

Thomas Jefferson and the Origins of Newspaper Competition in Pre-Revolutionary Virginia

For 200 years, historians have written that Thomas Jefferson and his fellow patriots brought a second printer into the colony of Virginia so that their radical messages could be heard. By examining newspapers and other evidence from the critical period around the Stamp Act of 1765-66, this article uncovers flaws in that interpretation and attempts a better understanding of what happened and how that influenced the development of a free press. Jefferson was not directly involved in procuring a printer, but new print competition did bring substantial changes to the relationship among the printer, the government, and readers. Broader civic discourse spurred by commercial competition helped to develop new revolutionary ideals, including the concept of a constitutional protection for a free press, which ultimately was expressed in the First Amendment.

Thomas Jefferson has long been credited with bringing a printer to Virginia in 1765, introducing print competition to a colony that until then had only one printing press, which was controlled by the royal government. "Until the beginning of our revolutionary dispute, we had but one press," he said, "and that having the whole business of the government, and no competitor for public favor, nothing disagreeable to the governor could be got into it. We procured [William] Rind to come from Maryland to publish a free paper."¹

Thus, just as Parliament's hated Stamp Act threatened the printers' very livelihood, a new printer was encouraged to open a second shop in Williamsburg, bringing competition to that field and a second newspaper to Virginia for the first time. This was an important watershed for the culture and the government of the colony because it signified a shift in the power structure: control of

public messages began to relocate from the royal government to the consumer marketplace. This was a transformation that had a major impact on civic discourse in the colony. Despite such significance, the reasons behind such a change and the relevance of it have often been misunderstood. It has widely been accepted that Jefferson was responsible for bringing such print competition to Virginia and direct "patriot" influence was behind a freer and more open press. This Jefferson connection has been repeated continually by historians as has early print historian Isaiah Thomas' contention that Jefferson confirmed this in a letter written to him. This article shows that both these assertions are apparently erroneous and attempts to reach a better understanding of why these claims were originally made, how they were constantly repeated, and the larger significance of the motivations behind and relevance of such a change.

Print competition came later to Virginia than it did to the northern and mid-Atlantic colonies. In Virginia, this altered the relationships among printers, the government, and the readers. This study finds that as the role of print expanded and evolved, it had substantial long-term influence on civic discourse, culture, and the radicalization of politics. Each of the two printers responded to market pressure and the realities of new competition, both becoming less an official mouthpiece and more a voice of dissent, which enabled the transition from a deferential society to one that openly questioned the government. As the importance of an open-



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and critical press became more evident to residents, the practice of civic discourse became visible in the public prints. This research will discuss these changes and how they influenced the press in the important colony of Virginia on the verge of the Revolution.

Thomas was intimately involved in the world of print and printers in the early revolutionary period in America and has left later historians with important details as well as misconceptions. He was the first writer to seriously look at the history of printing in the United States, and he also was an early printer and the founder of the American Antiquarian Society. In 1810, he published *The History of Printing in America*, which contained considerable research plus his intimate knowledge of the early days of printing in the colonies and the republic. As Susan Macall Allen noted in her 1996 dissertation on the Stamp Act and colonial printers, Thomas' eyewitness account provided invaluable details regarding American printing, and, "Its accuracy has been trusted by scholars, and it is often cited as the authoritative source." She also wrote his work "has occasional errors of fact that subsequent scholars have pointed out."² His chapters on Virginia and Maryland were much shorter than his entry on Massachusetts, which was not only where he lived and worked but was where printing in British America originated. He observed, "As there was but one newspaper published in Virginia in 1765; and but one press in the province, which was judged to have an undue bias from the officers of government, a number of gentlemen who were desirous of having a free and uninfluenced *Gazette*" encouraged a second printer, William Rind, to come to Williamsburg. He added that a letter to him from Jefferson confirmed this because he said he was involved in procuring Rind.³ Other historians have repeated these claims endlessly.

Arthur Schlesinger, the elder, noted in 1957 that the Stamp Act was a burden largely for those who were most capable of stirring up resistance because they were the most vocal and influential members of society—clergy, lawyers, merchants, and printers. Every newspaper had to carry a minimum of a halfpenny duty with a two-shilling tax for each advertisement. Worse still, the Stamp Act required importing expensive paper instead of using locally produced material. Thus, newspapers were changed by this new tax, he suggested, from merely transmitters of information to opinion makers. He quoted from David Ramsay's 1789 book, *The History of the American Revolution*, which said printers, who generally favored liberty but were more interested in profits, universally opposed the tax: "A stamp duty, which openly invaded the first, and threatened a great diminution of the last, provoked their united zealous opposition." While Schlesinger repeated Thomas' claims, he also suggested the new, second printer in Virginia was not influenced by the governor, and in the years ahead, both newspapers supported the patriot cause.⁴

In 1975, historian Stephen Botein concluded printers were more businessmen, or "Meer' Mechanics," than revolutionaries, and he wrote the Stamp Act profoundly changed their business. Printers' normal, cautious tendencies to stay out of controversies

were overridden by their financial interest. The standard viewpoint had been that a free press meant presenting both sides while staying out of extreme disputes that might have alienated any customer. This new tax not only threatened their livelihood but political writing became a hot seller. Most printers, he suggested, abandoned neutrality and chose sides, the majority opting for the patriots' position.⁵

With printing limited to one government-sanctioned press, there could be no real press freedom. As book historian Hugh Amory noted in 2000, printing was reflective of the power structure of the colony within which it existed. In Puritan New England, about which he was writing, printing was initially licensed and sanctioned, serving rather than challenging the power structure. It was the same when the press first came to Virginia. By the 1760s, the pressures of trade and merchandising altered the function of a press from merely a duplicator of official governmental and religious works to one of commercial output. With a second press and consumer pressure, the character of printing and the idea of a "free press" was transformed because a wider range of content freed print to function as a medium for the "diffusion of useful knowledge."⁶ T.H. Breen theorized in 2004 that a rising marketplace and a consumer revolution was an important preface to political change, and newspapers, as part of this increased consumption, helped expand civic discourse.⁷ As historian Jack Greene wrote in his 1963 exploration of the shifting of power in the southern colonies, government support for a printer was crucial in such colonies as Virginia before a strong, commercial economy developed. He sug-

gested the royal governor had a great deal of control over what was printed prior to 1766, and he repeated the claim that Jefferson was involved in changing that situation.⁸

More focused on Virginia and its printers, Laurie Godfrey wrote in 1998 that the two Virginia newspapers had an "authoritarian" stance throughout this period, not shifting to a more "libertarian" revolutionary ideology until three to six months before the Revolution. She concluded this ideological shift in the press happened later in Virginia than in the middle and northern colonies, suggesting this was because of the colony's extremely close trade and ideological ties to England and a social structure in which the plantation gentry were considered the natural rulers. Her analysis utilized Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm's *Four Theories of the Press* and downplayed some obvious shifts in the presses' viewpoints in the 1760s. However, she did get correct many of the important details that had eluded more prominent historians, and she observed that the character of the press in Virginia changed after the mid-eighteenth century.⁹

From the beginning, the government in colonial Virginia tightly controlled the press, and there was no real freedom of expression. From Governor William Berkeley's warning to his superiors, the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations in London, about a troublesome press in 1671, to Governor Thomas Culpeper's expulsion of a printing press for being unlicensed in

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1682, to the eventual welcoming by the royal government of a press in 1730, government income and control were the key influences.¹⁰ Thus, the press in colonial Virginia began as a royally sanctioned and controlled institution, which was paid for and licensed by the government in power. As both Amory and Richard D. Brown noted, knowledge was power, and in the early colonial period, information was in the hands of governmental and ecclesiastic authorities. Not until a second printer existed, and commercial competition began, could there be a free press.¹¹

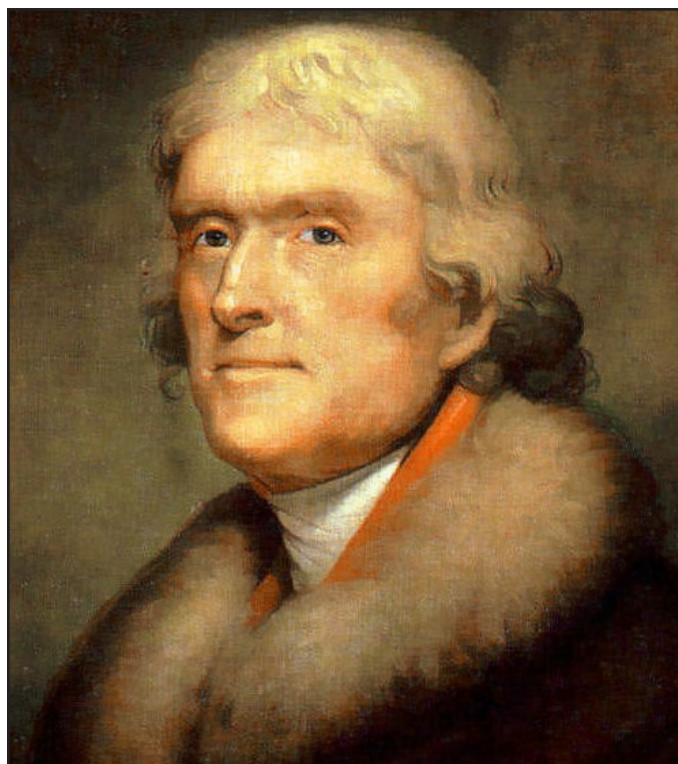
The first printer, William Parks, began his newspaper publishing with an overt recognition of the limits of press freedom and announced a need to defer to those in power. The first issue of the *Virginia Gazette* in 1736 had an explanation of this in the “Printer’s Introduction;”

By the Liberty of the Press, we are not to understand any licentious Freedom, to revile our Governors and Magistrates; to traduce the establish’d Laws and Religion of our Country; or any Attempts to weaken and subvert by opprobrious Writings that sacred Respect and Veneration which ought always to be maintain’d for Authority, and Persons in Authority¹²

Such deference was necessary for a printer in early Virginia. Without any large urban community or a strong commercial economy, all of the southern colonial printers before 1766 counted on a government salary as part of their support, but it was not always clear who in the government controlled the printer. The House of Burgesses in Virginia voted on the printer’s salary, but it also had to be approved by the royal governor and his council. Greene suggested that despite the lower house’s control of money, the governor was generally able to exert the most censorship, at least until the 1760s. However, former Governor Alexander Spotswood wrote printer Parks in 1736, complaining that it was the burgesses who maintained a tight control over the content of printed matter. He prefaced what eventually made it into print: “If his Worship will permit you to Publish in your News Paper, this answer.” This was a reference to John Randolph, speaker of the House of Burgesses and treasurer for the colony, with whom Spotswood was having an open dispute over the spending of public money dating back to his administration. As Greene observed, the assembly struggled against the royal governor’s authority, and control of the press was an important part of that power structure.¹³

This control over the content of the newspaper by the governor again became apparent in 1754, when a Virginia resident turned to the newspaper in the neighboring colony of Maryland to complain, “the Press in this Colony [Virginia], either through particular Inclination, or some other cogent Bias, in the Proprietor of it [William Hunter, Parks’ successor], is, in many instances, shut against us.” The Virginia governor had accused the burgesses of neglecting the safety of the colony by not taking any action against French aggression. To counter that accusation publicly, the burgesses had to turn to the *Maryland Gazette* in Annapolis.¹⁴ In contrast, the few issues of the *Virginia Gazette* of that period still extant show only mutual respect and deference between the burgesses and the governor.¹⁵ The Williamsburg press appears to have been largely under the control of the governor at this point.¹⁶ As Botein suggested, the colonial printer could little afford to offend powerful individuals or groups with what he printed and often avoided controversy altogether.¹⁷

Few issues of the newspaper published by Hunter’s successor, Joseph Royle, still exist, but those that do were mostly filled with literary essays, news from Europe, and debates over social practices.



Thomas Jefferson

For example, a recently recovered rare issue from 1764 began with a letter declaring that oaths were sworn all too often without considering the responsibility of making such a promise. Two essays took a large portion of column space; one describing a conversation between a master and his dog while the other was a farmer’s dream that led him to gold. Both appear to have been an attempt to instill strong moral values in readers. Several short items talked about new crops being raised in South Carolina, clashes with the Indians and the French in other colonies, and scientific advances to measure longitude. Finally, future president George Washington ran an advertisement in an attempt to find the owner of two runaway horses discovered on his plantation.¹⁸ Little in this or other extant issues demonstrated a willingness by the printer to tackle controversial issues.

Accusations of control by the burgesses, rather than the governor, again surfaced in one dispute. The controversy over pay for the official Church of England ministers in the mid-1750s brought accusations of censorship by the Virginia printer. Reverend John Camm was forced to turn to the Maryland press to print a pamphlet in answer to comments by two burgesses that had been printed in Virginia. Apparently, printer Royle was afraid of offending burgesses who were satirized in Camm’s response:

[I]f it should Displease, would be taken as ill by this Assembly, as if pointed directly at them; I am far from saying it would give them Offence, nay, I think otherwise; however as there is a Possibility in the Case, it will be most prudent in me not to risk forfeiting their Good-will upon such an Issue, as I cannot but own myself a Dependent upon the House of Burgesses, and the Public in general. I therefore return you your Pamphlet.¹⁹

Royle appeared to be more timid than overtly controlled. While Camm argued that he should be able to use the press to tell his side of a story that had already been printed, he recognized

the printer's editorial right: "I acknowledge as much Prudence as you please, in the Rule by which your Press is Conducted."²⁰ This view of the press demonstrated a theory of the press that it was not so overtly controlled by the government but instead the private printer had some discretion, which he needed to exercise with care. Offending either the governor or the burgesses could threaten his government-printing contract, an important part of a printer's income, which had to be approved by all branches of the colonial government.

In 1998, David Rawson suggested that for a brief time, the *Virginia Gazette* opened its pages to increased local controversy, eventually leading to a reassertion of control by the governor just prior to the Stamp Act. Printer Hunter was ill and spent considerable time out of the colony between 1756 and 1759, apparently leaving his assistant, John Stretch, in charge of his print shop, the newspaper, and the post office.

According to a local resident who wrote Hunter upon his return, the newspaper had a slightly more lively, local debate in that interim period, only to become more boring after Hunter's return. "Tim Pastime" sent a thirty-six page letter to the printer, addressing him as "Demipostmaster, Printer and Linnen Draper" (the latter appears to be a bit of Cockney rhyming slang, perhaps insulting the newspaper business, as in "linen draper/newspaper"). The pseudonymous author suggested that because Stretch, "that Flower of Beauty, and Cream of all Proportion, has left this Colony . . . your Publications are but sometimes little entertaining and, at every other Time extremely dull" (from the context, the seemingly positive description of Stretch was sarcasm). While presumably not printed in its entirety in the *Gazette*, the letter recommended hanging it on a peg in the printing office where visitors could read it, suggesting that had been done before with other letters. This offers an interesting image of the printing office as a busy center of discourse and information beyond what printed material and post office business would offer. Local residents stopped by, read letters not yet printed, and discussed the latest news. According to Rawson, Stretch was in charge of the newspaper for more than three years, and it offered more lively political debate under his stewardship. He suggested this resulted in gubernatorial pressure on Hunter and forced the reassertion of gubernatorial control over the newspaper. This is largely conjectural because there are few extant copies of the *Virginia Gazette* from this time period to confirm the content biases suggested by this single letter.²¹

It was such control by the royal governors, however, that constantly frustrated more radical Virginians and eventually led to action. In October 1765, the *Maryland Gazette* printed a letter written anonymously to the Virginia printer but never published in his paper. It accused Williamsburg printer Royle of deceiving readers and yielding to royal pressures. The Annapolis newspaper published the letter with an added note by the author saying Virginia did not have a free press "as the only one we have here, is totally engrossed for the vile Purpose of ministerial Craft: I must . . . apply to you . . . [b]old and honest Asserter of the Cause of Liberty."²² This insinuated not just gubernatorial control of the Williamsburg newspaper but implicit bias in favor of corrupt ministers in England. The more radical political element in Virginia turned increasingly to the Maryland press for distribution of its ideas, and this partly fulfilled its goals since the Maryland paper had a substantial number of readers in northern Virginia.²³ In a 1766 *Virginia Gazette*, a "Man of Principle" wrote that while Royle was the only Virginia printer, between 1761 and 1765 the press "was not renowned

for its freedom," and he alleged the governor was allowed to read the newspaper before it was circulated and actually censored it:

If a Counselor or a Burgess was only squinted at in any thing sent to the press before this period, it was wither too low or too-----but if a Governour was----- O Horrible!—Has it not been said that Mr. Royle owned a private license, and that a paper was constantly carried to a certain house in Palace street [the Governor's palace] to be inspected before it could be seen by the publick?²⁴

The author of this piece claimed Royle acted as though he was dependent upon a license to print, and the governor was checking everything before it could be published. This view was of a press tightly controlled by the royal governor and described a press that was not suited to the needs of political allies (later referred to as the "patriots") attempting to oppose official British colonial taxation policies. Such a tightly controlled government press was a challenge to the evolving concept of civic discourse and a free press. Writers were constantly forced to turn to presses elsewhere to print anything critical of the British government or the local governor, and readers also had to look elsewhere for broader discourse. Such censorship of the local press also, of course, could have been the result of several other reasons: the printer might have been more timid than others, his personal loyalties may have been closer to the British ministry, and it was always easier to print matter critical of one government in another jurisdiction, where the local government was not the focus.²⁵ Whatever the reasons, local patriots found the printer too conservative to allow them to express their dissenting opinions.

While it was often inferred that Royal Governor Francis Fauquier kept tight control over the output of the press, he was popular. A young Jefferson, often a guest at the governor's dinner table, later referred to him as "the ablest man who ever filled the chair of government in Williamsburg."²⁶ Fauquier followed an unpopular governor, Robert Dinwiddie, and was quick to form partnerships with leaders in the House of Burgesses.²⁷ In contrast to his predecessor, he had strong alliances with local leaders, including powerful House Speaker and Colony Treasurer John Robinson. The colonists appreciated that Fauquier sometimes did not obey instructions from his superiors in London and considered him amiable, just, and "moderate in Power."²⁸ It is clear from the correspondence of Fauquier to his supervisors at the Board of Trade that he closely monitored what was printed in the newspapers, often including copies of the *Virginia Gazette* and occasionally the *Maryland Gazette* in his letters to London. In a 1766 letter, Fauquier noted the Stamp Act forced the shutting down of the Virginia newspaper, and new print competition was on the way:

From the first of November we have been without any newspaper till very lately. The late printer to the Colony is dead, and as the press was then thought to be too complaisant to me, some of the hot Burgesses invited a printer from Maryland, upon which the foreman to the late printer, who is also a Candidate for the place, has taken up the News paper again in order to make Interest with the Burgesses.²⁹

The governor also noted that a second, competitive newspaper was about to begin and would be in addition to the original *Virginia Gazette*, which was being published by Alexander Purdie, the foreman for the late Royle. He suggested that it was the work of some of the more radical burgesses, who were unhappy with the old press because it was too willing to please the royal authority in the colony. As colonial opposition to British taxation policies

gained ground, Virginia readers who were not content with the local printer hoped that a new, competitive newspaper would allow for a more critical civic discourse.

Historians have generally agreed who was involved in this somewhat rebellious move to bring in an opposition printer. Thomas claimed that Jefferson wrote him: "Until the beginning of our revolutionary dispute, we had but one press, and that having the whole business of the government, and no competitor for public favor, nothing disagreeable to the governor could be got into it. We procured Rind to come from Maryland to publish a free paper."³⁰ This claim of Jefferson's involvement has been repeated in many books, including those by Schlesinger, Philip Davidson, Sidney Kobre, Greene, and an anthology edited by Bernard Bailyn.³¹ Numerous other works also have included the assertion that the former president wrote about this specifically in a letter to Thomas.³²

In her dissertation, Godfrey said it was extremely unlikely that Jefferson was that deeply involved. She noted that at the age of twenty-two, he was likely to be merely a bystander in procuring a printer, and the widely repeated claim actually came from a letter that he wrote to someone else. She did not speculate about why he included himself by using the term "we" and why Thomas might have claimed Jefferson wrote that in a letter to him, nor did she recognize the significance of print competition on the ideological bent of the newspapers. Because it was a minor point not central to her larger work, the argument was not completely researched and developed, and few have noticed her point.³³ A deeper examination of the evidence confirms her doubts of the claim that Jefferson was directly involved and that he wrote directly to Thomas about it. This raises questions about memory and historical research, and it also helps explain the origins of print competition in the colony. When the provenance of the Jefferson claim was cited, it was either directly from Thomas' influential *History of Printing in America* or a secondary or tertiary source that took it from there. Thomas wrote "a number of gentlemen who were desirous of having a free and uninfluenced Gazette, gave an invitation to Rind," and he footnoted it: "This fact is corroborated by the following extract of a letter to the author from Thomas Jefferson, late president of the United States, dated July, 1809."³⁴

What Godfrey and other researchers failed to note is that only in the second edition of his book did Thomas claim Jefferson wrote directly to him. The first edition merely noted Jefferson wrote this in a letter, and the recipient was unidentified: "This fact is corroborated by the following extract of a letter from Thomas Jefferson, esq. late president of the United States, dated July 1809."³⁵ Later editions of *History of Printing in America* claim Jefferson wrote the letter specifically to Thomas, but the letter does not exist in either Thomas' extensive papers nor in Jefferson's papers, despite the fact that the former president kept copies of virtually all of his correspondence in this period.³⁶ Jefferson did write those words about the press being overly influenced by the governor and the procurement of Rind, with only minor discrepancies of capitalization and abbreviation, to William W. Hening the year before Thomas' book

was first published.³⁷ It is also known that Hening wrote to Thomas about another matter within a year of Jefferson's letter.³⁸ In a copy of the first edition of *History of Printing in America* that Thomas notated for a revised second edition, he wrote "to the author," indicating the former president's letter was to him, and that is how it ended up in the subsequent edition of the book.³⁹ It seems probable that either Thomas stretched the truth to make the point that a former president of the United States corresponded with him, or that time and old age had distorted his memory (he was at least sixty-one years old and possibly as old as eighty-three, when he made that notation). What is remarkable is that this claim, reasonably easy to double-check, has been passed on by other historians for more than 100 years.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the suggestion that Jefferson was a key player in the recruitment of the new printer does not stand up. As Godfrey noted, Jefferson was only twenty-two years old and not yet a member of the House of Burgesses.⁴¹ Before Rind would have left his lucrative partnership in Annapolis, it would have been necessary to offer him either cash or a promise of becoming the official printer of the colony, which would guarantee him an income.⁴² According to Jefferson's autobiographical draft, he was a mere law student and not yet a practicing lawyer in 1765.⁴³ However, he apparently later had some type of relationship with Rind's

competitor, printer Purdie. While he was writing the Declaration of Independence at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1776, a friend wrote to him that Purdie promised to pack up Jefferson's books to be shipped to him.⁴⁴ Thus, it appears that when Jefferson wrote "we procured Rind," he simply meant to include himself among his political associates in Williamsburg, who were later identified as patriots, including some who were senior to him and in a better position to do the actual procuring.

It is reasonable to conclude that some of the "hot burgesses" to whom the governor referred, and very possibly the Lee family specifically, had a greater involvement than Jefferson in recruiting a new printer. When Rind moved to Williamsburg, he lived in and worked out of a brick house on Duke of Gloucester Street that belonged to Philip Ludwell III, the uncle of the Lee brothers: Thomas Ludwell, Richard Henry, Francis Lightfoot, William, and Arthur. Richard Henry Lee and Arthur Lee contributed many essays to Rind's newspapers, and in 1770, William Lee inherited "The Mansion" in which Rind lived. Edmund Randolph, who was a young contemporary in 1766, described a new group of burgesses at the time of the Stamp Act, who likely were the governor's "hot burgesses." He suggested that the new "upper counties," farther from the old power base of the James River, were supplying burgesses who no longer displayed the traditional "fortune, rank, and perhaps fashion," and he mentioned specifically Patrick Henry, John Fleming, and George Johnston. Later Randolph lauded the oratory and patriotism of Richard Henry Lee, whom Godfrey included in the group.⁴⁵ These men supported Henry's resolves against the Stamp Act and later became leading Virginia supporters of the American Revolution.

The eventual selection of Rind as the official "Public Printer" of the Virginia colony was a disputed one. In November 1766,

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four printers, or groups of printers, petitioned the burgesses for the appointment. Purdie and John Dixon were the successors to the former public printer, the deceased Royle, and were a likely leading candidate. However, their combined petition received only ten votes in the House of Burgesses, while Robert Miller had seventeen votes, William Stark got nineteen votes, and Rind had a majority with fifty-three votes. The governor and his council later agreed, despite the fact that the Royle/Purdie and Dixon press had a history of subservience, and Rind was paid £375 a year for his official printing.⁴⁶ It is clear that someone with a great deal of influence in the government—which Jefferson did not yet have—lobbied hard to get Rind this appointment.

Rind's arrival and election as official printer meant there was now competition for local printing in Virginia, and that had an immense impact on the printed material available in the colony. Two printing houses now operated in Williamsburg.⁴⁷ Rind immediately undercut his rivals' newspaper sales price, from 15 shillings for a yearly subscription to 12 shillings, 6 pence. The new paper was originally called, *Rind's Virginia Gazette*, but soon the printer removed his name from the title, leaving the colony with two newspapers with the exact same name.⁴⁸ The first issue of Rind's paper boldly stated his intent to run "a well conducted NEWS-PAPER," which he noted was essential just then, "especially at a Crisis, which makes a quick Circulation of Intelligence peculiarly interesting to all the AMERICAN COLONIES." The only extant copy of this issue has an interesting editorial insertion penned in, apparently by the original owner, noting this was the first well conducted newspaper to be printed in the colony: "and the first that has ever been Established in this Province." While the writer is unknown, the comment demonstrates the hope of Virginia residents of 1766 to have a better-run newspaper that would be freer to publish criticism of the government. Rind claimed his newspaper would be, "Open to all parties, but influenced by none."⁴⁹

The original *Virginia Gazette* was quick to join the competitive fray, matching the new competitor's moves and gaining for itself a reputation as a "free press." Now published by Purdie, who was soon joined by Dixon, they quickly matched the lower price and announced a new, open press policy before Rind's newspaper even came out: "[M]y press shall be as free as any Gentleman can wish or desire; that is, as free as any publick press upon the continent."⁵⁰ A few months later, two writers arguing opposing sides of an issue agreed on one thing: the press run by Purdie and Dixon was now well run. Such freedom of the press "is [a] matter of rejoicing," and "You, Sir, have behaved yourself as the director of a press ought to do." However, these writers' praise was for both presses.⁵¹ A notice in Purdie's paper acknowledged that only with real competition, only with at least two newspapers, could a free flow of information be sustained. With the loss of the government subsidy, Purdie was in danger of being forced out of business, and he pleaded with the "friends of liberty" to help keep his newspaper and print shop in business: "[W]e have reason to believe it the almost universal desire that there should be two presses maintained, for the security of freedom to one or both."⁵² They requested their readers to continue their subscriptions with the original *Virginia Gazette*. It was believed that only with two presses, only with competition, could the press be free.

For a short period of time, Rind included a claim that his was the official newspaper, demonstrating that this was a confusing transition period for the press. The masthead of his version of the *Virginia Gazette*, beginning early in 1767, included the claim, "Published by Authority," which was just months after his appoint-

ment as the "Public Printer."⁵³ This phrase had often been used in English papers since the days of licensing to indicate an official government imprint, and it was on the masthead of the first regularly published British-American newspaper, John Campbell's *Boston News-Letter* in 1704, but it had never before been used in Virginia.⁵⁴

In a letter published in the other *Virginia Gazette*, "A Man of Principle" wrote questioning the "authority" claim: "Several of your readers are very solicitous to know what authority you have for publishing a paper now, more than formerly. Some, I suppose of the most intelligent, allege that because you have had the good fortune (for certainly you cannot ascribe it to anything else) to be chosen Publick Printer, that gives you an exclusive privilege." The author pointed out that anyone who wished could publish a newspaper and call it the *Virginia Gazette*.⁵⁵ This demonstrated the confusion of the period as printers shifted from functioning as official government printers to public businesses. While Rind still had a lucrative government contract, the profit center had shifted to where satisfying the public was one key to financial success, and by July, he had dropped from his masthead the claim that he published by authority.⁵⁶ Thus, the newspaper in Virginia had moved from a quasi-governmental source to one where public opinion and marketplace competition was paramount.

The Stamp Act controversy offered a contrast between the earlier restricted press with the competitive press exercising greater freedom. When the British tax enraged the colonists, Royle failed to print the *Stamp Act Resolves*, which was passed just down the street by the Virginia House of Burgesses although other newspapers across the colonies published this heated reaction to Parliament.⁵⁷ Instead, his paper called on the assembly to help enforce the tax and warned of "the consequences if you should suffer a confirmed disobedience of this act of Parliament to take place."⁵⁸ This was quite different from reports published in the neighboring colony of Maryland and also in sharp contrast to what was printed in both versions of the *Virginia Gazette* in the next year.⁵⁹ The original *Virginia Gazette*, now published by Purdie, contained an item that referred to the Stamp Act as a flagrant violation of the British constitution and called the idea of virtual representation in Parliament a "despicable subterfuge."⁶⁰ Competitor Rind's newspaper ran two letters from the radical *Boston Gazette*, "Letters from a Farmer" and "The Monitor's Letters," which was a Virginia-based attack on the Stamp Act. The latter admonished Britain for attempting to enslave the American colonists, suggesting "that though we are a weak people, yet the principles of liberty fully infused into us, will render it impossible to enslave us."⁶¹

The content in the pages of the two gazettes reflected a substantial change. With considerable coverage of the Stamp Act crisis and later taxation issues, neither newspaper displayed the former tendency to buckle under royal pressure. The two *Gazettes* ran more articles critical of the colonial government, Parliament, and the British ministry, including stories that would not have been printed a few years earlier. Each paper also covered the scandal following the May 1766 death of the powerful Virginia treasurer and speaker of the House of Burgesses, John Robinson, who it was discovered had illegally loaned 100,000 pounds of public money. One planter complained that "very large Sums of the Public Money have been misapplied" and recommended that in the future, the offices of treasurer and house speaker be held by separate individuals. He noted that his participation in this civic debate "would not have been in my Power without the Benefit of a Free Press."⁶²

A related incident displayed the new power to criticize the elites in the public prints. Both newspapers published letters questioning the actions of several of the colony's chief justices following the public killing of Robert Routledge by Colonel John Chiswell in June 1766. According to a detailed newspaper description, an angered but sober Chiswell stabbed his unarmed and drunk friend through the heart with his sword.⁶³ Both *Gazettes* eventually ran articles not just about the slaying but about the subsequent actions of the accused killer, including the fact that three of the highest judges in Virginia had released him from jail. An anonymous letter noted the original court refused to release the accused murderer on bail and remarked that Chiswell was a well-connected member of the colony's elite (in fact, probably one of those to whom Robinson had lent public money). This article questioned the legality of the judges' release of the accused: "[B]efore he was delivered to the keeper of the publick prison, the Judges of the General Court, out of sessions, took him [Chiswell] from the sheriff who conveyed him from Cumberland, and admitted him to bail, without seeing the record of his examination in the county or examining any of the witnesses against him."⁶⁴ Another letter writer, who called himself "Dikelphilos," suggested that because of his social standing, "the murderer was treated with indulgence and partiality inconsistent with our constitution, and destructive of our security and privileges."⁶⁵ The fact that both newspapers made public the details of this controversy, and included critical comments regarding the actions of the colony's elite, was something that would not have happened a few decades earlier.

Thus, by 1766, new commercial competition had led to less government control and a freer forum for civic discourse in both Virginia newspapers. No longer was there only one press in Virginia, and no longer could the governor control the press. Power was shifting from the governor to the burgesses, and newer, more radical burgesses were gaining in influence.⁶⁶ Politics in Virginia was fractionalizing, and soon that was reflected in the media of the time. After a second press began printing in the colony, leading political elites, the Parliament, and the British ministry were subject to criticism on the pages of the Virginia newspapers. As Carl Bridenbaugh wrote in his 1981 essay about violence in Virginia, Purdie "completely revised the former policy of the newspaper" and from then on, the residents of Virginia were "served up . . . what they had never before experienced, the sensations and sensationalism of a free press."⁶⁷ He suggested that the new freedom of the press brought excesses and sensationalism, but the newspapers also now put the feet of the wealthy to the fire.⁶⁸ An anonymous writer wrote of the changed newspapers in mock-biblical fashion: "Party shall menace Party, and Dunces shall enflame Dunces, and the *Gazettes* of Purdie and of Rind shall contain Wonders . . . and Much Paper [will] be wasted, and Words shall lose their Meaning."⁶⁹ Obviously, not everyone was happy with the political controversies now being

openly publicized in the newspapers nor with the less sophisticated tone of the letter writers.

Both newspapers appeared to be directing their content to the same, somewhat middling-to-elite audience with the same political bias. One contributor noted that what was now being printed in the two papers no longer had the high standards of the past. "Dikelphilos" requested that potential authors should examine carefully their abilities, and "they would not usher into the world sentiments which are neither useful nor entertaining."⁷⁰ This apparently was an expression of dissatisfaction with the contributions to both papers from those further down the social scale. There was no longer an obvious elite bias to the papers' content; there were no more Latin verses, fewer classical references, and more common pseudonyms, such as "A Farmer," or "Tit for Tat."⁷¹ Sales and satisfied customers had become more important to the printer than pleasing the governor.

As Botein wrote, the business philosophy of the printers had to change with the times, and it was now political material with a patriot slant that was the best seller. Newspaper circulation in the colonies also had increased, and political writings became popular.⁷² Both printers featured a patriot viewpoint in their papers with no noticeable difference in the bias or content, including the advertisements. As Godfrey concluded, "Rind and Purdie . . . provided the same voice for the community." One might add that the readers of the two newspapers also appeared to be the same, geographically and economically. What she did not recognize was that this was not only because of Royle's death or the direct influence of a new political force. It was also because of the new commercial pressures, requiring both printers to respond to the needs of the customers.⁷³

Thus, the myth of Jefferson corresponding with Thomas, confirming that he invited Rind to bring his printing press to Virginia, offers a patent example of questionable memory, misinterpretation, and a weak historical method. Human recall is not as precise as is sometimes presumed, and language is often ambiguous. Thomas falsely claimed the former president wrote to him regarding the Virginia printer. However, this did not crop up until later in Thomas' life and only then in his note for the second edition of his book.⁷⁴ Old age may well have begun to cloud his memory, or it may have been a case of false braggadocio that a former president had corresponded with him. Jefferson's actual statement, written in a letter to Hening rather than to Thomas, was misinterpreted by Thomas and following generations of historians. "We procured Rind" did not mean that Jefferson was a leading actor as countless historians have inferred from the line.⁷⁵ As a twenty-two-year-old student, he did not have the means to arrange Rind's election to the public printer post. He noted in his own autobiographical draft that at an incident during that same time (the 1765 passing of the *Stamp Act Resolves* in Williamsburg) he was merely a young observer: "I was yet a student of law in Wmsbg. I attended the debate however at the door of the lobby of

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the H. of Burgesses.”⁷⁶ It is more likely “we” either meant “we, the people of Virginia,” or was a reference to the group of more radical politicians in the colony who later supported the patriot cause. It was a group with whom Jefferson was to eventually take a leadership role.

For nearly 200 years, authors have repeated Thomas’ story—even elaborated on it—apparently without confirming its veracity. Davidson, in his important 1941 work, *Propaganda and the American Revolution: 1763-1783*, cited no source for his statement that “Thomas Jefferson, dissatisfied with the old *Gazette*, now edited by Alexander Purdie and John Dixon, brought William Rind from Maryland, and the second *Virginia Gazette* was begun.”⁷⁷ Kobre, a venerable journalism historian, also was certain of Jefferson’s involvement:

William Rind’s third [*sic*] *Virginia Gazette* indicated the change in the social forces, for Thomas Jefferson backed Rind because he believed the *Virginia Gazette*, which was then being published by Alexander Purdie and John Dixon, was too closely tied to England. He considered that it was not representing the colonial cause with any strong determination and belief. He secured William Rind from Annapolis and Rind’s *Virginia Gazette* began in Williamsburg in May, 1766.⁷⁸

Since Kobre cited no source, it is unclear how he determined Jefferson’s reasoning in such unlikely detail. Influential historian Schlesinger cited Thomas in a 1935 article—“Thomas Jefferson and his friends persuaded William Rind . . . to settle in Williamsburg”—but the Jefferson connection was not repeated in his book on the subject of colonial newspapers and the Revolution in 1957.⁷⁹ More recently, other prominent historians continued the error. Greene cited Bridenbaugh when he wrote of the Jefferson connection, and an article by Robert Weir in Bailyn’s and John Hench’s 1980 book on *The Press and the American Revolution* noted that the new printer “had come to Williamsburg at the invitation of Thomas Jefferson and some other leading men.”⁸⁰ While such prominent historians apparently did not see the weakness in Thomas’ attribution, Godfrey’s dissertation raised serious questions about Jefferson’s involvement. However, it was not a major focus of her work, she apparently did not publish her findings, and she never developed the reason for the errors.⁸¹

This story of how one person’s flawed personal memory became part of the historical record holds warnings for historians. Too often they take the work of others at face value, without verification, because it is nearly impossible to double-check everything. They constantly build their work on the foundations of prior historians without often enough digging to verify facts, and thus errors large and small often multiply. As Alfred Young observed in 1999, personal memory shifts over time, and historical memory can be far from perfect.⁸²

Going beyond questions of memory and accuracy, the situa-

tion in Virginia reveals much more about the evolution of print—and of press freedom. The character of the newspapers in the colony changed as competition came to Williamsburg. From being a single newspaper that several times was accused of censorship in favor of the British ministry, depriving the Virginia citizens “of that great SUPPORT of FREEDOM, the liberty of the press,” the competing gazettes now openly published controversy.⁸³ A year later, in 1766, another reader proclaimed “the press, one of the principal handmaids of liberty, is become a free channel of conveyance whereby men may communicate their sentiments on every subject that may contribute to the good of their country.”⁸⁴ Another letter directly questioned the official actions of the colony’s supreme judges in their handling of the Roulidge murder: “I ask, whether this act of the three Judges of the General Court be legal.”⁸⁵

The causes of this radical transformation of the press were more complex than simply Jefferson or other patriots importing a new printer to publish a newspaper with more radical sentiments. New competitive pressures that accompanied an emerging consumer economy brought a change in power and domination. Government control dramatically lessened, and marketplace pressures became paramount, which were necessary precursors to both a second printer and a more open press. As Amory wrote, a single sanctioned printer could not run a truly free press: “The first step toward that distant nineteenth-century goal [of a free press] was often the advent of a second press.”⁸⁶ As Breen theorized, such marketplace choices began to erode colonial power structures, and a new “consumer public sphere” developed. Newspapers were an essential driver, supplying substance and expanding this new discourse: “Everywhere Americans reached out to each other through the channel of print.”⁸⁷ As Botein noted, colonial printers were forced to abandon their cautious

approach, attempting to please all sides, as the Stamp Act threatened their livelihood. Just as in the other colonies, Virginia printers began to take a stand against British policies.⁸⁸

Thus, the Virginia press became freer, more open to a wider range of opinions, including those critical of powerful members of government. Quotations from John Wilke’s radical newspaper, *The North Briton*, appeared in Rind’s gazette.⁸⁹ Dissent was printed openly, even harsh words written by those farther down the social scale aimed at the once-untouchable elites. For example, “An Enemy to Hypocrisy” began his 1766 letter to the newspaper with a disclaimer of his abilities, yet he went on with a thinly disguised attack on Colonel Richard Henry Lee, calling him a rogue.⁹⁰ The new competition in the newspaper and overall printing business in Williamsburg assured a broader public of more outlets for wider viewpoints. The new printer did not provide the only open press, however. The older press, now run by Royle’s successors, proved just as open to the faction that eventually became the patriots, running stories about the Sons of Liberty and attacking the Stamp

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Act as illegal.⁹¹ Governmental pressure no longer reigned supreme. Civic discourse in the colony of Virginia had broadened and become more radical.

Such new discourse and the economic competition that spurred it have implications worthy of further development by today's historians. The new press freedom and the public recognition of the importance of such broader civic discourse led to the flowering of an important new concept in pre-revolutionary Virginia; the newly declared independent state's Declaration of Rights in 1776 contained the first constitutional protection for a free press.⁹² Article twelve declared, "That the freedom of the press is one of the greatest bulwarks of liberty and can never be restrained but by despotic governments." This idea emerged directly from the public recognition that such open discussion was essential to a republican government, and such discourse was impossible when a powerful and potentially corrupt government could control the press. Just days before this first free press clause was written, "Civis" was lobbying in the *Virginia Gazette* for recognition of the importance of a free press, stating, "Liberty of the Press is the palladium of our LIBERTIES," and while free "speech is a *natural right* . . . printing is a more extensive and improved kind of speech."⁹³

The new civic discourse spurred the recognition of the importance of a free press, leading directly to the free press clause in Virginia's Declaration of Rights, and that—both directly and indirectly—inspired the free press clause in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Other states followed Virginia's example and guaranteed a free press in their own constitutions, and when James Madison wrote his draft of the Bill of Rights in 1789, he worked from Virginia's example.⁹⁴ The founders of this nation realized that only through a competitive, unfettered, and potentially annoying free press could a powerful government be balanced in the public interest, and they attempted to guarantee a free press by stating unequivocally, "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press."⁹⁵

NOTES

¹ Quoted by Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America, With a Biography of Printers*, 2nd ed. (1874; reprint, New York: Weatherlane Books, 1970), 566.

² Susan Macall Allen, "The Impact of the Stamp Act of 1765 on Colonial American Printers: Threat or Bonanza?" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1996), 1-6, 24.

³ Thomas, *Printing in America*, 556.

⁴ See Arthur Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1957), 61-79; and David Ramsey, *The History of the American Revolution*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: R. Aitken & Son, 1789), 61-62. Thomas was quoted in Schlesinger, "The Colonial Newspapers and the Stamp Act," *New England Quarterly* 8 (March 1935): 78.

⁵ See Stephen Botein, "'Meer Mechanics' and an Open Press: the Business and Political Strategies of Colonial American Printers," in *Perspectives in American History*, vol. 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 127-228; and Stephen Botein, "Printers and the American Revolution" in Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench, eds., *The Press and the American Revolution* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1980), 12-42.

⁶ Hugh Amory, "Printing and Bookselling in New England, 1683-1713," in Hugh Amory and David Hall, *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 83-116.

⁷ T.H. Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), xvi, 133, 248.

⁸ Jack Greene, *The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 287-89.

⁹ Laurie E. Godfrey, "The Printers of the Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette*, 1766-1776: Social Controls and Press Theory" (Ph.D. diss., Regent University, 1998), especially iv. Godfrey, on 149-50, noted that Jefferson was unlikely to be involved in the procurement of the new printer and raised a question about the claim that the Jefferson quotation came from a letter to Isaiah Thomas.

¹⁰ Berkeley's oft-quoted, "But I thank God, *there are no free schools nor printing*, and I hope we shall not have these for hundred years, for *learning* has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and *printing* has divulged them, and libels against the best government. God keep us from both!" appeared in William Hening, *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619* (1819-23.; facsimile reprint, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969), vol. 1, iv-vi. William Nuthead and his printing press were not allowed in Jamestown. See Douglas C. McMurtrie, *A History of Printing in the United States; The Story of the Introduction of the Press and of Its History and Influence During the Pioneer Period in Each State of The Union* (New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1936), 277; and Douglas C. McMurtrie, *The Beginnings of Printing in Virginia* (Lexington, Va.: printed in the Journalism laboratory of Washington and Lee University, 1935), 15-21. William Parks was invited by the lower house to move his printing office from Annapolis to Williamsburg, and he was paid a government salary. See John Pendleton Kennedy, ed., *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, June 10, 1732, vol. 6 (Richmond: Colonial Press, E. Wadley Co., 1905-15), 141-42. In 1762, printer Joseph Royle received a stipend of £350 per year, which was voted on by the House of Burgesses but also approved by the governor and his council. It was given "for printing the Journal of the House of Burgesses, printing the Laws of each Session, and sending as many Copies to the County Court Clerks as there are Justices in the Commission in each respective County, and one another, which is to be half-bound, for the Use of the Court, and ten to the Clerk of the Court of Husting of the Borough of Norfolk, printing Inspectors Notes and Book, Proclamations, and other publick Advertisements." This was increased to £375 in 1764. The printer also received additional contracts for printing other things, such as paper money and compilations of the laws. See Kennedy, *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, Jan. 19, 1762, vol. 10, 38; and Nov. 5, 1764, vol. 10, 227.

¹¹ See Amory, "Printing and Bookselling in New England, 1683-1713," 83-116; and Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹² *Virginia Gazette*, Aug. 6, 1736. Although this first issue is no longer extant, the "Printer's Introduction" from the first issue was quoted in William Maxwell, ed., *The Virginia Historical Register, and Literary Companion* 6 (1853): 21-31.

¹³ See Alexander Spotswood to William Parks, 1736, Washburn Autograph Collection, vol. 22, p. 47, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston; *Virginia Gazette*, Dec. 17, 1736; and Greene, *The Quest for Power*, 287-89. Spotswood and others were referred to here and in contemporary writings as "governor," when, in fact, they were lieutenant governors acting as governor.

¹⁴ *Maryland Gazette*, Oct. 24, 1754. The dispute aired here was entangled with the "Pistole Fee," which was imposed by Governor Robert Dinwiddie on land sales. The burgesses opposed this arbitrary tax because it was imposed without their consent. See Jack Greene, "Landon Carter and the Pistole Fee Dispute," *William and Mary Quarterly* 14 (January 1957): 66-69. Greene identified the author of the newspaper letter as Burgess Landon Carter. At the death of printer William Parks in 1750, he was succeeded by William Hunter, who was replaced in 1761 by Joseph Royle.

¹⁵ The *Virginia Gazette* on Nov. 7, 1754, had Governor Dinwiddie praising the burgesses for approving the supplies, without any indication of the controversy.

¹⁶ In 1762, printer Joseph Royle received a stipend of £350 per year, which was voted on by the House of Burgesses but also approved by the governor and his council. This was increased to £375 in 1764. According to Kennedy's *Journals of the House of Burgesses* (Jan. 19, 1762, vol. 10, 38, and Nov. 5, 1764, vol. 10, 227), he was paid "for printing the Journal of the House of Burgesses, printing the Laws of each Session, and sending as many Copies to the County Court Clerks as there are Justices in the Commission in each respective County, and one another, which is to be half-bound, for the Use of the Court, and ten to the Clerk of the Court of Husting of the Borough of Norfolk, printing Inspectors Notes and Book, Proclamations, and other publick Advertisements." He also received additional contracts for printing other items, such as paper money and compilations of the laws.

¹⁷ Botein, "'Meer Mechanics' and an Open Press," 127-225.

¹⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, July 6, 1764.

¹⁹ Royle to Camm, Aug. 5, 1763, quoted in John Camm, *Single and Distinct*

View of the Act, Vulgarly Entitled, The Two Penny Act . . . (Annapolis, Md.; Green, 1763), appendix, 48-49. This dispute, also referred to as the Parson's Cause, pitted the burgesses against ministers who contested an act that in essence lowered their pay.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, appendix.

²¹ "Tim Pastime" to William Hunter, ca. 1760, Special Collections, ms. 90.d4, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Va. Emma L. Powers, in the Department of Historical Research at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, provided a transcript and some annotations of references within this letter, which was discovered in the 1990s. See David A. Rawson, "'Guardians of their Own Liberty': A Contextual History of Print Culture in Virginia Society, 1750 to 1820" (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1998), 100-115. An advertisement from "deputy Postmaster" John Stretch in the *Virginia Gazette*, April 22, 1757, suggested that he was editing the newspaper but also leaving the colony that summer.

²² A *Supplement to the Maryland Gazette, of Last Week*, Oct. 17, 1765.

²³ Advertisements from Fairfax and Alexandria in northern Virginia often appeared in the newspaper from Annapolis, and with transportation by water being faster than by land in the eighteenth century, parts of the southern colony were served faster by the northern printer. There were notices for home sales in Alexandria, and George Washington and George William Fairfax solicited for a builder for a new church in Fairfax County's Truro Parish in the *Maryland Gazette*. For example, in the *Gazette*, see house sale advertisements for Alexandria on Feb. 2, Feb. 23, and Oct. 2 in 1764; a church builder advertisement on May 17, 1764; and a May 26, 1768, advertisement from William Rind, who was now printing in Williamsburg, for a revised edition of the Laws of Virginia at a price of 40 shillings. See also the introduction in Edith Moore Sprouse, *Along the Potomac River: Extracts from the Maryland Gazette, 1728-1799* (Westminster, Md.: Willow Bend Books, 2001).

²⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1766. This was written after Royle's death and after Alexander Purdie and John Dixon took over the business.

²⁵ There were numerous contemporary references to the governor's control, including one letter to the newspaper in which the author claimed the *Virginia Gazette* was hand-carried to the governor to be inspected before it was distributed. See "Man of Principle," *Virginia Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1766, which was printed by Purdie and Dixon. Even the governor admitted the press was "thought to be too complaisant to me." See Francis Fauquier to the Board of Trade, Williamsburg, April 7, 1766, handwritten transcription, Great Britain PRO CO 5, container v. 1331:97-106 [137-148], Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁶ Thomas Jefferson to L.H. Girardin, Jan. 15, 1815, Jefferson papers, Library of Congress, at http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collid=mtj1&fileN=mtj1page047.db&recNum=1098&itemLink=/ammem/mtjhtml/mtjser1.html&linkText=7&tempFile=./temp/-ammem_W2J4&filecode=mtj&next_filecode=mtj&prev_filecode=mtj&itemnum=3&ndocs=4 (accessed on Dec. 11, 2008). Jefferson also is quoted in Dumas Malone, *Jefferson, the Virginian: Jefferson and His Time*, vol. 1 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 75.

²⁷ See also Greene, "Landon Carter and the Pistole Fee Dispute," 66-69, which discussed Dinwiddie angering the burgesses by his unilateral actions.

²⁸ George Reese, ed., *The Official Papers of Francis Fauquier, Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, 1758-1768*, vol. 1 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1980-83), xxxviii-xliv. He was instructed several times to separate the offices of Speaker of the House of Burgesses and Colony Treasurer, but he avoided doing so. He also sided with the burgesses in the Parson's cause, earning him a rebuke by the Board of Trade. See *ibid.*, xlii-xliv; Fauquier obituaries in the *Virginia Gazette*, March 3, 1768; and a quotation in the *Virginia Gazette*, March 3, 1768. The paper was published by Purdie and Dixon.

²⁹ Francis Fauquier to the Board of Trade, Williamsburg, April 7, 1766, handwritten transcription, Great Britain PRO CO 5, container v. 1331:97-106 [137-148], Library of Congress.

³⁰ Thomas Jefferson, quoted by Thomas, *The History of Printing in America, With a Biography of Printers*, 566.

³¹ Schlesinger, "Colonial Newspapers and the Stamp Act," 78, cited Thomas as his source. Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 231, did not credit any source for this. Also see Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper* (1944; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1960), 179; Greene, *The Quest for Power*, 287-89; and Robert M. Weir, "The Role of the Newspaper Press in the Southern Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution," in Bailyn and Hench, *The Press and the*

American Revolution, 109.

³² See, for example, "Old Virginia Editors," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine* 7 (July 1898): 9-17; Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed., *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography*, vol. 2 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1915), 255-56; McMurtrie, *The Beginnings of Printing in Virginia*, 20-21; Calhoun Winton, "Eighteenth Century Southern Book Trade," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, 239; and Martha Joanne King, "Making an Impression: Women Printers in the Southern Colonies in the Revolutionary Era" (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1992), 122.

³³ Godfrey, "The Printers of the Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette*, 1766 to 1776," 249-50, noted the quotation was in a letter from Jefferson to William W. Hening.

³⁴ Thomas, *The History of Printing in America, With a Biography of Printers*, 556.

³⁵ Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America, With a Biography of Printers*, vol. 2 (Worcester, Mass.: Isaiah Thomas, 1810), 148.

³⁶ Email, J. Jefferson Looney to Roger Mellen, Feb. 4, 2005.

³⁷ Thomas Jefferson to William W. Hening, July 25, 1809, Thomas Jefferson papers, series 1, General Correspondence, 1651-1827, Library of Congress. It also was published in J. Jefferson Looney, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 369-70. Godfrey also pointed to this letter as the source. See "The Printers of the Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette*, 1766-1776," 249.

³⁸ Emails, Thomas G. Knoles to Roger Mellen, Dec. 29, 2005, noted Thomas left a handwritten note in an annotated copy of his first edition, stating that Hening had written to him on July 21, 1810, about a fact regarding earlier Virginia printing.

³⁹ See Thomas, *The History of Printing in America, With a Biography of Printers*, annotated 1st. ed., in the Isaiah Thomas papers, box 12, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. Thomas was not able to publish the second edition of his book before his death. A committee served as editors, following Thomas' notes for changes, and they included the footnote which cited a letter from Jefferson to Thomas as the source. That decision was based on Thomas' notes.

⁴⁰ Godfrey, "The Printers of the Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette*, 1766-1776," 249-50, also noted that the popular quotation could not be found in correspondence to Thomas but was in a letter to Hening. She apparently did not explore how this discrepancy got into Thomas' book.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 249. Her argument was simply that he was young and still a law student, and thus could not have been directly involved, but she did not contrast those facts with the financial and political requirements behind bringing a new printer to the colony.

⁴² Rind's name last appeared on the *Maryland Gazette* on Oct. 10, 1765. By the next issue a week later, the name of his former partner, Jonas Green, appeared alone. While Rind's first Virginia newspaper did not appear until May, 16, 1766, the Stamp Act interrupted publication of many newspapers. It was likely that whatever negotiations brought Rind to Williamsburg were completed by October 1765.

⁴³ Under the new calendar, Jefferson was born on April 13, 1743, but the actual date was April 2, 1743, under the old calendar, which was discontinued while he was a boy. See Malone, *Jefferson, The Virginian*, 3; Thomas Jefferson, "Autobiography Draft Fragment, January 6 through July 27, 1821," from Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes*, Federal Edition, at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mtj:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(tj010010\)\)>](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mtj:@field(DOCID+@lit(tj010010))>) (accessed on March 27, 2005).

⁴⁴ William Fleming to Thomas Jefferson, June 22, 1776, in Julian Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Volume 1, 1760-1776* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950), 406.

⁴⁵ Edmund Randolph, *History of Virginia*, ed. Arthur H. Shaffer (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970), 167-68, 184; and Godfrey, "The Printers of the Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette*, 1766-1776," 247-48.

⁴⁶ Kennedy, *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, Nov. 7, 1766, vol. 11, 18, 72, 75. Purdie began publishing the *Virginia Gazette* under his name but soon joined with Dixon in a partnership.

⁴⁷ It is not clear from the records who Robert Miller or William Stark were or what happened to them after they lost the vote, but only two print shops remained.

⁴⁸ "Gazette" was the name normally used for the official newspaper, and Rind may have dropped his name from the masthead because official business tradition-

ally went to the *Virginia Gazette*. See Godfrey, "The Printers of the Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette*, 1766-1776," 254.

⁴⁹ *Rind's Virginia Gazette*, May 16, 1766. The original is at the New York Historical Society. See Clarence Brigham, *History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1820*, vol. 2 (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1947), 1160-63.

⁵⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, March 28, 1766, 3. The paper was printed by Purdie.

⁵¹ "Philanthropos," and "A Man of Principle," *Virginia Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1766. The paper was printed by Purdie and Dixon.

⁵² *Virginia Gazette*, Nov. 27, 1766. The paper was printed by Purdie and Dixon.

⁵³ The *Virginia Gazette* that Rind published at the end of December 1766 did not include this claim. The first extant issue of the next year, on Feb. 19, 1767, included the phrase "Published by Authority" in the masthead on the top of page one.

⁵⁴ David A. Copeland, *The Idea of a Free Press: The Enlightenment and Its Unruly Legacy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 59, 133-34.

⁵⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Feb. 12, 1767. The paper was printed by Purdie and Dixon.

⁵⁶ The *Virginia Gazette* on July 23, 1767, which was printed by Rind, no longer ran this claim. The March 12 issue did, but there are no extant issues between the two dates.

⁵⁷ Edmund Morgan and Helen Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (1953; revision, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 102.

⁵⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, Oct. 25, 1765.

⁵⁹ The Annapolis newspaper, published the day before, featured many of the same stories but with a different slant. It also included a story of local opposition to the Stamp Act rather than warnings about what would happen if it was disobeyed. See *Second Supplement to the Maryland Gazette*, Oct. 24, 1765.

⁶⁰ From the *Gentleman's Magazine*, quoted in the *Virginia Gazette*, April 4, 1766.

⁶¹ Copeland, *The Idea of a Free Press*, 205, refers to this newspaper as the most radical of this time. The first of the "Farmer's Letters" began in the *Virginia Gazette* on Dec. 24, 1767. "The Monitor's Letters," credited to Arthur Lee, ran in the *Virginia Gazette* from Feb. 25 to April 28, 1768. See Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence*, 125; and Quotation from Monitor II, *Virginia Gazette*, March 3, 1768. The paper was printed by Rind.

⁶² *Rind's Virginia Gazette*, Aug. 8, 1766.

⁶³ *Virginia Gazette*, July 18, 1766. The paper was printed by Purdie and Dixon.

⁶⁴ See *Virginia Gazette*, June 20, 1766. The paper was printed by Purdie and Dixon. J.A. Leo Lemay, "Robert Bolling and the Bailment of Colonel Chiswell," *Early American Literature* 6 (1971): 99-142, identified the pseudonymous author as Robert Bolling. See also Jack Greene, "'Virtus et Libertas': Political Culture, Social Change, and the Origins of the American Revolution in Virginia, 1762-1766," in Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise, eds., *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 55-108; and Carl Bridenbaugh, "Violence and Virtue in Virginia, 1766," *Early Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 188-212.

⁶⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Aug. 29, 1766. The paper was printed by Purdie and Dixon.

⁶⁶ Greene, *The Quest for Power*, 3-6, 361, 367.

⁶⁷ Bridenbaugh, "Violence and Virtue in Virginia, 1766," 200.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 209-11.

⁶⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, Aug. 15, 1766. The paper was printed by Rind. It also is quoted in Bridenbaugh, "Violence and Virtue in Virginia, 1766," 206.

⁷⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, Nov. 6, 1766. The paper was printed by Purdie and Dixon.

⁷¹ See "A Farmer," *Virginia Gazette*, Dec. 24, 1767; and *Virginia Gazette*, July 11, 1766. The first article was printed by Rind, and the second was printed by

Purdie and Dixon.

⁷² Botein, "'Meer Mechanics' and an Open Press," 215-21. There are no specific circulation figures available for the *Virginia Gazette*.

⁷³ Godfrey, "The Printers of the Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette*, 1766-1776," 289.

⁷⁴ See Thomas, *The History of Printing in America, With a Biography of Printers*, annotated 1st. ed.; and Thomas, *The History of Printing in America, With a Biography of Printers*, 2nd ed., 556.

⁷⁵ Thomas Jefferson to William W. Hening, July 25, 1809, Thomas Jefferson papers, series 1, General Correspondence, 1651-1827, Library of Congress.

⁷⁶ Jefferson, "Autobiography Draft Fragment, January 6 through July 27, 1821."

⁷⁷ Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783*, 231.

⁷⁸ Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper*, 179.

⁷⁹ See Schlesinger, "The Colonial Newspapers and the Stamp Act," 78; and Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence*, 79.

⁸⁰ See Greene, *The Quest for Power*, 289; Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities; Societies of the Colonial South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 41-42; and Weir, "The Role of the Newspaper Press in the Southern Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution," 109.

⁸¹ Godfrey, "The Printers of the Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette*, 1766-1776," 249-50.

⁸² Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 11-12, 124.

⁸³ "A Virginian," "To the Printer of the *Virginia Gazette*," *A Supplement to the Maryland Gazette of last Week*, Oct. 17, 1765.

⁸⁴ "Philanthropos," *Virginia Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1766. The paper was printed by Purdie and Dixon.

⁸⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, June 20, 1766. The paper was printed by Purdie and Dixon.

⁸⁶ Amory, "Printing and Bookselling in New England, 1683-1713," 116.

⁸⁷ Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 158, 248-52.

⁸⁸ Botein, "'Meer Mechanics' and an Open Press," 211. Botein notes that the few who supported a Tory position were soon forced to moderate their positions or flee because a "free press" came to mean the freedom to support only the patriot position.

⁸⁹ *The North-Briton*, issue 191, quoted in the *Virginia Gazette*, May 16, 1766. The paper was printed by Rind.

⁹⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, July 18, 1766. The paper was printed by Rind.

⁹¹ See *Virginia Gazette*, June 20, 1766; and the *Gentleman's Magazine* quotation in the *Virginia Gazette*, April 4, 1766. The paper was printed by Purdie and Dixon.

⁹² While George Mason is recognized as the author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, the actual author of the free press clause is not clear. See Irving Brant, *James Madison*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1941-61), 239; and Robert A. Rutland, *The Papers of George Mason: 1725-1792*, vol. 1 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 274-91.

⁹³ *Virginia Gazette*, May 18, 1776. The paper was printed by Dixon and Hunter.

⁹⁴ For Madison's draft, see his proposed "Amendments to the Constitution," in "Remarks to Congress," June 8, 1789, in Gordon Lloyd and Margie Lloyd, eds., *The Essential Bill of Rights: Original Arguments and Fundamental Documents* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1998), 331-44. See also Leonard Levy, *Essays on the Making of the Constitution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 258-89; and Stephen A. Smith, "The Origins of the Free Speech Clause," *Free Speech Yearbook* 29 (1991): 48-82.

⁹⁵ For further development of the freedom of the press connection, see Roger Mellen, "Liberty of the Press: The Emergence of the Constitutional Doctrine in Colonial Virginia" (Paper delivered at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C., Aug. 11, 2007).

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