

Biographical/Historical Notes

Archibald Binny (1762-1838), a type founder, was born Archbald Binnie on November 25, 1762, in Portobello (now part of Edinburgh), Scotland. He arrived in Philadelphia in 1796, and became a United States citizen in 1802. James Ronaldson (1768-1842), also born near Edinburgh, arrived in America in the spring of 1794, and opened a bakery on Landenberger's Wharf in Philadelphia in 1795. After losing his business in a fire in 1796, he joined Binny in partnership as Binny & Ronaldson type founders, with Binny guiding the technical end of the business and Ronaldson the financial. Their first appearance in the Philadelphia directories was in 1801, where they were listed in James Robinson's *Philadelphia Directory, City and County Register, for 1802* as "Binny & Ronaldson letter founders Cedar above 10th." The earliest permanent type foundry established in America, the firm published its first specimen book, *A Specimen of Metal Ornaments Cast at the Letter Foundry of Binny & Ronaldson* in 1809, and their *Specimen of Printing Types from the Foundry of Binny & Ronaldson, Philadelphia* in 1812.

Binny and Ronaldson were also partners in second endeavor, the Columbian Pottery, which was located on Cedar (now South) Street near 13th Street, and operated from 1808 through about 1814. They advertised teapots, coffee pots, and sugar boxes made in queensware, also known as creamware, which was used extensively in the production of household china. Further information on Binny and Ronaldson's relationship with the Columbian Pottery and their master potter Alexander Trotter, who was the son of Binny's sister Elizabeth (Mrs. Alexander) Trotter, can be found in *Handcraft to Industry: Philadelphia Ceramics in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, by Susan H. Myers (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980).

Binny remained listed as a type founder in Philadelphia directories through 1814, the year he began to acquire property on Chesapeake Bay near Drayden, in southern Saint Marys County, MD. In August 1815 he retired there to an estate named Porto Bello, which by 1821 encompassed 5,000 acres. James Ronaldson continued on the type business with his brother Richard, and issued *Specimen of Printing Type, from the Letter Foundry of James Ronaldson, successor to Binny & Ronaldson* in 1816. The Ronaldson brothers were listed in the city directories as type founders through 1831 and appeared as gentlemen thereafter.

Archibald Binny's name was occasionally spelled Binney in correspondence and invoices, and it was the spelling used by his second wife, Charlotte Prager (1790-1875), and their children when they returned to Philadelphia after his death. "Binny" appears on his tombstone in Saint Mary's City, but "Binney" was used in an obituary printed in the May 11, 1838, issue of *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (which misstated his date of retirement):

DIED, at Porto Bello, his family's residence, in St. Mary's county, Maryland, on Wednesday, the 25th of April, ARCHIBALD BINNEY, Esq., in the 75th year of his age. Mr. Binney was a native of Scotland, but emigrated at an early age to this country, and was for many years in Philadelphia, successfully engaged in the business of type