

Aaron V. Brown

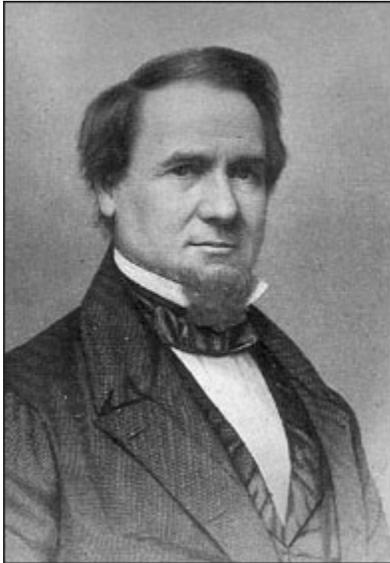
(15 August 1795 - 8 Mar 1859)

** * * Removed to Tennessee, March 11, 1859 * * **

The Evening Star, March 8, 1859

Death of the Postmaster General

It is with sincere regret we announce the decease of Hon. Aaron V. Brown, Postmaster General, which occurred at twenty minutes past 9 o'clock this morning, after a painful illness of some ten days' duration, at his residence, corner of G and Nineteenth streets.



Although this melancholy event has been expected for several days, its announcement has had the effect of casting a gloom over the minds of our citizens and the public functionaries residing here, to many of whom Mr. Brown was known personally and by whom he was held in highest esteem. During his illness he has had all the advantages of the best medical skill, and he has borne his sufferings with composure and calm resignation. His death was an easy transition from the present to a future stage of existence, and almost up to the moment of its occurrence he retained possession of his faculties.

The President and members of the Cabinet were informed of the sad event as soon as possible, and for the time being all public business will be suspended, except such as is essential to the welfare of the public interests. The Post Office Department was closed as soon as convenient, in respect to the memory of the deceased and will so remain until his funeral, except in cases of urgent necessity.

The deceased eminently deserves to be classed among the eminent men of the present age, for in every position he has been called to occupy during a public life of more than ordinary length, he has acquitted himself of the duties pertinent thereto with marked ability.

Mr. Brown was born on the 13th of August, 1795, and was therefore, aged sixty-three years, six months and twenty-three days. His birthplace was Brunswick county, Virginia, and his father was the Rev. Aaron Brown, a minister of the Gospel of high repute in the Methodist Episcopal denomination.

Mr. Brown was educated at the University of North Carolina and during his absence at school his father removed from Virginia to Tennessee. After he had graduated, he also went to Tennessee, and studied law in the office of Judge Trimble, at Nashville, to whom he attributed much of those habits of industry and thorough research into the merits of whatever business came into his hands which so eminently qualified him in after life for filling public stations.

He practiced law in Tennessee a number of years, and for several years was in partnership with the late ex-President James K. Polk. He was several times a member of the Tennessee Legislature, serving at different periods in both houses, and always acquitting himself with such credit as to satisfy political opponents as well as to gratify his friends. In 1839 he was elected to Congress, where he served continuously until 1845, when he was elected Governor of Tennessee. In 1847 he was defeated in another contest for Governor, as the State was politically Whig and his opponent was a very popular man.

From that period until called by President Buchanan to fill the position of Postmaster, he was not engaged in public life, having refused through delicacy of feeling, to accept any position under President

Polk, by whom he was tendered various offices. The long personal friendship which had existed between them, however, remained unabated up till the time of Mr. Polk's decease.

Since he assumed control of the Post Office Department the whole country is aware of the efficient manner in which he has administered its affairs, though his usefulness has been greatly restricted at times by the adverse action of Congress. He has added vastly to the mail facilities of the entire country, and to his efforts mainly must be attributed that vast and noble undertaking of establishing mail routes through the hitherto unknown interior, and connecting thus the eastern with the western States of the Union. The advantages to arise from this service are not yet commenced to be felt, but it may be plainly perceived that these routes will become in a few years the trail, as it were, for a line of settlements across the continent, and lead to the rapid filling up of those expansive territories which would otherwise have lain unoccupied for years.

Politically, Mr. Brown belonged to the National school. Always an unflinching Democrat, fanaticism had no charms to attract him from the path of duty, and he steadily and uncompromisingly resisted all her approaches, whether they came from North or the South. In losing him, the nation has lost another of its leading minds, and his State has suffered a misfortune. In social life, his uniform affability and sincere good-heartedness, won for him the respect and affection of all his acquaintances, and many will deeply mourn his demise. Within the sacred precincts of his own family, where he was enshrined as the object of most fervent affection, we will not intrude.

Rumors are rife as to who will succeed Mr. Brown in the Post Office Department, and we hear quite a number named in this connection. Among these are Hon. Cave Johnson and Hon. Horatio King. The former has hereto filled the position and the latter is now the First Assistant in the Department. The exigencies of the time require the services of an officer acquainted with the Department affairs.

The Evening Star, March 10, 1859

The Funeral of Postmaster General, A.V. Brown

At an early hour this morning, the Marshal for the District of Columbia, Col. Selden, detached a large body of police to the White House, to preserve order during the arrangement made there for the funeral of Postmaster General Brown. They appeared on the ground at about 9 o'clock, but ere their arrival, a good many persons prompted by sympathy or curiosity, had assembled in the vicinity.

Between 9 and 10 o'clock, the surviving members of the Cabinet repaired to the residence of the deceased, and escorted the remains, which were borne on a bier, thence to the Executive Mansion. The doors of the latter, however, remained closed for full half an hour afterwards and during this interim we are told the President took a parting look at his late lamented friend.

A favorite female servant, at the request of her mistress, accompanied the remains to their removal.

At a few minutes after 10 o'clock, the doors of the Presidential mansion were thrown open and the public were permitted to take a parting look at the deceased. The remains were deposited on a sarcophagus in the center of the East room, and were encased in a handsome mahogany coffin, lined with sheet lead, and tastefully ornamented with wreaths of natural flowers from the conservatory of the White House. The trimmings of the coffin were, of course, all in keeping with its style and quality. On its lid was a silver plate bearing the following brief inscription:

Aaron V. Brown, Postmaster General
Born August 15th, A.D., 1795
Died March 8th, 1859

In the lining of the coffin a glass pane was fitted through which the features of the deceased could be seen. A pall of black velvet was thrown over the coffin and fell to the floor. The colored servant of

the deceased occupied a seat by the side of the bier of her late master, while it remained in its position in the hall. Those who visited the room observed remarkable decorum, and all seemed affected deeply by the imposing spectacle. Among those who availed themselves of the opportunity afforded to look at the remains, were a large number of ladies, several prominent officers of the Government and distinguished gentlemen, and a good many strangers in the city, and a host of citizens of Washington, numbering in all, of both sexes, perhaps 3,000 persons.

Marshal Selden, and his deputy, Mr. Phillips, Dr. Blake, Commissioner of Public Works, and Capt. Goddard, chief of the police force, were in the East room during the morning, preserving order and arranging so that all the visitors might have equal facility for attaining the object of their visit.

At eleven o'clock the number of visitors having increased considerably, the green-room and the President's reception room were thrown open to afford freer egress for the company, and the throng soon equaled that witnessed on other State occasions.

At half-past eleven the clerks, messengers, etc. of the Post Office Department, and Sixth Auditor's office, numbering near two hundred, headed by the three Assistant Postmasters General, proceeded, to procession, from the Department building to the Executive Department to take part in the melancholy and imposing proceedings. And shortly afterwards the Senate of the United States, led by their officers, arrived in coaches.

Filing into the room, the clerks before mentioned passed the coffin, taking a last look at their late chief, and then ranged themselves around the room outside the circle of seats set for the cabinet, senators, diplomatic corps and clergymen. Those in this procession wore crape on the left arm. The clergy were next seated in the south part of the room, near the coffin. The pall-bearers, with sashes of black, were seated next to the clergy; and next came the committee of arrangements on the opposite side of the room, wearing sashes of white.

The members of the Senate were ranged on either side of the coffin below, and the President of the United States, members of the Cabinet, Diplomatic Corps, Judges of the Supreme Court, and the relatives of the deceased (except the ladies of his own family, who were not present) were ranged in the south end of the room behind the clergy. In this portion of the hall we observed a number of ladies of the families of members of the Cabinet and judges of the Supreme Court.

The Diplomatic Corps were present in full costume.

The company having been seated, after a few moments spent in silence, the Reverend Dr. Hall, pastor of the Church of the Epiphany, then read the imposing funeral ritual of the Episcopal service, together with its accompanying impressive prayers; after which Rev. Mr. Granberry, of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, delivered an impressive discourse.

Giving first a brief notice of the sickness of the deceased, and the state of mind in which he found him during his visit to his sick chamber, he proceeded to impress on the minds of his hearers the necessity of reliance on Divine power. He recognized the blessings of this life, and the value of those honors which are attained in this country through laudable ambition. Yet, notwithstanding these high positions, the present is an instance of their continual liability to be cut off by death in the midst of all their distinctions.

He next called the attention of the distinguished men of the country, those who occupy high places in the Government, to the great weight of their example on the entire country. Their conduct, he urged, is noticed by young men who visit this city for the purpose of carrying out their desires to attain eminence in public life, and they copy after it, and thus frequently shape their future destiny. But this is not all. The acts of these men who have been elevated to control the nation are heralded by the press, and the example is not without influence in distant parts of the country.

He then alluded especially to the deceased, asserting that general testimony concerning him gave him a high character for integrity and virtue, in all the relations of life. That he was upright in his

dealings, of undeviating probity and honesty, but he would to God he were able to add that he was an example of piety.

Rev. Dr. Hall then read a prayer, and announced that the ceremonies would be concluded at the grave. There were also present of the clergy of this city Reverends Messrs. Gurley, Smith, Tustin, Hill, Carothers, Kingsford, and Elliott.

Shortly after noon the line of the procession was commenced to be formed by the Marshal, Col. Wm. Selden, U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia, and his aids Capt. I. Rynders, U.S. Marshal for the southern district of New York; Geo. W. Phillips, Esq., Deputy U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia; Charles Tyler, Esq., of Washington city. The line, as being formed, extended from the Executive Mansion down to Fourteenth street upon Pennsylvania avenue, and the sidewalks were lined with spectators.

Minute guns were fired from the public grounds south of the President's mansion as the signal for the procession to move, which took place shortly after one p.m. in the following:

Order of Procession

The Marshal of the United States of the District of Columbia

The officiating clergymen

The physicians who attended the deceased

Committee of Arrangements

Mr. Davis of Miss.

Mr. Owin, of Calif.

Mr. Bayard, of Del.

Mr. Crittenden, of Ky.

Mr. Bright, of Ind.

Mr. Foot, of Vt.

Pall-Bearers

Mr. Fitch, of Ind.

Mr. Floyd, Sec. of War

Mr. Johnson, of Ark.

Judge Catron, Sup. Ct.

Mr. Thompson, Soc. Int.

Judge Clifford, Sup .Ct.

Family and relatives of the deceased

The President of the United States and the Heads of Departments

The Senators and ex-members of the House of Representatives from the State of Tennessee

The Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate

The Senate of the United States, preceded by its President and Secretary

The other officers of the Senate

The Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives

The ex-Members and Members elect of the House of Representatives, preceded by the Speaker and Clerk

The other officers of the House of Representatives

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

Foreign Ministers and their suites

The Assistant Postmasters General and the other officers and clerks of the Post Office Department

The heads of bureaus and the officers and clerks of the several Executive Departments

The officers of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps

The Governors of States and Territories

The Judges and officers of the Court of Claims

The Judges of the Circuit, Criminal and Orphans' Courts of the United States for the District of Columbia, with the members of the bar and officers of the several Courts

All other civil officers of the Government

The corporate authorities of Washington
The corporate authorities of Georgetown
Such societies and fraternities as may desire to join the procession
Citizens and strangers

The hearse was drawn by four superb white chargers.

So large and universal a turnout of all classes of citizens has rarely been seen here on such an occasion. Carriages by hundreds, and men, women and children by thousands thronged the streets and avenues in the neighborhood of the Executive Mansion and the Departments; and all along Pennsylvania avenue, where the procession was expected.

The Evening Star, March 11, 1859

Funeral of the Late Postmaster General

Our notice of this occurrence in yesterday's Star extended no farther than the starting of the procession, on account of the lateness of the hour. The cortege afterwards moved along Pennsylvania avenue, passing the Capitol on the south side. On arriving at the Congressional Cemetery, the corpse was placed on a bier in front of the vault, and the Rev. Dr. Hall there concluded the funeral services. The lid of the coffin was again raised, when the sons and relatives of the deceased, the President and his niece, Miss Lane, members of the Cabinet and ladies of their families, and many other persons walked around the bier and took a last look at the features of the dead. The coffin was then removed into the vault and placed in a box to be ready for transportation to the family burial place in Tennessee. A number of persons went into the vault while it remained open and after the company had partially retired, a servant of the deceased followed them and took a careful survey of the premises and of the box containing the remains of his late master, saying that he wanted to see how everything was so as to report to his mistress. The vault was then closed and those comprising the procession were soon on the way to their respective homes.

We omitted to mention yesterday the attendance at the funeral services at the White House, and the participation in the procession, of the Board of Aldermen, Common Council, officers of the city government generally, and of the Courts of the District. The Mayor was not present on account of indisposition. The diplomatic corps, it seems, did not go to the grave, although they were in the line of procession as it issued from the Executive Mansion. It is surmised that their non-attendance is attributable to a question of etiquette as to what place should have been assigned them in the line. In the program they were placed after the representatives of the legislative and judicial branches of the government, and the question is supposed to be whether they were not entitled to follow immediately after the chief Executive officers.