

Abraham Hodge

Abraham Hodge (1755-1805) furthered his career as a printer by spending the winter of 1778-79 with General George Washington at Valley Forge, operating the press that turned out orders, commissions and recruiting posters for the Continental Army.

When the war was over, Hodge, a New Yorker, sought warmer climes in the little village of Halifax, North Carolina. In 1785, he was named state printer by the state's General Assembly and held that lucrative position until 1800 except for one-year in the 1790s.

And he would become the most active founder of newspapers in 18th-century North Carolina. During his career, he had printing establishments at various times in Edenton, Fayetteville and New Bern, as well as Halifax, which was usually his home.

In partnership with Andrew Blanchard, Hodge was founder-proprietor of the State Gazette of North Carolina in New Bern and then moved the newspaper to Edenton. In 1792, he was back in Halifax as founder of the North Carolina Journal. Hodge continued to edit this influential newspaper until his death. But he was busy elsewhere as well.

In 1796, he and young William Boylan established the Minerva and Fayetteville Gazette in the village on the Cape Fear. But when Raleigh was finally established as the state's permanent capital, in 1799, Hodge & Boylan moved their presses to the raw settlement in Wake County and renamed it the North Carolina Minerva and Raleigh Advertiser.

Like nearly all newspaper proprietors of the time, Hodge ran a political journal. He was a staunch Federalist, and his paper engaged in hard fought editorial combat with the growing power of the anti-Federalist, later called Republican, political forces in the state.

The 1800 national election of Republican Thomas Jefferson and his followers in the state ended Hodges' longtime hold on the state printer's post. But he continued to publish the Minerva until he retired in 1803.

Hodge gathered information for a 1794 North Carolina Almanac, and he was among the first contributors to the tiny library at the new University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

By Roy Parker Jr.
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