

## 539 DAVIES, ADDISON

### Publisher

### Lynchburg

Publisher of the *Lynchburg Centinel* (1814-15) with a partner named Rives (540).

Addison Davies was a native of Bedford County who published a short-lived weekly paper in Lynchburg during the War of 1812, in an apparent effort to continue offering an alternative to the established *Lynchburg Press* after the demise of its sole competitor in 1814.

Davies was the first-born child in the second marriage of his earlier widowed parents, Henry Landon Davies (1745-1808) and Lucy Whiting Clayton Manson (1755-1819). That union gave him widespread familial connections in piedmont Virginia, and access to the wealth found in his father's large land-holdings along the James River above Lynchburg. That property had passed to his father after the death of his grandfather, Nicholas Davies (1709-1794), the family's progenitor in Virginia. He arrived in Virginia in 1728 to follow mercantile pursuits and was soon hired as the agent for Col. Thomas Randolph of Tuckahoe (1686-1730); as his employer died shortly thereafter, Davies was instrumental in settling his complex estate, which led to his marrying Randolph's widow, Judith Fleming (1698-1743), in 1733. After her death, he married Catherine Whiting Clayton (1724-74), mother of Henry Landon Davies.

Not unimportantly, Randolph's daughter was Jane Randolph (1720-76), Thomas Jefferson's mother, leading to his frequent residence at Tuckahoe Plantation (which spans the modern-day border between Goochland and Henrico counties) in childhood; thus Randolph was also great-grandfather to Jefferson's daughter Martha (1772-1836), as well as to her husband, Thomas Mann Randolph, Jr. (1768-1836); those familial connections made Jefferson a part of social and business relationships of the James River Valley around Lynchburg. But so too did the land speculation pursued in that area by his surveyor-father, Peter Jefferson (1708-57), partially in league with Nicholas Davies.

Between 1743 and 1771, Davies patented over 30,000 acres in the valley, with 25,000 of those acres in an amalgamated tract that covered both sides of the James River in Bedford and Amherst counties above Judith Creek. South and east of his tract were grants held by "Fry and Company" – a group that consisted of Joshua Fry (1700-54) and Peter Jefferson, the surveyors who published the famed Fry-Jefferson map in 1751; Rev. William Dawson (1704-52), the Anglican commissary and president of the College of William & Mary; Charles Lynch (1704-53), the father of the later ferry-operator and town founder John Lynch (1740-1820); Thomas Ballow (1726-87), then a captain in the Henrico County militia; and Thomas Turpin (1708-90), the manager of William Byrd II's Westover Plantation, who was married to Peter Jefferson's sister Mary. The Revolution forced a reconfirmation of those grants, resulting in a survey through which Davies gained another 6300 acres for his 25,000 acre tract above Lynchburg. Thus when he died in 1794, probate records show he owned more than 40,000 acres in Bedford, Amherst, and Campbell counties. And as Henry was his only son, nearly all of his property, real and chattel, went to the son when the estate was settled.

Addison Davies was born in the heart of his grandfather's vast tract northwest of Lynchburg. His father built a manor house there, called Pebbleton, before his first wife, Ann Clayton,

died in 1784. Its setting was nearly opposite the site of a James River town that he and his father had proposed building in 1775; the town of Bethel was situated on Nicholas's lands in Amherst "near the upper end of Navigation with small Craft in said River" at the mouth of Salt Creek; however, the pair intended to rent the town's lots, rather than sell them, which proved fruitless when the Lynch family began selling outright the lots in their planned town at Lynch's Ferry twelve miles away. Still, these inherited lands provided the legacies that Henry would need to establish his nine children in independent households.

Awkwardly, Henry died intestate in 1808, which led to litigation over his considerable estate that stretched into the 1830s. Addison received a portion of that estate, but as the fifth of six sons, his share was relatively small; the bulk of Henry's lands went to his two oldest sons, Nicholas Clayton (1769-1814) and Arthur Landon (1770-1837). Nicholas was the one who preserved the Davies family's presence in Amherst County, particularly in his attempts to revitalize the Bethel project in 1801; but Arthur was apparently instrumental in breaking up the Bedford tract built by his grandfather, being Clerk of the Gloucester County Court, the county of his mother's birth. (She was the daughter of Dr. John Clayton, the noted colonial-era botanist.) Still, Henry had made substantial gifts of land to his three daughters before his death, as their dowries, which had markedly reduced the holdings that he had inherited from his father. He also made gifts and bequests to the children of second wife Lucy's first marriage, with Pebbleton eventually going to her eldest son, Nathaniel J. Manson (b. 1781), after a chancery suit that ran until 1825.

In total, there were 12 children included in the settlement process and likely a few cousins associated with Henry's first marriage. With so many legatees involved in his father's estate, the prospects of the then nineteen-year-old Addison were probably shaped by the dictates of the law. He would have to wait for a settlement before receiving any funds bequeathed to him or clear title to any property. So it is interesting that he did not marry for another six years, and then wed a cousin, Elizabeth Ann Coleman (b. 1795), a daughter of his mother's sister, so keeping the assets he secured within the circle of his extended family.

It was at about that same time that Addison made his mark on the Virginia print trade. In August 1814, he circulated a prospectus for "publishing a paper in the town of Lynchburg, by Rives and Davies; to be entitled the Lynchburg Centinel." While no issues of this weekly are known to have survived, the course of its brief life can be traced in references to it seen elsewhere. It appears that the *Centinel* began publishing about September 1st that year, based on a broadside "extra" edition issued on September 10th, describing the withdrawal of British forces from Washington and Alexandria after they had burned the capital's public buildings on August 25th. The paper continued over the ensuing fall – as an 1815 almanac issued from that office in late 1814 – with mentions of the *Centinel* seen in Amherst County Court records in the spring of 1815, and in Norfolk newspapers until October 1815. But by late November 1815, it is clear that its publication had ceased; at that time, a lengthy notice appeared in Washington's *National Intelligencer* announcing the sale of the journal's office at auction on December 20th.

"The pre-eminent advantage is connected with the situation of Lynchburg for the publication of a Newspaper, render the present advertisement an important object

of attention to all persons who may be desirous of engaging in this very profitable species of employment. The rapidly encreasing population of Lynchburg will soon make even the local patronage of the town fully adequate to the support of a newspaper; besides which, the numerous subscription may be expected in the neighboring country, and the more remote western parts of the state which have been accustomed to look to Lynchburg as their principal medium of intelligence from the Atlantic. There is but one paper published in Lynchburg, besides the *Centinel*, so that nothing is to be apprehended from competition."

The abrupt cessation suggests that the *Centinel* was a hurried effort that was financially failing, despite Davies's manifest association with the wealthiest family in the area. Just four months before the *Centinel* first appeared the *Lynchburg Star* of James Graham (183) had ended a nine-year run, apparently in consequence of the death of the proprietor's wife. The *Star's* demise precedes the start of the *Centinel* closely enough to lead one to believe that it was at least a successor to the *Star* if not a continuation of that paper. Moreover, the similarity of the typography seen in the surviving extra edition to that of the *Star* indicates that as well. And if so, this auction sale embodied a chance to continue challenging the larger *Lynchburg Press*, which suffered through a major reorganization in October 1815. Yet the lack of supporting evidence and surviving issues makes such an appraisal speculative.

Even more mysterious than the origin and purpose of the *Centinel* is the identity of Davies's partner in the project. The Rives family was then an extensive one in the counties north of Lynchburg, which makes it difficult to suggest any one person as the unnamed Rives in the firm of Rives & Davies. But the Amherst household of Robert Rives (1764-1845) and Margaret J. Cabell (1770-1815) offers two intriguing prospects. The father was a prominent merchant-planter in the county, much as Henry Landon Davies in Bedford; his two eldest sons were contemporaries of Addison Davies, and so ready possibilities here. But of those two – Landon Cabell Rives (1790-1870) and William Cabell Rives (1793-1868) – the latter seems the most likely.

A graduate of the College of William & Mary, the future U.S. Senator began his public life by studying law with Jefferson at Monticello after he retired from the presidency. The standard biographies of Rives report that he was admitted to the Albemarle County bar in May 1814 before they jump forward to his first major public oration in Nelson County in July 1816, leaving a gap in those accounts matching the short life of the *Lynchburg Centinel*. Moreover, while he was studying with Jefferson, he was undoubtedly aware of the litigation in Bedford over the estate of Henry Landon Davies. Shortly after Rives started his studies in 1809, the Rev. Charles Green Clay (1745-1820) wrote to Jefferson about his recollections concerning the settlement of the estate of Nicholas Davies in the 1790s, when the former president was involved in that process as Peter Jefferson's heir; Clay was then rector of Lynchburg's Episcopal Church, a friend of Jefferson's dating back to that same period, and the husband of Editha Landon Davies (1777-1838), Henry's daughter and Addison's older half-sister; he was concerned that his wife was being deprived of her due from her grandfather's estate by her brothers in their role as administrators of their father's estate while it was probated; as such legal disputes were common ones then, it is very likely that Jefferson provided Rives a lesson in property law by researching that case before he replied to Clay; if so, then Rives

probably came to know the members of the Davies family then engaged in litigating Henry's estate, including Addison Davies. Still, the evidence for his identification as the publisher's partner is clearly circumstantial.

Nevertheless, the closure of the *Lynchburg Centinel* ended the print trade careers of both Rives and Davies. While that ending was most likely prompted by the state of the paper's financial affairs, it may also have been triggered by events in the proprietors' lives. Such a course is suggested by the ensuing death of Addison Davies just eighteen months later. It was not uncommon in this era for printer-publishers to die in their twenties and thirties, a condition attributed to their regular exposure to lead and chemicals. It was also common for many to die at such an early age as a result of epidemic diseases. So Davies probably succumbed to one cause or the other in 1817.

Davies drafted a will on May 8th, likely expecting his impending demise. In that document, "he directed sundry of his slaves to be emancipated when they should severally attain the age of twenty eight years." That directive plainly applied to four individuals, as his executor, half-brother Nathaniel J. Manson, submitted the requisite deeds of emancipation to the Lynchburg Hustings Court, one in 1829 freeing Benjamin, and one in 1831 freeing Stephen, Judith, and Ned. However, Manson was clearly negligent in the second case, as the people covered were well beyond the age of 28: Stephen was 40, Judith was 33, and Ned was 60. And once Judith was freed, Manson was sued on behalf of her minor sons, Watt and Allen, who it was claimed were free persons as a result of being born after their mother reached the age of 28, even though she had not yet been formally emancipated. With the condition of the mother's servitude determining the legal status of her children, the court found that Watt was a free person, but that Allen had been born while his mother was still enslaved and so a slave himself. The decision in that case is the last trace of Davies in the public record, even though the dispute over his father's estate continued four more years.

### ***Personal Data***

Born:	Late	1789	Pebbleton, Bedford County, Virginia
Married:	ca.	1814	Elizabeth Ann Coleman @ Amherst County, Va.
Died:	May	1817	Lynchburg, Virginia.

One local history reports 2 children died in infancy; none mentioned in his will however.

Sources: Imprints (Hummel no. 3276 & item 1814.080 in this Index); *Lynchburg Centinel, Extra*, Sept. 10, 1814 (Duke University Library Special Collections); Records of the Circuit Court of Chancery, Library of Virginia; *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*; Bannister, "Lands of Nicholas Davies, Fry and Company, and Others" (Univ. of Rochester, 2005); WPA Survey Report, "English Church, Lynchburg" (1937); notices in the [Williamsburg: Dixon & Hunter] *Virginia Gazette* (18 Feb. 1775) and [Washington] *National Intelligencer* (25 Nov. 1815). Genealogical material from Early, *Campbell Chronicles and Family Sketches*, and Boyle, *Davies Family of Virginia*, both quoted repeatedly online.