

## 170 FOUSHEE, JOHN H. – [DR. JOHN HARMANSON FOUSHEE]

### Publisher

### Richmond

Publisher of *The Press* (1800) at Richmond with Meriwether Jones (242), Alexander McRae (299), and James Lyon (274); brother-in-law of Thomas Ritchie (360).

Foushee was a well-respected and accomplished physician, son of the equally distinguished Dr. William Foushee. Both were instrumental in vaccination efforts against small pox in the state between 1790 and 1810, establishing a clinic for such just outside Richmond in 1799. That was also the year that the younger Foushee received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and published his doctoral treatise on "strictures in the urethra" in Philadelphia; he was also then a member of that city's Medical and Chemical societies.

With the passage of the Alien & Sedition Acts in 1798, father and son became key figures in the Republican "central committee" of Richmond, frequently referred to as the "Richmond Junto" in juxtaposition to the "Essex Junto" of Massachusetts Federalists. The young doctor gained his initial political notice as chair of a June 1798 meeting of Richmond Republicans, aged sixteen to twenty-five, supporting resolves issued by the central committee, chaired by his father, which would lead to the passage of the Virginia Resolution in fall 1799.

At about this same time, Foushee was enlisted as a partner in an attempt to build a network of Jeffersonian papers to counter the influence of the then numerically superior Federalist ones. The focal point of that effort would be a "national paper" published in Richmond by Foushee, Alexander McRae (a member of the Council of State), and Meriwether Jones (the state's public printer); the trio would employ as the paper's managing editor James Lyon, son of the recently persecuted Vermont congressman and publisher Matthew Lyon. They clearly stated their rationale in their November 1799 prospectus: "buy up the Republican papers, and put them down by harassing and ridiculous suits for libel and sedition, point out the necessity of establishing one beyond the reach of accidents." They were seeking patrons in locales across the country who would act as redistribution agents for the paper's content and for the imprints their press office would also produce. Yet their Richmond paper was only part of a broader plan; that winter, Lyon partnered with three practical printers to publish new Jeffersonian papers in Staunton, Petersburg, and Georgetown, D.C., which all drew on the output of the Jones, McRae, and Foushee combine in Richmond. Foushee took specific responsibility for contracting journeyman printers and supplies for their new press office, one which would publish the controversial tract of James Thomason Callender (075) – *The Prospect Before Us* – the following spring.

This grand effort proved remarkably short lived, as it became ever more apparent over the course of the ensuing months that Jefferson would defeat the sitting Federalist president, John Adams, in the 1800 election. *The Press* closed after just two months in February 1800, and Lyon dissolved his various partnerships during the summer. Most of the workers in their Richmond press office were absorbed into the independent shops of Meriwether Jones and Samuel Pleasants (331), both members of the Republican central committee as well.

With the dissolution of the Jones, McRae, & Foushee partnership in mid-1800, the young

physician apparently ended his career in journalism; but he may have later been a part of the sale of Meriwether Jones's office and newspaper to Thomas Ritchie in early 1804, as the young editor became the doctor's brother-in-law by marrying Isabella Foushee in January 1807. Though no longer taking part in that era's partisan journalism, Foushee remained an active presence in civic affairs, and a behind the scenes political leader, as he continued a notable medical practice. In late 1800, he was a founding trustee of the Jefferson College in Amelia County; likewise he was a founding trustee of the Richmond Academy in 1803. That same year, Foushee served on a committee that developed a plan to divide Richmond into three wards as part of a reform of the city's administration. He also served as the city's delegate in the General Assembly in 1805 and 1806.

Yet Foushee's contributions to his community were cut short by his unexpected death in late 1812 at the relatively young age of thirty-three. Remarkably, his passing was not noted in either Ritchie's or Pleasants's journals, which were both inundated with the business of an Assembly then sitting. It was left to the Federalist editor Augustine Davis (119) to present a memorial in the *Virginia Patriot*; Davis avoided his political activity and focused his public character, describing Foushee as "unquestionably one of the first physicians of the age." His funeral that day was attended by a wide swath of Richmond society.

### ***Personal Data***

Born:            in 1779    Northampton County, Virginia.  
Married        July 4 1791    Nancy Garlington Cralle @ Northampton Cty, Va.  
Died:         Nov. 15 1812    Richmond, Virginia.  
Children:     One son recorded: Griffin Henry Foushee (b. 1793).

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; *Marriages of Northern Neck of Virginia*; notices in *Virginia Argus* (1798-1806), *New York Gazette* (1799-1800), and *Philadelphia Aurora* (1807); obituary in *Virginia Patriot*, 17 Nov. 1812; genealogical data from Foushee family charts posted on Ancestry.com (October 2012).