

John Quincy Adams (11 Jul 1767 - 21 Feb 1848)



Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989

A Senator and a Representative from Massachusetts and 6th president of the United States; born in Braintree, Mass., July 11, 1767; acquired his early education in Europe; attended the University of Leyden; was graduated from Harvard University in 1788; studied law; was admitted to the bar and commenced practice in Boston, Mass.; on May 30, 1794, appointed Minister to Netherlands by George Washington; in 1796, Minister Plenipotentiary to Portugal; on June 1, 1797, Minister Plenipotentiary to Prussia; on March 14, 1798 commissioned to make a commercial treaty with Sweden; elected to the State senate in 1802; unsuccessful candidate for election in 1802 to the 8th Congress; elected as a Federalist to the United States Senate and served from March 4, 1803, until June 8, 1808, when he resigned; Minister to Russia 1809-1814; member of the commission which negotiated the Treaty of Ghent in 1815; Minister to England 1815-1817 and assisted in concluding the convention of commerce with Great Britain; Secretary of State in the Cabinet of President Monroe 1817-1825; in 1825 the election of the President of the United States fell, according to the Constitution of the United States, upon the House of Representatives, as neither of the candidates had secured a majority of the electors chosen by the States, and Mr. Adams, who stood second to Andrew Jackson in the electoral vote, was chosen and served from March 4, 1825 to March 3, 1829; elected as a Whig to the 22nd through 30th Congresses and served from March 4, 1831 until his death; unsuccessful candidate for Governor of Massachusetts in 1834; died in the National Capitol at Washington, D.C., February 23, 1848; interment in the family burial grounds at Quincy, Mass.; subsequently re-interred in the United First Parish (Unitarian) with his wife, to lie with his father and mother.

The National Intelligencer, Tuesday, February 22, 1848

A mournful and agitating event occurred in the House of Representatives yesterday, which, as the news of it spread through the city, engrossed all thoughts and filled all hearts with sympathy.

Just after the yeas and nays were taken on a question, and the Speaker had risen to put another question to the House, a sudden cry was heard on the left of the chair, "Mr. Adams is dying!" Turning our eyes to the spot, we beheld the venerable man in the act of falling over the left arm of his chair, while his right arm was extended, grasping his desk for support. He would have dropped upon the floor had he not been caught in the arms of the member sitting next him. A great sensation was created in the House; members from all quarters rushing from their seats and gathering round the fallen statesman, who was immediately lifted into the area in front of the Clerk's table. The Speaker instantly suggested that some gentleman move an adjournment, which being promptly done, the House adjourned. A sofa was brought, and Mr. Adams, in a state of perfect helplessness though not of entire insensibility, was gently laid upon it. The sofa was then taken up and born out of the Hall into the Rotunda, where it was set down, and the members of both Houses and strangers who were fast crowding around were with some difficulty repressed and an open space cleared in its immediate vicinity; but a medical gentleman, a member of the House, (who was prompt, active, and self-possessed

throughout the whole painful scene,) advised that he be removed to the door of the Rotunda opening on the east portico, where a fresh wind was blowing. This was done; but the air being chilly and loaded with vapor, the sofa was, at the suggestion of Mr. Winthrop, once more taken up and removed to the Speaker's apartment, the doors of which were forthwith closed to all but professional gentlemen, several of whom arrived in succession as the news spread into the city. While lying in this apartment Mr. Adams partially recovered the use of his speech, and observed, in faltering accents, "This is the end of earth;" but quickly added, "I am composed." Members had by this time reached Mr. A.'s abode with the melancholy intelligence, and, soon after, Mrs. Adams and his nephew and niece arrived and made their way to the appalling scene. Mrs. A. was deeply affected, and for some moments quite prostrated by the sight of her husband, now insensible, the pallor of death upon his countenance, and those sad premonitory fast making their appearance which fall with such a chill upon the heart.

In the Hall, meanwhile, a gloomy pause occurred in the usual hum of voices that fills it. Some members sat in mute suspense; others stood in groups, and made or answered inquiries as to the cause and the probable issues of the attack; others hastened toward the Speaker's room to get the latest intelligence of the sufferer's condition; while many were busily engaged in writing to their friends at home the alarming news. A remark very frequently heard was, "Well, this is just what Mr. Adams could have wished; it is an appropriate ending of his public career: he falls, like a second Chatham, in the Senate House."

Mr. Adams, though for some months very feeble, was, when he entered the hall in the morning, in his usual health, and had but a few minutes before delivered his vote, on a motion before the House, in an unusually distinct and emphatic manner. The attack was believed, at first, to have been a fainting fit; but this idea soon gave place to the appalling conviction that it was a recurrence of paralysis, which has twice before affected Mr. Adams, though in a milder degree. Very slight hopes are entertained on his recovering. Mr. A. attained his eightieth year in July last.

At eleven o'clock last night the venerable sufferer still lay in the Speaker's chamber, insensible to all external objects, but apparently more comfortable, and his symptoms giving hope to his medical attendants that he might revive sufficiently by this morning to bear removal to his own residence.

As soon as the news of the painful occurrence reached the Senate, that body likewise adjourned.

The National Intelligencer, Wednesday, February 23, 1848

Our last notice of the condition of Mr. Adams left him in a state of apparent insensibility to all around him. He continued in the same state through Monday night and during the whole of yesterday; his breathing calm and uninterrupted, but the powers of nature manifestly, though very gradually, sinking under the pressure of disease. His lady, in feeble health at best, and exhausted by watching, anxiety, and grief, fainted about the middle of the day and was taken home.

When the last intelligence was received from the Speaker's chamber in the Capitol, (at 10 o'clock last night,) Mr. Adams was still alive, lying as in a profound sleep, breathing calmly, but obviously unconscious of all around him. From present appearances he may survive the night; but, on the other hand, may expire at any moment with little previous warning.

The National Intelligencer, Thursday, February 24, 1848

Death of Ex-President Adams

The venerable Patriot and Statesman, John Quincy Adams, expired at the Capitol last evening a little after seven o'clock. He lingered, to all appearance insensible and unconscious, from the period of his attack on Monday until an hour after sunset last evening, when he gently breathed his last, and his "spirit returned to God who gave it." It is not for us to pronounce the eulogy of one so eminent, and so

honorably and constantly associated with all that was exalted in his country's history, from the very foundation of the Government to the present time. That task will be fittingly discharged by more competent and more appropriate hands. It will suffice for this brief notice to say, that few men have filled a larger space or acted a more important part in the great civil affairs of their country; that few have commanded a higher admiration for abilities, or won a wider respect for unwavering integrity and a rigid adherence to his views of duty. His domestic character was not less bright than his public, and was truly above all praise and all reproach.

The National Intelligencer, Saturday, February 26, 1848

The Funeral Procession

The procession which will attend the mortal remains of the Hon. John Quincy Adams to the Congressional Burying Ground, will be formed at the Capitol immediately after the religious ceremonies in the Hall of the House of Representatives shall have been performed, moved from the east front of the Capitol, through the north gate, round the western portion of the public grounds and proceed to the cemetery in the following order:

Order of Procession:

Military Companies

Band

The Chaplains of both Houses of Congress

Physicians who attended the deceased

Committee of Arrangements

Pall-Bearers

Hon. J.J. McKay, N.C.	C	Hon. Truman Smith, Conn.
Hon. Linn Boyd, Ken.	O	Hon. J.R. Ingersoll, Penn.
Hon. John C. Calhoun, S.C.	R	Hon. Thos. H. Benton, Mo.
Chief Justice R.H. Taney	P	Hon. Justice J. McLean
General George Gibson	S	Com. Charles Morris
Hon. W.W. Seaton	E	Hon. Thomas H. Crawford

Mr. J.F. Harvey, Conductor of the Car

The family and friends of the deceased

The Senators and Representatives from the State of Massachusetts, as mourners

The Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives

Speaker and Clerk of the House of Representatives

The House of Representatives of the United States,

The other Officers of the House of Representatives

The Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate

President and Secretary of the Senate

The Senate

The other Officers of the Senate

The President of the United States (Polk)

The Heads of Departments

The Judges of the Supreme Court of the United States and its Officers

The Judges of the Circuit and District Courts of the District of Columbia and their Officers

The Diplomatic Corps
The Comptrollers, Auditors, and other Heads of Bureaus of the several Departments of the Government,
with their Officers
Officers of the Army and Navy at the seat of Government
Members of State Legislatures
The Corporation of Washington
The Columbian Typographical Society
Officers and Students of Georgetown College
Officers and Students of Columbian College
Literary Institutions
Fire Companies of the District
Masonic Institution
Odd Fellows
Citizens and strangers

The procession to be formed in Pennsylvania avenue at a quarter before 11 o'clock, will be under the charge of Joseph H. Bradley, Esq., Chief Marshal,

By order of the Committee of Arrangements

N. Sargent

Sergeant-at-arms, House of Representatives

Carriages will arrange themselves without the public enclosure, so as to enter at the southern gate. All public carriages engaged must be on the ground as early as 11 o'clock a.m. Persons owning hacks not now engaged, and who wish to join the procession, must report their numbers by 10 o'clock a.m.

The National Intelligencer, Monday, February 28, 1848

Funeral Obsequies of Mr. Adams

Pursuant to the resolve of both Houses of Congress, Saturday was set apart for rendering to the remains of the deceased Patriot and Statesman the last human tribute, in conducting them to their resting place in the "City of Silence."

At an early hour men in uniform might be seen hastening to their respective places of parade, while numerous groups of citizens and strangers were flocking from all directions toward the Capitol.

By a judicious arrangement, the doors of that vast building were thrown open to the gathering multitudes, while those of the Hall of the House of Representatives, where the funeral ceremonies were to take place were closed to all but the members and officers of the House. The ladies' gallery was rapidly filled up, all gentlemen without distinction being peremptorily excluded. A certain portion of the semi-circular gallery (usually occupied throughout by gentlemen only) was partitioned off for the accommodation of a very large choir of singers, selected from those of the several churches of the city.

The Hall was shrouded in black, and presented a very solemn appearance. This part of the arrangements was executed with great taste and judgment by the officers of the House, under the suggestions and kind supervision of a distinguished lady. The figure of History, especially, (whose graceful form surmounts the clock, holding in her hand a tablet and a pen,) was robed with consummate taste and judgment, the black drapery covering her entire person, with the exception of the arm holding the recording pen, whose alabaster whiteness, in strong contrast with the surrounding stole, had a fine effect; heightened as it was by the attitude of the head, which, turning toward one side, happened to have its countenance in the very direction where stood the vacant seat of Mr. Adams, as if in the act of recording the solemn circumstances of his death. That seat by order of the House was draped in the deepest mourning, and, by the fact of its vacancy, recalled every beholder to the blow which had there

fallen, like a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky. The portraits of Washington and of Lafayette, on either hand of the chair, were covered over with thin crape, casting a melancholy dimness over the features, without entirely concealing them, the frames being covered with a deeper black. The effect of this, too, was very fine, most truly representing what would have been the feeling of both those distinguished men if alive to witness the solemn scene; for Washington gave the deceased his first commission, and Lafayette embraced him in his arms when taking his last adieu of America.

The members gradually arrived and filled up their seats in the hall, a portion, however, being reserved for the Senate.

The space in the central area, in front of the Clerk's table, was furnished with seats for the Judges, the Cabinet, the Diplomatic Corps, and the Committee of Arrangements, consisting of one member from each State of the Union: while, in its center, stood a table covered with a black velvet pall, to support the corpse.

Officers of the Army and Navy, as they entered the hall, had seats assigned them next in the rear of the Foreign Ministers. By an unfortunate omission no seats were reserved for the Clergy; but as a number of them arrived, not only from the city, but from Baltimore, Alexandria, and several from Massachusetts, they were conducted by the officers of the House to favorable positions.

The members of the Diplomatic Body arrived severally, from time to time, and not in a body: some of them manifested their respect for the solemn occasion, and for the presence of the assembled authorities of the nation, by appearing in their full official dresses, with their respective orders and decorations, while others seem to have deemed it more appropriate to appear in simple black. The contrast could not but strike the eye.

The Speaker having taken the chair, the Journal of Thursday was read. Soon after, the Senate entered, preceded by their venerable Presiding Officer, whose white and flowing hair renders him so striking an object in every scene where his erect and dignified figure is seen. He took his seat on the left of the Speaker. As the Senate passed up the center aisle and took their seats, the Speaker and Members of the House rose and continued standing till they had taken the seats assigned them. Soon the President of the United States entered the hall, and was received by all in like manner, while he took his seat on the right of the Speaker. The members of the Cabinet occupied seats in front of the Senators and opposite to the Foreign Ministers. The Judges of the Supreme Court, preceded by their Officers, passed up to seats on the right of the Clerk's desk. The relatives of the deceased were next conducted to a position reserved for them on the extreme left. Next entered the Corporate authorities of Washington, headed by their respective officers, who were conducted to places by the officers of the House. At length came the Body, escorted by the Committee of Arrangements, and followed by the Massachusetts Delegation as mourners. The Speaker, the President of the Senate, the Officers of both Houses, the Members of the Committee of Arrangements, the pall-bearers and attendant physicians wore white scarves. The whole assemblage being thus at length completed, the deep silence of expectation pervaded the hall. Not a rude sound, and scarce a sound of any kind, was to be heard among the waiting thousands who crowded the galleries and lobbies in every spot where a human being could find room to stand.

The Chaplain of the House, the Rev. Mr. Gurley, then rose and read an appropriate portion of Holy Writ, and addressed the throne of Heavenly Grace in a meek and devout prayer.

He then read a hymn which had been selected for the occasion, and which was sung with admirable skill and impressive effect by the choir. As the wailing notes swelled and sank away in melancholy cadence, their placid, stilling and solemnizing effect was obvious to the eye, in the countenances of the listening auditory, and prepared them for the address which followed, from these words in Job, "And thine age shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning; and thou shalt be secure, because there is hope."—(Chapter x, 17).

The effort of the Reverend gentleman seemed to be to improve, for the benefit of all, the example of Mr. Adam's firm and reverential conviction of the truth of Christianity, and its moral effect in the dignified purity of his private life. To this effect he quoted very clear and emphatic testimonials from the pen of the deceased, as well as recent conversations held with him shortly before the affecting close of his career. In illustration of the power which a sense of public duty ever exerted over him, Mr. G. read a portion of the address of Mr. Adams to his constituents immediately before setting out, in the depth of winter, on a journey to Cincinnati to lay the foundation of the Observatory in that city; and, to exhibit the early foundation of that virtue and piety which distinguished the deceased through life, the eloquent preacher quoted some touching passages of the written advice and admonition addressed to Mr. Adams when a boy at school, by his pious and strong-minded Mother.

The address was followed by a closing hymn and the Apostolic benediction, when the funeral procession began to be formed, the corpse was borne out of the hall, the several public bodies fell into their places in order of the program, passing in succession along the broad aisle and through the north door into the Rotunda, and so out on the eastern portico, and down the great flight of steps to the open area in front, where carriages were in waiting to receive them.

The proceeding was conducted with great decorum and dignity, and the universal interest excited among people of all classes to witness it shows the deep hold the event itself had taken on the public mind. As the coffin was borne into the hall, the impression was profound on every countenance, and all seemed to feel that the solemnities of Death and of the Judgment had been brought nearer to them than ever before. The dignity of the victim, his eminent station and yet more eminent endowments, the luster of his moral virtues, together with the open publicity and appalling suddenness of the blow which crushed him as well as the spot where it fell, seem not to have failed in accomplishing their solemn mission and pressing their resistless appeal to the human heart. May Congress, of which he was as the father; may our Nation, of which he was long so bright an ornament; may the Age, in which he shone as a great light; may our entire World, in almost every part of which his name had been heard, and where heard had been honored, be warned by his sudden death, as they had all been blessed and benefited by his long, illustrious and useful life.

Thus much for the solemn scenes and ceremonies within the Capitol. Without the building (the vast Rotunda of which, as well as the lobbies and passages, were densely crowded by hundreds or thousands who could not gain admittance to the Representatives Hall) the scene was striking, from the vast multitude of orderly and well-dressed people of both sexes, the military companies and various associations, college societies, etc. which filled the great space in front of the Capitol and all its precincts, amounting in all, within and without the Capitol, on the grounds and the avenue to the cemetery, to not less than fifteen thousand men, women, and children. Of the arrangements and incidents out of doors and in the city, our City Reporter furnishes the following account:

Among the immense multitude who attended the funeral, we noticed many citizens of Baltimore and the adjacent counties of Maryland. The members of the Legislature of that distinguished State did themselves honor in attending the funeral in a body pursuant to a joint resolution of the two Houses, unanimously adopted on the previous day.

Early on Saturday morning the west wing of the City Hall, in which is the Mayor's office and the chambers of the City Council, was hung with mourning drapery, and all business in the offices of the Corporation closed for the day. The National Flag on the elevated pole in front of the City Hall was displayed at half-mast; and along Pennsylvania avenue, and indeed in other parts of the city, there was a general cessation from business, the stores, hotels, and many dwellings being hung with mourning drapery. All the fire engine houses had their flags at half-mast; but the Perseverance Fire Company, of which Mr. Adams was an honorary member, put their building into deep mourning, the entire steeple being covered with black, and its front festooned with mourning emblems and drapery.

The procession, under the direction of Joseph H. Bradley, Esq. as chief marshal, moved along Pennsylvania avenue towards the Capitol about half past eleven o'clock, being joined by the Major, the City Councils, and officers of the Corporation, who left the City Hall about eleven o'clock. The chief marshal was aided by the following gentlemen as assistant marshals: Mr. James Scott, Mr. E.H. Fuller, Mr. G.S. Gideon, Mr. W.H. Winter, Mr. Wm. Barker, Mr. J.R. Queen, and Mr. J.W. Martin.

The military part of the procession consisted of the Ringgold Cavalry, a fine troop of horse from Alexandria, Virginia, and the Mount Vernon Guards, also from Alexandria, accompanied by Garcia's excellent band. Our Washington Light Infantry and the National Blues immediately followed the Alexandria companies.

In the line of the procession we noticed, besides the public bodies and societies named in the program, the members of the Corporation of Alexandria. That body and the volunteer companies of that ancient and patriotic town paid marked respect to the memory of the venerable Ex-President by their full attendance at his public funeral.

The officers and students of Georgetown College attended, bearing their two handsome banners in mourning. Then followed the officers and students of Columbian College; the Odd Fellows, in full regalia; the Temperance Associations, wearing rosettes; and the officers and members of the Perseverance, Franklin, and Anacostia Fire Companies—making altogether an imposing appearance.

The Funeral Car, which was built by Mr. J.F. Harvey, had a canopy covered with black velvet. It was surmounted with a spread eagle covered with crape. The car was drawn by six white horses, led by as man grooms, the horses and leaders being in sable attire.

The coffin, which was made by Messrs. Lee and Espy, was covered with black velvet and ornamented with silver lace. The silver breastplate, manufactured by Mr. S. Masi, presented the following inscription:

John Quincy Adams
Born
An Inhabitant of Massachusetts, July 11, 1767
Died
A Citizen of the United States,
In the Capitol of Washington,
February 23, 1848
Having served his Country for Half a Century,
And
Enjoyed its Highest Honors.

The procession moved from the Capitol in good order. No accident occurred, that we have heard of, during the whole day.

The National Intelligencer, March 15, 1848

Honors to Mr. Adams at Boston

The Remains of the venerable Ex-President Adams were expected to reach Boston on Friday afternoon. For many hours preceding the date of our latest accounts, rain had been falling in that city, accompanied by a northeasterly wind, which had induced the Authorities to give notice that the civic portion of the Procession would be dispensed with. The State and City Authorities, and others designated as the First and Second Divisions, were to meet at Faneuil Hall at 2 o'clock, there to receive the Body, which was to be escorted from the Depot by the Military, as previously arranged. The Traveler says:

"Faneuil Hall has been dressed in deep mourning for the occasion. The portraits of the former Presidents of the United States are surrounded with crape. Commencing on the north side, the great periods of his life are recorded, beginning with his appointment as Private Secretary to the Minister to Russia, in 1781 at the tender age of fourteen; next comes his appointment as Minister to the Netherlands in 1794; Minister to Prussia in 1802; Senator in the Massachusetts Legislature in 1804; United States Senator in 1806; Minister to Russia in 1809; Judge of the Supreme Court in 1811; Chief Commissioner to negotiate a treaty with Great Britain in 1814; Minister to Great Britain in 1815; United States Secretary of State in 1817; President of the United States in 1825; and Representative in Congress from 1831 to 1848. Large strips of black are hung in festoons from different parts of the Hall. Fronting the northeast gallery are recorded the words of the dying Ex-President: "This is the last of earth--I am content." Also, President Washington's opinion, in 1787, that the deceased was the ablest Diplomatic Minister in the employ of his country.

"Minute guns are now (1 o'clock p.m.) firing, the bells are tolling, the shops are shut, and though the Procession will not have that imposing appearance that was anticipated, yet the ceremonies will be such as to show the high estimation of the great and pre-eminent qualities of the deceased by the citizens of Boston and the legislators and authorities of his native State."