

511 RIDDLE, JOSHUA H.

Apprentice

Alexandria

Apprentice bookbinder who absconded from Alexandria office of James (146) & Archibald Douglass (146) in 1821.

Riddle has left only a single trace of his participation in the Virginia print trade – the notice of his flight from his masters while a bookbinding-apprentice in Alexandria, to wit:

TWO DOLLARS REWARD.

RAN AWAY from the subscribers on the 22d September, JOSHUA H. RIDDLE, an apprentice to the Book Binding business. He is in the 17th year, well grown of his age, pale visage and sandy hair. It is probable that he is either of Baltimore or Philadelphia, but more likely the latter place. Masters of vessels and others are prohibited from harboring or employing said boy. The above reward will be given if he is brought back to use again but no charges paid.

J. & A. Douglass.

The brothers James and Archibald Douglass opened a bindery office and stationery store in Alexandria in December 1818, and continued together until James's death in 1828. As this 1821 notice marks Riddle as being then sixteen, it would appear that he had been bound out to them shortly after they opened their Alexandria shop, when he was about thirteen. That inference is the basis for Riddle's inclusion in this Index.

Riddle was apparently the son of Joshua Riddle (1766-1825), an Alexandria merchant, and Fanny Rush Harper (b. 1769). They were both transplants from Pennsylvania, he from York County, her from Philadelphia; that background no doubt informed the speculation about the son's destination seen in the notice. But after this one publication, the apprentice is not seen again in print until March 1829 when he appears in lists of unclaimed letters printed in New York City papers. That sparse evidence does not allow for an assessment of whether he remained in the trade or not, nor does it give any indication of his later life. His history is also obscured by the fact that Joshua Harper Riddle had an Alexandria-born cousin named Joshua Riddle Harper (1796-1882), a son of Fanny's brother named for her new husband; it seems very likely that there was confusion between the two in nineteenth-century histories given the inconsistencies seen in the varying accounts of that cousin's life.

Personal Data

Born: ca. 1804 Alexandria, Virginia (then District of Columbia).

Sources: Not in MESDA Index; notices in *Alexandria Advertiser*, later *Alexandria Gazette* (1796-1825); [New York] *Commercial Advertiser* (1829).