

Thomas Tyler Bouldin

(1781 – 11 Feb 1834)

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989

A Representative from Virginia; born near Charlotte Court House, Charlotte County, Va.; in 1781; attended the country schools; studied law; was admitted to the bar Dec. 6, 1802, and commenced practice at Charlotte Court House, Va.; appointed judge of the circuit court; elected as a Democrat to the 21st and 22nd Congress (March 4, 1829 to March 3, 1833), unsuccessful candidate for reelection to the 23rd Congress; subsequently elected to the 23rd Congress to fill the vacancy caused by the death of John Randolph and served from August 26, 1833 until his death in Washington, D.C., February 11, 1834 while addressing the House of Representatives; internment in a private cemetery on his farm, "Golden Hill," near Drakes Branch, Charlotte County, Va.

The National Intelligencer, Wednesday, February 12, 1834

The Hall of Representatives was yesterday witness to one of the most solemn and affecting scenes that ever occurred in any Legislative Body.

Mr. Bouldin, a distinguished Representative from the State of Virginia, having risen to speak on the Deposite Question, had uttered but a few sentences, when he was observed to falter in his speech, and, after a momentary struggle, fell, and in a few minutes expired!

The House, of course, adjourned instantaneously; and, on being informed of the melancholy occurrence, the Senate did the same.

We shall not here anticipate the notice due to the character of the deceased, nor anticipate the friend, whoever it may be, whose duty it will be to pronounce his eulogy.

It is not to be expected, after the melancholy occurrence of yesterday, that any business will be attempted to-day in either House of Congress, besides taking order for the Funeral.

It was a striking instance, indeed, that Mr. Bouldin should have been struck by the hand of Death at the moment of his allusion to the decease of the eminent citizen who was elected to succeed him. but died before the meeting of Congress. It is not supposed, however, that his solemn visitation could have been brought about by any mental association of the memory of the deceased with the actual position of the living Representative. This remark is hazarded because it happened to one of the Editors to have casually conversed with Mr. Bouldin on this very subject, at the time of the motion, by one of the Representatives of South Carolina, in honor of the memory of a deceased colleague. Mr. B. appeared desirous to do what was proper in honor of the memory of his colleague, but drew the obvious distinction between his case and that of Mr. Singleton, that the latter died on his way to take his seat in Congress, and after the opening of the session, whilst not only the death of Mr. Randolph had occurred several months before Congress met, but a successor to him had been elected, and was called, at the opening of the session. This appeared to the writer to be the only ground which Mr. Bouldin refrained from what he appeared to be otherwise desirous of doing. The coincidence, however, is not therefore the less (but rather the more) remarkable.

It was a distressing circumstance that the lady of Judge Bouldin was in the gallery of the House yesterday, and a beholder of the appalling scene!

The National Intelligencer, Thursday, February 13, 1834

Obituary

Thomas Tyler Bouldin, whose sudden demise, while in the act of addressing the House of Representatives, has filled all minds and hearts with solemnity and awe, was one amongst the most distinguished sons of Virginia. At the bar, for his was the learned profession of the law, he occupied for years the foremost rank in all the courts in which he practiced; and upon the bench, to which he was elevated by the votes of the two Houses of Assembly of his native State, he very soon acquired the reputation of a profound reasoner, an able jurist, and an upright judge. After several years service in that station, the people of his district called upon him to lay down his judicial functions, and to assume those of their representative in Congress. He responded to their wishes, and was elected the successor of the late Mr. Randolph. Bringing with him to that high station a mind deeply and profoundly imbued with the truths of political science -- a heart devoted to the principles of free government, and filled with the most generous sensibilities -- a deportment amiable and exemplary -- and a disposition conciliatory and benevolent, it is not to be wondered at, that he possessed, at the same time, the confidence and affection of all who knew him. Many, very many, are afflicted by his loss, and his constituents are deprived of an able, talented, and honest representative. In his public course he was governed by no selfish policy; he looked only to the good of the country, and of the whole country. Content to move in the sphere appointed him by his constituents, he looked to no higher advancement - if there be a higher -- and, resting on the broad basis of principle, the constitution and laws were the only lights to which he looked for the regulation of his footsteps. His death may be regarded more as a subject of sorrow to his numerous connections and friends, than on his own account. He died at his post, and in the discharge of his duty. On the argument he was about to deliver, he had deeply pondered; and, if its delivery had comported with the decree of an all-wise Providence, it would, as is firmly believed, have constituted an additional claim to public gratitude.

He lived and died an honest man, and; beyond that, there is nothing on earth worthy the aspirations of a noble and generous mind.

The National Intelligencer, Friday, February 14, 1834

The Members of the two Houses of Congress assembled yesterday only to unite in paying the last earthly honors to the remains of their late associate, the Hon. Thomas T. Bouldin, of Va. The Funeral Ceremonies took place in the Hall of Representatives. Prayers were read, with due solemnity, by the Rev. Mr. Hatch, one of the Chaplains to Congress, and a very excellent discourse, suited to the occasion, was delivered by the Rev. Mr. Stockton, the other Chaplain; after which, the two Houses, in procession, escorted the corpse to the Eastern burial ground. The Funeral Ceremonies were attended also by the President of the United States, the Judges of the Supreme Court, and the Heads of Departments. On no similar occasion has the mourning been more general or more sincere than on this; the peculiar circumstances of which, indeed, could not fail to make a deep impression on the minds of all men.