

William Wright Billing

(- 5 Oct 1843)

Billing. Of consumption on the morning of the 5th instant, William W. Billing in the 43rd year of his age. The friends of the family are respectfully invited to attend his funeral from his late residence corner of 14th and L streets on Sabbath afternoon at 2 o'clock.

The National Intelligencer, Monday, October 9, 1843

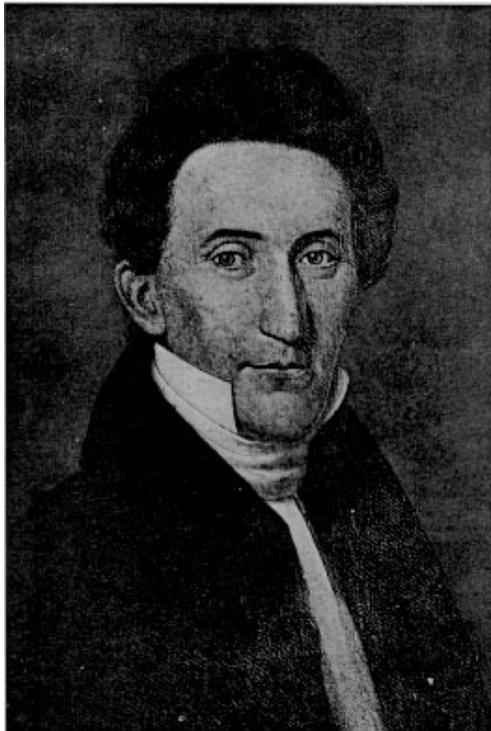
Masonic Funeral

The remains of the late W.W. Billing were followed to the grave in Congress Burial ground yesterday afternoon by a numerous procession of the ancient brotherhood, preceded by the German band playing a solemn dirge. A great number of citizens also attended the funeral services in the Protestant Methodist Church.

Kenton N. Harper, History of the Grand Lodge and of Freemasonry in the District of Columbia, 1911

Grand Master, 1835-37

Colonel Billing, as he was universally known, was born in the District of Columbia in August 1801, and received an excellent education in the local private schools. His parents were English and came to this country just a short while before his birth.



WILLIAM W. BILLING.
GRAND MASTER, 1835-1837.

He was an unusually resourceful man, and while engaged in a good private business was a Common Councilman in 1833, and at one time Collector of Taxes of the District. He afterwards accepted a clerkship in the Paymaster-General's office, War Department, which position he held at the time of his death. He resided most of his life at the corner of Fourteenth and L Streets, N.W., in a home destroyed by fire in the early forties.

He was one of the original members of the congregation of the Tabernacle Church, Twelfth near H Street, N.W., now the Rhode Island Avenue Methodist Protestant Church.

He is described as a man of most kindly disposition, was hospitable and generous, and at the same time thrifty and acquired considerable property. He was public-spirited and very popular with all with whom he came in contact. In the language of his daughter Miss Margaret M. Billing, he was a "Christian gentleman." For years he was Colonel of the District Militia, which represented the only military organization in the District at that time.

Bro. Billing came into office when the anti-Masonic movement was at its height, and throughout the three years of his incumbency was called upon to meet more unusual and trying conditions than perhaps have ever fallen on the lot of a Grand Master in this jurisdiction.

He was a fair example, however, of the truism that the times make the man, and, rising superior to the most disheartening obstacles, maintained the integrity of the Grand Lodge, and by the force of his executive ability brought some degree of order out of the chaos into which the Fraternity had fallen.

At the very beginning of his term of office the trouble the Fraternity had been for some years having to retain their hold upon the building at the corner of John Marshall Place and Indiana Avenue culminated, and only through the efforts of Grand Master Billing were the various lodges interested enabled to maintain a quasi ownership therein for a few more years. By the arrangement then entered into the leasehold remained in Bro. Billing's name for a number of years, as is fully set out in the chapter on Meeting Places, and is only mentioned in this connection as an evidence of the high place the then Grand Master held in the estimation of his brethren.

Bro. Billing was initiated in New Jerusalem Lodge, No. 9, October 16, 1826; passed November 20, 1826; raised November 28, 1826; was Secretary, 1827-28; Junior Warden, 1829; Senior Warden, 1830-31; Master, 1832-35, 37-38, and Treasurer, 1839-43.

He served as Grand Secretary of the year 1833, and Grand Master for the three terms indicated above.

Although during this period Masonry was under a cloud, public demonstrations, after the custom of the time, were, indeed, more frequent than at the present, and perhaps the most notable of these at which Bro. Billing officiated as Grand Master was the laying of the cornerstone of Jackson City, across the river, January 11, 1836, which event was made the occasion of considerable pomp and ceremony, and was participated in by M.W. Andrew Jackson, P.G.M., of the State of Tennessee and President of the United States, who actively assisted Grand Master Billing in the work.

William W. Billing of City of Washington, D.C. (dtd. Oct. 1, 1843, probated Oct. 17, 1843, Will Book 5, O.S. #2435)

To wife Rebecca K. Billing, all property for her use and support of children Augusta Matilda Billing, Emily Virginia Billing, Rosanna Moore Billing, Mary Wright Billing, Amelia Walker Billing, William Wright Billing and Margaret Moore Billing.

Exrx.: Rebecca K. Billing, wife, consulting with James A. Kennedy

Wits.: Charles L. Coltman; Nathan Mullikin; Nicholas B. VanZant