

138 DILLWORTH, SAMUEL

Printer & Publisher

Petersburg, Norfolk

Journeyman printer in partnership with Marvel W. Dunnivant (154) in Petersburg (1815) and with Charles Keemle (246) in both Norfolk (1816) and Vincennes, Indiana (1817).

Dillworth's origins are uncertain. With his first trade presence coming in Petersburg, he may be related to a Samuel Dilworth who was collecting British debts there in 1783. He may also have been related to the Philadelphia iron merchant of that same name, as his partner Keemle was born there, and so might he have been as well. However, neither alternative is proven. All that can be discerned with any certainty is his working life from 1812 to 1830.

By October 1812, Dillworth was living in Petersburg when he enrolled in the 39th Regiment of the Virginia Militia – the Petersburg Volunteers – as the war with Britain then intensified; in a year-long enlistment, he aided in the defense of Norfolk. It seems that his deployment put him in contact with Charles Keemle, who was then completing his apprenticeship in the office of the *Norfolk Herald* under James O'Connor (317) and Daniel Baxter (027); the two would join together in a job-printing firm in that seaport after the war. But in the interim, Dilworth joined Marvel Dunnivant on his return to Petersburg in opening new a job-printing office there. It is unclear as to where he was trained as a printer, but it seemingly had to be either when he was in Norfolk, or in Petersburg before or after his coastal deployment.

In mid-1816, Dillworth and Keemle set up an independent job-printing office in Norfolk. This left Dunnivant in search of a new partner; he was planning to start a new Republican paper in Petersburg, suggesting that Dillworth did not want to be shunted into a subordinate role in the affair. Meanwhile, Keemle was being supplanted at the *Norfolk Herald*; the aging and ill O'Connor had chosen to make another journeyman in that office, Thomas G. Broughton (055), his new partner and heir-apparent. So this job-printing firm seems to have been a contingency plan for both tradesmen, a temporary refuge while they regrouped – and an interesting opportunity was presented in short order by one of their customers, Samuel K. Jennings (236). Jennings had just relocated to Norfolk from Lynchburg, where he edited the *Lynchburg Press*; now, he had turned to expanding his medical practice via the manufacture of a patented therapeutic bath in the port town, contracting Keemle & Dillworth to print its instruction manual. In their conversations, Jennings told the young tradesmen of the dearth of printers and newspapers in Indiana where his brother, Jonathan Jennings (1784-1834), had just been elected as the new state's first governor. In the ensuing winter, the partners moved their job-press to the frontier town of Vincennes, Indiana, on the Wabash River.

Once settled in Vincennes, Keemle & Dillworth began printing a new weekly there, the *Indiana Centinel*, in opposition to the long-lived *Western Sun* of Elisha Stout. In the ensuing five years, the two papers contended for dominance in that neighborhood, with the *Centinel* supporting Gov. Jennings and the *Sun* his opponents – a marked irony given Jennings's one-time ownership of that journal (1806-09). But in doing so, Dilworth and Keemle soon faded into the backdrop behind the unmistakable editorial presence of Dr. Elias McNamee; formerly a contributor to the *Sun*, he had probably financed their move to Indiana, and was now building a newspaper network in support of the new administration

of his old friend Jennings. Keemle left the office after just four months, moving on to St. Louis that August to a profitable career, first as a fur-trader and sales-agent for western lands, then as a newspaper publisher there, with McNamee becoming the *Centinel's* chief proprietor.

Still, Dilworth appears to have been fully committed to Vincennes as seen subsequently in his long residence there; indeed, he may have instigated the relocation through the use of the bounty-land warrants earned in his service during the War of 1812. And while his name disappeared from the *Centinel's* masthead, he retained some proprietary connection to its press office, for in 1822 he issued a self-authored military manual from that office. He also became a civic presence in fairly short order. In early 1817, he was a founding member of the town's new Library Company, alongside McNamee, likely serving as the conduit for its book purchases. And the life-long Freemason soon joined the Vincennes lodge, transferring from Petersburg's Blandford Lodge No. 3 in early 1818. But by 1823, it seems that Dillworth had finally severed his bonds to the printing trade; that spring he was elected as the town recorder, a post that he held until 1830. But once unseated from that office, Dillworth's presence in both the historical and bibliographic record is longer seen.

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

Personal Data

Born:	ca.	1795	??
Married	Mar. 26	1818	Marcia Books @ Vincennes, Indiana.
Died:	after	1830	Vincennes, Indiana?

No record of children yet discovered.

Sources: Brigham; Wyatt, *Checklist for Petersburg; War of 1812 Service Records; Index to War of 1812 Pay Rolls and Muster Rolls*, Library of Virginia; *Minutes of Ohio Valley Historical Assn.*, 1898; *Proceedings of Grand Lodge of Indiana*, 1818; marriage notice in *American Beacon*, 27 June 1818.