

Anne Royall

(11 Jun 1769 - 1 Oct 1854)

The National Intelligencer, October 2, 1854

Royall. Yesterday morning, the 1st instant, Mrs. Ann Royall at a very advanced age. Her funeral will take place this afternoon at 3 o'clock from her late residence on B street north, Capitol Hill where her friends and acquaintances are respectfully invited to attend without further notice.

The Evening Star, October 2, 1854

Mrs. Anne Royall Dead

This venerable and eccentric lady died at her residence on Capitol Hill, in this city, yesterday morning. She must have been well nigh 90 years of age. Ever since the publication of the famous history of her peregrinations throughout the country, fighting the Presbyterians, she has made her residence here, first editing the "Huntress," and subsequently living on its proceeds published by others in her name. For the last four or five years she has been out and about very little, owing to her increasing infirmities. When about, however, her tongue went as before--always so as to attract a crowd of wanderer's around her. Vehement and violent in her antipathies, and the expression of them, she was equally warm in her friendship for those she favored, though from her peculiar was of manifesting her liking's, few, indeed, courted her affectionate regards. To the hour of her death she preserved all the peculiarities of thought, temper, and manners, which at one time rendered her so famous throughout the land.

The Evening Star, October 3, 1854

The Late Mrs. Anne Royall

This eccentric woman whose death we noticed yesterday was aged ninety two years, as appears by the Sentinel, which says that she originally edited the Paul Pry, afterwards changed to that of the Huntress. She was the authoress of several volumes entitled the "Black Book," a narrative of travel throughout the United States, and criticisms of individual character. She was a woman of considerable literary attainments, and benevolence, and of strict integrity, although somewhat peculiar in her views. Her husband having been a captain in the army of the revolution, she, as his widow drew a pension of forty dollars a month. About six months ago she announced, after recovering from a severe attack of sickness, that she felt as strong and healthy as she did at any former period of her existence. However, she then trembled with age, as might naturally be expected. But she is gone, after a long period of active life, during which her name has become familiar especially among visitors to the metropolis, many of whose portraits, painted in her usual graphic style, adorned the "gallery" of the Huntress.

Mrs. Royall was born in Virginia, and at an early age, was stolen by the Indians, with whom she continued until she had seen fifteen summers in the western part of that State. After her release, she met with Captain Royall, who became her husband; and then it was that she first acquired the rudiments of an English education, having graduated, as it were, in the free school of nature. Captain Royall removed to Alabama, and, as a planter, dispensed his ample hospitalities. She had a half-brother, Col. Butler, of Ohio, who acted a prominent part in the late war with Great Britain. He afterwards served in the legislature of Indiana, and, but a few years since, died in Cass county, in that State.

The Evening Star, December 30, 1908, p. 14

Life of Anne Royall

Story of One of the Strangest of Washington Characters

Friend of Peggy O'Neill

Convicted of Being a Nuisance and Common Scold

Deprived of Her Fortune

Spent Her Time in Travel, Observation and Writing --

Interviewed Many Presidents

By William E. Curtis

Written for The Star and the Chicago Record Herald

Miss Sarah Harvey Porter, M.A., a teacher in Columbian College for Deaf Mutes at Kendall Green, has written a life of Anne Royall, one of the strangest characters that ever walked the earth, and, during the first third of the nineteenth century, the most widely known woman of the country. In Washington, the scene of her greatest and longest activity, Mrs. Royall has the reputation of being a shrill-tongued and wicked old infidel, beggar and blackmailer, who was convicted by a jury of being a common scold and narrowly escaped an official ducking in the Potomac. This was in 1829. The accusation was brought by persons connected with a small Presbyterian congregation which worshiped in an engine house near Mrs. Royall's dwelling on Capitol Hill, but Miss Porter believes that the real instigators of the prosecution were prominent men living both in and outside of Washington, and that the motive was to punish Anne Royall for her attacks upon them in her "Black Book," which was very widely read in those days, and devoted a great deal of attention to the fight over Masonry and the United States Bank. Among the chief accusers were two clergymen of Washington, who also figured in the Peggy O'Neill scandal, which broke up President's cabinet, in which Mrs. Royall took an active part.

The Peggy O'Neill Storm

You will remember that John H. Eaton, a senator from Tennessee and afterward Secretary of War, married Peggy O'Neill, the beautiful daughter of a tavern keeper, whom the wives of his official associates refused to receive. Vile charges were made against her character by a Washington clergyman, and President Jackson caused a searching investigation to be made. The evidence presented to sustain the charges was of a trivial character, and President Jackson, being convinced that it was false, threw himself into the social quarrel, invited Mrs. Eaton to receive for him at the White House, gave dinners in her honor, threatened to expel a foreign minister who snubbed the tavern keeper's daughter; sent his nephew's wife back to Tennessee because she sided with the cabinet ladies; induced Mr. VanBuren, his Secretary of State, to give a dinner for Mrs. Eaton, to which the ministers of all the principal powers and their wives were invited, and endeavored to force Washington society to accept a woman whom he believed to have been basely slandered. But, "by the Eternal," the hero of New Orleans ran up against something that he was powerless to overcome. The wives of the cabinet compelled their husbands to resign rather than associate with Peggy O'Neill-Eaton, and the greatest social cyclone that ever occurred in Washington whirled that unfortunate woman into oblivion.

Conviction of Mrs. Royall

Mrs. Royall naturally was in the most of the storm; she had a great deal to say on that subject in the papers, and her defense of the wife of the Secretary of War was another reason why she should be punished.

Her first examination resulted in her discharge from arrest on the ground that there was no law in the District of Columbia under which she could be punished for her alleged offense. Whereupon Chief Justice Cranch of the Supreme Court of the District discovered an antiquated English statute which would answer the purpose; a ducking school was made at the navy yard by his orders and Anne Royall

was brought to trial on an indictment of three counts. 1. For being a public nuisance; 2. For being a common brawler; 3. For being a common scold. Fifteen witnesses were summoned, among whom were George Waterston, librarian of Congress, and Mr. Timms, doorkeeper of the Senate. Three judges sat in the case and the jury brought in a verdict of guilty; but the court dared not impose a punishment that was unknown to America, although public clamor demanded it, and instead of using the ducking stool, sentenced Mrs. Royall to pay a fine of \$10 and placed her under bond to keep the peace. The Secretary of War and the Postmaster General signed the bond, and Mrs. Royall continued the publication of her paper without interruption.

Search for the Facts

Miss Porter, who has made an enviable reputation in literature and original investigation, has spent an unusual amount of labor and pains in searching for the facts in Anne Royall's life, which is full of mysteries. "Ancient records of the District of Columbia, of five states and of more than a score of cities have been scanned carefully," she says in her preface; "many libraries and bookshops have been ransacked; correspondence has been carried on with secretaries of the Masonic lodges and local historians. * * * Every line of Mrs. Royall's voluminous works has been read, and oral tradition has been sifted with care. My research has covered several years. The result is the discovery of biographical material which seems to show that Mrs. Royall was really far less black than she had been painted."

Miss Porter quotes the late Dr. Spofford of the Library of Congress, who said of Mrs. Royall: "That she was regarded as a horrid creature is most true. But it is equally true that Anne Royall had many friends wherever she went, and that she was not without unkindness and even charity. The world's judgment of erratic persons who become prominent in any age is apt to be severe, but a more impartial judgment holds in fair balance the good and evil in human character and refuses to condemn too harshly the struggling and industrious woman who in a ruder age than ours conquered adversity and ate her hard-earned bread to the sweat of her brow."

Miss Porter gives us a fascinating picture of a strange woman. She writes with sympathy, but with a clear judgment of the proprieties. She says that Anne Royall was probably one of the first persons in the United States to whom the word "crank" was applied. John Quincy Adams described her as a "virago errant, in enchanted armor." Amos Kendall said of her: "She had a tolerable education, much shrewdness and respectable talent; she procured her subsistence by publishing books in which she praised extravagantly those who bought her books or gave her money, and abused without measure those who refused or in any way incurred her displeasure."

Sketch of Mrs. Royall's Life

Miss Porter says that this is unjust, and believes that Mr. Kendall was prejudiced, because more than once in the newspapers Mrs. Royall exposed plans of the Jackson administration which he wished to have kept secret. "No ferret was ever keener after rats," she says, "than Mrs. Royall on the scent of political plots."

Miss Porter has gathered a great deal of interesting information concerning this remarkable woman, of whom very little was known before. She was born Anne Newport, June 11, 1769, in Maryland. Her father was William Newport, over whose life a mystery hangs and who was believed to have been an illegitimate son of a British sovereign. The child was brought up in a frontier cabin among wild flowers and wild beasts and wild men, and when she was very young married Capt. Royall, formerly of the United States army, of Sweet Springs, Botetourt county, Va., where she lived in happiness for sixteen years and met some of the first people of the country. They found this backwoods girl of brilliant mental attainments, generous of disposition, joyous of nature and careless of the world. Her husband died in 1813 and left her all of his property, but a nephew disputed the will, and after ten years of

litigation succeeded in depriving her of the estate on the ground that she and Capt. Royall were never legally married.

After her husband's death and while the estate was in litigation, Mrs. Royall spent her time in traveling through the country and writing her impressions of the places she visited. Miss Porter says she was an observant traveler. She visited every important town and city in the United States, and her impressions and descriptions are published in ten volumes. She was a pioneer woman journalist -- not the first woman journalist in the United States, but the earliest in Washington.

During thirty years of her active career as a writer here was not a famous man or woman in the country whom she did not interview. She met and talked with every man who became President of the United States, from George Washington to Abraham Lincoln, inclusive. Miss Porter gives a list of men that she interviewed. She also gives a list of towns and places she described, which covers seven printed pages, and a list of persons she discussed in her books and in her papers, which covers forty-six pages, beginning with the Adams family of Massachusetts, and ending with Mrs. David Yulee, wife of a United States senator from Florida. Included in this list is the name of every person who was in any way prominent socially, politically or otherwise in the United States from 1823 to 1847.

Aided by the Masons

After the decision of the court depriving her of an income Mrs. Royall was financially assisted by the Masons. This was due to her active interest in the case of William Morgan, who disappeared mysteriously from Genessee county, in New York, in 1826, and whose disappearance was attributed to the Masons. Anne Royall was not a person to remain neutral in a great agitation like that which followed the Morgan case. Her traditions and convictions were all on the side of Masonry, and she plunged into the controversy with intense zeal and energy. Recognizing the force and usefulness of her pen the Masonic fraternity employed her to travel throughout the country to defend their threatened cause, and she spent several years in that work. Then she came to Washington, and printed "The Black Book" which was very largely devoted to the defense of Masonry and to attacks upon the Calvinistic denominations, which were then arraigned against Masonry, which Mrs. Royall considered to be the noblest institution on earth. Although the Roman Catholic Church is and always has been more determined in its opposition to Freemasonry and all other secret societies than the Protestant sect, Mrs. Royall reserved her fury for the latter. This singular inconsistency is attributed to the influence of Father William Matthews, a Washington priest, who was her closest friend during her residence in this city, and the only human being besides herself who knew the history of her father, William Newport. "In his day Father Matthews kept many a secret for the nobility of England and the aristocrats of Maryland."

Publisher of Yellow Journal

After settling down in Washington Mrs. Royall published the first "yellow journal" ever known in the United States -- the prototype of a class of muck-raking publications and so-called "society papers" which now disgrace the profession of journalism, which deal exclusively with the weaknesses and vices and the mistakes of men and women and cater to a vicious craving for scandal. But Miss Porter insists that she was not a blackmailer; that she refused to invade the homes and private lives of ordinary citizens; that she refused to publish scandals that she did not believe to be true; that she confined her attacks to persons in public life and to those who were guilty of wrong and hypocrisy. She was merciless in her attacks upon humbugs and hypocrites, particularly among the clergy and men who made a pretense of piety that their conduct did justify and were prominent in religious affairs.

From the first number of "Paul Pry," her original paper, to the last issue of "The Huntress," her second publication, covering almost a quarter of a century, there was not a political battle or an official scandal in which Anne Royall did not have her say. And Miss Porter says: "She hit, too, with uncommon frequency, and always near the bull's-eye. Her pages contain much to offend a critical taste. Much that

her admirers could wish could never be printed, but, liked or disliked, her bitterest enemies must admit that her utterances never lacked point. * * * The local news in both 'Paul Pry' and 'The Huntress' was confined almost exclusively to the different departments of the government. She made frequent tours through the departments, spotting corrupt officials who in her judgment ought to be removed for the good of the service. * * * Mrs. Royall's manner of presenting her arguments was often abominably offensive. Anything more disagreeable than portions of "The Black Book" and some of the earlier numbers of 'Paul Pry' would be hard to find in print. * * * Her papers and books reached every town and village of the United States. They were read alike by friend and foe. They influenced the most important class of any age in any country. * * * Patriotism was the ruling passion of her life. The preservation of the government was a part of her very existence."

What Anne Royall Sought

Miss Porter enumerates the main causes for which Anne Royall fought, as follows:

- Entire separation of church and state in letter and spirit.
- Exposure and punishment of corrupt officials.
- Sound money.
- Public schools everywhere, wholly free from religious bias or control.
- Freemasonry.
- Justice to the Indians.
- Liberal immigration laws.
- Sunday transportation of mails.
- Internal improvements.
- Territorial expansion.
- Liberal appropriations for scientific investigation.
- Just tariff laws.
- No nullification.
- States rights in regard to the slavery question.
- The abolition of flogging in the navy.
- Betterment of conditions of wage earners.
- Free thought, free speech and a free press.
- Good works instead of long prayers.

Miss Porter's researches for "The Life of Anne Royall" began in 1904 and can hardly be said to have ended, for she hopes that the publication of her book may bring out additional material now hidden away, perhaps, in some farmhouse attic or under dusty volumes of somebody's grandfather's library.

The Evening Star, April 10, 1911, p. 18

Stone to Mark Grave

Memorial to Anne Royall, Traveler, Author and Newspaper Editor

The grave of Anne Royall, traveler, writer and newspaper editor, is to be marked by the erection of a memorial stone. For more than fifty years the mound in Congressional cemetery indicating the place where the body of Anne Royall was laid to rest has been unmarked.

Attention was recently called to this circumstance as well as to the events in the life of Mrs. Royall, especially since the publication of Miss Sarah H. Porter's book, giving an account of the stormy career of this rather remarkable woman. It has been decided by some who have become acquainted with the story of a life which was given up for the most part to unselfish effort in behalf of the people of the country of her birth that it would only be deserved -- if tarty -- tribute if some memorial should be placed at the grave.

It has been decided to erect a plain and unpretentious gravestone, and arrangements will be made to hold some time in the early part of the coming month a service at the grave.

The Evening Star, May 2, 1911, p. 20

Ann Royall Memorial

Memorial services will be conducted at the dedication of a monument to Anne Royall pioneer woman publicist in Congressional cemetery, Friday afternoon, May 12 at 5 o'clock. There will be introductory remarks by Dr. E.M. Gallaudet an address by Dr. Fred Gowing, and singing by Miss Roe Standish Sliney.

The Evening Star, May 6, 1911, p. 4

Anne Royall Monument

Memorial in Congressional Cemetery to Be Dedicated May 12

Arrangements have been completed for the dedication of a monument to Mrs. Anne Royall in the Congressional cemetery. Brief exercises will be held on the afternoon of the 12th instant at 5 o'clock at the grave. Dr. E.M. Gallaudet will preside, and an address will be delivered by Dr. Fred Gowing. The originator of the movement, which has resulted in the erection of the monument is Ralph Hayes of Philadelphia, who has had the cooperation of people of that city and of Washington.

More than fifty years have passed since Mrs. Royall was laid to rest after a career which was more than usually stormy. Through her books, descriptive of her travels in various portions of the country, and as the editor of two newspapers published in this city, Mrs. Royall had opportunity to express her views in regard to public men and measures, and also of a good many men and women who were not in public life.

As an insurgent in politics and religion, she disagreed with much of the current opinion of the day from the period of the early thirties to the close of her life, and she did not hesitate to say so with much vigor of language, often not free from personalities of an irritating character.

It is recognized, however, by those who are familiar with her aims in life that she was honest and sincerely attached to the country of her birth. It is in recognition of sterling qualities of head and of heart as well as of her strong and devoted patriotism that a tribute is to be paid to her memory.

The Evening Star, May 13, 1911

Monument is Dedicated to Mrs. Anne Royall

Pioneer Woman Publicist Honored Fifty-Seven Years After Her Death

Fifty-seven years after the close of the life of Anne Royall, known as the pioneer woman publicist, a newspaper writer and author of books of travel in the United States, several scores of men and women, mindful of the sterling qualities of her character, her love of the Union and her warm defense of Freemasonry in the days when it was bitterly assailed, gathered around her grave in Congressional cemetery to dedicate a rugged granite monument to her memory.

Dr. Fred Gowing of Philadelphia delivered the principal address. He stated that Mrs. Royall had established in this city, in 1831, her first newspaper, a weekly, known as "Paul Pry," and her second, known as "The Huntress." In 1835, among the first papers published in the District of Columbia. He also referred to her travel throughout the country and the numerous works on travel written by her. Reference was also made to her as the champion of Freemasonry in the dark days of its early history in the United States.

Mrs. Porter Delivered Address

Mrs. Sarah H. Porter, the biographer of Mrs. Royall, whose book aroused an interest in her life and writings, also delivered a brief address, in which she spoke with appreciation of the aid and encouragement received from various sources in carrying out the project which resulted in the erection of the monument. This cooperation of J.T. Earnshaw, the superintendent of the cemetery, had proved, she said, especially helpful.

Dr. E.M. Gallaudet presided and made the introductory remarks. Miss Rose Standish Sliney sang a hymn, "The Eternal Right," and Rev. Herbert Gallaudet pronounced the benediction.

The monument was raised largely through the personal efforts of Ralph L. Hayes of Philadelphia, who was custodian of the funds for its erection and among the personal contributors.

It is a rugged granite stone with polished face and top. It bears the inscription "Anne Royall, Pioneer Woman Publicist, 1769-1854. I pray that the union of these states may be eternal. Erected in appreciative recognition by a few men from Philadelphia and Washington.

Washington Post, Saturday, May 13, 1911.

Memorial to Mrs. Royall.

Stone is placed over grave of pioneer newspaper woman.

To perpetuate the memory of Mrs. Anne Royall, the pioneer newspaper woman of this country, a stone was dedicated yesterday by a number of her admirers over her grave at the Congressional Cemetery. Funds for the memorial were raised largely through the efforts of Ralph L. Hayes of Philadelphia.

Dr. Fred Gowing of Philadelphia delivered the principal address of the afternoon. He stated that Mrs. Royall organized the Paul Pry here in Washington in 1831 which was succeeded by the Huntress in 1835. These two papers were among the first to be published in this city.

Mrs. Sarah H. Porter, the biographer of Mrs. Royall spoke briefly. A hymn was sung by Miss S. Sliney. Dr. E.M. Gallaudet of Gallaudet College presided. Among those present from Philadelphia were William Dick, G. Eking, William J. Moran, Ralph L. Hayes and Dr. Fred Gowing.

[Note: See Sarah Stack for account of visit to Congressional Cemetery]

The Evening Star, December 20, 1930, p. A-3

Ann Royall Story Regales Natives

Duhamel Recalls "Paul Pry" Incidents at Society's Christmas Meeting

Historical observations and regular business activities sharing time with a musical program, the Society of Natives of the District of Columbia last night conducted its annual Christmas meeting at the Washington Club under the branches of a gigantic Christmas tree erected in the assembly room.

James F. Duhamel, historian of the society, traced briefly the erratic career of Ann Royall, critic and reformer-publisher of the capital in the second quarter of the last century. Born in Western Pennsylvania, the woman who later was to cause so much agitation here and who was to be one of the few private citizens to whom a memorial is erected in the Capital, journeyed into Virginia as an ignorant young woman in quest of employment, Mr. Duhamel said. The girl worked for Col. Royal, Revolutionary War figure, who became so appreciative of her apparent talents that he sought her hand in marriage.

Although illiterate when she married, Mrs. Royal was regarded as a "well educated woman" by the time her husband died, in 1818, Mr. Duhamel declared. She gained her knowledge from Col. Royal, who patiently tutored her in their home. Following the colonel's death, Ann Royal undertook the travels

through the country which formed the basis for her later famous writings. She journeyed through the South and subsequently visited the Northern States.

Founder of "Paul Pry"

Finally Ann Royal came to Washington in 1824. Here, Mr. Duhamel recited, she entered the field of reformer, which was to make her exceedingly unpopular, and led her, in fact, to the very edge of the ducking stool. The woman founded a newspaper, which she called Paul Pry. In its columns she criticized the officials of the city and many of its residents in such scathing terms that she was charged with being a common scold, the penalty of which in those days was an ignominious "dunking" on the official stool fastened to the end of a long wooded beam. Ann Royal was convicted, but she escaped with a fine. As a result of the action against her Paul Pry was suspended.

The courageous woman founded a second journal, the Huntress, which was published until a few days before its editor's death, in 1854. Mrs. Royal, the historian pointed out, was honored by the League of American Pen Women, which erected a monument to her in Congressional Cemetery.

Fred A. Emery, president of the society presented another of his brief papers on historical events associated with George Washington in recognition of the approaching Washington bicentennial celebration. Mr. Emery recalled that 147 years ago yesterday George Washington journeyed to Annapolis then the Capital of the infant Nation to present his resignation as chief of the Continental Armies to the Continental Congress before proceeding to Mount Vernon through what is now the District of Columbia.

Dead 131 Years

He recalled also that the first President died 131 years ago this month. During another December, Washington and his men suffered the cruel encampment at Valley Forge. Mr. Emery said it was December 19, 1791, that the Maryland legislature passed the act that "ratified and confirmed the cession of what is now the District of Columbia, with whose creation George Washington is so closely interlinked."

Members of the Society of Natives brought wrapped gifts to last night's meeting, which they piled in a great heap for presentation, with the season's greetings, to the Washington Home for Foundlings. The society's Christmas activities were arranged by a committee, of which Mrs. J.C. Kondrup was chairman, and which included Mrs. Ella C. Robinson, Mrs. Dora K. Muir, Mrs. Leslie Lipscomb and Frank Dowling.

[Note: Also see Proctor's *Washington and Environs*, pp. 326-327 .]