

521 SOLOMON

Slave Pressman

Richmond

Enslaved pressman who fled the Richmond office of Edward C. Stanard (399) in 1810.

Solomon was one of the many enslaved men who were employed by their masters to pull presses in Virginia's printing offices – a purely manual labor function. Yet this pressman is unusual in that a record exists of his name, physique, and skills, though not of his fate.

In the fall of 1809, the proprietors of Richmond's *Spirit of Seventy-Six* decided to relocate their journal to Washington before the next session of Congress met that winter. Begun in September 1808 as a campaign paper supporting James Monroe, it became an anti-Madison sheet after Monroe's loss to Madison, and an outlet for the views of Republican dissidents John Randolph of Roanoke and John Taylor of Caroline. But as those opinions were found increasingly wanting by the city's Republican editors, Samuel Pleasants (331) and Thomas Ritchie (360), it seemed best to place their newspaper nearer to where their patrons served in Congress, if it was to survive. So in November 1809, editor Edward C. Stanard closed his Richmond office and loaded the *Spirit's* press and tools onto wagons bound for Washington.

The move did not go smoothly, however. The cartage firm that he hired failed to deliver his press and tools to his new Washington office before Congress convened, meaning a delay in its publication. But more importantly here, Stanard also lost the services of his enslaved pressman, who used the disruption as an opportunity to flee his master's control, never to be seen or heard from again:

Ten Dollars Reward.

Absconded from the employment of the subscriber, on the 1st inst. a mullato fellow called SOLOMON, about five feet eleven inches high, spare made, and possessing a good countenance. He is unusually adroit and imposing in his address; is an excellent coach driver, waggoner, ostler, shoe maker, cooper, miller, house servant, pressman, cook, and a tolerable blacksmith. Whether he has directed his course in not known; but it is conjectured that he has gone either to Culpeper in Virginia, nor [sic] to the state of Pennsylvania. He will no doubt attempt to pass a free man. His dress is not particularly recollected, except that he had with him a dark brown great coat cut in the french fashion. The above reward will be given for apprehending and securing him in such manner as to enable the subscriber to get him again.

EDWARD C. STANARD.

Washington City, Jan. 5th, 1810.

No Personal Data yet discovered.

Sources: *Virginia Argus* (19 January 1810).