

432 WATERS, DAVID J.

Printer

Richmond

Journeyman printer who died in Richmond in 1804.

Waters had only a brief association with the Virginia print trade, perhaps only a few weeks, dying in Richmond before he could establish a clear trade identity there. The Boston-trained printer had recently given up a journalistic struggle in Maine to join one of the Republican presses in the state capital; however, it is not known where he worked or how long.

The reason Waters chose to relocate to Virginia seems to have been tied to a sense of his "seditious" activities among New England's Federalists. He was a native Bostonian who was trained as a printer in the *Independent Chronicle* of Thomas Adams and Ebenezer Rhodes, successors to that paper's founder, Nathaniel Willis (449), who removed to Virginia in 1787. Under their ownership, the *Chronicle* had become the principal Republican newspaper in New England by the time John Adams ascended to the presidency in 1797; ever critical of his Massachusetts neighbor, editor Thomas Adams was finally indicted under the Alien & Sedition Acts in October 1798 for his commentaries; the distraction of preparing his defense, along with the financial pressures that resulted from his plight, compelled Adams to sell the *Chronicle* shortly before his trial in May 1799.

By then, the firm of Adams & Rhodes was losing employees, tradesmen who were either in disagreement with their masters' views, or who had removed themselves from a politicized situation to a new office. For Waters, this meant a relocation to the Maine seaport town of Castine, then the second largest port in the District behind Portland. On January 2, 1799, he issued the first number of the first newspaper ever published there, *The Castine Journal and Universal Advertiser*. In its early days, the *Journal* was a small sheet about two-thirds the size of its eventual format, evincing its speculative nature; yet that period produced enough support for Waters to continue his mercantile advertiser for almost three years.

But Waters found that his supporters did not appreciate his favorable coverage of the new Jefferson administration once it assumed office in 1801, and so his financial reserves began to evaporate. In October, he suspended publication of his *Castine Journal*, and reordered his finances by taking on unnamed partners; his weekly reappeared in April 1802 in the new guise of the *Columbian Informer and the Eastern Advertiser*; but the refusal of the Federalist merchants there to support his "Republican" journal meant that Waters was forced to close his revamped paper that July after just three months.

He now determined to move his press and paper inland about 35 miles to the village of Hampden among the farmers he thought would be more favorable to his political views than the merchants in the port town he left behind. But that new weekly, the *Penobscot Patriot and the Hancock & Washington Advertiser* was only marginally more successful than was his Castine paper; it survived into the summer, closing shortly after he published a Fourth of July oration delivered by Andrew Morton, a local lawyer.

That fall, Waters reportedly relocated to Virginia, after having sold his tools in Maine. It may be that his decision was tied to plans to start a new Jeffersonian journal in Portland in September 1803, just two months after Waters closed of his *Columbian Informer*; with but four papers then published in the entire District of Maine, all Federalist in their perspective, the leaders of the Republican cause there combined their resources to back the *Eastern Argus* of Nathaniel Willis Jr. (450), the son of founder of Boston's *Independent Chronicle*. By finding Waters work in Virginia, and so inducing the closing of his struggling paper, their new venture would be the only one opposing those existing papers, enhancing its chances for success. Yet such a deal is only implied, not proven, and based on a solitary account of Water's contributions to the printing trade in Maine before statehood that was published in 1872. That account also provides the only indication that Waters worked in Virginia in 1804; no records or newspaper notices of his presence there have yet been found.

Personal Data

Died: Early in 1804 Richmond, Virginia.

No other personal data yet discovered.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Blumberg, *Repressive Jurisprudence*; Griffin, *History of the Press of Maine* (1872); U.S. Newspaper Directory, Library of Congress.