

## 471 BLAKE, LEVIN S.

**Bookbinder**

**Richmond**

Bookbinder in Richmond (1817-20) with partner Charles G. Carter (476) as Carter & Blake.

Blake has left a very spare trace on the historic record; little is known about him other than what is seen in notices published in Richmond's newspapers advertising his business.

His first appearance in those pages came in November 1817 with an announcement of his partnership with Charles G. Carter and the opening of their bindery shop near the Capitol. Sometime before 1819, the partners moved their office to Bank Street opposite the new buildings for the Bank of Virginia and the Farmer's Bank of Virginia. Then in mid-1820, in their last known advertising notice, they announced the relocation of their business to a space "four doors below the Bell Tavern" on 15th Street. After that notice, neither the firm, nor the partners as individual tradesmen, appear again in Richmond's newspapers.

The brief life of the Carter & Blake bindery suggests a small-scale venture, one that passed from the scene with the end of their partnership agreement. With larger bindery operations in Richmond at that time, both Blake and Carter could easily have found employment in the city and so fade into anonymity as hired journeymen. Blake's only subsequent appearance in the Virginia public record is his marriage there to Sarah L. Bingham in 1822, meaning that only this five-year-long period of his life (1817-22) can be reported with any certainty.

Still, it can be speculated that Blake soon relocated to New York City, as one "Levin S. Blake" was recorded in the city's 1825 directory, and in several unclaimed-mail notices published in that city's papers between 1824 and 1828; however, that Blake's trade was not recorded, so any link between these occurrences is conjectural at best. His origins are equally obscure. There was a Levin Blake who was part of the Revolutionary-era conventions in Maryland, suggesting that this Blake used a middle initial in his name to differentiate himself from that older kinsman; but again, no clear evidence of a Maryland origin is known. In Virginia, two privates named "Levin Blake" are seen in the enlistment records of the state's militia during the War of 1812, one in the 1st Corps d'Elite, the Richmond unit commanded by Thomas Mann Randolph, and one in Petersburg's 19th Regiment of militia, commanded by Jacquelin Ambler; but the absence of a middle initial in the names recorded makes any link to the bookbinder conjectural without further evidence. So too with the case of the "Levin Blake" who volunteered for Richmond's home-guard after the Chesapeake-Leopold affair in 1807, which may be the earliest evidence of the bookbinder's presence there.

### ***Personal Data***

Married: Aug. 13 1822 Sarah L. Bingham @ Richmond, Virginia.

No other personal data yet discovered.

Sources: MEDSA no. 2902; *Richmond City Directory*, 1819; notices in *Richmond Enquirer* and *Richmond Commercial Compiler* (1817-22).

Searching online specifically for Blake's name produces multiple results for a like-named firefighter who was killed in a gunpowder explosion at an Atlanta fire in 1859; however, that Blake was then twenty-seven years-old, so clearly not the Richmond bookbinder.