

### 336 POLLARD, WILLIAM

**Printer & Publisher**

**Richmond**

Partner in a Richmond job-printing concern (1817-27) with Samuel Shepherd (379); later publisher of *Richmond Commercial Compiler* (1823-27), initially with Samuel Cary (085).

Pollard was a journeyman printer who rose to an ownership role in the Virginia print trade for a decade before vanishing from the bibliographic and historic record. His identity and origin are shrouded by a name that was relatively common in central Virginia in the early Republic era. It is clear that he was **NOT** the most frequently seen "William Pollard" of that period, the long-serving like-named clerk of the Hanover County Court, though he may have had some connection to the clerk's family given the recurrence of his given name in that clan. His professional lineage is only slightly less obscure, with no record extant of where he trained or with whom. But his trade associations suggest that he was a part of a network of printers and publishers tied to the *Richmond Enquirer* office of Thomas Ritchie (360) – a group that included Samuel Shepherd and Samuel Cary, both his future partners.

Pollard moved up to keeping his own press in late 1816 as an equal partner in the firm of Shepherd & Pollard. Their shop on 15th Street, between Cary (then D) and Main (then E) streets, had tools "being all entirely new," an unusual set of circumstances for new presses then, which were regularly formed out of the cast-offs of other offices. Here, Shepherd had sold his interest in the *American Beacon* office in Norfolk in August 1816 in order to return to his home base in Richmond; those proceeds gave the pair an ability to acquire an entirely new set of tools, giving them an advantage over other job-presses just when the elements of the three-press printing-plant of the late Samuel Pleasants (331) became embroiled in litigation. As a result, Shepherd & Pollard quickly acquired patrons left in the lurch by the ongoing disruption of the city's print trade.

Among their first customers were the Baptist associations both north and south of the city, printing the minutes of the annual conventions of the Dover Association (1816-20) and the Middle District Association (1817-20); the firm also published sermons for ministers in the Presbyterian Synod of Virginia before the competing Franklin Press became their exclusive publisher when Nathan Pollard (335) took control of that press in 1820. Yet, they then picked up, in turn, the publication of the case reports from Virginia's various court reporters that the Franklin Press handled prior to that change. The pair found patronage in printing for Peter Cottom (107) as well, then possibly the largest bookseller in Virginia. So by 1820, they were a practicable supplier for irregularly-issued government titles, either contracted directly from state agencies like the Adjutant General's office and the Board of Public Works, or subcontracted by Thomas Ritchie, then the public printer. But the most common imprint that Shepherd & Pollard produced was the fourth and final edition of *The Virginia Justice* of William Waller Hening (213) in 1825; the work was the most widely circulated handbook for Virginia's county-court justices in the antebellum period.

His office's profits allowed Pollard to buy into the community of journalists in the capital in 1823, his first and only such investment. The *Richmond Commercial Compiler* was the city's first successful daily, founded in May 1813; when Shepherd sold his interest in the *American*

*Beacon* in 1816, it went to the publisher of the *Compiler*, William C. Shields (381), who had moved to Norfolk to join his brother, Hamilton Shields (380), in that venture; to acquire Shepherd's share in the *Beacon*, Shields sold the *Compiler* to the partnership of Philip DuVal (155) and Daniel Trueheart (420), both long-time associates of Ritchie; in October 1819, Samuel Cary, another Richmond journeyman, bought the aging DuVal's share in the daily, so making the *Compiler* a publication of the firm of Trueheart, Cary & Company. In early 1823, Pollard became the way for both Trueheart and Cary to retire from the journalistic grind. His two-stage acquisition of their journal started with the purchase of Trueheart's interest in March, followed by the purchase of Cary's in July; Pollard then conducted the *Compiler* for the following three years as William Pollard & Company, while continuing in his job-printing partnership with Samuel Shepherd. The only apparent effect of this new arrangement on the antecedent firm was a slight reduction in its production of contract book-work, a clear marker of Pollard's transition from press operator to office manager in both ventures.

Despite this prominence in the imprint record, and the apparent wealth that his endeavors generated, Pollard would soon fade into obscurity. In May 1826, he sold a half-interest in the daily to one Robert A. Mosby; about a year later (ca. May 1827), Mosby acquired the whole of the *Compiler* operation. At about that same time, Pollard also sold his interest in the job-printing concern to Shepherd, and promptly disappears from the bibliographic and historical record. Moreover, no record of a family or an independent residence in the area has yet been uncovered. Thus this abrupt ending to a decade of continuous, visible work suggests that Pollard died at this point, or at least retired in ill health. But no clear indication of either alternative has yet been found.

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

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Cappon; newspaper notices in Norfolk (1816-17) and Richmond (1817-27).