

On this day in Columbus history, October 19, 1833,

E. Sigourney Norton's ad for "New & Interesting" books at the Columbus Book Store appeared in the *Enquirer*. Among the books Norton listed to coax his customers into the store was "Emma by Miss Austen," and periodicals like "The Saturday Evening Post."

Newspaper owners must have smiled when they saw Mr. Norton coming because he spent so much money on front page advertising. His ads begin appearing in existing papers in Georgia Historic Newspapers by 1831. On the front page of the January 7, 1832, *Democrat*, Norton has six different ads: a "Circulating Library;" a long list of law books; his trusty blue-black ink; another list of books including "The Frugal Housewife," and Coleridge's study of the Greek;" a big notice headlined: "Almanacs for 1832;" and another ad headlined "New Publications" that included Buffon's *Natural History* and the *Autobiography of Sir Walter Scott*. In addition, over to one side appears an ad for "Maps of the Cherokee Country." On the day after his death, the front page of the *Columbus Herald and Sentinel* still held five of his advertisements.

Norton also did his civic duty, serving as a grand juror in 1832 and in 1838. He signed up to fight Creek Indians as a private in the Columbus Guards in 1835. Norton was elected an alderman in 1836 during the mayoral term of John Fontaine and continued in that seat into the administration of the next mayor, James S. Calhoun in 1837. He also owned several properties in town including half of town lots 159 and 160, which he shared with Moore & Tarver and S.R. Bonner (Galer).

I could find little personal information about E. Sigourney Norton. And then, still perusing John Martin's "Trading Town," I came upon a paragraph in 1838: "An event which shocked the city, on the 30th of May, was the suicide of Mr. E. Sigourney Norton, mentioned in preceding pages. He cut his throat with a razor — being, it was supposed, under the influence of liquor." (96) The primary announcement in the *Enquirer* makes no mention that Norton was drinking at the time. The *Southern Post* from Macon mentions "melancholy" and "mental derangement" as influencing him, in a reprint from the June 1 issue of the *Sentinel and Herald*. Mr. Norton's tragic story was also reprinted or mentioned in the *Georgia Constitutionalist*, *Federal Union*, *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, and the *Georgia Mirror* in Florence.

Norton's death came in the wake of the financially devastating Panic of 1837 and, from the number of advertisements that carry his name, he may have had his money spread pretty thinly. On the day after his death, the advertisements that appeared on the front page of the *Columbus Herald and Sentinel* included, tellingly, two ads "to rent or sell" several stores and many second story rooms, on Oglethorpe and McIntosh, "in the Most Business Part of Columbus." The times were economically difficult for many people, evidenced by the columns of notices for sheriff's sales, and sales of plantations and properties on other pages. Norton's front-page ads echoed the financial desperation of the times.

Although I finally figured out his first name (Elisha), E. Sigourney Norton's death notices carried no word about his family members or any biographical details of his life. In fact, I only found clues to one possible relation: John A. Norton.

New & Interesting
Columbus Book Store.

THE subscriber has just received from New York via Savannah the following new and interesting Publications.

New Gil Blas or Pedro of Penalfor	2 vols.
The Abbess by Mrs Trollope,	2 do
Library of Romane—Slave King,	1 vol
Mary of Burgundy,	2 vols
The Game of life, a Novel,	1 vol
Wild sports of the West,	2 vols
Legends of the Rhine,	2
Memoir of Zerah Colburn,	1
Philosophy of the moral Feelings,	1
Ferguson Nature and Revelation,	
The Infants Annual or a mothers offering,	
Medico Chirurgical Review for April,	
On the Penitentiary system in the United States by G. De Beaumont, and A. De Toqueville,	
Wacousta,	
Emma, by Miss Austen,	
Whigs of Scotland,	
Stolen Child,	
Kidd, on the Physical condition of man,	
Fiddlers United States,	
Madro on the observation of nature,	
Eulers Letters,	
Humboldt's Travels,	
Address to the young,	
Harmony of the Gospels,	
Life of the Rev Geo. Burder,	
Family scenes,	
Misererimus,	
Life of Doct Dodimus,	
Together with a large number of standard works.	

E. SIGOURNY NORTON.
October 19—21—1833

There were other bookstores in Columbus besides Norton's Columbus Book Store and one was I.C. Plant & Co's Book Store. Less than two months after E.S. Norton's death, bookseller T.H. Plant dissolved his partnership with I.C. Plant in Augusta and Columbus and announced a partnership with J.A. Norton to sell books in Columbus. Two years later, J.A. Norton and T.H. Plant dissolved the partnership amicably and Norton and William M. Langdon took it over. Plant wrote that he was "pleased to leave it in the hands of young men of known integrity, ability and perseverance in business." (*Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, February 8, 1840, 3.)

John A. Norton, the bookseller and possible younger relation of the late Elisha Sigourney Norton, went on to marry Mary A. E. Sturgis, the daughter of his fellow alderman Judge Joseph Sturgis, in 1840, and served as an alderman and was active in civic and political life of Columbus. – **Rachel Dobson**

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days'-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.

And we request that these, our presentments, be published in the public gazettes of this place.

JAMES BOYKIN, Foreman,	
E. C. Bandy,	Aaron Odom,
Joseph Coleman,	James Patillo,
M. N. Clark,	James Ramsey,
T. J. Hand,	Charles Rosende,
Daniel Huff,	R. T. Sankey,
J. W. Johnson,	E. B. W. Spivey,
James H. Jones,	B. A. Sorshy,
C. E. Mims,	Theophilus Sapp,
Charles McFarlin,	Elisha Tarver,
Elisha S. Norton,	Hugh Watt,
James S. Norman,	David Wright.

Ordered, That the foregoing presentments be published as requested.
A true extract from the Minutes of this Court, 9th May, 1838.
GERARD BURCH, Clerk.

SUICIDE.

Mr. E. Sigourney Norton, formerly Alderman of this city, yesterday morning committed Suicide, by cutting his throat from ear to ear with a razor. We are not apprized of the circumstances which led to this unfortunate tragedy. His friends, who were in the house, seemed to have no intimation of his bloody purpose, until they were aroused to his condition by hearing his death struggle in the adjoining room, when it was too late to save his life. The fatal instrument had been used too successfully. He lived but a few minutes after the wound was inflicted.

Elisha Sigourney Norton served on the grand jury in 1838 just a few days before he died, with my four-greats-grandfather, James Boykin. *Columbus Sentinel and Herald*, May 10, 1838.

"Suicide," *Columbus Enquirer*, May 31, 1838

SOURCES:

Mary Jane Galer, *Columbus, Ga., Lists of People, 1828-1852 and Sexton's Reports to 1866* ([Columbus, Ga.]: Iberian Publ., 2000).

Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO), <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

Columbus, Georgia, From its Selection as a "Trading Town" in 1827, to its Partial Destruction by Wilson's Raid, in 1865, Part 1 - 1827 to 1846, John H. Martin, compiler (Columbus, Ga.: Thos. Gilbert, 1874) (Internet Archive).