

149 DROMGOOLE, WILLIAM A. – [WILLIAM ALEXANDER DROMGOOLE]

Printer & Publisher

Evansham (now Wytheville)

Publisher of *Republican Luminary* in Wythe County (1809-10) with Robert Engledow (158).

Dromgoole was born and raised in Frederick County and evidently was taught the printing trade in one of Winchester's press offices in the decade before 1808. With that training in hand, he joined his brother-in-law, Robert Engledow, a Wythe County merchant-planter, to publish the first newspaper in that county. *The Republican Luminary* issued its first number in March 1809 and continued exactly one year, probably the length of Dromgoole's contract with Engledow. Despite the familial link, Dromgoole left Wythe almost immediately and was working in Kentucky by May 1810; after failing to find a successor to his brother-in-law, Engledow advertised the sale of his printing press that November.

Dromgoole's move to Kentucky was apparently the result of an earlier relocation by Peter Isler (235), another brother-in-law who had trained as a printer alongside Dromgoole in Winchester. Isler moved to Bardstown, Kentucky, in late 1806 to conduct a weekly – *The Candid Review* – and so likely needed reliable assistance at that time. To get him to leave Engledow and Wythe, Isler offered Dromgoole the chance to publish a new literary magazine – *The Garden* – from his press. Dromgoole's *Garden* did not live out 1810, or so the scant number of surviving issues suggests, with Isler's weekly following suit in August 1811. The two moved to Natchez in the Mississippi Territory shortly thereafter; Isler bought the press of a dead weekly and issued a new *Mississippi Republican* there, while Dromgoole was appointed the territory's public printer. They continued in business together in Natchez until March 1814; Dromgoole advertised the sale of their press then, before he and Isler joined Mississippi forces that later fought in the Battle of New Orleans at the end of the War of 1812. They served with Philip A. Gilbert from Bardstown; he too became a brother-in-law to Dromgoole when the printer married Gilbert's sister Sarah in 1816.

By 1817, Dromgoole was operating a job-printing office and reading room in Alexandria, Rapides Parish, Louisiana; he had even moved his widowed mother from Winchester to join the extended family, as she died there in July 1820. However, he soon moved again, this time to Monroe in Ouachita Parish, Louisiana, to take up journalism again; his new weekly *Louisianian* issued its first number in June 1822; but as with his Kentucky periodical, this journal had a very short life. Eventually, he landed in Washington County, Mississippi, northeast of Monroe, across the Mississippi, north of Natchez. There he established a substantial cotton plantation on Lake Washington in conjunction with his son-in-law, Robert J. Turnbull, and retired from the printing trade permanently. Dromgoole lived out his life in apparent comfort there, dying on his "Long Island Plantation" in early 1842, far from his Virginia birthplace but surrounded by his Virginia-bred family.

Personal Data

Born: March 1787 Frederick County, Virginia.
Married in 1816 Sarah Gilbert @ Bardstown, Kentucky.
Died: Feb. 18 1842 Washington County, Mississippi.
Children: William (b. 1817); George (b. 1818); Mary Jane (b. 1822); Philip G. (b. 1829); John G. (b. 1837); Alexander M. (b. 1840).

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Kegley, *Wythe County*; Woods, *Delta Plantations*; notices in *Louisiana Herald* (Alexandria), 1820-22; U.S. Supreme Court, 43 U.S. 241; genealogical data from Dromgoole family charts posted on Ancestry.com (September 2012).