

428 WARD, GILES – [GILES WARD, JR.]

Bookseller

Lynchburg

Bookseller in Lynchburg (1816-22) in successive partnerships with Anderson M. Waddill (423) and William Digges (136).

Ward was a bookseller in Lynchburg while he was studying for the bar there. His bookstore seems to have been a convenient way to build a law library and so subsidize his education, as he left it behind once licensed as a practicing attorney.

A native of Torrington, Connecticut, Ward was the son of a like-named father (1769-1845) who became a successful grist-mill operator there, after starting out as a tanner in the mid-1790s. How the second son ended up in Lynchburg is unknown, but he was residing there by 1816, at age eighteen, studying law with a lawyer there, possibly Anderson M. Waddill, who would soon become his partner in a bookselling concern.

That bookstore opened in 1816. As Ward was studying law, and Waddill was a practicing attorney, the business was a convenient way to subsidize Ward's training and to expand Waddill's library, as evinced by the numerous legal titles listed in their advertising; the firm of Waddill & Ward faced competition from at least two other bookstores there, as well as from the imprints available at Lynchburg's two printing offices, so such specialization was a key to their survival. In mid-1818, Waddill sold his interest in the business to William Digges (136), an Elizabeth City County merchant who would continue the store until 1825; he then moved on to Rockingham County North Carolina, where he was serving as a justice of the peace in a year later. Ward would eventually do the same, selling his share to Digges in late 1821 when he was licensed to practice law in the local courts. Digges then continued the business alone until at least 1825, and perhaps far longer.

Sometime in 1822, Ward travelled to St. Louis to join the forwarding business established there by his wife's cousin, James Kennerly; he stayed about a year before returning to his wife and new-born son in Lynchburg in 1823. That sojourn appears to have been his only deviation from a Lynchburg-based law practice that ended only when he died in 1850. In his Lynchburg years, Ward developed a theatrical reputation, forming a Thespian Society in the town in conjunction with Digges and others. One contemporary observer noted that their efforts matched those of travelling acting troupes, especially in performing dramas. In 1825, the Society was even engaged to offer a summer series of plays as a fund-raising effort for the town's new Episcopal Church, with Ward serving as its president. And that depiction is the one by which he is best remembered, rather than as an attorney or bookseller, a result of the society's acclaim in Margaret Anthony Cabell's mid-century account of Lynchburg.

Ward's lasting legacy, though, is in his connection to a treasure-hunting legend that has a devoted following on the Internet. His only son, James Beverly Ward, was also a lawyer; in 1885, he was asked to manage publication of a pamphlet purporting to describe an 1818 fur expedition into the Rockies that discovered gold and silver deposits there; that expedition of thirty Virginians then reportedly mined those deposits until 1822, secretly shipping some of their ores back to the Lynchburg area to be buried somewhere nearby on the Blue Ridge,

so banking their takings as a hedge against future needs. At the head of that expedition was one Thomas J. Beale, who was reported to have had dealings with Giles Ward in Lynchburg on his journeys east bringing their new-found treasure back to Virginia; those contacts are said to have led to the deposit of encrypted papers detailing the location of the mines and the burials with Robert Morriss of Lynchburg, who kept the secret until 1862, long after Beale disappeared in the west; Morris then divulged the tale to a friend, who wrote the text of the 1885 pamphlet; Morris later engaged Ward's son to publish the account of the 1818 expedition – so creating an implication that members of the Beale and Ward families then knew of the treasure's location. The veracity of this treasure story is still in doubt, as some have suggested that the pamphlet was merely fiction, or that the encoded documents were just a hoax. But Ward's travels to St. Louis in 1822-23 have sustained the idea that the 1885 story is truthful and that the treasure has yet to be found in the hills at the head of the James River in Bedford County.

Personal Data

Born: Oct. 12 1798 Torrington, Connecticut.
Married: In 1820 Adeline Eliza Risque @ Lynchburg, Virginia.
Died: In 1850 Lynchburg, Virginia.
Children: One son: James Beverly (1822-1909).

Sources: Advertising notices in *Lynchburg Press* (1816-22); Cabell, *Sketches of Lynchburg*; Early, *Campbell Chronicles*; *History of Torrington, Connecticut*; genealogical data from *Sons of the American Revolution Membership Applications* (1889-1970), linking Adeline Risque to her grandfather Samuel Kennerly (1763-1840) of Fincastle; not recorded in MESDA Index.

Synopsis of the Beale story from websites advocating Ward's book as both truth and hoax, who all claim to have solved the mystery (simply search "Beale Ciphers"); no objective account/analysis can be found.