

Book Review

by Melissa Barker

***Townmania* by R. Scott Williams. Published by R. Scott Williams, 2025. ISBN 9780998699752, 364 pp. Appendix, bibliography, index. Hardbound or paperpace (\$19.99) on Amazon.com.**

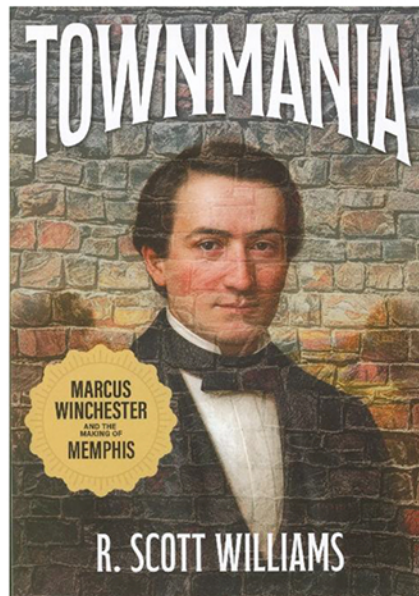
Townmania: Marcus Winchester and the Making of Memphis by R. Scott Williams, Published by R. Scott Williams, 2025. ISBN 9780998699752, 364 pp. Appendix, bibliography, index. Paperback, \$19.99 on Amazon.

Townmania: Marcus Winchester and the Making of Memphis by R. Scott Williams is a profound book about Memphis, Tennessee's first mayor, banker and postmaster Marcus Winchester. This well researched volume gives the reader a look at the early beginnings of the city of Memphis and those that brought her to life. This story is also a look at the social quandaries Memphis and Marcus Winchester faced with his wife, Amarante Loiselle, a free woman of color whose presence certainly challenged the racial norms of this Southern city.

In the Introduction, Williams prepares the reader to learn about Marcus Winchester by saying "Instead, he chose to make Memphis home for the rest of his life. Young Winchester found himself living among a rugged yet enterprising mix of flatboat crewman, Native Americans, fur trappers, and traders-all eking out a living on the bluff that his father, Brigadier General James Winchester, soon named Memphis."

Marcus Winchester is a key figure in the establishment of the city of Memphis and anyone researching their ancestors or the local history in Memphis should put this book on their reading list. It is full of adventure as well as the social and economic challenges that faced an up-and-coming city like Memphis and those that created her.

Williams takes the reader from the begging of Winchester's life as a boy all the way to his death and his lasting legacy in the city of Memphis. Chapter Three is pretty much dedicated to his marriage to Amarante Loiselle, a free woman of color from St. Louis. There is not much known about Amarante but Williams does a fantastic job relaying to the reader the



feelings and sentiment of an inter-racial marriage at a time when it was not accepted for the most part.

Every city has a history and Memphis is no exception. Williams detailed research and the sources he uses to tell the story of the history of Memphis and the impact Marcus Winchester had on the development of Memphis is very well written in this book. At the beginning of each chapter Williams includes an image from various sources, such as Memphis City Directories, showing the local Memphis business advertisements which are fantastic works of art in themselves and gives the reader a glimpse of local businesses and advertising in Memphis.

Williams includes two separate appendixes, the first being an explanation of why Williams titled each chapter and the other a list of burials related to the Marcus Winchester family buried in the Winchester Cemetery. Williams also uses end notes to list the sources he uses and researched at the end of each chapter. He also included a very good Bibliography at the end of the book that the reader will turn to often to find reference materials that Williams used to write this work. Lastly, Williams includes a handy Index of names and places in Memphis that gives the reader a quick reference to find particular items in the book. *Townmania* is an excellent book to read on a Saturday afternoon at your leisure and one that any historian or genealogist of Memphis or the Marcus Winchester family can use for reference in their own family history research.