

259 LAMB, JOHN F. JR. – [DR. JOHN FERGUSSON LAMB, JR.]

Publisher

Lynchburg

Publisher of the *Lynchburg Press* (1811-15) in partnership with Jacob Haas (196).

Lamb was an accomplished and widely-respected physician who was proprietor of a Virginia newspaper for a short time early in his adult life. It appears that he was born in 1791 near Lynchburg, given the numerous Lambs in the neighborhood and later in life descriptions of Lamb as "a true Southerner ... [whose] connections were all in the South;" by 1811, he was practicing medicine there at just age twenty. In those early years, Lamb also came to know Samuel K. Jennings (236), another local doctor; he was also a popular, evangelical Methodist minister, who officiated at Lamb's wedding in 1812 and was the key personality in launching his journalism career.

From 1805 onward, Jennings had been a target of criticism from Lynchburg's solitary paper, the *Lynchburg Star*, and its editor and proprietor, James Graham (183); another local doctor, Graham condemned the evangelical fervor seen in the Methodist revivals then sweeping southwestern Virginia which Jennings promoted. Thus when journeyman printer Fleming Grantland (185) came to Lynchburg in early 1809 to publish a new weekly in competition with Graham, the *Lynchburg Press*, he found in Jennings an able and willing editor with a considerable local following. For five of the next six years, Jennings was the newspaper's editorial voice, leaving that role only during the year-long proprietorship of William Waller Gray (193), which followed Grantland's departure in May 1810 to join his brother Seaton (186) in his Georgia press office. At that time, Gray sold the *Press* to the firm of Haas & Lamb; they returned Jennings to the editorial seat that he had filled before, and his 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.

The role that Lamb played in this new alliance was evidently more financial than editorial, though he likely did contribute content during Jennings's absences from Lynchburg. Haas was the trained journeyman in this company, recently arrived in the town from Shenandoah County where he apparently apprenticed in the trade at the Henkel Press in New Market. So while 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 particular interests of local Republicans. The press also produced imprints advancing the Methodist cause so important to Jennings, even as Lamb embraced a Presbyterian faith and Haas a Lutheran 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 (050), 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, until Haas brought in Samuel G. Dawson (131), a neighbor and relative, as his partner. Eventually, Lamb left the Lynchburg area for Frankford, Pennsylvania, a northern suburb of Philadelphia, though retaining familial property there for the rest of his life. Indeed, he is last seen in Virginia records involved in an 1850 chancery court suit disputing a settlement of the estate of his only daughter's first husband. By 1825, just ten years after selling out of the *Lynchburg Press*, Lamb was settled in a Pennsylvania practice that gave him a reputation that legitimized his endorsements in national advertisements of patent medicines produced in Philadelphia. Thereafter, occasional articles about his medical successes appeared in local papers there. Thus he was elected president of the Philadelphia County Medical Society in 1853; that society published his last imprint the next year: an address to the membership on exercising caution in their diagnoses and treatments. Lamb's association with the society continued until at least 1862, when he was named a delegate to the annual meeting of the state medical society. Then age seventy-one, the report of Lamb's election proved his last appearance in a public capacity. But the funeral at his residence in 1869 evidently drew a crowd, as those members of the College of Physicians, the County Medical Society, and the Northern Medical Association who wanted to attend the services were advised to use cars provided by the undertakers to limit any disturbance to his neighbors.

Personal Data

Born: Sept. 1791 Campbell County, Virginia?
Married: Jan. 2 1812 Susannah Page Taylor @ Lynchburg, Virginia.
Died: April 26 1869 Philadelphia (was Frankford), Pennsylvania.
Children: Walter Richardson (d. 1814); Mary Ann (m. twice).

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cabell, *Sketches of Lynchburg*; Christian, *Lynchburg*; *Campbell Chronicles*; *Historical Society of Frankford Papers* (1907); Federal Decennial Census, 1830-60; notices in Lynchburg papers (1812-32), Richmond papers (1812-50), and Philadelphia papers (1825-69); death notice in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Apr. 30, 1869.