

250 KENNEDY, A. T. – [ANDREW THOMAS KENNEDY]

Bookseller & Publisher

Alexandria

Bookseller and publisher in Alexandria (1810-29) and Washington D.C. (1823-29), initially in partnership with his father, James Kennedy (251).

Kennedy was born into a family with deep literary interests. His father, James Kennedy, was an Alexandria apothecary of Irish origins who became a bookseller through his involvement with the Alexandria Library Company; his grandfather, also named James, was a physician in County Down, Ireland, who left a substantial library to his third son on his death in 1770; sometime after 1780, that son brought that library with him when he migrated to Virginia, and it became the bulk of the new library's holdings after its incorporation in 1794. By 1797, James Kennedy had been named the librarian of the institution, even as he now also began to sell books alongside the patent medicines offered in his apothecary shop. Young Andrew was thus trained in both businesses, but chose to embrace bookselling in adulthood.

In January 1813, the twenty-five-year-old Andrew Kennedy became his father's partner in the bookselling and stationery concern of James Kennedy & Son, while his sixty-one-year-old father retained a down-sized apothecary business to himself alone. This would be the state of their business relationship until James Kennedy's death in October 1820. In splitting his business into two parts, the elder Kennedy recognized to the reality that his book store paled in comparison to that of contemporary competitors, like those of Peter Cottom (107) & John A. Stewart (402) or John (189) & Robert (190) Gray; those two firms in particular had long since outpaced him by focusing on a broader market than that seen in the patrons of the library and their peers, as Kennedy served. The younger Andrew had apparently been the store's manager during the two-dozen hours that the Alexandria Library Company was open each week; now the store was left in his care while the elder Kennedy spent his time at the library. With this focusing of responsibilities, the scale of advertising undertaken by their firm changed markedly, evincing Andrew's marketing sense rather than his father's; small, frequent advertisements touting specific titles replaced the longer lists of available books previously published seasonally; throughout the late 1810s, the *Alexandria Gazette* often carried three different notices from Kennedy & Son simultaneously in its pages.

Yet, this pattern also changed in 1820 following James Kennedy's death. The number of store advertisements annually dropped to a handful, placed only when new imprints that Kennedy had invested in were published. After he finally settled his father's estate in late 1823, Kennedy also changed the focus of his business from school books and instructional texts to one retailing music and instruments alongside the latest novels. In 1824, he also expanded that new business form by establishing a branch store on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington City, taking a house there as well. But in these years, the stationery side of his business seems to have been its foundation, given the extensive advertisements for various paper varieties he published regularly. Still, it seems that the Alexandria store established on King Street by his father was the heart of his operation. When he died in April 1829, he had abandoned his Washington residence and was again managing the Alexandria store daily. In his residence above that store, Kennedy came to his end, not in the District of

Columba as several nineteenth-century accounts report erroneously.

As Kennedy never married and never had children, management of his bookstore fell to his unmarried sister Elizabeth on his death. She was quickly named his executor, along with two male guarantors, and operated that store for the benefit of his estate for the next year. At that time, all of the Kennedys disappear from the records of the American book trade, and the legacy left to Andrew and his sisters by their father reverted to cousins in Ireland.

Personal Data

Born: in 1788 Alexandria, Virginia.

Died: April 7 1829 Alexandria, Virginia.

Died unmarried and without issue.

Sources: Imprints; *Artisans & Merchants*; Moore, *Seaport in Virginia*; notices in *Alexandria Gazette* (1810-30), and *Alexandria Herald* (1810-30); genealogical data from Kennedy family charts posted on Ancestry.com (November 2012), including transcription of father's will, corrected by family history in *Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland Journal* (1886).