

## 500 MOORE, PEARSON

### Printer

### Clarksburg

Printer in Clarksburg press office of his brothers-in-law Alexander (052) and Forbes Britton (053); printer of newspapers for Gideon Butler (067) and Alexander G. McRae (300).

Pearson Moore became part of Virginia's print trade via his association with the Clarksburg press office opened in 1810 by his brothers-in-law, Alexander and Forbes Britton. At that time, he was apparently an adolescent family-laborer assisting his older kin, but by 1825, he was the legally-recognized owner of that office's presses.

Throughout its decade-long life, the Clarksburg office of the Britton brothers was one that struggled financially, despite its ties to two of the town's leading figures: attorney James Pindall (1783-1825) and Harrison County Justice Samuel P. Moore (1756-1822), Pearson's father. Forbes married Pindall's sister Elizabeth in 1805, while in 1811 her sister Rachel married Moore's eldest son Thomas Preston, Pearson's brother. In 1810, Pindall persuaded Forbes to leave nearby Morgantown, where he then published the *Monongalia Gazette* with Joseph Campbell (078), to start another weekly paper in Clarksburg supporting both the town's commerce and the family's political ambitions. Forbes convinced his brother Alexander, a journeyman printer in Philadelphia, as he had once been, to join him in this new venture. Their new weekly, *The Bye Stander*, began a five-year run on July 28th.

As with the *Gazette* before, this new journal was beset by supply problems, problems heightened by the disruptions on the War of 1812 – not the least of were the enlistments of Forbes and the Moore brothers in a local militia regiment. Nonetheless, in terms of the *Bye-Stander's* long-term survival, the most significant issue the paper faced was its Federalist perspective and its support of Pindall, who regularly challenged the area's chief Republican, John G. Jackson (1777-1825), who represented western Virginia in Congress from 1803 to 1816. So by the end of the War of 1812, the Britton brothers faced imminent bankruptcy from their unpaid bills and uncollected debts, seemingly a result of a decline in subscribers for a "pro-British" newspaper during a war with Great Britain. Consequently, the brothers reluctantly closed their weekly in mid-1815.

In the wake of the closing, Alexander Britton removed to Ohio, having married a widow with connections there in 1814, and quickly disappears from public records. Forbes, however, had now planted deep roots in Clarksburg and struggled to recover. He evidently retained ownership of the press and operated it as a job-press for the ensuing five years. Court records from this period indicate that Pearson Moore was employed in that office, and so printed the succeeding *Western Virginian* for the partnership of McRae & Butler (1815-17), and then the *Republican Compiler* for McRae alone (1818-20) – it being then the only press in Clarksburg. Eventually, however, ownership of that press became an issue, triggering the demise of McRae's weekly in mid-1820, the moment Forbes Britton was declared insolvent.

At that time, Britton lost his house, and had his financial affairs assigned to brother-in-law Thomas P. Moore for settlement. From the ensuing transactions, it looks as if that Thomas and Pearson Moore both had an interest in his business; that turn suggests Pearson had

accrued his share through his labors, while Thomas had sustained the press with funds derived from his increasing success in land speculation. Britton's fleeting return as publisher of a new weekly, *The Rattlesnake*, in 1822, shows that a settlement was reached in fairly short order. Still, the appearance of that paper confirms that Pearson had acquired the assets of the press office in 1820, thereby keeping them in family hands close to Pindall, who then served in Congress as Jackson's successor; so too does the fact that Baltimore printing suppliers filed suit against Pearson in 1825 – fully a year and a half after Britton's death – seeking monies that he owed them.

Even so, the days of the Pindall-Moore-Britton alliance were numbered by 1822. Britton's return to journalism was driven by McRae's introduction of a new Republican newspaper there – the *Clarksburg Gazette*, later called the *Clarksburg Intelligencer* – in early 1822; that sheet represented the views of a new generation, especially after the death of J. G. Jackson in 1825. Later that year, Pindall also passed away, leaving the remnants of the region's old Federalist group leaderless just as the Jacksonian movement began to take root. But more importantly, the Britton press was challenged from 1819 onward by a new anti-Republican paper, the *Independent Virginian* of William McGranahan (288). This combination of factors relegated Pearson Moore to the sidelines after Britton's *Rattlesnake* folded. But even in such a subordinate role, no imprints have been identified bearing his imprimatur, suggesting that the press was marginal in its last five years of operation. Thus, Pearson easily faded into historical obscurity after his death in March 1825. Indeed, he remains a minor figure even in the family histories that trace the lives of his father and many siblings, particularly overshadowed by a sister who gave birth to Harrison County's most-recognized historian, Henry Haymond.

### ***Personal Data***

Born: Apr. 4 1795 in Pennsylvania.

Died: Mar. 6 1826 Clarksburg, Harrison County, WV (then Virginia).

No record of marriage or offspring found.

Sources: Dorothy Doyle, "Historical Sketch" of Moore Family (Harrison County Historical Society); Haymond, *History of Harrison County*; and genealogical records posted on *Ancestry.com* (March 2016).