787, was the only daily paper in the state. The *Columbian Herald* and the *State Gazette of South Carolina* were published twice weekly, and the *South Carolina Weekly Chronicle* was published weekly.

Antifederalist Aedanus Burke claimed that South Carolina newspapers did not print Antifederalist material. “The printers are, in general, British journeymen, or poor Citizens who are afraid to offend the great men, or Merchants, who could work their ruin. Thus, with us, the press is in the hands of a junto, and the Printers, with most servile insolence discouraged Opposition, and pushed forward publications in its [i.e., the Constitution’s] favour; for no one wrote against it.” Burke’s analysis regarding the publication of original material appears to be largely correct, although Charleston’s press reprinted nationally circulated Antifederalist pieces.

The City Gazette, and the *Daily Advertiser* provided the most extensive local coverage of the ratification debate, not surprisingly, because as a daily it had the most space to fill. The paper, published by Robert Haswell and John McIver, was a continuation of *The Charleston Morning Post*, and *Daily Advertiser*, which had been published in Charleston under that name since 18 January 1786. On 1 January 1788, John Markland replaced Haswell as publisher of the paper, although Haswell (d. 1791) remained active with the *Gazette*, publishing notes of House debates on the Constitution in the paper and later as a pamphlet through the *Gazette*’s office. McIver (1764–1801) was the son of a planter in what is now Darlington County and had been in the newspaper business since 1785. Markland (d. 1837), along with his partner Thomas B. Bowen, established the Charleston *Columbian Herald* in November 1784. He retired in November 1786. Markland had served as an officer in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War and was an original member of the South Carolina Society of the Cincinnati. Markland and McIver intended to report in great detail on political matters. On 29 December 1787, the two announced that they would publish “the proceedings in both houses of the legislature, debates on every interesting question, all laws ratified, of a public nature; the yeas and nays on material questions; and should a convention be appointed, the deliberations at large, if permitted.”

Few issues of the *Morning Post/City Gazette* survive from the period between the adjournment of the Constitutional Convention on 17 September 1787 and November. Only the 17 October issue of the *Morning Post* has been found (which contains a report of the calling of a ratifying convention in Pennsylvania) and less than half of the issues of the *Morning Post/City Gazette* remain for November. Starting in December 1787 through 1788, most numbers of the *City Gazette* are available.

The *City Gazette* published essays by Federalist “Caroliniensis” and Antifederalist “Philo-Centinel.” The paper’s editors refused to print Antifederalist “Cato” (later published in the *State Gazette of South Carolina*) because the author would not identify himself, noting “*the printers still continue of opinion, that they have no right to lay before the public insinuations against characters, without knowing from what source they originate. To act otherwise, would render the liberty of the press licentiousness.*” The paper specialized in coverage of the state legislature and the ratifying convention. As noted above and below, speeches in the House debates on the Constitution in January 1788 and in the state Convention in May were printed in the *City Gazette*. The *Gazette* also reprinted speeches from the Massachusetts and Connecticut ratifying conventions. Peter Fayssoux, an Antifederalist leader in the state Convention, believed that the *City Gazette* reported one of his speeches in the Convention in “a very partial and false manner.” The editors of the *Gazette* replied that they thought the “*epithets ungenerous and undeserved.*”

The *City Gazette* reprinted nationally circulated Federalist essays, such as Tench Coxe’s “An American Citizen”; Benjamin Rush’s speech to the Pennsylvania ratifying Convention; “Foederal Constitution’s” reply to Pennsylvania Antifederalists; Francis Hopkinson’s “A.B.”; “Old Man”; and “A Yankee.” It also reprinted several Antifederalist items, such as the first two numbers of “Centinel”; Richard Henry Lee’s letter to Gov. Edmund Randolph; and Gov. George Clinton’s speech to the New York legislature.

Ann Timothy (c. 1727–1792) published *The State Gazette of South-Carolina* on Mondays and Thursdays. Members of the Timothy family had published the paper, with starts and stops, under variations of the name since 1734. Ann and her husband Peter were exiled to Philadelphia during the British occupation of Charleston. Ann returned to Charleston after her husband’s death and on 16 July 1783 resumed publication of the *The Gazette of the State of South-Carolina*. The paper changed its name to the *The State Gazette of South-Carolina* on 28 March 1785. Ann Timothy served as the state’s printer from 1785 until her death. Most of the issues during the debate over the Constitution have survived.

More so than the other Charleston papers, the *State Gazette* opened its pages to both Antifederalist and Federalist writings. The paper published the local Federalist “Mæcenas” and “A Steady and Open Republican” (Christopher Gadsden?) as well as Antifederalist “Cato,” which the *City Gazette* refused to print. It also reprinted a mixture of nationally circulated items both favoring and criticizing the Constitution. Federalist reprinted items included the first number of “Curtius”; Oliver Ellsworth’s “Landholder” X; John Dickinson’s “Fabius” I; “One of the People”; and “A Yankee.” Important Antifederalist pieces reprinted in the *State Gazette* included George Mason’s objections; Richard Henry Lee’s letter to Gov. Edmund Randolph; the Dissent of the Pennsylvania Minority; and eight installments of Luther Martin’s “Genuine Information.”

Thomas B. Bowen, James Vandle, and S. Andrews published *The Columbian Herald, or the Independent Courier of North-America* on Mondays and Thursdays. On 3 January 1788, Andrews dropped out of the partnership. Bowen (1742–1804), a native of Ireland who had served in the Pennsylvania Continental Line during the Revolutionary War, had established the paper in 1784 with John Markland (who later published the *City Gazette*) and, like Markland, was an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati. Most issues of the *Herald* during the debate over the ratification of the Constitution have survived. The *Herald* reprinted more nationally circulated Federalist items than the other Charleston papers and was David Ramsay’s preferred place of

publication, printing Ramsay's "Civis" as well as his undelivered speech from the South Carolina celebration of ratification. The *Herald* reprinted nationally circulated Federalist items such as two of James Wilson's speeches; Tench Coxe's "An American to Richard Henry Lee"; "Philanthropos"; two spurious Centinels; Francis Hopkinson's "The New Roof"; "An Old Man"; "New England"; Hugh Williamson's speech in Edenton, N.C.; and "The Fabrick of Freedom." It also reprinted items from the Massachusetts ratifying Convention. Antifederalist items reprinted by the *Herald* included George Mason's objections; a letter from Richard Henry Lee to Gov. Edmund Randolph; Gov. George Clinton's speech to the New York legislature; and the report of Robert Yates and John Lansing, Jr., New York's Antifederalist Delegates to the Constitutional Convention.

John Markland, who until November 1786 had been a publisher of the *Columbian Herald*, established *The South Carolina Weekly Chronicle* in May 1787. Only the issue of 9 October survives. The paper, which published its weekly edition on Tuesdays, likely halted publication sometime in late 1787, when Markland became a publisher of the *City Gazette*.

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