

## 147 DOUTHAT, ROBERT

**Publisher**

**Staunton**

Publisher of *Virginia Gazette* (1795-97) of Staunton as partner to John Wise (455).

Douthat was an Augusta County merchant and miller who served as a justice of the county court in the 1790s. He was also the town's first postmaster under the original federal postal laws, a director of the local fire company, and treasurer of Staunton's Masonic lodge. In all these roles, Douthat promoted the development of the Augusta County seat as a nexus for commerce between the tidewater east and the trans-Appalachian west. Hence he was also a noteworthy land speculator in Randolph, Greenbrier, Montgomery, and Kanawha counties in modern-day West Virginia.

At the end of 1795, Douthat evidently financed the purchase of Staunton's only newspaper by printer John Wise (born Johan Weiss) from its founder William Throckmorton (415), taking a majority interest in the weekly until September 1796 as a result. At that time, Wise brought in a new partner named Adams (001) to assist him in buying-out Douthat's interest; Wise could then gain full control of the paper in early 1797 by purchasing Adams' minority share. Such a financially supportive role is one that Douthat apparently assumed frequently, as he is seen providing security for many individuals in the county over about two decades.

Yet Douthat eventually removed to nearby Botetourt County, building a new mill complex there sometime after 1804. He evidently died there after 1820, though several historians have confused him with a like-named attorney from Botetourt County who established an influential legal practice in Richmond around 1810. That Douthat may have been a nephew of his, but sparse genealogical evidence for the family precludes a definitive link.

### ***Personal Data***

Born: ca. 1765 in Augusta County, Virginia

Married ca. 1785 Anne Lewis @ Augusta County, Virginia

Local histories report that marriage produced no offspring.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Waddell, *Annals of Augusta County*; Peyton, *Augusta County*; Brown, *Freemasonry in Staunton*; real-estate notice in *Alexandria Advertiser*, 6 Nov 1798.