

458 WOODRUFF, IRA

Printer, Publisher

Staunton

Publisher of *The Phenix* (1803-04) at Staunton as successor to John Wise (455).

Woodruff was apparently a practical printer who became a newspaper owner in Staunton in 1803. However, the paper soon failed and he left Virginia for Kentucky. There he became a foundry owner after a second unsuccessful stint as a newspaper proprietor.

Where Woodruff came from or was trained is unknown, but he may have had Baltimore origins, as it appears that he was part of a Kentucky paper launched in late 1806 by Samuel Adams, long a printer in that Maryland port. He appeared in Staunton in August 1803 as a fully trained journeyman, when he became a partner to John Wise in his five-year-old *Phenix*; Wise was then consolidating his interests in the mail-stage business he had built in southwestern Virginia while publishing the *Phenix*; his partnership with Woodruff was the first step in relinquishing the journal, and three months later, he sold Woodruff his majority share in the paper and retired from journalism permanently. Yet Woodruff remained its owner just a year, as he experienced financial problems within months, leading to the paper's suspension in late 1804, leaving the largest Shenandoah Valley town south of Winchester without a mercantile advertiser. Woodruff then sold his office to William G. Lyford (272), a New Englander who recently worked in Lexington for Samuel Walkup (426); and on January 4, 1805, he began issuing the *Candid Review and Staunton Weekly Register*, a paper avowedly Federalist in its outlook, fitting its setting in "Old Federal" Augusta. The paper continued, through a series of iterations, until the First World War.

Woodruff, though, was soon in Kentucky, apparently with several members of extended his family, given the suddenly numerous incidences of his surname in the 1810 federal census. The Adams family of Baltimore printers had established a journalistic foothold in the state in September 1804 in the town of Danville; Samuel Adams relocated that paper, *The Mirror*, to Russellville in late 1806; and Woodruff was a part of the Russellville office, if not of the Danville one previously. As with Woodruff's Staunton journal and Adams's Baltimore paper before, the *Mirror* was a Federalist one, and so lost its Republican-leaning editor, Matthew Duncan in late 1808; he soon launched a partisan alternative, *The Farmer's Friend*, placing a competitive burden on the Adams office. As a result, Adams sold the *Mirror* to Woodruff in late 1810 and retired from journalism, just as Wise had before. And as before, Woodruff found the venture financially difficult, especially in the face of Duncan's competing journal, and so closed his second paper in January 1812. It appears he never published again.

Rather, Woodruff turned to metal-founding, establishing a foundry capable of casting gold, silver, or brass in Lexington in the summer of 1813 – after having served in the Kentucky militia for much of 1812. The advertising notices for that manufacturing concern provide the last view we have of Woodruff, as he is lost in the midst of at least three other families of that surname in and around Lexington, apparently not ever establishing a household of his own. That turn suggests either an early death, or his relocation away from Kentucky, or a bachelor life among relatives. But absent more evidence, Woodruff's fate is unknown.

No Personal Data yet discovered.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Federal Decennial Census, 1810; *Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky*.