

083 CARTER, JOHN**Editor & Publisher****Lynchburg**

Editor of the *Lynchburg Weekly Museum* (1797-98) for John Davis (124) and publisher of the subsequent *Lynchburg Weekly Gazette* (1798-1803).

Carter was a native of Amelia County who remained tied to his birthplace for all of his life. But Amelia's rural character offered fewer opportunities than did the growing James River port of Lynchburg, so he pursued a professional career there. Carter's quest put him into the circle of John Davis, son of a prominent Quaker merchant and son-in-law of the town's founder, John Lynch. In the spring of 1797, Davis acquired the press office of Robert Mosby Bransford (049), who had just ended a three-year-long effort at publishing that town's first newspaper. Davis understood that Lynchburg's continued growth was tied to the success of its merchant community, and a weekly advertiser was a key to that outcome. So he picked up where Bransford had left off, launching the *Lynchburg Weekly Museum* in June 1797.

John Carter was a part of Davis's office, probably from the start; he would also become his employer's successor. In the 1790s, the Quaker communities of Virginia were enmeshed in a debate over slavery, specifically whether they could continue to live in a state where it was condoned. Many Virginia Friends had already migrated to Ohio and Kentucky to escape the tarnishing influence of that peculiar institution, and Davis's family was about to join them. In 1798, as part of his family's divestiture of its properties around Lynchburg, Davis sold his paper to Carter; shortly thereafter he joined his father near Cincinnati.

With the change in ownership came a change in both title and identity. Carter recast his weekly journal in a more mercantile dress, as the *Lynchburg Gazette*. Its identification with the town's commercial interests proved profitable. Such is also indicated by his successful navigation of the problems often associated with untrained proprietors engaging trained craftsmen. As a result, Carter could buy out his unnamed partners at the end of 1799 with the capital he had now accumulated; sometime in the summer of 1802, he made his locally-trained printer, John Weaver (433), a partner with him, apparently anticipating his eventual retirement from journalism. The pair continued the *Gazette* together until the end of 1803, when Carter sold his interest in the *Gazette* to Weaver, retiring to the life of a gentleman farmer at his Amelia County plantation, Mulberry Grove. He died there nearly fifty years later, a major figure in the county.

Weaver was not so fortunate. He died unexpectedly just over a year after buying Carter's weekly. His three elder brothers took control of the *Gazette* as part of the administration Weaver's intestate estate; they closed the paper in September 1805 after the mortgaged press office was sold at auction to John Graham (183), a respected physician in the town; Graham understood the need for a weekly mercantile advertiser and so wanted to continue the journal; not being a trained printer, he also hired transient journeymen to help him publish his new *Lynchburg Star* starting that October.

Personal Data

Born: Mar. 25 1775 Amelia County, Virginia
Married [1]: In 1798 Mary Carter @ Nottaway County, Virginia
Married [2]: Mar. 8 1814 Oney Pollard @ Amelia County, Virginia
Died: Dec. 27 1852 Amelia County, Virginia
Children: William R. (b. 1809), Sallie M. (b. 1812), Beverley A. (b. 1813),
Mary E. (b. 1820)

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Yancey, *Lynchburg*. Cabell, *Sketches of Lynchburg*; genealogical data from Carter and Davis family charts posted on Ancestry.com (August 2012).