

Bookbinder

Fairfax County

Purported bookbinder at a Fairfax paper mill who may have fled to Norfolk in 1815.

Whether John Valentine was a part of the Virginia print trade is debatable. Though known to be a bookbinder, the only evidence for his possible participation in the trade is found in a published notice reporting his flight from his mill-owning employer after stealing a sizeable sum of money in drafts and bank notes. That act resulted in the publication of the following advertisement in at least six Federalist newspapers:

ROBBERY!

100 DOLLARS REWARD.

Ranaway from the employ of the subscriber on Wednesday morning the 1st inst. [i.e. Nov. 1, 1815] an old White man by the name of

JOHN VALENTINE,

A Polander by birth; he is supposed to be about 60 years of age, five feet, 6 or 5 inches high, straight made, wears his hat or carries his head a little on one side, speaks quick both English and Dutch, he assumes to be thought a gentleman. His dress was, when he went off, a black hat, dark mixed coat, and an old brown surtout, dove or lead colored corduroy pantaloons & half boots. He robbed me of a sum of money, the amount not exactly known; 300 dollars of the notes can be identified thus far; they were notes of 10 and 20 dollars of Georgetown Importing and Exporting Company, signed by Henry Foxall, President and Walter Smith, Principal Agent, the dates of all supposed to be 12th Oct. 1815; the 10's payable to P. Levy, the 20's to C. Brush, both of numbers between 201 & 300 or the 10's in favor of J. Smoot & the 20's in favor of J. Cross, of numbers, between 301 & 400.

I have reason to believe that said Thief has changed his name from Valentine to Van Hoffen, and that he has gone in the Steam Boat and Stage by the name of Van Hoffen to Richmond or Norfolk, where it is supposed he will endeavour to get passage to the West Indies. He is known in Frederick county, Md. where he has family, and, it is said, he is a tolerable good bookbinder—he perhaps may seek employment in that line.

Whoever will apprehend and commit said thief to jail, shall receive 50 dollars, or 100 dollars if the money is recovered with him, or in proportion for any part of the money recovered.

Edgar Patterson.

The Editors of the Publick Ledger, Norfolk, Va.; Federal Gazette, Baltimore; Courier, New-York; Herald and Republican Gazette, Frederick-Town, Md. are requested to insert the above advertisement three times, and to transmit their accounts to the subscriber for payment.—E.P.

Given these circumstances, Valentine clearly cannot be traced further. But the history of his

employer is well known. Edgar Moses Patterson (1776-1835) was an entrepreneurial figure in Georgetown from 1805 to 1835; he purchased the remnants of William Alexander Rind's (359) *Washington Federalist* in June 1809 and then issued the journal as the *Independent American & Commercial Advertiser* until March 1811; by December 1815, he owned several mills in the District of Columbia, including the Columbia Paper Mill on Rock Creek and a mill complex at the mouth of Pimmit Run in Fairfax County – near the southern end of today's Chain Bridge – that also hosted a paper mill. He does not state which mill Valentine worked in, but as the Fairfax one was the larger and operated by Patterson, while the Rock Creek mill was then leased, it seems clear that Valentine was a Virginia worker. That deduction is the basis for his inclusion in this Index, despite the uncertainty of his role there.

Personal Data

Born: ca. 1755 in Poland.

Sources: *Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger* (23 Nov. 1815).