

New York Journal

The *New York Journal* was published on Thursdays by Thomas Greenleaf (1755–1798) in New York City. Greenleaf, a native of Abington, Mass., had been trained by Isaiah Thomas. In September 1785 Greenleaf became the manager of the *New York Journal* under the direction of Eleazer Oswald of the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*. Greenleaf purchased the *Journal* in January 1787.

During the meeting of the Constitutional Convention, Greenleaf published material advocating a strengthened central government, but in early September 1787 he began printing Antifederalist items. The *Journal* became so biased, in the eyes of Federalists, that Greenleaf felt obliged to defend his publication policy on 4 October.

By 18 October the *Journal* was so inundated with Antifederalist material that Greenleaf was forced to publish an extra issue. In the next four issues, Greenleaf apologized that the “want of room” prevented him from printing certain essays. Another two-page extra appeared on 1 November. Finally, he announced on 15 November that the *Journal* would become a daily because of “the solicitations of a respectable number of his present subscribers—and by means of the generous patronage of a few valued friends and the public....” He declared that in this time of “crisis” people needed to be well informed about the new Constitution. By publishing only once a week, Greenleaf claimed that he had “unavoidably neglected” half of the original essays he had received. Although four other New York City newspapers published a total of sixteen separate issues a week, Greenleaf intimated that a “free and impartial discussion” of the Constitution depended upon the daily publication of the *Journal*.

The first issue of the daily *Journal* appeared on 19 November as *The New-York Journal, and Daily Patriotic Register*, but it did not entirely supplant the regular weekly issue. Greenleaf announced that his Thursday issue would continue with the title *The New-York Journal, and Weekly Register*, and that it would contain “the choicest pieces, and the fewest advertisements.” The Thursday issue, then, “had a more general Circulation in the Country, than that of any other day in the Week” (Charles Tillinghast to Hugh Hughes, 27–28 January 1788, Hughes Papers, DLC). To insure the widest possible circulation, Greenleaf offered subscribers either Thursday’s newspaper alone at two dollars annually or the expanded daily, including Thursday’s issue, at six dollars annually.

As an Antifederalist newspaper, the *New York Journal* was second only to the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*. The *Journal* was the first to print several important serialized essays, such as “Cato” (7 nos.), “Brutus” (16 nos.), “Cincinnatus” (6 nos.), “A Countryman” (Hugh Hughes, 6 nos.), and “A Countryman” (DeWitt Clinton, 5 nos.). The *Journal* also reprinted large amounts of

Antifederalist material, especially from the *Independent Gazetteer*, e.g., seventeen of the eighteen essays of “Centinel,” seven of the eight numbers of “An Old Whig,” and all twelve installments of Luther Martin’s “Genuine Information.”

Such a policy brought Greenleaf under severe Federalist attack. One Federalist questioned his independence, declaring that he was an “Echo” of Eleazer Oswald. He also described Greenleaf as “brainless,” “a poor thick-sculled Creature,” while another Federalist referred to his talent for “misrepresentation.” Others simply cancelled their subscriptions. Finally, on the night of 26 July 1788, a mob broke into Greenleaf’s shop and destroyed much of his type. Because of these losses, the last daily issue of *the Journal* appeared on 26 July. Publication resumed five days later as a weekly.

Cite as: *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution Digital Edition*, ed. John P. Kaminski, Gaspare J. Saladino, Richard Leffler, Charles H. Schoenleber and Margaret A. Hogan. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009.

Canonic URL: <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/RNCN-03-13-01-0011-0002> [accessed 17 Mar 2011]

Original source: Commentaries on the Constitution, Volume XIII: Commentaries on the Constitution, No. 1