

### 309 MURPHY, WILLIAM

**Bookseller & Librarian**

**Alexandria**

Proprietor of a commercial circulating library (1786) in Alexandria.

Murphy is an anonymous figure who conducted circulating libraries in Annapolis, Baltimore, and Alexandria as a fundamental part of a bookselling and stationery business in each place.

His first setting was in Annapolis, the staid Maryland capital, established there apparently at the close of the Revolutionary War; Murphy sold that concern in 1784 to one Hugh Barley and moved on to the growing commercial center of Baltimore where he set up a similar business on Market Street. Evidently, his stay there was just over a year in length and likely unprofitable, as Murphy announced his relocation to Alexandria in January 1786. Yet he was soon disappointed there as well; by November 1786 he had returned to Baltimore, where he advertised his imminent departure for Europe, soliciting a settlement of accounts with those who owed him money from his earlier residence.

Murphy apparently did not return to America, suggesting that he had been an immigrant all along, rather than a native-born American; in October 1789, a Murphy named Timothy placed notices in Baltimore newspapers announcing a meeting in the ensuing November to settle the bookseller's outstanding debts. No further trace of him has been found, largely the result of an exceedingly common name.

***No Personal Data yet discovered.***

Sources: *Artisans & Merchants*; Scharf, *Baltimore*; notices in Baltimore (1784-89) and Alexandria (1786) newspapers.