

3-2001

Archival Chronicle: Vol 20 No 1

Bowling Green State University. Center for Archival Collections

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/archival_chronicle

Recommended Citation

Bowling Green State University. Center for Archival Collections, "Archival Chronicle: Vol 20 No 1" (2001). *Archival Chronicle*. 50.
http://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/archival_chronicle/50

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Library Newsletters at ScholarWorks@BGSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Archival Chronicle by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@BGSU.

Archival Chronicle

Archival Chronicle

March 2001: Volume 20, Number 1

[Famous Fakes 1: Ulster County Gazette](#) | [For Further Reading](#) | [Archival Chronicle Index](#) | [CAC Homepage](#)

A New Series: Famous Fakes *The Ulster County Gazette*, January 4, 1800

You're helping to clear out the papers of some long-deceased relatives. It seems they saved everything—clippings of recipes and poetry, and whole newspapers announcing the landing on the moon, the end of World War II, and great events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Then you find something with a very old date—January 4, 1800, a newspaper called the *Ulster County Gazette* of Kingston, New York, which announces the death and burial of President George Washington. Before you run over to your computer with dollar signs in your eyes and click on e-Bay, please consider the following.

No American newspaper has ever been reprinted as frequently as this issue of the *Ulster County Gazette*. In fact, it is famous not for its account of Washington's death, but rather for the number of its reprints, which have totaled over 100 different versions since 1876, and at least a million printed copies.

This phenomenon may have begun as a commemorative printing marking the 25th anniversary of Washington's death in 1825, repeated with the 50th anniversary, and proliferated at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, where thousands of such souvenirs were sold daily on the grounds for five cents each. Reprints continued to be produced into the 1920's and perhaps later. Until November 1930, no original copy of the newspaper could be found, thus confirming that these reproductions were made from early nineteenth century reprints with errors intact, rather than from one of the original 200 copies printed in 1800. The only two known original copies of the *Ulster County Gazette* are at the Library of Congress and (uncovered in 1938) at the American Antiquarian Society.

If you believe that your copy of the *Ulster County Gazette* is one of the 200 originals, you should evaluate its authenticity based upon these basic criteria:

It should be printed on heavy hand-made eighteenth century rag paper with a double fleur-de-lis watermark, not on the wood pulp paper of the reprints, which have become brittle and dark in color.

It should be hand printed using worn type that produced blurred lettering and details, in contrast to later reprints, which exhibit cleaner, more precise machine produced results.

The title should be in italic style capital letters and measure 6 15/16" in length. It should not be printed in Roman (upright) letters, as are many reprints.

The American Antiquarian Society suggests a single, conclusive test. Unless the first line of the fourth column of page 1 reads, "command the town, and not withstanding," it is *not* an original.

For Further Reading

Kelly, Daniel J., Jr. "The Baffling Case of *The Ulster County Gazette*," in *The Spinning Wheel*, July 1949, pp. 6-11.

Rapport, Leonard. "Fakes and Facsimiles: Problems of Identification," in *American Archivist* v. 42 1979.

Vail, R. W. G. *The Ulster County Gazette and its Illegitimate Offspring*. New York: The New York Public Library, 1951.

--Eric Honneffer

Because people often contact the CAC wishing to authenticate documents, this article is the first of a series devoted to historic document reprints and the characteristics that distinguish them from the originals.

--Lee N. McLaird