

426 WALKUP, SAMUEL

Publisher

Lexington

Publisher of *Virginia Telegraphe* (1802-10) at Lexington, briefly with William G. Lyford (272); and publisher of *The Virginia Religious Magazine* (1804-07) for the Lexington Synod.

Walkup was a well-to-do merchant-planter with Federalist sympathies who engaged in a three-year long newspaper contest in Lexington with a struggling Jeffersonian weekly. In doing so, he also became the preferred publisher for the Presbyterian Synod administered from Lexington, and so of the first religious magazine issued in Virginia.

The Walkup name was an Anglicization an old Scottish one: Wauchope. The family of that surname in Lexington were all Scots-Irish – descendants of Scots who had colonized Ireland in the time of James I – who came to North America in the 1720s; Samuel's father, Arthur (1734-1834) left his immigrant parent's home in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, at the end of the Revolutionary War to settle independently in Rockbridge County, where he became one of Lexington's leading merchants. Samuel was born there in 1783 and was raised as the successor to his father's mercantile business.

In August 1801, the town acquired its first weekly newspaper, the *Rockbridge Repository* published by John McMullin (298). He was a dedicated advocate for the new administration of Thomas Jefferson which placed that Rockingham County native in conflict with many of his neighbors. Hence, he struggled for five years to publish his partisan journal. As only nine issues survive from that five-year-long venture, it appears that continual financial issues led to a small print run each week, further limiting its exposure. At the end of the *Repository's* first volume in August 1802, McMullin suspended publication in order to settle his accounts; that process meant that his weekly did not again issue until October 1803.

Walkup and his mercantile backers used the opportunity afforded by McMullin's hiatus to organize and start a Federalist challenge to his Republican journal. The *Virginia Telegraphe* was first issued as a weekly in November 1802, conducted by the firm of Samuel Walkup & Co. Beyond its overt partisan perspective, little can be said about Walkup's new paper's initial days, as only seven numbers survive from its first year. But the new journal seems to have quickly found its footing; in early April, Walkup was able to increase his publication pace to twice per week, so manifesting a more reliable flow of revenue from his advertisers than McMullin had experienced. Yet the approach of the 1804 election campaigns would change Walkup's approach, and so his fortunes.

In early October 1803, McMullin restarted his *Rockbridge Repository*, offering a forthright statement that implicated Lexington's merchants as the cause of his fiscal difficulties, which justified the sharper political edge that his paper now adopted. For the ensuing year, both papers found sufficient support from each party's supporters to pursue a vibrant contest between them, one that lasted until the outcome of the 1804 election became clear.

Almost immediately, Walkup began a search for a seasoned journeyman printer to assist him in meeting the resurrected challenge from McMullin. Through much of the following winter, he advertised for a tradesman who

"would be fond of living in a healthy village, and would put up with moderate wages, will find constant employ for one year by making application to this Office. He must be sober-inclined, and be willing to work both the case and the press, as occasion may require. It is necessary you should understand Book-work."

In the end, Walkup found a partner rather than an employee. William Gilman Lyford (272) was a journeyman already employed in the *Telegraphe* office then; he had trained in the Exeter, New Hampshire, office of Henry Ranlet, a prolific Federalist printer-publisher. Lyford may have been with Walkup from the start of the *Telegraphe* in 1802, but most likely he came to Lexington when Walkup's paper became a twice-weekly one in April 1803. The new firm of Walkup & Lyford began publishing the *Telegraphe* on February 28, 1804. Still, when Jefferson's reelection became a certainty, both partners considered new opportunities for the near future. Lyford decided to remove to Staunton to buy the office of *The Phenix* of Ira Woodruff (458), who was about to suspend publication because of his financial difficulties, potentially leaving the largest Shenandoah Valley market town south of Winchester without a mercantile advertiser.

The loss of Lyford was particularly telling for Walkup, as his office had just taken on a new publishing project as well. In the summer of 1804, the faculty at Lexington's Liberty Hall Academy (today the Washington & Lee University) had organized an effort to produce a monthly Presbyterian magazine under the guidance of George Addison Baxter, Liberty Hall's principal, and Archibald Alexander, president of Hampden-Sidney College. Once authorized by the Lexington Synod, the bi-monthly *Virginia Religious Magazine* issued in October 1804 from Walkup's press. He was a fitting choice to oversee the magazine's production being a devout Presbyterian himself, as well as being a brother-in-law to Rev. Dr. John McElhenney, the one-time Liberty Hall instructor who now promoted the Presbyterian cause in the Virginia counties of the New River valley. But when Lyford departed, Walkup faced a choice between his partisan journal and his sectarian magazine as his small printing office's focus; the non-tradesman Walkup followed the less-laborious and more-saintly path, suspending publication of his *Virginia Telegraphe* within days of Lyford's departure.

McMullin continued his *Repository* until it finally closed for financial reasons in August 1805, so leaving Lexington without its own paper. A year later, Walkup restarted his *Telegraphe*, apparently in anticipation of the closing of the *Religious Magazine* that December – with the Synod of Lexington handing over their project to the supervisory Synod of Virginia, who hoped to employ the more capable press offices in Richmond to produce a successor. The *Telegraphe* apparently continued into 1810, when it was listed in Isaiah Thomas's *History of Printing in America* as one of the newspapers then issued in the country; however, no issues of Walkup's paper from after 1808 are known to have survived. That same year, Walkup announced he intended to relocate his *Telegraphe* to Richmond if sufficient support could be found in the east, but that move never occurred, suggesting that the perspective his paper represented was particular to the Valley, and so not one popular in the Tidewater.

After 1810, Walkup was clearly pursuing non-publishing ventures, making the preceding seven or so years his only ones in the print trade, a fraction of his seven decades of life. He owned a substantial farm south of Lexington which became the center of his life once he

married in 1821 and began raising a family. Before that, he was the proprietor of the family store in town, once his elderly father retired from the business. The clerical experience he acquired in that mercantile vocation was utilized in military service during the War of 1812 when Walkup served as the paymaster for the 6th Regiment of Virginia Militia, despite his Federalist inclinations. After the war, he became sheriff of Rockbridge County, most visibly in the 1830s when his name appears frequently as trustee in probate settlements and court orders. Eventually, he also became a minister in the Presbyterian Church, a calling followed by three of his sons. When he died in 1852, he was buried in the yard adjacent to the High Bridge Presbyterian Church, near the Natural Bridge in Rockbridge County, a place of honor indicative of his service to that rural congregation, close to his home at Rural Retreat.

Walkup's wife, Maria Todd Houston, a cousin of the celebrated Samuel Houston, survived her husband by twenty years. She gave birth to eight sons during their marriage, with only one dying in infancy; the survivors all served in the Army of the Confederacy. They also sired thirty-one grandchildren, and family lore holds that when she died in 1874, it was the result of her exhaustion from caring for too many of those grandchildren.

Personal Data

Born: Mar. 16 1783 Lexington, Virginia.
Married: Mar. 29 1821 Maria Todd Houston @ Lexington, Virginia.
Died: May 4 1852 Rural Retreat, near Lexington, Virginia.
Children: Eight sons: Samuel Augustine; John Arthur; Joseph Walker; Matthew Henry; Samuel Rutherford; James Douglass; William Madison; and Samuel Houston.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Morton, *Rockbridge County*; Boley, *Lexington in Old Virginia*; *Recollections of John McElhenney* (1893); *Houston Family* (1882); *Descendants of Rev. John Walker* (1902); birth & death dates from grave-stone photographs posted on FindaGave.com (April 2013).