

287 MCGLOSSIN, GEORGE

Publisher

Winchester

Publisher of the *Republican Constellation* at Winchester (1819), which he then recast as the *Winchester Republican* (1819-20).

McGlassin was a Philadelphia-trained printer who gained a considerable national reputation for his exploits during the War of 1812, a reputation that then brought him to Winchester to publish the principal Republican journal there. He was the son of Scottish immigrants who settled in Washington County, Pennsylvania, dispatched at a fairly early age to Philadelphia to apprentice in the printing trade; by 1808, he was a practicing journeyman there when he joined the all-volunteer Philadelphia Fire Company (founded 1806) at the age of seventeen, an early demonstration of his belief in public service.

McGlassin's sense of service was most visibly manifest during the War of 1812. He enlisted in the Fifteenth Regiment of Pennsylvania Infantry in March 1812, fully three months before war was declared, and was promoted from lieutenant to captain (August 1813) and then to brevet major (September 1814) for his diligence and gallantry. The last came as a result of the assault McGlassin led during the Battle of Plattsburgh (also known as the Battle of Lake Champlain) in which his detachment crossed the Saranac River outside that town to silence a British rocket battery that had stymied a northward advance along the western shore of the lake, an action that was widely heralded in American newspapers. At war's end, he was retained in service, becoming a captain in the Sixth Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army; but McGlassin's military career came to an undignified end in May 1818 when he was cashiered for his reportedly abusive treatment of the men under his command.

McGlassin seems to have now turned to seeking out new opportunities for public service in his original trade. He found one in December 1818 when Jonathan Foster (168), publisher of the *Republican Constellation*, offered his Winchester business for either sale or long-term lease (a half interest), requiring "satisfactory recommendations of strict sobriety, integrity, industry, and ... firm and consistent republican principles." Foster had badly overextended himself as a book publisher over the preceding two years, and wanted to focus on collecting debts and distributing books, rather than the ongoing demands of his thrice-weekly journal. Evidently, McGlassin fit the bill, as three months later, in March 1819, Foster transferred outright ownership of the *Constellation* to the retired officer. After six months as proprietor, McGlassin recast the paper as the *Winchester Republican*, seeking to create an identity for the journal that attached to his person and not to those of his predecessors. In the notices he placed in newspapers distant from Winchester, McGlassin told potential subscribers that he would "endeavor to continue his press with circumspection and usefulness—ever mindful of the medium between liberty and licentiousness..."

However, McGlassin soon found that the venture was far less profitable than he had hoped. In taking control of Foster's paper, he had displaced two sons of eminent members of this lower Valley community: Peter Klipstine (253) and Joseph F. Caldwell (073). In combination with McGlassin's unfamiliarity with the statewide and local political issues, this dismissal raised concerns that some thought could only be dispelled by offering an alternative to

McGlassin's paper. That partisan rival, the *Virginia Reformer and Herald of the Valley*, issued exactly three weeks after the first issue of McGlassin's *Constellation* appeared.

With the Republican-inclined readership in Frederick County now divided between the two journals, the survival of each one was decidedly uncertain. As the 1820 election campaign dawned, it seems that local Republican leaders negotiated an end to this intraparty conflict. At the close of the *Virginia Reformer's* first volume/year in April 1820, they brokered a sale of the *Reformer's* subscriber list to McGlassin; they then set about recruiting a publisher capable of conducting the *Republican* in his stead – with the older journal passing into the hands of Samuel H. Davis (126), a job-printer from Alexandria, at year's end; he quickly established himself in Winchester, becoming a fixture there over the next decade.

McGlassin remained in the area for some time after the sale, quietly collecting a military pension while living on farm south of Martinsburg until at least September 1821. In March 1821, he wrote to President Monroe seeking reinstatement in the Army, but was rebuffed. Yet his proximity to Washington gave him the chance to lobby for a non-military post in Monroe's administration despite that rejection. In June 1822, shortly after his marriage in the capital, he was named surveyor and inspector of revenue for the ports along the St. John River in the district of St. Augustine (as Florida was then known), operating out of the village that became modern-day Jacksonville. But that position did not match his ambitions. By September 1822, McGlassin had resigned the post and moved on to the Arkansas Territory (established in 1820) as a purchasing agent for the U.S. government there. It was reported that he intended to settle there permanently, seeing commerce on the "frontier" as a better opportunity for his future than that tied to government service. But McGlassin did not live long enough to realize such plans. In the course of his itinerant duties, he contracted yellow fever and died on September 25, 1822, apparently just shy of his thirty-first birthday. His eulogists all employed his brevet rank of major in mourning his passing, and not his lesser pensioned rank, a title that has carried into McGlassin family histories.

Personal Data

Born:	ca.	1791	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
Married	June 14	1822	Abby Jones @ Washington, District of Columbia.
Died:	Sept. 25	1822	Arkansas Territory.

No offspring from a brief marriage.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cappon; Morton, *Winchester*; Russell, *Winchester*; Heitman, *Historical Register of the US Army; Centenary of Battle of Plattsburg; Papers of James Monroe*; obituary in *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), Oct. 8, 1822; genealogical data from entry on sister Frances in *John Broome and Rebecca Lloyd: Their Descendants and Related Families* (2009). Several nineteenth-century sources incorrectly report his death date as 1831, the year that his widow remarried in New York City.