

## 459 WORKMAN, SAMUEL

### Publisher

### Wellsburg

Publisher of the *Charlestown Gazette* (1814-15) at Wellsburg, then called Charlestown.

Workman was briefly part of the Virginia print trade in an era that saw the development of multiple printing centers along the new National Road from 1808 onward. In that role, he founded one paper in Virginia and conducted another in Pennsylvania before abandoning the trade for service in various county and state offices in Pennsylvania.

Born in 1793, Workman was the son of an Irish immigrant who was one of four brothers who arrived in southwestern Pennsylvania in 1777; Hugh Workman (1759-1843) served in both the Revolutionary War and the Northwest Indian War of the 1790s, while conducting a tannery and harness works in Washington County at a site near the later county seat of Washington; in 1780, he married Jane (Peggy) Bryson (b. 1760) and the couple had eight children, of which Samuel was the sixth.

Young Samuel was drawn into the print trade by William Sample (1786-1862), who would marry his sister Margaret (1795-1825) in 1810. Sample arrived in Washington in 1808, after being trained at his Westmoreland County home of Greensburg (in the *Farmers' Register* office of John Snowden and William McCorkle) and working as a journeyman in an unnamed Pittsburgh printing office (likely that of John Scull's *Pittsburgh Gazette*). In 1808, Sample travelled to eastern Pennsylvania to acquire a press and types with the intention of starting a newspaper and job-printing office in a town on the proposed National Road somewhere west of Pittsburgh; with partner Benjamin Brown, Sample set out for the west with a loaded wagon; during a stop-over in Washington, the partners were convinced by local merchants to set up their press there; so that August, the firm of Brown & Sample issued their first number of the *Washington Reporter* from the cellar of the Golden Swan Tavern. Workman was soon training in that new office, rising to shop foreman after Brown left the concern in February 1810; thus, Workman also became the *de facto* proprietor of the *Reporter* when Sample raised and led a company of volunteers from the county during the War of 1812.

Upon Sample's return, Workman determined to set out on his own, choosing the Brooke County seat of Wellsburg as the site for his new press office in 1814. At that time, the final route of the National Road was still up for debate; it would travel west from Washington to a crossing over the Ohio River at either Wheeling or Wellsburg; Workman obviously thought that Wellsburg would be the choice given its proximity to Steubenville, then the largest town in eastern Ohio. But within a year, the commissioners building the road had chosen Wheeling, so leaving Wellsburg in that city's shadow. Workman's paper there follows that chronology, established when the decision was still unmade and abandoned when the prize was assigned elsewhere. Yet that correlation is obscured by a concurrent debate over the town's name. It was founded in 1791 by Charles Prather, who named it after himself. So in 1814, there were two Charlestown in Virginia, the other being the seat of Jefferson County; that duplication led to confusions among travelers that were easily resolved by choosing Wheeling as the river crossing. So in 1816, disappointed townsmen successfully petitioned the General Assembly to rename their town as Wellsburg, named after Charles Wells, a

respected though recently-deceased colleague.

Thus, the paper Workman established in April 1814 was called the *Charlestown Gazette*. It was a mildly-Republican journal, befitting its rural setting. Workman, though, would later grow apart from the Jacksonian element within the party, embracing the more conservative Heiserite faction of western Pennsylvania after 1820, and eventually the Whig perspective of Henry Clay, as would William Sample. But in the last year of the War of 1812, Workman's *Gazette* actively supported both the Republican administration of James Madison and the expansion of the Ohio River valley export-trade that was the *raison d'être* of the town's existence. But at the end of 1815, Workman would be pulled back to Washington; his older brothers, who were their father's partners, were dead or dying, so threatening the family's financial footing; moreover, Sample's growing political activism drew him away from his *Reporter* ever more frequently; in returning to his hometown, Workman could assist the family's business affairs more readily, as well as study law there, so become his family's legal representative. So in December 1815, Workman sold his *Gazette* to John Berry (033) and returned to Washington County. Berry was a journeyman printer from Brownsville, Pennsylvania, and had recently been employed in St. Clairsville, Ohio, forty miles west; indeed, he may have been Workman's foreman, as his Ohio departure came just before the *Charlestown Gazette* first issued. The situation was evidently the stable one that Berry had then long sought; he conducted his retitled *Wellsburgh Gazette* until November 1822, when the town finally fell into the journalistic shadow of both Wheeling and Pittsburgh.

Workman now became a prominent figure in Washington. He began a legal practice there, investing in several local business ventures. His new father-in-law also relocated there from Wellsburg, establishing a long-lived tavern in the town center. Workman would return to journalism there in 1819; that May, Sample was elected the prothonotary ("first scribe" or the clerk) of the county's courts, which required that he give up his private business affairs; Workman took his place as proprietor of the *Washington Reporter* for the two years that Sample served in that post; after he returned to his practice in May 1821, Workman did not again publish or edit a newspaper. Sample eventually sold the paper and removed to Iowa in 1840 in search of new opportunities there.

Workman's retirement from the print trade seems a result of similar service in public office. In 1821, he became an officer in the county militia, eventually rising to the rank of Brigadier General, resulting in nineteenth-century Pennsylvania histories invariably referring to him as "Gen. Workman." That same year he was named the county's treasurer, holding that post until October 1823, when he was elected the county's sheriff. He was also elected to the state legislature in 1827, 1828, and 1829, before being named secretary of the state's land office in May 1830 by Gov. George Wolf (1777-1840), for whom he named his youngest son. In 1836, he retired from public service and returned to his practice in Washington and the care of his aging parents, now being their sole surviving son. Workman was appointed as the town's postmaster in 1839 and 1840, in recognition of his local prominence, before he was again named county treasurer in January 1841. He was serving in this final role when he died unexpectedly in March 1841, at the age of forty-eight.

***Personal Data***

Born: Jan. 11 1793 Washington County, Pennsylvania.  
Married: Jan. 7 1812 Nancy McCammant @Wellsburg, VA/WV.  
Died: Mar. 31 1841 Washington County, Pennsylvania.  
Children: Mary (b. 1814); Hugh (b. 1816); William (b. 1818); Margaret (b. 1820); Elizabeth (b. 1822); Samuel Jr. (b. 1824); Nancy (b. 1827); Jane (b. 1829); George Wolf (b. 1832); Ellen Jane (b. 1836).

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Norona & Shetler; Crumrine, *Washington County*; McFarland, *Washington and Washington County*; *Biographical Album of Lee County, Iowa*; genealogical data from Workman and Sample family charts posted on Ancestry.com and Genealogy.com (May 2013).