

166 FLANAGAN, MICHAEL

Printer

Richmond

Journeyman printer in Virginia (1817-27) who died in Richmond in June 1827.

Flanagan has left only a small trace on the American print-trade record; his 1827 obituary offers clues to his origin and training but his known activity is sparse: two newspaper notices. Thus he seems a typical print tradesman from the early Republic era; he was able to earn a viable living from his trade skills, but never achieved the level of success associated with a profitable newspaper and job-printing establishment.

Flanagan first appears as an autonomous printer in a New York City directory for 1812; the timing suggests that he was a minor son of Christian Flanagan, a bookseller and job-printer who died in late 1805; his eldest sons succeeded him as James & Moses Flanagan and so continued the business until they were forced into bankruptcy in June 1807. James does not reappear in a business situation until 1811, conducting a bookstore once again; that set of circumstances suggests that Michael, if related, worked for older brothers until he reached his majority in 1812 and struck out on his own. More importantly, all of these Flanagans were involved in the city's Republican political circles, particularly James, as a ward leader.

In April 1813, Michael Flanagan issued the first newspaper notice involving him. He was proposing publication of a weekly *Republican Herald* in the city, but he found insufficient support; that was probably the result of a prospectus saying that "an undeserved and unjust denunciation of" the policies of both Jefferson and Madison "has become the cloven foot of political degeneracy and malicious opposition to the true interests of the United States." Apparently, his weekly would have statured the market for such a militant perspective as the paper that carried his proposal, *The National Advocate*, was a daily Republican journal that had started there just the preceding December. Still, the obvious association seems to indicate that he was then a part of that office.

Flanagan moved to Richmond in 1817, where he became a part of the Franklin Press office, then conducted by William Waller Gray (193). That removal implies that as political tensions rose in New York during the War of 1812, it made sense for him to move on to a Republican bastion like Virginia, as many other like-minded print-tradesmen did then – especially in light of Gray's ties to Republicans Gerard Banks (019) and William Waller Hening (213).

The final notices for Flanagan are his obituaries, published in the two Richmond papers of Thomas Ritchie (360) first, and later in the Jacksonian papers of New York City. Ritchie's interest here, as well as the absence of notices of Flanagan's death in the capital's other newspapers, suggests that he may have worked in the Ritchie press office as it continually grew over those years. The obituary's verbatim repetition in New York City papers indicates his continuing ties to that distant place. But more nothing definitive about Flanagan can be discerned without further unequivocal evidence.

Personal Data

Died: June 20 1827 Richmond, Virginia.

No other definitive personal data yet discovered.

Sources: Hubbard on Richmond; obituary in *Richmond Enquirer & Daily Compiler*, 29 June 1827; New York City directories, 1803-16; notices in various New York City newspapers, 1805-27.