

Pennsylvania Newspapers during Ratification

The most important sources for the history of the debate over the Constitution in Pennsylvania are the fifteen newspapers and two magazines that were published in the state at one time or another between September 1787 and June 1788. Ten of the newspapers and the two magazines were published in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia newspapers appeared daily, semiweekly, triweekly, and weekly.

The Philadelphia dailies were Eleazer Oswald's *The Independent Gazetteer; or, the Chronicle of Freedom* and John Dunlap and David C. Claypoole's *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser*. The *Packet*, a Federalist newspaper, contained little original material about the Constitution. Oswald printed both Federalist and Antifederalist pieces in the *Gazetteer* until mid-November. Thereafter the paper was strongly Antifederalist. It contained more original items than any other Philadelphia newspaper, many of which were reprinted throughout the United States.

The Philadelphia triweeklies were Daniel Humphreys' *The Pennsylvania Mercury and Universal Advertiser*, which had been a weekly before 1 January 1788, and Andrew Brown's *The Federal Gazette, and the Philadelphia Evening Post*, which was published only in March and April 1788. Both were Federalist newspapers. William Spotswood's *The Pennsylvania Herald, and General Advertiser* was a triweekly between 11 September and 6 October 1787, but a semiweekly thereafter. The *Herald* was edited by Alexander J. Dallas, whose published reports of the debates in the Convention led to Federalist attacks upon him and his dismissal as editor in January 1788. Spotswood retired after the issue of 5 February, and the *Herald* ceased publication shortly afterwards.

The Philadelphia semiweeklies were Thomas Bradford's *The Pennsylvania Journal and the Weekly Advertiser*, and Robert Smith and James Prange's *The Evening Chronicle*. Both were Federalist newspapers, judging from the material they reprinted from other newspapers. The *Chronicle's* last-known issue is that of 7 November 1787.

The Philadelphia weeklies were David and William Hall and William Sellers' *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Francis Bailey's *The Freeman's Journal: or, the North-American Intelligencer*, and Melchior Steiner's *Gemeinnützige Philadelphiaische Correspondenz*. The *Gazette* was Philadelphia's leading Federalist newspaper, and news and propaganda pieces were reprinted throughout America. The *Philadelphiaische Correspondenz* was also Federalist. Bailey's *Journal* was an Antifederalist paper which contained almost no Federalist pieces.

Philadelphia's two magazines were Mathew Carey's *The American Museum, Or Repository Of Ancient And Modern Fugitive Pieces, Prose And Poetical* and Thomas Seddon, William Spotswood, Charles Cist, and James Trenchard's *The Columbian Magazine*,

Or Monthly Miscellany Containing a View of ... History, Literature, Manners & Characters... Both magazines were monthlies which usually appeared between the 7th and 10th of the month following the month given as the date of publication. The *American Museum* was Federalist, with a national subscription list that included many prominent Americans, and it reprinted many of the most important Federalist pieces published in Philadelphia, as well as a few original items. *The Columbian Magazine* contained little about politics.

Four weeklies and one biweekly were published outside Philadelphia. The four weeklies were: John Scull and John Boyd's *The Pittsburgh Gazette*; George Kline and George Reynolds' *The Carlisle Gazette*, and the *Western Repository of Knowledge*; Matthias Bartgis and Thomas Roberts' *Pennsylvania Chronicle or the York Weekly Advertiser*; and Anton Stiemer, Johann Albrecht, and Jacob Lahn's *Neue Unpartheyische Lancaster Zeitung, und Anzeigs-Nachrichten*. The biweekly (published once every two weeks) was Michael Billmeyer's *Die Germantauer Zeitung*. The Carlisle and Pittsburgh gazettes were Federalist newspapers published in Federalist towns located in predominately Antifederalist counties. Not enough issues of the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, which began publication on 24 October 1787, exist to determine its political affiliations. The German-language newspapers were Federalist.

The Constitution was printed in eleven of the state's extant newspapers and in both magazines. In addition to newspaper coverage, the Constitution was also printed in broadsides, pamphlets, and almanacs; and, on 24–25 September, the Assembly authorized the printing of the Constitution in English and in German at state expense.

Pennsylvania printers, particularly those in Philadelphia, also printed pamphlets and broadsides on the need to strengthen the central government and on the merits or defects of the Constitution. Between 17 October 1787 and 27 April 1788, six Philadelphia printers and one in Carlisle published seven pamphlets which were original treatises on the Constitution. Two Philadelphia publishers printed pamphlets of material originating outside Pennsylvania, such as George Washington's letter of June 1783 to the state executives and Luther Martin's "Genuine Information." Philadelphia printers also printed as broadsides such items as "Centinel," "An American Citizen," and "An Old Whig," which had previously appeared in Pennsylvania newspapers.

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