

## 196 HAAS, JACOB

### Publisher

### Lynchburg

Publisher of the *Lynchburg Press* (1811-19) in partnership with John F. Lamb (259), Samuel Bransford (050), Samuel G. Dawson (131), and William Duffy (150), who was his successor.

Haas made his first appearance in the trade in 1811 as a trained journeyman, suggesting that he had apprenticed at a press near his family's Shenandoah County farm. Yet while his family origin can be established, the commonality of his name among the Germans who settled the Shenandoah Valley makes tracing his other associations difficult. This Jacob Haas was a second generation descendant of John Haas, the first of that name to come to the Old Dominion. Named for his father, a respected farmer and community leader, he was also the second of ten children born to Christina Sonner Haas. His parents attended a Lutheran Church frequented by the Rev. Paul Henkel (217), the patriarch of the Henkel Press in New Market, just south of the Haas family farm. So it seems likely that Haas was trained there.

In the spring of 1811, William W. Gray (193) determined to sell his interest in the two-year-old *Lynchburg Press* in order to return to the press offices of Richmond. Haas stepped into the role of the paper's proprietor in conjunction with a financial partner, John F. Lamb, Jr., a young Lynchburg-area physician; together the partners engaged Samuel K. Jennings (236), a popular Methodist minister and physician in town, as their editor. Jennings had been the paper's original editorial voice in 1809, when journeyman printer Fleming Grantland (185) came to Lynchburg to publish a new weekly in competition with the *Lynchburg Star* of Dr. James Graham (183). From 1805 onward, Jennings had been a target of criticism from Graham, thus Grantland found an able and willing editor with a considerable local following to pair with his craft skills. However, Gray had taken on the editorial side of the business in his single year of ownership, supplanting Jennings. But with his return to the editorial seat, Jennings's efforts brought about the death of Graham's *Star* in early 1812, less than a year after his return, even as he continued both his medical practice and his ministry.

For the firm of Haas & Lamb, this was both proprietors' first newspaper venture; it proved a successful one for about four years, readily surviving the disruptions of the War of 1812, while promoting the interests of local Republicans. The press also issued imprints advancing the Methodist cause so important to Jennings, even as Haas embraced a Lutheran faith and Lamb a Presbyterian one. Of particular note was their publication of two new works in 1812 by the evangelical preacher Lorenzo Dow (148): the oft-reprinted tract *Dialogue between Two Characters; Curious and Singular!!* and *A Journey from Babylon to Jerusalem or The Road to Peace and True Happiness*, a 250-page opus which was the most substantial imprint that the Lynchburg printing office of Haas & Lamb ever produced.

By 1815, however, both Lamb and Jennings voiced preferences for medicine over journalism and moved to turn exclusively to their practices. That summer, Jennings left Lynchburg for Norfolk, where he then manufactured and marketed a "portable warm and hot bath" for therapeutic use while continuing to preach at the invitation of Methodist congregations on the Southside; eventually, he would become an important medical and religious figure in Baltimore. In October, Lamb sold his interest in the *Press* office to Samuel Bransford, a local

merchant with extensive familial and commercial connections in the neighborhood. It is clear that Haas was fortunate with this transition; Bransford saw the opportunity as a lucrative investment for his growing business portfolio; he remained Haas's partner for two years. In October 1817, though, Haas changed the direction of his venture. He induced Bransford to sell his interest in the *Press* to Samuel G. Dawson (131), both his neighbor and a nephew to his young wife. Dawson was yet another Lynchburg physician; he came to that profession by his service in the War of 1812. After the war, he began his journalism career by financing William W. Gray in publishing his Lynchburg-based Republican campaign paper, *The Echo*, employing Gerard Banks (019) as its editor. That association continued until the fall of 1817 when Gray again returned to Richmond. Haas invited Dawson to buy Bransford out of the *Lynchburg Press* and take on the editorial role then held by Jennings. The change, like subsequent moves Haas made, reflects an ambition to share the rewards of a successful business with family members. But the changes unsettled the journal's stability, particularly after the pair converted their weekly into a twice-weekly paper. So the firm of Haas & Dawson sold their now declining business in spring 1819 to William Duffy; he came from Georgetown, Maryland, to both acquire and reinvigorate their *Press*, first buying Dawson's interest in April, and then that of Haas at the end of May. But Duffy's proprietorship was just a year old when he was approached to sell the *Press* to a new set of owners. The local political backers of the soon-to-be governor, James Pleasants, wanted to bring his son, John Hampden Pleasants (330), into the mix as Duffy's partner and editor. Four months later, in September 1820, the Pleasants faction bought Duffy's share as well, sending the printer off to a successful new career as a brewer while they transformed the *Lynchburg Press* into the political voice of Virginia's emerging Whig party.

That Haas was willing to sell his paper and press to Duffy is significant; he had obviously moved on to new challenges. His wife Susannah died just before his 1819 sale of the *Press*, suggesting that her death had instigated that sale. He remarried just as the sale went through, taking another Shenandoah County native, Catherine Pittman, as his wife; that marriage helped to solidify a set of links then being forged between four families there: the Haas, Pittman, Sooner, and Funkhouser clans. All four sent settlers to Harrison County, Indiana, just west of Louisville, between 1808 and 1838; Haas joined the migration in 1834, adding his growing family to those of his wife's two siblings and eight cousins already there. By then, he had divested himself of his remaining business and real-estate interests in the Lynchburg area and had retired from his public service commitments in adjacent Amherst County, where he had been a county-court justice and a delegate to the General Assembly. Now in his forties, Haas was content to be an evangelical, having taken vows in 1831 as a United Brethren minister at the Mill Creek Church in Shenandoah County, following a path like that trod by five of the printer-sons of Paul Henkel. On his relocation to Indiana, Haas became a major land owner, building a large farm with his Virginia wealth, while starting and serving a new congregation in the northwestern part of Harrison County.

Evidently Haas retired from the business life with the dawning of the Civil War, withdrawing to his farm where he lived out his remaining years. Haas died there in September 1876 and was buried in the yard of his beloved church in Frenchtown.

***Personal Data***

Born: Nov. 10 1790 Narrow Passage Creek, Shenandoah County, Va.  
Married [1]: June 11 1815 Susannah Goode Tinsley @ Amherst County, Va.  
Married [2]: Apr. 7 1819 Catherine Pitman @ Shenandoah County, Va.  
Died: Sept. 28 1876 Frenchtown, Harrison County, Indiana.  
Children: By Susannah: Mary Ann (b. 1816), Susan (b.1818); two step children.  
By Catherine: William (b. 1820), Samuel (b. 1821), Virginia (b. 1824),  
Julia A. (b. 1827), Joseph (b. 1832), and Elizabeth (b. 1836).

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cappon; Cabell, *Sketches of Lynchburg*; Cartmell, *Shenandoah Pioneers: Wayland, German Element*; various uncorrected genealogies of Haas, Pittman, Sooner, and Funkhouser families posted on Ancestry.com and USGenWeb.com, with birth/death dates for Haas & Pittman established from grave markers recorded on Findagrave.com (all October 2012).

Much of the genealogical data on Haas available online is incorrect, drawn from repeated use of flawed nineteenth century sources; dates and names reported here are based on the historical record where practicable rather than on those sources; that approach makes list of offspring here a conjectural one.