

320 PARADISE, JOHN

Publisher & Bookseller

Alexandria

Bookseller in Alexandria (1814-16) in conjunction with his school there.

Paradise was one of many schoolmasters who became booksellers in the early Republic era in consequence of acquiring texts for use in their pedagogical practice. Hence, his trace in the historical and bibliographic record is found largely in relation to his Alexandria school. His origins are unclear, but genealogical accounts of his wife's family suggest that he was part of a Paradise family then living in Accomack County on the Eastern Shore.

First notice of Paradise in Alexandria comes in April 1806 when he advertised the opening of an "academy" at the Masonic Lodge; he apparently continued the school in that location until May 1812 when he leased space on St. Asaph Street opposite the apothecary store of the Quaker elder Edward Stabler. At about that same time, Paradise began selling books from that setting. By 1814, he was sponsoring the Philadelphia imprints of Theophilus R. Gates, an itinerant evangelical originally from New England who then found sympathy among Virginia's Baptists – though rejected in the 1820s and 1830s for advocating a "free love" theology. Paradise was himself a fervent Baptist, having assumed the pastorate of Alexandria's Baptist Church in 1811 (today's First Baptist Church) from its founder Jeremiah Moore. That sponsorship introduced Paradise to the Philadelphia printer Joseph Rakestraw, who he then contracted to print for him the first American edition of a long treatise by the late British Baptist preacher Robert Hall (1728-91): *Help to Zion's Travelers* (1814).

However, that work became Paradise's only solitary publishing venture; shortly after it was issued, his health began to fail. By April 1816, he had ceased teaching school, and then he closed his book store that July in order to "retreat to the country with a view to its repair." That necessary retreat did not help him, and by year's end he had been forced to relinquish his pastorate to Spencer H. Cone as well. He lived barely a year beyond his withdrawal from the church, succumbing at his Alexandria residence at the age of "exactly" thirty-nine in January 1818. Paradise's death was widely reported in the country's newspapers from the coincidence of his birth and death both coming on January 1st – though none reported any more than that piece of interesting trivia.

Personal Data

Born:	Jan. 1	1779	Accomack County, Virginia?
Married	May 31	1810	Elizabeth Lawrason Smoot @ Alexandria, Virginia.
Died:	Jan. 1	1818	Alexandria, Virginia.
Children:	Two sons: John Algothian (1812-33) and William S. (1814-50).		

Sources: *Artisans & Merchants*; advertising notices in Alexandria newspapers (1806-18); death notice in *Alexandria Herald*, Jan. 2, 1818; *Life of Spencer H. Cone* (1857); genealogical data from Lawrason family charts posted on Ancestry.com (January 2013).