

515 Ross, JOHN

Apprentice Printer

Fredericksburg

Apprentice who absconded from the Fredericksburg office of James Walker (425) in 1803.

The only information about John Ross now known with any certainty is found in the notice reprinted in the *Norfolk Herald* reporting his flight from his master's office in Fredericksburg in late October 1803, to wit:

Ten Dollars Reward.

ABSCONDED on Sunday morning, the 30th ult. from the Printing Office of the Apollo, an apprentice boy about 16 years old, but rather small for his age—his eyes are dark, and his skin of a pale and sallow appearance—his mouth wide, and his nose small. I do hereby forewarn all printers and other persons from harbouring, employing or giving him any kind of support or they will be subjected to the penalty which the law directs. He has taken with him a Gold French Watch, the case of which is set around with Pearl, near the edge of the glass—two of the pearls have fallen out—makers name (Argand and Solomon) marked on the face. This apprentice's name is JOHN ROSS, but being an artful boy it is likely he will assume some other. Whoever apprehends and secures said boy, so that I get him again, shall receive the above reward, and all reasonable charges paid.

JAMES WALKER. Fredericksburg, Virginia, Nov. 2d, 1803.

Ten Dollars Reward.

A few days before the above named apprentice boy of Mr. Walker's absconded, his brother, RICHARD ROSS, bound to me as an apprentice to learn the Sadler's trade, ran off – no doubt they concerted a plan to meet at some place, and to continue together. Richard is the oldest of the two, the largest, and rather the likeliest. I will pay the above reward to any person for apprehending and securing the said apprentice so that I get him again, and pay all reasonable charges.

JAMES SMOCK. November 2.

N.B. Both of these boys are very badly disposed, and most things they touch stick to their fingers. Printers will oblige, by publishing the above--It may be a means of correcting the misconduct of apprentices.

As both brothers bear common names, tracing their paths after this event is unworkable.

James Walker was a printer who became a part of an effort by Democratic-Republicans in the Fredericksburg area to publish a partisan alternative to the Federalist-oriented Virginia Herald of Timothy Green (194) in 1800. *The Apollo* mentioned in Walker's notice was the third and last of his attempts to publish such a paper there; the first had fallen to his hands after the death of its founder and his employer, Robert Mercer (301), in late 1800; Walker recast that paper as *The Courier* soon thereafter, but was compelled to close that sheet in

late 1801 under pressure from a competing Republican weekly, the *Fredericksburgh News-Letter*. He restarted his dormant weekly as *The Apollo* just a month before the flight of John Ross; that concurrence suggests that his apprentice balked at the increased workload facing Walker's office with the resumption of the journal; his flight may also explain why Walker abandoned journalism – and perhaps Fredericksburg as well – the following February.

Personal Data

Born: ca. 1787 Uncertain, likely in Fredericksburg, Virginia area.

Sources: *Norfolk Herald* (8 Nov. 1803).