

395 SOUTHGATE, CHARLES

Publisher

Richmond

Publisher of *The Visitor* (1809-10) at Richmond with John O. Lynch (273).

Southgate was neither a printer nor a journalist, but rather a musician and teacher who was drawn into the Virginia print trade by a desire to produce a literary journal. That desire led, in turn, to his administration of the estate of his practical-printer partner.

That Southgate was an Irish immigrant who landed in Richmond is something manifest in nearly all references to him seen in secondary sources. When he arrived there, however, is uncertain. The timing of his initial appearances in newspaper advertisements suggests that he crossed the Atlantic in the 1790s, as did many other Irish émigrés who fled the United Irishmen troubles of that decade. By 1800, Southgate was partner in a Richmond "Grocery and Commission Merchant" business with one William Hart. That arrangement was ended "by mutual consent" in November 1805, with Hart focusing on the grocery business alone.

The parting was triggered, it seems, by Southgate's aspiration to teach. In the same notice publicizing the dissolution of the firm of Hart & Southgate, he announced the opening of a new school on the street leading to Shockoe Basin,

"for the purpose of instructing a limited number of pupils in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Grammar, and Book-Keeping, according to the most approved methods now in use."

He also stated his intention to teach "Psalmody and every other species of Vocal Music" as an adjunct to his school. That aspect appears to have been his true avocation in life, as he closed his "Day-School" the following September in order to devote his "attention entirely to MUSIC" – whether in teaching singing, copying and arranging music, or in tuning pianos "both in town and country." From contemporary accounts, Southgate excelled at these endeavors and built a considerable reputation as a musician in the capital.

In November 1808, Southgate was offered a new opportunity by another Irish immigrant in the city. John O. Lynch (often spelled O'Lynch) was a journeyman in the office of the former Williamsburg printer Thomas Nicolson (315); when his master died that November, he acquired the tools in Nicolson's office to conduct his own job-printing concern. He quickly formed a partnership with Southgate, and the two began planning for the publication of a literary magazine. The periodical they issued about six weeks later was as distinctive as they were; *The Visitor* was a biweekly journal, produced by

"Lynch, a practical printer, an Irishman of diminutive size, and Southgate, a musician, an Irishman of very large size, who filled many of the pages in musical type."

From the start, Lynch & Southgate gave space in their periodical's pages to the writings of Louis Hue Girardin (180), then principal of Richmond's Hallerian Academy and previously Professor of Modern Languages, History, and Geography at the College of William & Mary; of particular note was Girardin's epic Latin-language poem, *De Monomachia, sive Duello*, (or Lines on dueling, addressed to the legislative), a work still cited today in early-American literature collections. However, the project apparently exhausted Southgate, who had been

seriously ill prior to forming his alliance with Lynch; fourteen months later, in April 1810, he sold his interest in *The Visitor* and the press office to George Davis (122) and retired from journalism permanently; just a month after that, Lynch & Davis abandoned the idea of printing music in their journal – both lacking compositional and music-writing skills – and advertised the sale of a "complete fount of imported MUSIC TYPE, very little worn" on reasonable terms. Yet their association was far shorter lived than had been Lynch's initial one with Southgate, lasting only until June; the printer struggled on alone for another two months before finally closing *The Visitor* in August 1810.

Lynch continued printing alone, producing in January 1812 the most widely-read and authoritative account of the Richmond Theater Fire of December 1811: *Narrative & Report of the Causes and Circumstances of the Deplorable Conflagration at Richmond*. That imprint seemed to set the then twenty-four year-old printer on the course to long term success. But on April 10, 1812, he was struck with a "slow but irresistible paralysis which attacked his lower extremities" – evidently a stroke. He left Richmond for Yorktown "for the recovery of his health," but never returned, dying there on August 23rd.

Almost immediately, Southgate was named as administrator of Lynch's estate by the city's Hustings Court. Within a month, he announced an auction sale of a "tolerably complete apparatus for printing, a great part of which, including one of the presses, is nearly new," as well as Lynch's household furniture, including "a London made Piano, Flute, and Hautboy" [i.e. an oboe]. At the same time, Southgate offered for sale two chamber organs, "both in good repair." Clearly the relationship between these Irishmen had had a musical element and not just a journalistic one, and the estate settlement was going to redistribute a few fine musical instruments as well as the printing tools. On the conclusion of the auction on October 14th, Southgate's association with the Virginia print trade came to a final end.

Southgate returned to his varied musical pursuits thereafter. He served for a time as the organist at the new Monumental Church erected on the site of the theater fire and gave public cello concerts there as well. Yet those employments seem to have been insufficient for support his family. By mid-1817, Southgate's wife Mary had opened a millenary shop in Richmond which advertised the latest fashions in headwear.

After the War of 1812, Southgate evidently intended to attempt a new publishing project, a simple collection of sacred music. But that undertaking did not see fruition in his lifetime. On Sunday March 1, 1818, he died unexpectedly. He was buried in the yard of St. Paul's Church on the Capitol Square, memorialized with an epitaph that noted his skills:

"As a poet and musician few were his equals
What though his body turns to dust
That God in whom he placed his trust
Has raised his soul from nature's bed;
Then seek him not among the dead.
That should which glowed with music's fire
Has joined a bright celestial choir."

His many friends in Richmond determined to complete his final publishing project for the benefit of his widow. That October, the completed *Harmonia Sacra: A Collection of Original*

& Choice Psalms and Hymn Tunes, Odes, Anthems, Gloria Patris, and a Te Deum. Composed and harmonized by the late Chas. Southgate issued from the New York City press of Edward Riley. While a posthumous tribute to the deceased musician, it is telling that the work had to be published outside of Virginia from the lack of musical type-foundries in Richmond after the closing of *The Visitor*; it is also telling that the widowed Mary Southgate was obliged to continue her millenary business well into the 1820s, indicating that neither that work or her husband's estate could provide her with a comfortable retirement.

Personal Data

Born: ca. 1760 Ireland

Died: March 1 1818 Richmond, Virginia

Evidently married before emigration; no record of children found.

Sources: Imprints; Mordecai, *Bye-Gone Days*; Meagher, *Education in Richmond*; *Annals of Henrico Parish*; Fisher, *Monumental Church*; notices in various Richmond newspapers (1800-24).