

150 DUFFY, WILLIAM

Printer & Publisher

Lynchburg

Publisher of the *Lynchburg Press* (1819-20), first with Jacob Haas (196), then independently, and finally with John Hampden Pleasants (330).

William Duffy first appears in the record of the American print-trade in Philadelphia in 1809, suggesting his training in the craft there. His later association with the U.S. Catholic Church suggests that he may have been one of the many Irish émigrés who made that port their refuge in the 1790s and early 1800s. By 1813, he is primarily acting as a copperplate printer, and as such had a major role in producing the first annual report of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions for the United States in 1815.

In 1816, Duffy left Philadelphia to establish a small job-printing, bookselling, and stationery store in Georgetown, District of Columbia, near to Georgetown College (now University). It appears that Duffy made the move to provide printing for Leonard Neale, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Baltimore and former president of the college who still resided on the campus. Over the next two years, seven of the nine titles he published in Georgetown were Catholic-oriented ones, with two openly initiated by Neale. But evidently that patronage evaporated with Neale's death in 1817. Thereafter, Duffy published only two books, both for Elijah Weems, a nephew of the itinerant bookseller Mason Locke Weems (435), for sale at his Georgetown bookstore. By mid-1818, Duffy also began advertising his store in the District's papers, adding to his wares more traditional items like wallpaper and blank books.

Duffy's Georgetown residence, however, was about to come to an end. In early 1819, he appeared in the Lynchburg office of Jacob Haas and Samuel G. Dawson (131), publishers of the *Lynchburg Press*. The preceding November, Weems had announced a major expansion of his store's wares, suggesting that he had acquired Duffy's inventory at that time, allowing for Duffy's relocation. Apparently this was the start of a plan for Haas & Dawson to both retire from their twice-weekly responsibilities. In April 1819, Duffy purchased Dawson's interest in the paper and press, permitting the editor-physician to return to his practice in nearby Salem. The new firm of Haas & Duffy survived just six weeks before Duffy bought out Haas as well, taking full control of the journal as William Duffy & Co. and conducting an office employing four other hands.

Just who Duffy's unnamed partner-backers were is unclear, but within a year he was openly associated with the family of James Pleasants, then one of Virginia's two U.S. Senators and soon to be governor of the Commonwealth. Recognizing that he was not guaranteed the journalistic support of the Democratic party's principal organ, the *Richmond Enquirer* of Thomas Ritchie (360), Pleasants moved to build a newspaper base of his own in Lynchburg. In April 1820, he arranged the purchase of an equal interest in the *Lynchburg Press* from Duffy by his son, John Hampden Pleasants, then a local attorney. Then in September, Duffy sold his interest in the business to the younger Pleasants as well. In August 1822, Pleasants acquired the competing *Lynchburg Gazette* and merged the two newspapers to create *The Virginian*, a journal that openly supported his father's agenda, principally advocating greater

representation in the General Assembly for the state's fast-growing western population.

As the young lawyer was not a trained printer, Duffy may have stayed with Pleasants as the press manager until that subsequent merger, as Joseph Butler (068), a veteran newspaper proprietor, joined the office at that time. What is clear, though, is that Duffy now pursued a new trade there as a brewer. While he called the venture the "Lynchburg Brewery," it was known and remembered by locals as "Duffy's Brewery" on Twelfth Street. The newspaper record suggests that he developed a considerable clientele in the Valley regions to the west of Lynchburg well into the 1820s. But when those notices cease, so does all trace of Duffy in the historic record. His further life and fate remain unknown.

No Personal Data yet discovered.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Philadelphia directories, 1809-17; Federal Decennial Census, 1820; Cabell, *Sketches of Lynchburg*; Shade, *Democratizing the Old Dominion*; newspaper notices in *National Messenger* (Georgetown), 1818, and *Herald of the Valley* (Fincastle), 1820-22.