

Preston Smith Brooks

(5 Aug 1819 – 27 Jan 1857)

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989

A Representative from South Carolina born in Edgefield District, S. C., August 5, 1819; attended the common schools and was graduated from South Carolina College (now the University of South Carolina) at Columbia in 1839; studied law; was admitted to the bar in 1845 and commenced practice in Edgefield, S.C.; member of the State house of representatives in 1844; served in the Mexican War as captain in the Palmetto Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers; elected as a State Rights Democrat to the 33rd and 34th Congresses and served from March 4, 1853 until July 15, 1856, when he resigned even though the attempt to expel him for his assault on Charles Sumner on May 22, 1856, had failed through lack of the necessary 2/3 vote; reelected to the 34th Congress to fill the vacancy caused by his own resignation and served from August 1, 1856 until his death in Washington, D.C., January 27, 1857; interment in Willow Brook Cemetery, Edgefield, S.C.

The Evening Star, May 23, 1856

Held To Bail

Yesterday afternoon, a warrant was issued by Justice Dunnington against the Hon. Preston C. Brooks of South Carolina for an assault and battery on Hon. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. The warrant was served on Mr. Brooks by Officer Simmonds; and Mr. Brooks, with his friends after the officer had retired, went to the office of Justice Hollingshead and offered security for court. The Justice did not think it proper to take security for court until he knew the condition of Mr. Sumner, and therefore held Mr. Brooks to security in \$500 for his appearance at the office on the 24th instant, at 4 o'clock p.m. for a further hearing.

The Evening Star, May 23, 1856

The Assault in the Senate Chamber Yesterday

We have taken occasion to procure an account of the affair that occurred in the Senate Chamber yesterday afternoon from an eyewitness, in whose judgment and in the integrity of whose representation we rely. We present it to our readers as follows:

Yesterday, after he had sought Mr. Sumner elsewhere without finding him, Mr. Brooks went to the Senate chamber (the Senate having adjourned) and Mr. S. being there, Mr. Brooks sat near Mr. Sumner until a few ladies, who were on the floor, had retired. He then went up to Mr. S., who was at his desk writing, and said:

“I have read your speech carefully and with as much disposition to do you justice as I could command; and I have deliberately come to the conclusion that you were guilty of a gross libel upon my State, and of a wanton insult to my absent and gray haired relative, Judge Butler, and I feel myself under obligation to inflict on you a punishment for this libel and insult.”

Mr. Sumner thereupon essayed to rise from his seat, as though to resist what Mr. Brooks had said, when he (Mr. Brooks) struck Mr. S. with rapid and repeated blows about the head with a gutta percha cane, and continued his blows in spite of Mr. Sumner's efforts to ward them off and seize the cane, until Mr. S. fell. As Mr. Brooks was suspending his blows (which he did the instant Mr. Sumner fell) Mr. Crittenden came up and interposed, saying, “Don't kill, etc.” Mr. Brooks thereupon left the spot and

remained with his friends in the Senate chamber, until Mr. Sumner's friends, several of whom were present, (Mr. Morgan of New York, and Mr. Foster of Connecticut, among them,) lifting him up, bore him into one of the ante rooms of the Senate.

The Evening Star, July 22, 1856

Hon. P.S. Brooks

This gentleman was arrested this morning by Officers Boss and Allen, on a warrant issued by Justice Hollingshead upon the written affidavit of F.C. Treadwell, setting forth that he had reasons to believe that a duel was contemplated between Hon. P.S. Brooks of South Carolina and Hon. Mr. Burlingame, of Massachusetts. Mr. Brooks went before Justice Hollingshead, who, after consideration, decided that it was his duty to hold him to bail in the sum of \$5,000 that he would not in any way violate the law in relation to duels in the District of Columbia.

The National Intelligencer, January 28, 1857

Death of the Hon. Preston Brooks

The public sympathies were deeply and painfully stirred last evening about 7 o'clock by the news of the sudden death of the Hon. Preston S. Brooks, a Representative in Congress from the State of South Carolina. He had been unwell but 2 or 3 days and his indisposition was hardly known beyond the circle of his particular friends when information of his death broke upon the public heart with more than ordinary solemnity. We learn from one of the colleagues of the lamented deceased that his malady was a severe cold, which terminated in violent croup at a moment when his friends had reason to suppose that the crisis of his illness had passed.

The Evening Star, January 28, 1857

Death of Preston S. Brooks

This gentleman died at his lodgings, Browns' hotel, in this city, yesterday evening shortly after dark. He had been sick of inflammatory sore throat for a few days. On the day before yesterday, (Monday morning) he first deemed it advisable to call in resident medical advice, his affection having become serious, though up to half an hour before his decease no apprehensions of its fatal termination were entertained, we learn. The immediate cause of his death was a sudden attack of quincy or croup, incident to the affection under which he labored. About twenty minutes before the sad event took place a powerful emetic was administered to him, which failed of any effect whatever. Drs. Kidwell, Hall and Boyle were present, as well as some of his friends.

Instantly after the sad event took place it was known over the city, and the halls of the hotel were crowded with inquiring and sorrow-stricken citizens and strangers. We never before knew such an event to give rise to such widespread real grief as was manifested in this community on that occasion. No man ever in Congress has been more universally and sincerely beloved here, for no other has been endowed with a nobler nature or more lovable traits of character. The heartfelt grief manifested last night by so many men of all parties, of high, intelligence, all of whom knew him well personally, affixes the stamp of falsehood to the partisan slanders concerning him with which so large a portion of the Northern press has teemed, for political effect, for a year past. If ever a death touched the heart of this community—of all classes and parties congregated in the Federal metropolis—it is in this case. That of Preston S. Brooks is mourned, mourned, mourned.

The Evening Star, Wednesday, January 28, 1857

Death of Preston S. Brooks

This gentleman died at his lodgings, Browns' Hotel, in this city, yesterday evening shortly after dark. He had been sick of inflammatory sore throat for a few days. On the day before yesterday (Monday morning) he first deemed it advisable to call in resident medical advice, his affection having become serious, though up to half an hour before his decease no apprehensions of its fatal termination were entertained, we learn. The immediate cause of his death was a sudden attack of quincy or croup, incident to the affection under which he labored. About twenty minutes before the sad event took place a powerful emetic was administered to him, which failed of any effect whatever. Drs. Kidwell, Hall and Boyle were present, as well as some of his friends.

Instantly after the sad event took place it was known over the city, and the halls of the hotel were crowded with inquiring and sorrow-stricken citizens and strangers. We never before knew such an event to give rise to such wide-spread, real grief as was manifested in this community on that occasion. No man ever in Congress has been more universally and sincerely beloved here, for no other has been endowed with a nobler nature or more lovable traits of character. The heart-felt grief manifested last night by so many men of all parties, of high intelligence, all of whom knew him well personally, affixes the stamp of falsehood to the partisan slanders concerning him with which so large a portion of the Northern press has teemed, for political effect, for a year past. If ever a death touched the heart of this community -- of all classes and parties congregated in the Federal metropolis -- it is in this case. That of Preston S. Brooks is mourned, mourned, mourned.

The National Intelligencer, Thursday, January 29, 1857

Congress

No business was transacted in either House of Congress yesterday beyond the reading of the journals of the preceding day and the presentation in the Senate of a few memorials and resolutions. Both Houses; soon after assembling, adjourned in respect to the memory of the Hon. Preston S. Brooks, under circumstances plainly denoting the deep impression which his sudden death has made upon his fellow-members. The solemn event will be formally announced at 12 o'clock to-day in the House of Representatives, and immediately thereafter in the Senate, when it is expected that his many personal friends will speak in appropriate eulogy of his character. The funeral will then take place from the Capitol, in the following order:

ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

The Committee of Arrangements, Pall Bearers, and Mourners will attend at Browns' Hotel, the late residence of the deceased at 1 o'clock p.m. on Thursday, the 29th instant, at which time the corpse will be removed, in charge of the Committee of Arrangements, attended by the Sergeant-at-Arms of the House, to the Hall of the House of Representatives, where divine service will be performed.

At 2 o'clock p.m. the funeral will move from the hall of the House of Representatives to the Congressional Cemetery in the following order:

The Chaplains of both Houses of Congress

Physicians who attended the deceased

Committee of Arrangements

Mr. John McQueen	Mr. T.S. Boccock
Mr. Alex. DeWitt	Mr. W.H.Sneed
Mr. John Wheeler	Mr. J.F. Dowdell
Mr. Daniel Mace	Mr. J.W. Denver

Mr. J.C. Allen

Pall Bearers

Mr. H.A. Edmundson

Mr. J. Glancy Jones

Mr. Alex H. Stephens

Mr. W.W. Valk

Mr. A.K. Marshall

Mr. A. Rust

Mr. B.B. Thurston

Mr. J. Scott Harrison

The family and friends of the deceased

The Senators and Representatives from the State of South Carolina as mourners

The Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives

The House of Representatives of the United States, preceded by their Speaker and Clerk

The other officers of the House of Representatives

The Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate

The Senate, preceded by their President and Secretary

The other officers of the Senate

The President of the United States

The Heads of Department

The Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States and its officers

The Judiciary of the District of Columbia

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

The Mayor of Washington and Common Council

Citizens and strangers.

Preston Smith Brooks was removed to South Carolina February 9, 1857 attended by a delegation of over 30 South Carolinians.

The Evening Star, January 29, 1857

The Ceremonies—

At an early hour today it became apparent that, notwithstanding the state of the weather, the ceremonies to be performed at the Capitol over the remains of the late Preston S. Brooks—the program of which will be found in another column—were to be attended by an immense throng of citizens and strangers of all degrees and positions in society. Long before the two Houses met, the galleries, rotunda, and avenues leading to the two chambers of Congress were almost blocked up by the living mass thus attracted into the Capitol building.

The delivery of the eulogy pronounced by Mr. Toombs in the Senate chamber was cut short by the state of his feelings, which so overcame him as that he took his seat in the middle of the discourse he designed speaking.

The eulogies delivered in the House were able and eloquent efforts indeed. An allusion to the affair in the Senate chamber between the deceased and Senator Sumner, embraced in the remarks of Mr. Savage, however, gave rise to a manifestation of much excitement, and to no little conversation, on the part of many of the members in all parts of the chamber during the recess. It bids fair to become the subject of much newspaper comment, we apprehend.