

155 DuVAL, PHILIP

Printer, Publisher

Staunton, Richmond

Publisher of the *Staunton Observer* (1814) with Joseph Butler (069), of the *Richmond Daily Compiler* (1813-14, 1816-19) with Leroy Anderson (011) and Daniel Trueheart (420), and of the *Virginia Argus* (1815) with John McDonald Burke (065).

DuVal is something of an enigma; while one historian has claimed that he was the one son of the wealthy Henrico County planter Samuel DuVal "who was unable to prove himself," he did manage to remain an influential presence in the Virginia printing trade for two decades, especially in Jeffersonian circles. And his being older than his partners suggests that DuVal used familial assets acquired after his father's 1784 death to finance those ventures.

Richmond's first successful daily newspaper was also DuVal's first journalistic enterprise at the advanced age of fifty-six. In May 1813, he joined Leroy Anderson, a Richmond-based author and schoolmaster, to issue the *Daily Compiler*. However, Duval was soon involved in plans to publish a Jeffersonian paper in Staunton, nearer to his family's Buckingham County estates. When he was introduced to printer Joseph Butler that fall, DuVal shifted focus to the valley. By February 1814, he had sold his interest in the *Compiler* to Anderson, and began circulating a prospectus for the *Staunton Observer*, to be edited by the peripatetic Gerard Banks (019). However, his new weekly was a victim of bad timing, publishing for just three issues in August 1814. First, British forces invaded the Chesapeake and then marched on Washington just as the *Observer* started; the invasion disrupted supply networks and triggered militia call-ups throughout Virginia, with several newspapers suspending from the resulting absence of their tradesmen. Secondly, news of the impending death of Samuel Pleasants (331), the venerable Republican publisher in Richmond, began spreading within the trade at that time; DuVal would be an important part of the dispersal of his estate later that year. And lastly, Staunton and "Old Federalist Augusta" then supported a very stable Federalist journal – the ironically titled *Republican Farmer* – which had already repelled four Jeffersonian challengers, most recently in 1813. So a quick death was obviously best.

Back in Richmond, Pleasants died in October 1814, and his widow, Deborah Pleasants (328), put the entirety of his *Virginia Argus* office up for sale in December. His shop foreman, John McDonald Burke moved quickly to purchase the business, bringing Duval in as his financial partner. The promissory note that the resultant Philip DuVal & Co. gave the estate was to be paid off by selling off the office's printing plant and book store. In late March 1815, Burke joined with journeyman printer Arthur G. Booker (041) to acquire the printing plant; shortly thereafter, DuVal partnered with Frederick A. Mayo (284), a bookseller and bookbinder, to buy the Argus bookstore. But Burke's arrangement began to come apart that December when Booker announced his retirement for reasons of ill-health; Burke convinced DuVal to join the printing firm in order to retain its primary contract, the religious weekly *Christian Monitor* of John Holt Rice (354). However, DuVal evidently recognized the tenuous financial standing of Burke's enterprise and withdrew from his businesses in April 1816 after just four months; DuVal sold his interest in the bookstore to John Frayser (174), a bookbinder from Petersburg, and then his interest in the printing office to David Burke (064), John's brother,

while taking the lucrative contract for the *Monitor* with him. Burke's empire barely lived out the rest of the year, with the two brothers absconding from Richmond in January 1817, debts unpaid.

In May 1816, DuVal began the rebuilding process, forming an alliance with Daniel Trueheart and Thomas Ritchie (360), publisher of the *Richmond Enquirer*, in a job-printing firm that would publish the *Christian Monitor*. Almost simultaneously, DuVal and Trueheart acquired DuVal's old *Daily Compiler* from its current owners, William C. Shields (381) and Louis Hue Girardin (180), as both of those men moved on to new ventures. Now tied into the growing Ritchie circle, DuVal experienced three years of profitable stability. But the aging publisher was also considering retirement during those years. In October 1819, the sixty-two year-old DuVal sold his interest in both ventures, with the job-printing office being absorbed into Ritchie's *Enquirer* office and Trueheart forging an independent path with the *Compiler*.

For the next few years, DuVal alternated his residence between Richmond and Buckingham, while still keeping his eye on Virginia's print trade. In early 1821, he circulated a proposal for a new non-partisan mercantile paper in Richmond, the *Commercial Journal*, but found little interest. DuVal also was a part of the January 1824 transfer of Lynchburg's *Virginian* by John Hampden Pleasants (330) and Joseph Butler, his old Staunton partner, to a former Ritchie apprentice, Richard H. Toler. So while the sale of his Richmond businesses in 1819 ended his active involvement there, it clearly did not end his interest in journalism.

DuVal's new interest in Lynchburg may seem surprising, but it should not be. Not only was the town closer to his Buckingham home than Richmond, family members lived there. Toler was husband to his niece and his daughter Lucy had married a local attorney. And so it was in her Lynchburg home that the recently-widowed former publisher died in June 1838, just shy of his eighty-first birthday.

NB: Several family histories suggest that DuVal relocated to Florida between 1824 and 1830 to join his nephew, William Pope DuVal, governor of that state; his son Samuel did join WPD there and died in Pensacola on the date they give for DuVal's death; moreover he is seen in surviving Buckingham County records after 1830. Other histories suggest that DuVal died in Richmond in 1817, but his professional associations after that date demonstrate the error; rather, his son Philip Jr. died then and was buried in Shockoe Hill Cemetery.

Personal Data

Born:	in	1757	Buckingham County, Virginia.
Married	ca.	1797	Elizabeth Christian @ Campbell County, Virginia.
Died:	June 16	1838	Lynchburg, Virginia.
Children:	Philip Jr. (1806-17); Samuel Henry (1807-41); Elizabeth P. (b. 1812); Lucy Claiborne (1814-74); Mary Frances (1823-93).		

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cappon; Hubbard on Richmond; advertising notices in *Virginia Argus*, 1813-16, and *Richmond Enquirer*, 1813-21; obituary in Lynchburg *Virginian*, 21 June 1838; genealogical data from Duval family charts on USGenWeb (September 2012).