

# A Guide to the William Weaver Business Records, 1814-1826

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A Collection in the Library of Virginia Augusta County (Va.) Reels 246, 252, 253/ Barcodes 1187940, 1178136, 1178181, 1178187

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## History

**Processed by:** Bari Helms

## Title Statement

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## Profile Description

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## Descriptive Summary

### Collection numbers

Augusta County (Va.) Reels 246, 252, 253/ Barcodes 1187940, 1178136, 1178181, 1178187

### Language

English

### Collector

Augusta County (Va.) Circuit Court

### Physical Characteristics

9 v. and 3 microfilm reels

### Location

State Records Center - Archives Annex, Library of Virginia

## Repository

The Library of Virginia

# Administrative Information

## Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

## Use Restrictions

For Etna Furnace Pig Iron Book, 1815-1826, use microfilm copy Augusta County (Va.) Reel 246. For William Weaver Invoice Book and Etna Furnace Daybook, 1814-1826, use microfilm copy Augusta County (Va.) Reel 252. For Etna Furnace Negro Book, 1815-1822, and Retreat Furnace Daybook and Ledger, 1816-1826, use microfilm copy Augusta County (Va.) Reel 253.

## Acquisition Information

These items came to the Library of Virginia in transfers of court papers from Augusta County under the accession number 43658.

## Preferred Citation

William Weaver Business Records, 1814-1826. Local government records collection, Augusta County Court Records. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. 23219.

# Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Related Material

For additional information see the Augusta County Chancery Cause, William Weaver versus Thomas Mayburry. It can be found in the Local Records Collection at the Library of Virginia. The index number is 1831-019.

# Historical Information

William Weaver (1780-1863), born in Flourtown, Pennsylvania, was a prominent and successful ironmaster in Virginia and one of the largest slaveholders in Rockbridge County. During his career, Weaver was involved in a variety of enterprises including merchandising, milling, marble quarrying, and small-scale textile manufacturing, but in July 1814, Weaver made a chance investment in the Virginia iron industry along with his new partner Thomas Mayburry, a Philadelphia merchant whose father and grandfather had been involved in the iron industry in Pennsylvania. Weaver and Mayburry purchased, from William Wilson, Union Forge, located in Rockbridge County, and two blast furnaces, Etna and Retreat, in neighboring Botetourt County along with 6,000 acres of iron ore and woodlands.

The Retreat and Etna furnace properties were in decline when Weaver and Mayburry made their purchase - Etna Furnace was in serious disrepair while Retreat Furnace possessed inadequate water power. Weaver attempted to put Retreat into blast in 1815, but due to the lack of water, Weaver realized that the furnace at Etna had to be rebuilt. Etna Furnace, originally built in 1792, was situated along Purgatory Creek near Buchanan, Virginia. Weaver succeeded in putting Etna into blast in 1815, thus, insuring that Union Forge would have a steady supply of pig iron.

Union Forge, renamed as Buffalo Forge, was located on Buffalo Creek in Rockbridge County and would become William Weaver's permanent residence when he relocated to Virginia in 1823. Buffalo Forge was a large complex that had in addition to the forge two water powered mills; a store to sell tobacco, sugar, cloth, and clothing to workers; a shoe and harness shop; carpenter shop; sawmill; and blacksmith. In addition, fields on the furnace properties were used to grow crops of wheat, corn, oats, rye, hay, and clover.

Initially, William Weaver staffed his furnaces with a mixture of white laborers and hired slaves, but in October 1815, Weaver purchased eleven slaves from John Wilson, son of William Wilson from whom he had purchased the furnace properties. Included among these slaves was a valuable ironworker named Tooler, and it would be this group of slaves that would form the basis of Weaver's large crew of skilled ironworkers. Weaver had the bill of sale for these slaves made out to himself instead of the partnership of Weaver and Mayburry. When the partnership began to dissolve in 1825, Weaver would insist that Mayburry relinquish any claim to the slaves.

Despite the dissolution of the partnership in 1825, Thomas Mayburry would stay on to operate Etna Furnace. The dissolution of the partnership would ultimately lead to a lengthy chancery suit, primarily pertaining to the ownership rights of the "Wilson negroes," that would not be settled until an out-of-court agreement was reached in 1836. A preliminary agreement was reached between the former partners in 1827 when Mayburry

agreed to sell Weaver his half of the Union Forge property. After this purchase, Weaver would rename the property Buffalo Forge. Weaver would continue to add to his iron holdings in Virginia, when in 1825, Weaver purchased Lydia Furnace in Rockbridge County. Weaver would later rename this property the Bath Iron Works. Weaver would continue to operate his iron interests until his death on 25 March 1863. Upon his death, Weaver left the Bath Iron Works property to Daniel Brady. The remainder of his property, including Buffalo Forge and his slaves, went to his niece Emma Brady, Daniel Brady's wife.

Today, several buildings still stand at the site of Buffalo Forge, including Weaver's residence, slave quarters, and several support buildings. The property remains in the hands of the Brady heirs. Some ruins of Etna Furnace exist today on private land, but the remains of Retreat Furnace were destroyed in the 1970s by a treasure hunter searching for the Beale treasure.

## Scope and Content

The William Weaver Business Records, 1814-1826, document Weaver's partnership with Thomas Mayburry and the financial activities of his Virginia iron interests - Etna Furnace, Union Forge (later renamed Buffalo Forge), and Retreat Furnace. The collection consists of the following nine volumes: William Weaver Invoice Book and Etna Furnace Daybook, 1814-1826; Mayburry and Weaver Cashbook, 1818-1826; Etna Furnace Negro Book, 1815-1822; Retreat Furnace Daybook and Ledger, 1816-1826; Etna Furnace Daybook, 1824-1826; Union Forge Daybook, 1819-1824; Union Forge Provision Book, 1818-1826; Etna Furnace Pig Iron Book, 1815-1826; and Etna Furnace Pig Iron Book, 1820-1825.

William Weaver Invoice Book and Etna Furnace Daybook, 1814-1826, was used to record the financial activities of Weaver and his furnaces. The first half of the volume, 1814-1816, was used as an invoice book by William Weaver, Thomas Mayburry, and the partnership of Mayburry and Weaver. Entries begin in August 1814 and record purchases made by Weaver and Mayburry while establishing their furnace venture in Virginia. Transactions were listed chronologically as they occurred, and each entry includes the name of the person or business that Weaver and Mayburry did business with, a list of the items purchased, and the total monies paid for the purchases. Items purchased included cloth, clothing, livestock, boots, looking glasses, blankets, stoneware, furniture, sugar, coffee, chocolate, saws, hatchets, and wagons. Most of the businesses named were located in Philadelphia.

Beginning in 1820 the volume was used as a daybook for Etna Furnace with entries made on an almost daily basis as they occurred. The daybook records both purchases from the furnace and items purchased for the furnace. Each entry includes the date, name of purchaser, items purchased, and monies debited or credited. Purchases made from the furnace were limited to iron purchases. Examples of items bought by the furnace include shoes, bacon, beef, flour, tobacco, and whiskey. Also, scattered throughout the daybook are entries for purchases made by furnace employees for items such as food and clothing.

Mayburry and Weaver Cashbook, 1818-1826, tracks the cash received and disbursed for the partnership and its iron interests - Etna Furnace and Union Forge (which Weaver would later rename Buffalo Forge). In each pair of facing book pages, the left page is used to record cash received, while the right page documents cash disbursed. Each entry includes the date, type of transaction, and the amount of money debited or credited.

The cashbook contains entries for Etna Furnace, Union Forge, and what is referred to as House. For both Etna Furnace and Union Forge, expenses are listed for purchases for items such as bacon, sugar, coffee; payments made for having Negro clothes made; and paying "negroes for overwork." Many times expenses were listed for Etna Furnace and Union Forge with no reference to what was paid for, but at times more information is provided such as an entry for the forge which describes expenses paid "for hunting horse that ran away." The House transactions document such purchases as butter, eggs, vinegar, turkey, and cotton for the children.

Many entries scattered throughout the cashbook refer to the slaves living and working at both Etna Furnace and Union Forge. One such entry for 10 January 1824 details the expenses paid for hiring slaves; listed are their bond prices and the expenses they incurred on the road traveling to the furnace. The names of the slave owners are listed along with the amount paid for a year's hire. There are also several entries documenting when slaves were paid for overwork through either cash or goods (details for some of these transactions can be found in the corresponding Etna Furnace Negro Book).

In addition, located throughout the cashbook are notations for various business activities. At the back of the cashbook is an account of grain (rye, corn, wheat, and oats) stored at Jenkins's Mill for 1825 to 1826, with an account of the amounts stored at the mill and a record of the grain used at the furnaces. At the front of the cashbook is a record of shoes mended and made by I. Harris for 1824. Entries are listed chronologically as they occurred and include the number of shoes either made or mended. Also included in the front of the cashbook are detailed directions for bottling liquor... "should porter or ale be managed according to these directions it will seldom or never fail to give satisfaction." Following these instructions are a record of porter, corks, and bottles purchased.

Etna Furnace Negro Book, 1815-1822, records purchases at the ironmaster's store made by slaves who

worked at Etna Furnace. Slaves who performed work beyond their required tasks were compensated in cash or in goods from the ironmaster's store. Each entry is made under the name of the slave and records the goods purchased, the money owed or paid, or if paid in labor what labor was done. Examples of goods purchased include sugar, tobacco, shoes, trousers, cloth, pantaloons, etc. Examples of extra work performed by slaves for payment of goods include hauling, cording wood, working on Sunday, and working during Christmas. There is no index or pagination and no discernible arrangement.

Some slave names found in the account book include Old Sophie, Sam Beau the Miller, or Black Phil. Many surnames are listed including Glascock, Glasscock, Wilson, George, Johnson, Tutwiler, Olds, Carter, Mease, Rowland, Tayloe, Smith, Newbill, Skilern, Mewks, Meux, Mannering, Lee, Cosby, Hart, Burley, Buckley, Gordon, Sprig, Green, Dawson, Clark, and Jackson. Many of the slaves were hired by the furnace, but some such as Tuler (sometimes spelled Tooler) Wilson and Bill Wilson were owned by Weaver.

The back cover of the volume records instances of runaway slaves, noting the date they disappeared and the date they returned. Included are several entries regarding a Randall Clark who is described as a thief and runaway. Reference is made to a trial of his in 1815 where he was sentenced to be burned and whipped.

Retreat Furnace Daybook and Ledger, 1816-1826, was used first as a daybook, 1816, and then as ledger, 1818-1826, to record the transactions of individual employees. Daybook entries document items purchased at the furnace store and include such items as bacon, meal, shoes, blankets, coffee, beef, flour, and tobacco. Transactions were entered on a chronological basis as they occurred. Each entry includes date, employee name, items purchased, and monies debited to the accounts. Beginning in 1818, the volume was used as a ledger to record the individual accounts of employees. All of the employees appear to have been free laborers that were engaged primarily in blacksmith work. Each account includes the employee name and a record of the blacksmith work performed. Each account entry includes the day, a description of the work performed, and the wages provided. Examples of work performed include shoeing horses, making rivets and nails, shaping shovels, and sharpening tools. The accounts also include debits for purchases of items such as blankets, cider, skillets, etc. Several accounts refer to entries made in an unidentified daybook.

Etna Furnace Daybook, 1824-1826, records the daily business transactions of the furnace documenting both expenses and customer orders. Each entry includes the date, type of transaction, and monies credited or debited. Entries for iron purchases include the customer's name along with the amount of iron purchased and monies owed. Expenses for the furnace include freight and shipping fees and the purchase of food, shoes, clothing, and tools. The slave workforce is mentioned throughout the daybook with notations concerning the hiring of slaves and paying slaves for overwork. Also recorded are purchases that slaves made for items at the furnace's store.

Union Forge Daybook, 1819-1824, records the daily operations and financial activities of the forge. The daybook documents customer orders, worked performed by slaves and free laborers, wages paid to employees, and items purchased for the forge's operation. Each entry includes the date, type of transaction, and monies credited or debited. Entries for the purchase of iron include the customer's name along with the amount paid. Expenses for the forge include the purchase of provisions, clothing for workers, tools, and livestock. Detailed descriptions of provisions purchased can be found in the corresponding Union Forge Provision Book. Scattered throughout the volume are entries concerning the slave workforce at Union Forge. Such entries note the hire of slaves, paying slaves for overwork, and the purchase of clothing and blankets for slaves. Few details are included in the entries about slaves, but some slaves are mentioned by name - Garland, Tuler, Phil, Glover, and Sam Williams.

Union Forge Provision Book, 1818-1826, records the purchases of provisions used by the workers at Union Forge. Each entry is recorded under the name of the individual or company from which the items were purchased. Information found in each entry include date, items purchased, and the amounts paid. These entries were also recorded in the corresponding Union Forge Daybook. Provisions purchased included bacon, meal, beef, coffee, sugar, salt, wheat, shoes, clothing, and whiskey. The back of the volume was also used to record the amounts of straw used at Union Forge.

Etna Furnace Pig Iron Book, 1815-1826, documents pig iron sent from Etna Furnace to Union Forge, Pattonsburg (which presumably meant that the pig iron would be staying at Etna Furnace which was located in Pattonsburg in Botetourt County), and M. Harvey's Forge. The iron remaining in Pattonsburg is noted as being sent down the river to Richmond. Each entry lists the date, the weight of the pig iron, and the name of the worker responsible for receiving the shipment. Also included in the back of the volume is an account of the grain received by Etna Furnace. Thomas Mayburry was responsible for the majority of the entries in this volume.

Etna Furnace Pig Iron Book, 1820-1825, records the shipments of pig iron from Etna Furnace to most probably Union Forge. Information found in each entry includes the name of the worker hauling the iron, the amount invoiced at Etna Furnace, and the weight of the iron when it arrived. Workers listed as hauling iron include both slaves and free laborers. Also included in the volume are records of the orders for Etna Furnace pig iron. Information found in the orders includes the name of worker who accepted the order and the quantity of pig iron ordered.

# Index Terms

## Persons:

Weaver, William (1780-1863).

## Subjects:

African Americans--Employment--Virginia.

African Americans--Virginia.

Buffalo Forge (Va.).

Etna Furnace (Va.).

Iron and steel workers--Virginia.

Iron foundries--Virginia.

Iron industry and trade--Virginia.

Retreat Furnace (Va.).

Slave labor--Virginia.

Slaves--Virginia.

Union Forge (Va.).

## Geographical Names:

Augusta County (Va.)--History--19th century.

Botetourt County (Va.)--History--19th century.

Rockbridge County (Va.)--History--19th century.

## Genre and Form Terms:

Accounts--Virginia.

Account books--Virginia.

Business records--Virginia.

Cashbooks--Virginia.

Daybooks--Virginia.

Ledgers (account books)--Virginia.

Local government records--Virginia--Augusta County.

## Added Entry - Personal Name:

Mayburry, Thomas.

## Contents List

**Microfilm reel number: Augusta County (Va.) Reel 252: William Weaver Invoice Book and Etna Furnace Daybook, 1814-1826**

**Barcode number 1187940: William Weaver Invoice Book and Etna Furnace Daybook, 1814-1826**

**Barcode number 1187940: Mayburry and Weaver Cashbook, 1818-1826**

**Microfilm reel number: Augusta County (Va.) Reel 253: Etna Furnace Negro Book, 1815-1822**

**Barcode number 1187940: Etna Furnace Negro Book, 1815-1822**

**Microfilm reel number: Augusta County (Va.) Reel 253: Retreat Furnace Daybook and Ledger, 1816-1826**

**Barcode number 1187940: Retreat Furnace Daybook and Ledger, 1816-1826**

**Barcode number 1178136: Etna Furnace Daybook, 1824-1826**

**Barcode number 1178181: Union Forge Daybook, 1819-1824**

**Barcode number 1178187: Union Forge Provision Book, 1818-1826**

**Microfilm reel number: Augusta County (Va.) Reel 246: Etna Furnace Pig Iron Book, 1815-1826**

**Barcode number 1187940: Etna Furnace Pig Iron Book, 1815-1826**

**Barcode number 1187940: Etna Furnace Pig Iron Book, 1820-1825**