

433 WEAVER, JOHN

Printer, Publisher

Lynchburg

Printer of *Lynchburg Gazette* (1798-1805); successor to John Carter (083) as its publisher.

Weaver was a journeyman printer who rose to ownership of the office where he had been trained. He was the fourth son of a like-named father who died before he was born in 1785; it seems that this circumstance led to his being bound out as an apprentice printer to John Carter (083) at about the same time Carter bought the *Lynchburg Gazette* press in 1798. Weaver's association with that concern has been masked by the scarcity of surviving issues of the paper, but given his young age, he certainly never worked in any other trade setting.

The *Lynchburg Gazette* was founded in 1797 by John Davis (124), a son of one of the town's earliest inhabitants; born and raised as a Quaker, Davis conducted the weekly initially as the *Lynchburg Weekly Museum*, until his family joined the exodus of anti-slavery Friends from slave-holding Virginia in May 1798. Carter was a well-to-do merchant-planter from Amelia County who evidently edited the *Museum* for Davis; he gave the journal its better known name, and continued its publication until about 1803.

Both proprietors thus depended on transient printers to produce the weekly for them. But in January 1798, the two men moved to build a home-grown trade base – advertising for "two active Lads of genteel connexions...as Apprentices to the Printing business." Weaver was just such a candidate. His father's death in 1784 left the bulk of his extensive land holdings in adjacent Campbell County to his three older brothers. So the youngest son was raised in genteel circumstances, but lacked the wherewithal needed to maintain such social status. In their notice, Davis and Carter said that "of all the mechanical professions, none can be more respectable, nor yet more conducive to the improvement of the human mind than the art of PRINTING." That offer appears to have been taken up by the Weavers as a way to educate and provide for its youngest member.

Still, the course of Weaver's print-trade career can only be followed in references to him in other places. An essay addressed to Carter and Weaver jointly in October 1802, reprinted in a Baltimore paper, indicates that the apprentice had risen to ownership by then, at about age seventeen. A similar reference dated February 22, 1804 reported that Weaver was now proprietor of the *Lynchburg Gazette*, with Carter retiring to his Amelia County plantation, Mulberry Grove. Then, in March 1805, this short death notice appeared in several northern newspapers:

On Thursday, the 7th instant, in Lynchburg, Mr. JOHN WEAVER, Editor and Printer of the "*Lynchburg Gazette*."

These references reflect the perception of reliability the *Gazette* had gained in northern Federalist papers by then. They also constitute the only record of Weaver's proprietorship of that paper. So it appears that Carter sold his interest in the *Gazette* to Weaver at the end of 1803, when the young tradesman reached the age of eighteen, and that it was generally known that he had served as Carter's shop foreman for some time. Yet Weaver could not forge an independent identity for himself or his version of the *Gazette*, as he only controlled

that press for a year before dying unexpectedly at just age twenty.

Many authorities have reported that the *Lynchburg Gazette* died with Weaver. However, a recently-located issue for September 11, 1805, indicates that his brother Matthew (543) continued its publication – as the concern of M. W. Weaver & Brothers – until the printer's intestate estate could be settled that fall. His mortgaged press office was sold at auction to John Graham (183), a respected physician in Lynchburg; Graham understood the need for a weekly mercantile advertiser there and wanted to continue the journal; not being a trained printer, he would also hire transient journeymen to help him publish his new *Lynchburg Star* that October.

Personal Data

Norn: In 1785 Campbell County, Virginia.

Died: Feb. 7 1805 Lynchburg, Virginia.

No record of spouse or children found.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; U.S. Newspaper Project (Library of Congress); obituary in [Philadelphia] *Poulson's Daily Advertiser*, March 4, 1805; genealogical data posted on Ancestry.com (October 2014).