

333 PLEASANTS, TARLETON W. – [TARLETON WOODSON PLEASANTS]

Printer & Editor

Richmond

Printer in the Richmond office of Augustine Davis (119), and editor of his *Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser* in the 1790s; then publisher of the *Petersburg Intelligencer* (1799-1800) with William Prentis (340); also uncle of John Hampden Pleasants (330).

Pleasants had a decade-long association with the Virginia print trade early in his life, though chose not to make the trade his vocation. So after a brief tenure as a newspaper proprietor in Petersburg, he retired to farming in nearby Goochland County for the rest of his life.

Born in Goochland County in 1775, Pleasants was the son of James Pleasants (1730-1824) and Ann Randolph (1732-1824); his older brother was James Pleasants (1768-1836), future governor of Virginia, so making him uncle to John Hampden Pleasants (330), the ill-fated founder of the *Richmond Whig*. He was also a cousin to Samuel Pleasants (331), the founder of the *Virginia Argus* in Richmond. Indeed, it appears that both Samuel and Tarleton worked alongside each other for a time in the 1790s in the office of Augustine Davis there.

The obituaries published for Pleasants in 1850 report that he was trained as a printer in the Davis office; if so, then he was under the guidance of cousin Samuel, who was the foreman in that office from 1790 to 1793, the years when Tarleton would have been an apprentice. Those same notices indicate that Pleasants had then served "for a number of years as the principal editor of his paper, the *Virginia Gazette*;" if so, then he assumed that position after his cousin left that Richmond office to conduct his *Virginia Argus* alone, so also establishing a Republican opponent to the Federalist journal that Davis conducted. These accounts are not reflected in the bibliographic record, which shows Davis as the paper's sole proprietor in the 1790s; still, it is also well-known that Davis preferred to leave the daily operation of his journal to others, making these post-mortem accounts more than credible. And that credibility is buttressed by the fact that Pleasants does appear in that record as proprietor of a Federalist newspaper elsewhere shortly thereafter.

In spring 1799, Pleasants partnered with William Prentis in publishing his *Virginia Gazette and Petersburg Intelligencer*, only Prentis's second collaborator since the paper's 1786 start. The pro-Adams administration journal that was about to face stiff competition from the *Petersburg Republican* of Thomas Field (162) and James Lyon (274) as the 1800 presidential campaign dawned. Since young printer was a son of the extensive Pleasants clan in nearby Goochland County, and as the paper represented the mercantile interests that were central to the family's business endeavors, it made sense both philosophically and commercially for Pleasants to join Prentis. He likely brought partisan financing that marched that backing the Republican. Hence when Lyon removed himself – and his outside sources of funding – from the *Republican* in mid-1800, it was also then convenient for Pleasants to do the same, which left the Petersburg newspaper market to a struggle between two resident publishers.

After he left Prentis and the *Intelligencer*, Pleasants does not appear in the bibliographic record in association with any imprint again, whether a periodical or a book. Court records indicate that he returned to Goochland County where he played an increasingly important

role in managing his father's large real-estate holdings, becoming a large land-owner in his own right, particularly after his father's 1824 death. The timing of these activities coincides with his brother's rise to political prominence, suggesting that Tarleton oversaw the family's assets while James was in Washington or Richmond, and while his nephew John Hampden built a journalistic empire in Lynchburg and Richmond in support of his father's interests. He was also likely preoccupied by the demands of raising a large family, especially after 1809, when his first wife died childless; eventually, Pleasants fathered seven children with two succeeding wives, as well as influencing the upbringing of the children of his eight siblings. His standing as the *pater familias* was widely noted upon his death when he had become "the last survivor of a numerous family of brothers and sisters." That passing came "in his 74th year" at his plantation in Goochland, once that of his father, in November 1850.

Personal Data

Born:	in	1775	Goochland County, Virginia.
Married [1]:	May 17	1803	Sarah Pleasants @ Goochland Cty., VA (d. 1809)
Married [2]:	June 13	1812	Tabitha Crew @ Hanover Cty., VA (d. 1819)
Married [3]:	Aug. 23	1820	Margaret W. @ Goochland County, Virginia.
Died:	in Nov.	1850	Goochland County, Virginia.
Children:	By Tabitha: Sarah (b. 1815); Tarleton C. (b. 1816); Edward S. (b. 1817). By Margaret: Henrietta (b. 1824); Polly (b. 1826); John N. (b. 1829); one other, name unrecorded, suggesting death in infancy.		

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; obituary in *Richmond Whig*, Nov. 12, 1850; genealogical data from Miller, *Pleasants and Allied Families* (1980).