

137 DILLWORTH, JAMES A.

Publisher

Rockingham County

Publisher of a religious biography through the press of Ananias Davisson (129) in 1820.

Dillworth was a resident of Harrisonburg in the 1820s and 1830s, but little else of his history has yet been found. His only appearance in the bibliographic record is that of his contracted publication of a Virginia edition of *The Experience and Gospel Labours of the Rev. Benjamin Abbott* by John Ffirrh. That title suggests that Dillworth, like the book's subject, was a part of the Methodist evangelical movement then sweeping the Valley. Abbott (1732-96) had been raised an indifferent Presbyterian, who turned away from religion completely in the industrial workshops of Philadelphia; but hearing a Methodist preacher in 1772 brought him around to a ministry of evangelical preaching, even as he was persecuted for such during the Revolutionary era. That experience made him an exemplar to all non-believers of the positive effects of embracing the Gospel according to John Wesley. As Davisson was also inclined to evangelicism, it likely took little effort from Dillworth to convince him to use his recently acquired press to publish a new edition of the text for distribution in the Valley.

NB: Publisher's surname is also recorded as Dilworth; usage here from his Virginia imprint.

Personal Data

Born: ca. 1790 Virginia?

Died: after 1840 Virginia?

Census data suggests a wife and seven children, four girls and three boys, all unnamed, and all born after 1810.

Sources: Imprint (Shoemaker 1229); Federal Decennial Census, 1830-40; Sprague, *Annals* (Methodist).