Aegis & Intelligencer

*The Southern Aegis* [LCCN: sn83016108] was established in 1856 in Bel Air as a pro-southern paper by John Cox. It is an example of the important function local newspapers served in responding to the political debates dividing the country. Cox, who formerly edited the *Harford Gazette and General Advertiser* [LCCN: sn89060107], maintained an editorial tone that was hostile to the Union. For example, in July 1861 he published a disparaging description of a Pennsylvania infantry regiment that passed through Bel Air. Cox also engaged in a spirited editorial contest with the rival Unionist paper in Bel Air, the *National American* [LCCN: sn83016901]. His partner after 1858 was John Carroll Walsh. Walsh’s interests were more focused on agricultural and transportation developments. Ultimately, Cox found northern Maryland to be barren ground for his advocacy of the Confederate cause. In March 1862 he announced his withdrawal from journalism, and sold his interest in the paper to the prominent local lawyer, A.W. Bateman. The paper was then known as *The Southern Aegis, and Harford County Intelligencer* [LCCN: sn88065733].

Under Bateman and his successors, the *Aegis & Intelligencer* [LCCN: sn83016107] assumed a conservative Unionist political stance. Frederick W. Baker published the newspaper in the post-Civil War years (1864 – 1894). It was during this period that Bel Air and the surrounding region experienced economic growth due to its emergence as a major center for food canning and distribution. Although Baker’s editorial positions often were violently opposed to the federal government and any advancement for African Americans under Reconstruction, the *Aegis* also documented the rising prosperity of the town. Stories recorded the arrival of the American Union Telegraph Company and its new building in 1880, the construction of the Maryland Central Railway, which reached Bel Air in 1883, and the growth of the Bulett Carriage Company as it built the largest factory of its kind on the east coast in 1889. A race track opened in 1878 and the town’s neighborhoods soon featured impressive Victorian houses, new church structures, banks, fraternal organizations and a thriving social scene. The pages of the paper also preserve evidence of the appearance of eastern European immigrants who came to work in the canning and related industries.

John D. Worthington, Sr. purchased the *Aegis* in 1904. The newspaper remained in the Worthington family’s hands until the owner of the *Baltimore Sun*, the Times Mirror Corporation, acquired it in 1986.

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