

## Virginia Newspapers during Ratification

Ten weekly newspapers were published in Virginia between September 1787 and July 1788. Nine of the ten appeared during this entire period. A complete file does not exist for any of the ten newspapers, although nearly complete runs are available for the *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, the *Virginia Gazette*, and *Winchester Advertiser*, and the *Kentucky Gazette* (actually *Kentucke Gazette*). The file for the *Virginia Gazette*, and *Weekly Advertiser* of Richmond is relatively complete, too. The least complete files are for the *Virginia Gazette and Independent Chronicle* of Richmond and the *Virginia Gazette, and Petersburg Intelligencer*, which have only five and seven extant issues, respectively. Because so many issues are missing for a number of the newspapers, it is difficult to determine if they were Federalist, Antifederalist, or impartial. Nevertheless, the majority of the extant newspaper items are Federalist. At least six newspapers printed the Constitution.

Three newspapers were printed in the James River town of Richmond, the state capital. Augustine Davis owned the *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, and he probably published more original substantial essays than any other newspaper printer in the state, as well as important items from outside the state. Davis printed both Federalist and Antifederalist material, with the former exceeding the latter. The *Virginia Gazette, and Weekly Advertiser*, owned by Thomas Nicolson, printed very few substantial original essays, or major items from outside the state. Nicolson's politics are uncertain, although he published a broadside version of George Mason's objections to the Constitution and he reprinted the complete pamphlet version of Governor Edmund Randolph's letter to the Speaker of the House of Delegates, explaining why he had refused to sign the Constitution. The third Richmond newspaper, the *Virginia Gazette and Independent Chronicle*, owned by John Dixon, reprinted several numbers of *The Federalist*. In the nearby town of Petersburg, Miles Hunter and William Prentis printed the *Virginia Gazette, and Petersburg Intelligencer*. The *Gazette* was the first Virginia newspaper to print Richard Henry Lee's letter of 16 October 1787 to Governor Randolph, expressing his opposition to the Constitution and enclosing his amendments to it. The *Norfolk and Portsmouth Journal*, printed in Norfolk at the mouth of the James River, was owned by a Federalist printer from New York City, John M'Lean. M'Lean, who published *The Federalist* in his New York *Independent Journal* and in a two-volume edition, was the first Virginia printer to reprint *The Federalist*.

Two Federalist-oriented newspapers were published in northern Virginia: the *Virginia Journal, and Alexandria Advertiser*, owned by George Richards and Company, and the *Virginia Herald, and Fredericksburg Advertiser*, printed by Timothy Green and Company. Fewer than twenty issues exist for each newspaper.

The Shenandoah Valley town of Winchester had two newspapers—Matthias Bartgis and Company's *Virginia Gazette, and*

*Winchester Advertiser* and Richard Bowen and Company's *Virginia Centinel; or, the Winchester Mercury*. The *Gazette* printed both Federalist and Antifederalist material, while the *Centinel* was a Federalist newspaper established in April 1788 to counteract the *Gazette*. The files of both newspapers are almost complete.

The last Virginia newspaper, the *Kentucky Gazette* of Lexington, was owned by John and Fielding Bradford until 7 June 1788, when the latter retired from the paper. The *Gazette* published only a few items on the Constitution. It was a strong supporter of statehood for Kentucky.

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-02-08-01-0011> [accessed 17 Mar 2011]

Original source: Ratification by the States, Volume VIII: Virginia, No. 1