

491 GRAHAM, MARSHALL

Apprentice Bookbinder

Fredericksburg

Bookbinder apprentice in Fredericksburg office of William F. Gray (192) in 1820.

The only reference to Marshall Graham as being part of the Virginia print trade is a court record assigning his indenture to the Fredericksburg bookseller William Fairfax Gray in April 1820. As that assignment came as an order to the town's Overseers of the Poor, "with the assent & approbation of Mrs. Sarah Graham," it is clear that a widowed mother could no longer support her son, and had him bound out to a trade – a common occurrence among the indigent in the early-Republic era.

Gray was an apt choice for such a task. He was the youngest brother in a family of bookmen from Alexandria; the firm of John (189) & Robert (190) Gray was the dominant bookselling concern there before the War of 1812; William was trained in their shop and then removed to Fredericksburg to conduct a bookstore for Timothy Green (194), publisher of the town's *Virginia Herald*. At the time that he was induced to train Graham, Gray had just completed a year-long partnership with Green designed to effect the transfer of his long-lived paper to James D. Harrow (204), so allowing Green to retire after more than 30 years of effort in publishing that journal. Gray retained ownership of Green's bookstore in the exchange and would have needed helpers in conducting that business, making him amenable to taking on the training of an adolescent apprentice.

Outside of this solitary record, tracing Graham's life is problematic, given his fairly common name. Still, he may have been a clerk who was recorded in the 1850 census living in Bowling Green in nearby Caroline County; that individual was then 44 years old, making 1806 his birth year, and so his age in 1820 as fourteen, an appropriate age for anyone bound out as an apprentice. But lacking further evidence, it cannot be ascertained whether he was the adolescent charged to Gray's care in Fredericksburg.

No Personal Data yet confirmed.

Sources: MEDSA Index no. 13808; Fredericksburg Hustings Court Order Book H (1819-1827); Federal Decennial Census for 1850.