

096 COCHRAN, J.

097 COCHRANE, G. – [GEORGE COCHRAN]

Printers

Richmond

Joint proprietors of the Richmond job-printing firm of J. & G. Cochran (1814-23).

The origins of both tradesmen are unclear, but the timing of their appearance in Richmond suggests a link to the Philadelphia printer Robert Cochran, who died in 1811, and his wife, Ann Cochran Coles, who remarried in 1813 and closed his press in 1815. Both were clearly practical printers, so had trained elsewhere; G. Cochran (George) was twenty-three in 1814, a suitable age for striking out on his own, especially with a father's legacy in hand; George had relocated to Washington alone when a J. Cochran began publishing a paper in Oswego, New York, in 1829, with a partner named Coles, the remarried surname of Robert's widow Ann. So these known circumstances suggest that two newly-independent brothers began in Richmond in 1814, separated after 1822, with one then joining a step-brother in Oswego in 1829. That hypothesis is supported by the 1820 federal census which shows that George maintained a household of ten people there, with five engaged in manufacturing, four being white males over twenty-five, a count consistent with two printer-brothers living under one roof. Still, no certain proof or contradiction of such a speculative history has been found.

The job-printing office of J. & G. Cochran began work about the time of the death of Samuel Pleasants (331) in 1814, when Richmond's printing trade underwent a major reorganization. The Cochrans became involved in publishing works hewn by the noted legal scholar William Waller Hening (213), both concurrently with and subsequent to similar works issuing from the Franklin Press office of Hening's nephew, William Waller Gray (193). Most notable was their publication of volumes 8 through 12 of Hening's celebrated *Statutes at Large* between 1821 and 1823, as well as the third edition of his manual for county-court justices in 1820. They were also publishers in 1822 of a pioneering law-school journal from the Needham Law School in Cumberland County, founded by Creed Taylor, a justice on the Superior Court of Chancery for the Richmond District – the same court for which Hening was then the clerk. Given the increasing use of pre-printed legal forms at this time, they likely produced large quantities of those in their nine years in Richmond as well. In 1823, George Cochran became the sole name on the imprints that the press published, indicating his partner's withdrawal from their joint venture, and his probable departure from the city. Within another year, the Cochran imprimatur disappeared from Richmond entirely.

George Cochran removed to Washington City at about that same time. Over the next two decades, he can be seen occasionally in the proceedings of the printing-trade associations in the District of Columbia, indicating his continued operation of a job-printing office there. Yet such can only be inferred; the imprints that he produced rarely carried his colophon; moreover, Cochran did not advertise his services in the District's newspapers, continuing a marketing silence that marked his Richmond years as well. But he broke that silence loudly in 1845. In the preceding three years, he was an organizer of efforts within the Columbia Typographical Society to foster temperance among its membership; their annual meeting in

1844 was the first in that society's quarter-century history where alcoholic beverages were not served. Cochran followed this success by launching a temperance newspaper in April 1845, *The Washingtonian*. That journal, however, lived but seventeen weeks, dying quickly from a lack of support. His last public appearance was similarly futile; when the Civil War erupted in 1861, printers in the District voted to limit their working hours in the face of growing production demands; Cochran was a leader in the press-owners association that arose to resist those demands. In the end, pressing needs undermined the owners' position; increasing production quantities, by whatever means possible, mattered more than did the owners' control of their presses. Cochran had little time to respond to this loss of personal authority; he fell ill and died in September of that year, at the age of seventy.

Personal Data for George Cochran

Born: In 1791 Philadelphia. Pennsylvania?
Married: Aug. 10 1820 Sarah Bricken @ Richmond, Virginia (d. 1848).
Died: Sept. 12 1861 Washington, District of Columbia.
Children: At least one son, George W. (b. 1828).

Sources: Imprints; Hubbard on Richmond; *Tyler's Encyclopedia*; notices in *Alexandria Gazette*, *National Intelligencer*, and *Baltimore Sun*, 1842-61; marriage notice in *Richmond Enquirer*, 17 Aug. 1820; obituary in *National Intelligencer*, 13 Sept. 1861.