

## Col. James G. Berret

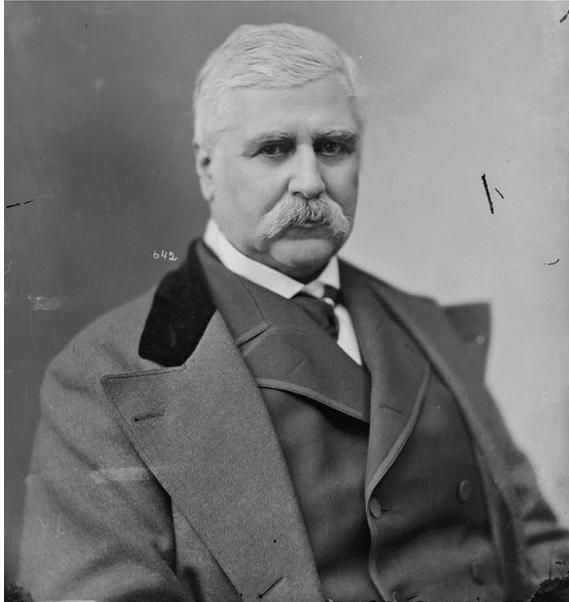
(12 Feb 1815 - 14 Apr 1901)

---

*The Evening Star, Saturday, April 13, 1901*

**Mr. Berret Dying**  
**The End of the Venerable Ex-Mayor Momentarily Expected**  
**Slowly and Steadily Sinking**  
**Sketch of the Career Now Coming to a Close**  
**Beloved By All**

Ex-Mayor James G. Berrett, beyond every hope of recovery, is slowly sinking into death at his residence, No. 1535 I street northwest. For the past twenty-two hours he has been wholly unconscious



and only feeble indications of pulse and respiration have shown that life was not extinct. His physician, Dr. W.W. Johnson, expressed surprise this morning to find his venerable patient still alive, having believed that he could not survive the night. Signs of the stopping of the blood's circulation were apparent in Mr. Berret's hands this afternoon, and those in attendance upon him were awaiting the inevitable end.

Mr. Berret was taken sick about two weeks ago with a derangement of the digestive system. The malady did not appear to be serious, but it was realized that his advanced age might lead to such a condition despite the most careful treatment. Finally it was seen that his entire system was gradually weakening and Saturday last it was evident that his state was dangerous. His nephew, Mr. James Berret, was summoned, and arrived Monday night. Paralysis of the tongue and the right side had then set in, but the sufferer managed to express by his eyes that he recognized his relative. There was slight improvement Tuesday night and Wednesday all hope was given up Thursday, when it was apparent he was weakening gradually. He became unconscious yesterday as stated.

### *His Personality*

Personally Mr. Berret is one of the most attractive of men. Those who differed with him on political or civic questions loved him for his amiable and genial disposition and his kindly spirit. Tall and erect of form, muscular and active even when age had crept upon him, handsome and distinguished in appearance, he was a marked figure in every assemblage. His popularity has been confined to no class and no creed. The cultured and refined, the humble and lowly esteemed him with real affection.

From early youth Mr. Berret was a man of affairs. Born in what was then Baltimore county, Md., February 12, 1815, the extent of his education was two years attendance at a country school. His father was a farmer, and the boy became his valued aid and helper. At the age of sixteen years his father's death threw him on his own resources, and the care of the farm devolved upon him. He met the responsibility as he did those that followed with masterly ability. Ere he was twenty years old he had the reputation of being one of the best farmers in his section of Maryland, as well as one of its able

citizens, because, while tilling the soil, he had studied hard. As he once said, "I made my daily life my daily education always."

Young Berret took an active part in county affairs, leading all movements that had its material improvement in view, and when, in 1836, the portion of Baltimore county in which he lived was made into Carroll county he was elected without solicitation member of the state legislature. The notification of his nomination reached him while he was at work in the field and he received his certificate of election signed by the governor when he was turning his plow horses at the end of a furrow. He served two terms in the legislature, taking prominent part in its deliberations and debates, and declined a re-election.

#### *Came to Washington in 1839*

Mr. Berret came to Washington in 1839, having received an appointment in the United States treasurer's office. He showed the same ability to master responsibilities in this new field that he had exhibited hitherto, and gained rapid reputation for superior executive capacity. He remained in the treasury until 1848, when Governor Marcy, then Secretary of War, tendered him the chief clerkship of the pension office. He held this position for only a year resigning, in spite of strong requests to the contrary, and when he retired he was presented with a silver pitcher by his fellow officials and employees as a mark of their appreciation of him "as an officer, a friend and a courteous gentleman." This was the first testimonial ever presented to a government official in such a way, and the pitcher has always been one of Mr. Berret's most cherished possessions.

In 1850 he embarked in business for himself in the prosecution of claims before the several departments, and was very successful. Three years later he was appointed postmaster of Washington, a position he filled with credit for five years.

#### *The Know Nothing Troubles*

The know nothing agitation of the later fifties, which convulsed the country, culminated, as far as Washington city was concerned, on June 1, 1857, when an election for mayor was in progress. A heated discussion had arisen over the question as to whether naturalized citizens should have the right to vote, the know nothings to a considerable extent being opposed to their exercise of such suffrage. Mr. Berret was one of the most pronounced opponents of this view, and in the difficulties that ensued was one of Mayor Magruder's chief advisors.

Trouble was anticipated for several days, and before the election in question the press and conservative citizens did all in their power to calm the excitement. Arrangements had been secretly made, however, for the importation of notorious toughs from Baltimore, known as "plug uglies" and a band of them reached here on an early train, others following later. At the voting precinct in the fourth ward an attack was made on a naturalized voter, at 9:30 a.m. and an effort made to drive all such voters from the polls. In the fight that followed Richard Owens, commissioner of the ward, was badly shot in the arm and wounded in the head; Justice Goddard, Justice Donn, F.A. Klopfer and George D. Spencer were bruised by stones, and Chief of Police Baggott and Officers Degges and Berckhead were more or less severely wounded and driven away. The result was that naturalized voters were demoralized and retired from the polls. An hour later the plug uglies appeared in the second ward and fired pistols.

#### *The Marines Called Out*

Mayor Magruder called on the Secretary of the Navy for assistance, and 110 marines, under Major Tyler and Captain Maddox, were placed at the mayor's disposal. When it became known that the marines had been ordered out a number of young men secured a six-pounder brass swivel gun and hauled it to the Northern Liberty market house, situated on 7th street where Mount Vernon Square is now located. A very large crowd had gathered, and when the mayor ordered the polling place opened

the know nothings declared voting should not take place. The mayor endeavored to calm the crowd, but his words only inflamed it more. Then an order was given to capture the swivel gun, and a body of marines, under Major Tyler, advanced to do so. The men in charge of the cannon abandoned it and retired, but the crowd hurled volleys of stones and fired several shots at the marines. The latter were then ordered to fire, and did so. The crowd thereupon took flight in all directions.

There were killed in the riot Archibald Dalrymple, a brakeman on the Washington branch of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad; D.H. Alston, a constable, who was formerly a member of the grocery firm of Frawlings & Co.; Ramy Neal, a colored waiter; a colored man named Redding of Georgetown, a youth sixteen years old named Christian Lindig and an infant. A large number of persons were wounded, some very badly.

The plug uglies made their way back to Baltimore as hastily as possible. In order to insure further safety of citizens a strong body of flying artillery from Fort McHenry was ordered to Washington and got here the evening of election day.

### *Elected Mayor of Washington*

The active part Mr. Berret had taken in supporting the side of free suffrage to all legal voters led to his being chosen to be the candidate of the anti-know nothing party in 1858, and he was elected, receiving 3,688 to 3,117 cast for his opponent, Richard Wallach, ex-marshal of the District of Columbia, who was the union candidate. The campaign was a lively one, and not devoid of bitterness, but both candidates did all in their power to prevent this.

In 1860 the contest was waged over again, Messrs. Berret and Wallach being opponents, while William B. Magruder ran as an independent candidate. He received 147 votes; Mr. Berret, 3,434, and Mr. Wallach, 3,410. The latter gave notice that he would contest the election of Mr. Berret on the ground of fraud, but never did so. By a peculiar turn of events Mr. Wallach did become mayor. In 1861, when the civil war broke out, Congress enacted a law requiring all officers of the government, national, state and municipal, to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. Mr. Berret by reason of his position as mayor was president of the board of police commissioners of Washington and Georgetown. When the oath was tendered to the members of the board Mr. Berret declined to take it. He said that while he was a state's right man, he was also a strong Union man, and further declared that there was no necessity for his taking the oath when he had already subscribed to it when inaugurated as mayor.

### *Arrested and Made Prisoner of War*

This position was not satisfactory to the government and accordingly on August 24, 1861. Mayor Berret was arrested by a provost marshal's guard and taken to Fort Lafayette, N.Y. His residence in this city was searched, but no evidence of his complicity or sympathy with the rebellion was discovered.

During the brief period of his imprisonment Washington's municipal affairs became complicated. Both branches of the city council were convened in special session to perform the duties of mayor, but it being necessary that there should be a mayor to execute the corporation's laws, the two boards on August 28, 1861, elected Richard Wallach to serve as mayor until the regular mayor's return. James M. Carlisle, then corporation attorney, resigned his place on account of this action, and Joseph H. Bradley succeeded him. Early in September Mayor Berret was released from prison. On the 14th of September he resigned the mayoralty and two days later returned to Washington. His resignation did not reach here until September 23, and then the question arose as to whether the city had a mayor. Mr. Bradley, as corporation attorney, decided that Mr. Wallach was mayor according to law, as Mr. Berret had resigned, and hence had no claim to the office. Notwithstanding this opinion, the city council, in order to make assurance doubly sure, on October 17, 1861, elected Mr. Wallach mayor to fill out Mayor Berret's unexpired term.

### *Accepted Inevitable*

It was generally understood then and is now known to be a fact that Mayor Berret was released from arrest after he had agreed to resign his office and take the oath, it being regarded as absolutely essential to have a man at the head of city affairs in the nation's capital during that critical period about whose absolute loyalty no doubt had been or could be entertained. With his characteristic philosophy Mr. Berret accepted the alternative, and after returning to Washington showed much zeal in movements for the betterment of local institutions where sick and wounded soldiers were cared for, and in other ways illustrated that his proclivities were largely for the Union. He became a close friend of President Lincoln and was tendered by him the commissionership of emancipation for the District of Columbia, but declined the offer. He was also on terms of intimacy with President Grant, and in 1873 was nominated by the latter to be a member of the board of police commissioners of the District and was unanimously confirmed by the Senate.

When the movement to change the form of government of the District was begun and gained strength and importance Mr. Berret was one of its most vigorous opponents and joined with the late Messrs. Geo. W. Riggs, W.W. Corcoran and other influential and wealthy men in protests against the reform. He also was identified with the same parties in an attempt to secure an injunction to prevent the board of public works to carry out the scheme of city improvement, which, directed by Alexander R. Shepherd, resulted in Washington becoming the most beautiful of cities that it is today. Mr. Berret lived to regret this action on his part; and in his later years there was no citizen more thankful that the attempts referred to were fruitless.

### *Significant Testimony*

He gave significant testimony to this upon the occasion of the memorable banquet to Governor Shepherd, tendered him by the citizens of Washington at the Arlington Hotel November 21, 1895. Mr. Berret was the presiding officer of the evening and in his opening address spoke in part as follows:

"As one of the oldest inhabitants of Washington and having had associations for many years with its public affairs, I recall vividly the history of the times in which our honored guest was an active participant. He came into power first as the chief of the board of public works under the administration of that highly honorable citizen, Governor Henry D. Cook. The plan that our guest inaugurated, if carried out to its logical end, will render this capital what the nation has the right to expect of it, the rival of any capital city of the old world.

"When I remind you gentlemen that these things were accomplished under circumstances most extraordinary, and which would have had the effect of causing a man of ordinary courage to have quailed in the presence of obstacles, which, I regret to say, in the end could not be wholly overcome, notwithstanding the prestige of that extraordinary soldier who at the time was at the head of this government as its President, and who I know considered it a high privilege to stand by and sustain the efforts of our guest in his administration of the affairs of the city. Yet such was the potency of opposition led by men of high character and distinguished eminence of this community that the prestige of the President's great name failed to give him that support to which his services entitled him, and the result was a voluntary exile on the part of him who contributed so to make Washington what it now is.

### *Time Brings Rewards*

"Gentlemen, time brings its rewards as well as its punishments. Seven years after our honored guest left this city to find employment in a neighboring state he returned to Washington unheralded, but not unknown. A meeting of the citizens was called in one of the public halls to meet him. I went there and I found a representative class of gentlemen such as I have never witnessed in my long life at any public meeting. The object of their gathering was to testify to their appreciation of the valuable services which had been rendered to this community by Alexander R. Shepherd. The result of this

meeting was an ovation coupled with a tender of freedom of this city to our honored guest, and such an ovation has never in my judgment been accorded to any other man in private life in this country.

"Now, I did not agree with the change in our form of government, but I have lived long enough to see its wisdom, but Congress only went half far enough. The next move they should make should be in the direction of building up this beautiful capital and making it what its illustrious designers intended it to be. One thing to be done should be to relieve it of all personal taxation, the effect of which should be to bring upon us a population desirable from every point of view. After this is accomplished I would go one step further. As I grow older I feel that I grow a little more progressive in my ideas and in this spirit I would relieve the people of this city and of this District of all taxation. (Laughter.) I should do it for the great reason that such action would vindicate a great principle for which our fathers of the revolution fought, and that is no taxation without representation. I now call on my friend, the ex-governor of the District of Columbia."

### *An Active Citizen*

While Mr. Berret had led a life of comparative retirement from political and business affairs since the war he was active in all enterprise of local importance, and in almost every celebration he was a member of the committee having the arrangements in charge. He was prominent in the preparations for President Buchanan's inauguration, and, being mayor of the city when President Lincoln was first inducted into office, took active part in the preliminaries for that event. He was chairman of the committee of fifty citizens selected by the democratic national committee to take charge of the inauguration of President Cleveland in 1885 and again in 1893 was chairman of the general committee.

Up to the time of his severe illness Mr. Berret took a keen interest in affairs, national and local, political and social. Nearly every night he would come over from his I street residence to the Arlington Hotel, and, seated in the midst of a congenial coterie would discuss the present and exchange reminiscences of the past. "Col. Berret's cabinet meeting," as some one once termed the group, was entirely democratic and all were welcome to enter and share the conversation.

*The Evening Star, Monday, April 15, 1901*

### **Death of Ex-Mayor Berret**

#### **Funeral Services Wednesday at St. Matthew's Church**

#### **The Commissioners of the District Adopt Resolutions of Regret and Respect**

Ex-Mayor James G. Berret died at his residence, No. 1535 I street, northwest, at 7:30 o'clock yesterday morning. He had been unconscious for forty-eight hours previously, and the passing from life to death was scarcely perceptible to the devoted watchers at his bedside. The venerable gentleman had made a gallant struggle against the inevitable, and that he held out so long after all hope of his recovery had faded was surprising. When the end came there were present his two nieces, Mrs. James George and Miss Lillie Berret. George and Miss Eleanor W. Berret, and his grandnephew, Mr. James Berret George. Two nephews, the only other living relatives, Messrs. Joseph W. Berret and James G. Berret, jr., arrived from their homes in Carroll county, Maryland, today.

Numbers of persons who had known and loved Mr. Berret called at the residence yesterday and today to offer their condolences and services, and many of his near friends were given the opportunity to take a farewell look at his familiar features. The body was laid out upon a bier in the room in which death came, the large middle chamber of the suite on the second floor. The hands were folded naturally over his bosom and the face was remarkably lifelike. But for the pallor of death, he looked as though he might be resting in peaceful sleep.

The funeral will take place Wednesday morning. Low mass will be celebrated at St. Matthew's Church at 11 o'clock by Rev. Father Bart. The music will be limited to the organ, at which Miss Jennie

Glennan will preside. Interment, which will be private, will be made in the Congressional cemetery. It is the wish of the family that flowers be omitted.

The pallbearers will be announced tomorrow and will comprise leading citizens of Washington and Maryland.

#### *District Commissioners Act*

The following order was issued today by the District Commissioners upon receipt of the news of the death of Mr. Berret:

"That the Commissioners learn with sorrow of the decease of the Honorable James G. Berret, one of the most esteemed and distinguished citizens of the District of Columbia and formerly mayor of the city of Washington, who expired in this city at 11 o'clock on the morning of the 14th instant.

"That, as a mark of respect to his memory, the flags on the District buildings be placed at half-mast until after Wednesday next, the day of the funeral."

#### *Special Mark of Respect*

Mr. John Joy Edson, chairman of the committee which had in charge the recent inaugural ceremonies, has issued a notice concerning Colonel Berret's death to each member of the committee, as follows:

"Learning of the death of Mr. James G. Berret, a member of this committee, which occurred at his residence yesterday morning, I have deemed it proper, as a special mark of the respect in which he was held by members of the inaugural committee, to request you to be present at his funeral Wednesday morning, April 17, at 11 o'clock at St. Matthew's Church, on Rhode Island avenue between 17th street and Connecticut avenue."

#### *Expression From District Officials*

Speaking of the decease of Col. Berret, Mr. Henry B.F. Macfarland, president of the board of District Commissioners, said:

"Col. Berret's death will leave a large place in the life of the District of Columbia vacant. He was not only public-spirited, and always ready to serve the District, but he was wise and intelligent in his service, and his memory held the precedents and traditions of half a century of civic effort. As chairman of the centennial committee I saw a great deal of Col. Berret, who took, he told me, more interest in that than in any other celebration, and learned to appreciate as never before all his fine qualities. It was delightful to see how fresh and keen his interest in the centennial celebration and his pleasure in its success were. It brought out all his strong feeling of devotion to the District's welfare. Personally he was one of the most attractive men in the District, and drew out affection as well as admiration."

Commissioner Ross also spoke of Col. Berret's death, referring to him as one of the grandest and noblest men he had ever known. He was a man, said Mr. Ross, of the highest and purest character, and one who was held in the highest esteem by every one who knew him.

*The Evening Star, April 16, 1901, p. 16*

#### **Ex-Mayor Berret's Funeral**

The remains of the late James G. Berret, former mayor of Washington, will be buried tomorrow privately in the family lot at Congressional cemetery by the side of Mrs. Berret, who died two years ago. Requiem mass will be celebrated by Rev. Charles M. Bart at St. Matthew's Church, Rhode Island avenue near Connecticut avenue at 11 o'clock. The pallbearers will be ex-Senator Arthur P. Gorman, John Lee Carroll, former governor of Maryland; General. John Mooer, Rear Admiral Franklin, Judge Hillyer, Alexander Porter Morse, Alexander P. Gordan-Cumming and John R. McLean.

*The Evening Star, Wednesday, April 17, 1901, p. 12*

### **Mr. Berret's Funeral**

#### **Large Gathering Attests the Esteem Felt For Him**

#### **Large Attendance at St. Matthew's Church, Where the Services Were Conducted.**

The deep and sincere affection in which the late James G. Berret was held by the community in which he was for so long such a prominent figure was attested in a most emphatic degree this morning by the large attendance which was present at the funeral services over his remains, held in St. Matthew's Church. It would be difficult to choose an assemblage in Washington more thoroughly representative of its residents, and each person in it came to pay, not a perfunctory mark of respect, but a sorrowful last tribute to the man who was so dear to them all in life. The gathering comprised all classes. Business and professional men, those in humble vocations, persons of leisure and social leaders, were there, the young as well as the old, and few vacant pews were left when the ceremonies began.

District Commissioner Macfarland represented the local government, and nearly every member of the inaugural committee, including Chairman Edson, Vice Chairman Roessle and Secretary Dingman, were in attendance. The venerable Mrs. Magruder, widow of former Mayor Magruder; ex-Mayor Matthew G. Emery, John W. Thompson, John F. Coyle, Judge Johnston, James W. Orme, S.H. Kauffmann, A.A. Wilson, Dr. Daniel B. Clarke, John W. Boteler, James L. Norris, E. Southard Parker, S.W. Woodward, Michael I. Weller, Louis D. Wine, E. Francis Riggs, W. Cranch McIntyre, Charles W. Pettit, G.G.C. Simms, Charles W. Cunningham, J.V.N. Huyck, Louis Kettler, J. Fred Kelley, John F. Cook, Marcellus West and Perry Carson were among the others present.

Brief services were conducted at the Berret residence, No. 1535 I street, at 10:30 o'clock, by Rev. Father Joseph Bart, which were attended by the family and the pallbearers. The casket, which was a massive one, of cast iron covered with mahogany and heavily silver mounted, and nearly seven feet long, was removed to the church, twelve body bearers being required to carry it.

Low requiem mass was celebrated by Father Bart, Miss Jennie Glennan playing solemn strains on the organ during its progress. Within the sanctuary, clad in white vestments, were Rev. Fathers Mackin, Stafford, Lee, Sterling, Foley and Clampi.

#### *Father Bart's Tribute*

At the conclusion of the mass Father Bart changed his vestments, and, approaching the casket, said that in accordance with the expressed wishes of the deceased there would be no funeral oration.

"The city of Washington," he continued, "mourns the death of its foremost citizen, and this assemblage testifies how his loss is mourned, and is a fitting tribute and testimony of his upright and noble character. He was loved by all. His life was long and honorable, and he needs no exaggerated panegyric of his public and private virtues. He was the soul of honor. He exemplified in himself truth and justice and virtue and duty, and was a noble Christian gentleman. He has left to his family the precious heritage of the knowledge that his character was as honorable as it was noble."

In conclusion Father Bart asked that all should join their prayers with those of the church in their dead friend's behalf that eternal peace and rest be granted him.

At the end of the services the body was removed to Congressional cemetery for interment, accompanied by the family and the pallbearers, who were ex-Senator Arthur P. Gorman, ex-Gov. John Lee Carroll of Maryland, Alexander Porter Morse, Mr. Gordon Cumming, Gen. Moore, Rear Admiral Franklin, Judge Hillyer and Mr. Hinckley.

*The Evening Star, April 23, 1901, p. 2*

### **Col. Berret's Will**

#### **Bequests Left to Various Local Institutions**

The last will and testament of Col. James G. Berret, ex-mayor of Washington, D.C., dated December 29, 1900, was filed today for probate. To Ruth Ann Berret, widow of his brother, Julius B. Berret, he bequeaths \$1,000; to Nancy B. Berret, widow of his brother, Joseph H. Berret, for life, and then to her daughter, Mary E. O'D. Berret, for life, certain property at the northwest corner of Baltimore and Gay streets, Baltimore, Md.; to his nephew James G. Berret, jr., and his wife, Emma, for life, certain lands and tenements in Freedom District, Carroll county, Md.; to his niece, Eugenia B. George, \$1,000; to his sister-in-law, Nancy B. Berret, \$1,000; to his niece, Emma Berret, \$500; to his niece, Annie G. Berret, \$500; to his servant, Richard Wallace, \$600; to Caroline Jones, \$500.

To St. Joseph's Male Orphan Asylum, \$500; to St. Vincent's Female Orphan Asylum, \$500; to St. Ann's Infant Asylum, \$100; to the House of the Good Shepherd, \$100; to the Home for the Aged of the Little Sisters of the Poor, \$100; to the Home for Colored People, \$100; to the Children's Hospital, \$100.

The remainder of the estate is left, share and share alike, to Joseph W. Berret, James G. Berret, jr., Annie DeComas Violette, Eugenia Bordley Berret, Eleanor Winder Berret, Ruth Gertrude Berret, James B. George, Eliza B. George, Bertha George and Mary E. O'D. Berret.

William Henry Dennis and James B. George are named executors.

*The Evening Star, April 1, 1858*

### **Presentation to Col. Berret**

Last night about ten o'clock, and after the accounts of the City Post Office had been made up ready to be transferred to the new Postmaster, an interesting ceremony took place at that office.

Col. Berret, in some exceedingly appropriate and handsomely conceived remarks, took leave of the clerks, alluding to the pleasant character of their intercourse, and concluded by expressing his hearty wishes for their future prosperity.

Mr. Lambert Tree, in behalf of the employees of the office, then handed to Col. Berret a letter, signed by all the clerks, presenting him with a handsome service of plate of some \$1,000 value; each piece of which bore the following inscription:

"Presented to Col. James G. Berret by the clerks and others connected with the City Post Office, as a token of their respect for his worth as a public officer, and of the affection for him as a man.

Washington city, D.C., March 17, 1858."

It was an appropriate testimonial to an officer who has won the regard and respect of the community by his efficient performance of his official duties and the many improvements he has instituted for the convenience of the citizens and those having business at the city post office.

At 12 o'clock today, Dr. Jones was formally installed as postmaster, and his well-known energy gives assurance that the public will continue to be as well accommodated as under Col. Berret's administration, which is all that need be asked.

*The Evening Star, May 12, 1877*

Ex-Mayor Berret's pair of stylish horses were handsomely decorated yesterday with a most elegant set of double-harness--mountings rubber inlaid with gold. This harness is conceded to be one of the finest in Washington and was made at Becker's harness factory, on the avenue, above Willard's.

(Advt.)

*The National Intelligencer, Oct. 9, 1847*

Col. James G. Berret has been appointed chief clerk in the Pension Office, vice Dr. George W. Crump deceased.

*Davis, "A History of the City Post Office," Columbia Historical Society, Vol. ??*

A little over two months after the beginning of the presidency of Franklin Pierce -- namely, on the 27th of May, 1853 -- Mr. Bradley was removed as a Whig, and Colonel James G. Berret, a Democrat, succeeded him.

Mr. Berret was born February 12, 1815, in Baltimore County, Maryland. He had the advantage of only two years' education in the county schools. His father was a farmer, and the boy's services being needed on the farm, he soon became a valuable assistant. At sixteen, his father dying, he was thrown on his own resources; but he had pluck and manliness in him, and after lots of hard work and study, before he reached the age of twenty, he had become one of the best farmers in the county. He took an active interest also in public business, and when that part of the county in which he lived was created Carroll County, he was elected, though only twenty-one years of age, a member of the State legislature. In this capacity he served two terms, and then declined a reelection. He came to Washington City in 1839, having received an appointment as clerk in the office of the Treasurer of the United States, and remained in that position until 1848, when he accepted the position of chief clerk of the Pension Bureau. This post he resigned in the following year, and went into business as a prosecutor of government claims, in which he was very successful. Three years afterwards he was made postmaster. In the Know-nothing election troubles in Washington in 1857, he was the chief adviser of the mayor, Dr. Wm. B. Magruder. In 1858 he was elected mayor of Washington, and in 1860 was a candidate for reelection against Richard Wallach, when he was again triumphant. In 1861, while still mayor, he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the United States, and was consequently arrested on the 24th of August, 1861, as a Southern sympathizer or supporter, by order of the Secretary of War, and taken a prisoner to Fort Lafayette, N.Y. In September, 1861, on resigning the mayoralty, he was released, and a few days later he returned to Washington, to find that during his confinement his late competitor before the people, Mr. Wallach, had been elected by the City councils to fill the office. Colonel Berret, as he was now generally called, bore these troubles and humiliations philosophically, and remained a citizen of Washington, and was supposed to be loyal to the government. He afterwards became a personal friend of both Lincoln and Grant, the latter appointing him commissioner of police in 1873.

Colonel Berret was a man of strong convictions, and of very high character. He was always an active citizen, and a lovable and popular man; and when he died, on the 14th of April, 1901, he was sincerely mourned by the whole population of the great city he had helped to build up and beautify. In person, Colonel Berret was tall and graceful. In his younger days he was quite handsome, and even in his extreme old age he was a very noticeable, dignified, and attractive gentleman. In religion he was a Roman Catholic.

As postmaster, Colonel Berret made no innovations. He retained most of the men who had been in office under his predecessors, and as a consequence, the business of the post-office was attended to promptly and efficiently. Mr. Lambert Tree again became the chief clerk of the office, or assistant postmaster -- a position which he continued to fill under many of Colonel Berret's successors, and nearly up to the day of his death. The post-office was continued in the old location on Seventh Street during the greater part of Colonel Berret's incumbency. In 1857, however, it was transferred to the first floor rooms in the F Street front of the extension of the Post-Office Department building, which part of the structure had then been completed. When that removal was effected the old Seventh Street buildings were torn down, and the extension was finished shortly afterwards on that side also. The emoluments

of the postmaster remained about the same, though the business of the office had greatly increased. In the last year of Colonel Berret's administration the gross receipts were about \$83,000.

It was during Colonel Berret's term that the old system of optional prepayment of postage was discontinued, and compulsory prepayment established. This was required by the act of Congress of March 3, 1855. The registration of letters, also, was begun under this same law.