

088 CHARLTON, ARMSTRONG

Printer, Publisher

Martinsburg

Publisher of the *Potomac Guardian* (1800-01) at Martinsburg with William Brown (059).

Charlton was the successor to Nathaniel Willis (449) in publishing his Jeffersonian *Potomac Guardian*. Choosing to leave Martinsburg following assaults on his person and property by local Federalists, Willis turned his paper over to someone who was in "every way qualified for the arduous undertaking." Charlton had apparently witnessed the beating that Willis took in his press office in March 1799 and was not intimidated by the prospect; however, the loss of subscribers and advertising to the newly-founded Federalist journal of John Alburtis (004) quickly killed the *Guardian*.

There seems to have been other factors in that closure besides the fiscal one. Charlton was a refugee from the suppression of revolutionary movements in Britain in the 1790s, making his editorial outlook a problem for many Berkeley County readers; moreover, his pen's edge was sharper than had been Willis's and he paid the price. In April 1800, he confronted his opponents by renaming his paper the *Republican Atlas*. Yet at the same time, he took on William Brown as a partner; Brown's brother Matthew (058) was a well-known Federalist editor in Baltimore, so their business arrangement was likely doomed from the start by the partners' conflicting political views. Sometime that summer, Charlton sold his interest to Brown and departed Martinsburg, never to return. Brown's subsequent attempt to turn the paper into a Federalist one was stymied by the presence of the new Alburtis journal; he removed to nearby Charlestown in early 1802 after closing the *Atlas* in November 1801.

Meanwhile, Charlton became an itinerant journeyman printer, eschewing any editorial work after his unhappy Martinsburg experience. He became a naturalized citizen in Washington in 1808, indicating that the capital represented a desirable choice for employment for him with Jefferson's ascension in 1801. In 1812, Charlton was working in Baltimore when he enlisted, at the advanced age of thirty-four, in the U.S. Army. Assigned to duties guarding the harbor of New York City, he was hospitalized frequently between July 1813 and June 1815; eventually he was discharged as an invalid in July 1815. Charlton remained in New York for the rest of his life, evidently working in that city's proliferating press offices. When he died in June 1843, only brief notices in that city's papers appeared; by then Charlton was long forgotten in the Old Dominion, as was the Federalists' assault on Nathaniel Willis that had brought him to Martinsburg.

Personal Data

Born: about 1773 Great Britain (Ireland? Scotland?)

Died: June 23 1843 New York, New York.

No record of a wife or children yet discovered.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Norona & Shetler; Rice, "West Virginia Printers;" U.S. Naturalization Records, 1794-1995; U.S. Army, Register of Enlistments, 1798-1914; death notice in *New York Evening Herald*, 23 June 1843.