

**501 MORGAN, THOMAS T.**

**Press Owner**

**Petersburg**

Press owner in Petersburg in 1808.

Morgan is noted here as a part of the Virginia print trade in consequence of his advertising the sale of a press and its accoutrements in Petersburg in the summer of 1808, to wit:

**TO PRINTERS.**

FOR SALE,

A PRINTING OFFICE,

Consisting of the following TYPES and PRINTING APPARATUS:

ONE Super royal Press; one font Long Primmer, 533 *lbs.*; one do. Double Pica, 98 *lbs.*; one do. French Cannon, 92 *lbs.*, one do. Thorn's Italic, 160 *lbs.*; 7 do. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13 & 15 line Pica, 460 *lbs.*; thick and thin Brass Rules; double metal, do.; cases, frames, imposing-stone and frame galleys, composing sticks, troughs and letters boards, chases, large horse cuts, furniture quoins, &c.

The whole of the above TYPES were imported from England and are nearly new, except the Double Pica and French Cannon, which are about half worn.

Letters (POST-PAID) addressed to the Subscriber in Petersburg, will be duly attended to.

THOMAS T. MORGAN

JULY 22<sup>ND</sup>, 1808.

The timing of this sale would suggest that this press was the one used by James L. Edwards (156) to publish the *Virginia Mercury* between April 1807 and March 1808. But that press was loaned to the publishers of the *Columbian Centinel* in Augusta, Georgia, and would not be sold until late 1810. Hence, the proffered press was probably that used to briefly publish the *Virginia Apollo* of bookman Nathaniel McLaughlin (294) and printer John L. Cook (105) in the spring of 1807. In July 1808, Cook was working for wages in Baltimore in an attempt to settle his debts, as just as Edwards was then doing in Boston. Thus, the sale of a press set-up located in Petersburg would have been handled by an agent there, such as Morgan. But it is more likely that Morgan had acquired the press from whoever Cook had assigned it as security for his outstanding debts in Petersburg when he left town a year before – as was the case with the press of William G. Lyford (272) when he departed Staunton in 1810. That deduction indicates Morgan was not a print-tradesman, *per se*, but rather a press owner in the style of Willoughby Tebbs (526) in Dumfries in the 1790s.

It is apparent from the evidence found for Morgan's life after 1808 that he was, indeed, simply a commission agent. In March 1810, his mother Sarah died, and her will was entered for probate in the Petersburg Hustings Court; she named her two sons – Thomas T. and John N. – as her executors. Shortly thereafter, Thomas is seen advertising the sale of her

house in town, which she had inherited from her late husband, and its contents.

The ensuing settlement of her estate gave Morgan the wherewithal to take possession of the substantial dry-goods store of Beasley, Kent, & Co. in November 1811. They had served as the Virginia outlet for the Boston maritime-trading concern of Munroe & Nash; those merchants evidently decided at that time to both enlarge their retail business and delegate its management to a partnership between Morgan (in Petersburg) and Ebenezer Pope (in Boston); the new partners then conducted stores in each place under the name of Morgan & Pope until about March 1815. Subsequently, Morgan formed a new business partnership with his brother, John N. Morgan; the nature of that venture is unclear, though it was likely a carry-over of the preceding concern, one that imported large quantities of New-England-made shoes alongside the usual items found in such stores. But that business failed in the fall of 1819 when Thomas was declared insolvent; he was also sued in the Superior Court of Chancery in Richmond at that time for his improper distribution of slaves from the estate of Samuel Peniston. The published legal notices from those two cases provide the last glimpse of Morgan, so leaving his fate a mystery.

***No Personal Data yet confirmed.***

Sources: *Petersburg Intelligencer* (1808-15); [Boston] *New-England Palladium* (1812); *Petersburg Republican* (1819); Petersburg Hustings Court, Will Book 2 (5 Mar. 1810); and Records of Petersburg Chancery Court, 1819-001 (later appealed in Richmond).