

535 McCREARY, JOHN M. – [John Murphy McCreary, Sr.]

Printer

Wheeling

Printer of a Wheeling broadside reported erroneously as issuing in 1812.

In his bibliography of *Southeastern Broad­sides Before 1877*, Ray O. Hummel, Jr. documented the following Wheeling title:

"New and extraordinary traveling accommodations [cut of stage] to Baltimore, Washington City and Philadelphia. The National Road Stage Co.... [rates and schedules to Wheeling] apply ... Virginia Hotel, Main St., Wheeling, Va. August 1st, 1812 ... John M. McCreary, Printer—Wheeling, Va. 76 x 61 cm."

Yet, the entry is inaccurate – probably from a faulty transcription of its dated text – because the National Road Stage Company was not formed until 1832, the Virginia Hotel was not in business there before 1828, and the printer mentioned had not yet been born in 1812.

John M. McCreary was the second son of James Agney McCreary (1787-1839). His father was a Baltimore tavern-keeper who filed for protection there as an insolvent person in July 1828; eventually, he removed to Wheeling, where he assumed control of the United States Hotel in 1834 and then the larger Virginia Hotel in about 1837; he died there in June 1839, of "a painful and protracted illness." Son John was evidently trained in Wheeling, as he was about fifteen when his father moved his family to that western Virginia town. The printer's age is deduced here from the notice he published on the death of "eldest brother," James A. McCreary, Jr., in 1842, who was then just twenty-four.

By that time, McCreary was recognized as the senior editor of the *Wheeling Gazette*, having attained that status in April 1836, when its proprietor, Samuel H. Davis (126), formerly the owner of the *Winchester Republican*, sold the paper to McCreary and left Wheeling to start another journal in the newly-organized Wisconsin Territory. Despite the difficult financial circumstances of that period, McCreary successfully managed the *Gazette* until July 1843, when the editor-owner of the *Cincinnati Gazette*, S. S. L'Hommedieu (1806-74), induced him to relocate to the Queen City to manage the printing office of that daily for him. McCreary remained in Cincinnati until at least 1852, before moving first to Memphis, and then to San Francisco, where he died in 1868. In each locale, he was a key figure in forming that city's first typographical union, societies intent on bettering the lives and fortunes of the many journeymen who labored in the printing offices there.

Consequently, the imprint Hummel credited McCreary with printing in Wheeling in 1812 must have been issued sometime between 1836 and 1843. An indistinct impression could easily lead a transcriber to record 1842 as 1812, so that appears to be the correct date for this broadside. However, the imprint itself is now lost, and thus cannot be consulted in order to confirm this deduction. Nevertheless, since Hummel recorded McCreary as a pre-1821 Virginia printer, he is included in this Index to clarify and correct that record.

That suggested date also corresponds with one of the many rearrangements of the routes of the National Road Stage Company that followed an acquisition of a smaller competitor, a

hallmark of its business. That company had grown out of a small stage-line firm started in Baltimore in 1818 by Lucius W. Stockton (1799-1844), a nephew of Richard Stockton (1730-81), an early signer of the Declaration of Independence from New Jersey. Stockton moved his business to Uniontown, Pennsylvania, in about 1824, to enable the westward expansion of its routes along the lengthening National Road. In about 1832, his small private company became the better-known stock company that dominated the mail-stage- business between Maryland and Illinois until the introduction of railroads in the 1840s. A nineteenth-century history of the National Road, drawn in part from the late-in-life recollections of many of his drivers, reports that Stockton made in a substantial upgrade in his company's rolling stock in 1842, which likely altered the line's schedules. Such would have necessitated the printing of new schedule circulars, such as this one produced by McCreary.

Personal Data

Born: ca. 1819 probably in Baltimore, Maryland.
Married: Aug. 8 1837 Cornelia L. Burdick @ Wheeling, VA/WV.
Died: May 25 1868 San Francisco, California.
Children: James (1841-95); Emma (b. 1843); John M. Jr. (1845-1907); and
Cornelia (b. 1849).

Sources: Imprints; Hummel Broadsides, no. 3254; Searight, *The Old Pike: History of the National Road* (1894); Scharf, *Western Maryland*; notices in various Baltimore newspapers (1821-43) and [Washington] *National Intelligencer* (1834-43), with obituary in *Sacramento Daily Union* (26 May 1868). Genealogical matter from family charts posted on *Genealogy.com* (April 2016).