

THE ANTI-FEDERALIST ACTIVITIES OF ELEAZER OSWALD

Oswald was one of the acknowledged leaders in Pennsylvania of the movement against the adoption of the new Federal Constitution. His paper was at the service of his party and some of the most significant denunciations of the Constitution and the men who framed it appeared in its columns. On October 5, 1787 he printed the first of a series of twenty-four articles which were signed the "Centinel" and which deserve to rank with the Federalist papers in the literature of the day.⁴⁵ Party feeling ran very high and the language used in some of the newspaper attacks reflects the vigorous but crude vocabulary which some writers had at their command. As the Federalist party became progressively stronger, Oswald began to feel the pinch of hard times, for his subscribers continued to diminish. He requested those owing money to pay as soon as possible and reminded "those *high-flying* tools, *pigmies*, and *tiffanies* of power and the prevailing party" that the tables might be turned.⁴⁶

He did not confine his Anti-federalist activities to Pennsylvania but helped in the attempt to organize resistance to the adoption of the Constitution in Virginia and probably in New York. On June 13, 1788 Madison wrote Washington from Richmond:

"Oswald, of Philadelphia, has been here with letters for the anti-federal leaders from New York, and probably Philadelphia. He staid a very short time here, during which he was occasionally closeted with H—y, M—n, &c. . . ."⁴⁷

Madison also informed Hamilton of Oswald's visit and a week later wrote:

"I mentioned in my last, that Oswald had been here in consultation with the Anti-Federal leaders. The contents of your letter confirm the idea that a negotiation for delay is on foot between the opposition here, and with you."⁴⁸

It has several times been stated that Oswald challenged Hamilton to a duel over some personal quarrel which grew from the struggle over the ratification of the constitution. Leake says:

"The violence with which each party urged its arguments, and the acrimony which was exhibited against each other, in their respective party papers, gave rise to numerous quarrels and con-

⁴⁵ Reprinted in full in McMaster and Stone, *Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution 1787-1788*, Philadelphia, 1888, pp. 565-698. Many other articles from the *Independent Gazetteer* are also reprinted.

⁴⁶ McMaster and Stone, *op. cit.* p. 15.

⁴⁷ *Letters and other Writings of James Madison*, N. Y., 1884. Vol. I, p. 399.

⁴⁸ J. C. Hamilton, *History of the Republic of the United States of America*, as traced in the writings of Alexander Hamilton, N. Y., 1859. Vol. III, pp. 470-1.