

**030 BELL, JOHN****Bookseller****Winchester**

Bookseller in Winchester (1787-1836), ostensibly the first to conduct a book store there.

John Bell was the son of an early settler of the town of Winchester, also named John, who served in the Virginia Line during the Revolutionary War. The scion kept a dry-goods store there, which was located on Boscawen Street near its intersection with Loudon after 1807; it was a location that came to be known as "Bell's Corner" as his son and heir continued his business there for many years as well. His newspaper advertisements, from the start of the town's first weekly in 1787, show that many books were available in his store; however, Bell did not specify titles, only the genres of his wares, mixed in among his broad descriptions of the store's other goods. Occasionally, Bell was a part of national subscription-publishing efforts by book-printing firms elsewhere, resulting in his name appearing as a "publisher" of such imprints – a misidentification which has led some bibliographers to report his presence in Richmond, and not Winchester.

Bell's life-long presence there gave the merchant a considerable reputation in the public sphere. He was an elder of the town's Old Presbyterian Church and served briefly as a justice of the county court; he was also a member of several committees appointed by the corporation council to oversee public-works projects, most notably in building Winchester's fire-fighting system of engines and hydrants. That standing was enhanced by his marriage to the daughter of the county's leading state-court judge, Robert Sherrard, in 1796, and by the large family that the union produced. Bell was still an active figure in the Frederick County seat when he died in April 1836; his shoes were filled promptly by his son, John N. Bell, who would soon develop a similar prominence in Winchester.

***Personal Data***

Born:	---	1768	Winchester, Frederick County, Virginia
Married [1]:	Jan. 12	1792	Mary Sherrard @ Winchester, Virginia
Died:	Aor. 2	1836	Winchester, Frederick County, Virginia
Children:	John N.; Robert; Nancy; Sarah D.; and other unrecorded sisters.		

Sources: Imprints; Russell, *Winchester*. Cartmell, *Shenandoah Pioneers*.