

476 CARTER, CHARLES G.

Bookbinder

Richmond

Apprentice bookbinder in Richmond (1804-07) under John Pumfrey (344); then bookbinder there (1817-20) as partner in firm of Carter & Blake with Levin S. Blake (471).

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

Given the commonality of the Carter surname in Virginia, the only reliable evidence of this tradesman's origins is that in the record of Richmond's Hustings Court. In April 1804, he was described as "a poor orphan boy, son of William Carter, deceased, adjudged 12 years of age by the court." As the orphaned sons of wealthier Carters in Virginia found homes with other family members – and so were not bound out to a trade as was this son – that brief entry suggests that he was the son of a boarding house keeper who opened his establishment "near the Bridge" in Richmond in late 1801. The court assigned his indenture to the firm of Fitzwhylson & Pumfrey, "Stationers and Book binders to learn their trade and mystery as an apprentice" until he attained the age of twenty-one. John Pumfrey was the bookbinder in the concern, with William H. Fitzwhylson (165), schoolmaster and musician, conducting the bookstore.

In July 1805, Fitzwhylson and Pumfrey parted ways, with Pumfrey opening an independent business in his own name, and taking Carter's indenture with him. The parting was evidently financed by Pumfrey's assumption of the old firm's debts; it was a decision that enriched Fitzwhylson while burdening Pumfrey – a burden that would crush him over the next three years. By October 1807, Carter had tired of the new situation, and filed a complaint with the Hustings Court "for ill-usage" by his master; the court found his complaint reasonable and reassigned his indenture "to some other person engaged in the bookbinding business" in Richmond. The loss of Carter's labor seems to have helped lead Pumfrey to an act of fiscal desperation the following year; after being named in spring 1808 as executor of the estate of one Patrick Ternan, a Richmond apothecary, he conducted an auction sale of that estate's assets that August; he then promptly absconded with the proceeds of the sale, never to be seen in Richmond again.

Carter evidently completed his apprenticeship according to the terms originally laid down by the Hustings Court, though the identity of his new master remains unknown. He reached the age of twenty-one during the War of 1812 (in about 1813); but unlike many other print-trade figures in Virginia, Carter is not found in the military service records for the period; that absence suggests he was one of the anonymous journeymen trusted to continue their master's businesses while he (and some co-workers) served in the Virginia militia.

Carter emerged from that anonymity in November 1817 with a notice in Richmond's papers announcing his new partnership with Levin S. Blake, who was apparently also a Richmond-trained bookbinder, and the opening of their new 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 thereafter and so fade into anonymity as hired journeymen, just as Carter had been after 1807. Yet such a fate for Carter is conjectural, given the lack of any reliable evidence for his life and work after 1820.

Personal Data

Born: ca. 1792 Virginia.

No other personal information yet discovered.

Sources: MESDA entry nos. 5680, 5682; *Virginia Argus* (Richmond), Nov. 6, 1801.