

332 PLEASANTS, SAMUEL M. – [SAMUEL MADISON PLEASANTS]

Publisher

Richmond

Publisher of the *Virginia Argus* (1814) at Richmond, succeeding his father, Samuel Pleasants (331), as agent for his mother Deborah Whitehead Pleasants (328).

Pleasants was briefly the publisher of record of the long-lived *Virginia Argus* in Richmond as successors to his father, Samuel Pleasants, the paper's founder. At the time, the fall of 1814, Pleasants was just fourteen-years-old, so a fictive owner rather than a true proprietor.

Over the preceding twenty years, his father had built a simple one-press shop that issued a twice-weekly mercantile advertiser into a substantial trade complex that operated a three-press printing plant, a well-stocked bookstore, and an influential Republican journal. Indeed, his association with that party's leadership led to a friendship with James Madison, for whom the son was named. On his father's death in October 1814, his mother Deborah took control of the business as the administrator of Samuel's estate. She continued the *Argus* without interruption, employing the cadre of experienced journeymen that Samuel had left behind. But its masthead promptly recorded the transition in ownership, stating that it was now "published by Samuel M. Pleasants, for the benefit of himself and the other Representatives of Samuel Pleasants, deceased." His assignment as publisher indicates that the adolescent Pleasants was at least training as a printer when his father died, if not working the press there. But his age would have prevented him from legally owning the paper, so mother Deborah was clearly its actual proprietor.

With the sale of the paper, as well as the larger Argus Office that produced it, in December 1814, Pleasants exited the printing trade. It appears that once he attained his majority, he became the manager of the various properties that his father had acquired in his lifetime, living with his mother in the large house that Samuel had rebuilt on Twenty-Second Street near Leigh. As a result, it seems that he took responsibility for the care of his aging mother, so never married, even after her death in 1837 and after his brother Edwin had moved his family into the domicile. Pleasants died there in October 1884 at the age of eighty-four.

Personal Data

Born: Feb. 2 1800 Henrico County, Virginia.

Died: Oct. 25 1884 Henrico County, Virginia.

Apparently never married or had children.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Hubbard on Richmond; Edward Pleasants Valentine Papers, Valentine Museum, Richmond; notices in Richmond papers (1814-84); genealogical data from Miller, *Pleasants and Allied Families* (1980).