

Elias Boudinot Caldwell

(- 1 Jun 1825)

Caldwell. On Tuesday night last, after an illness of long duration, Elias B. Caldwell, Esq. Attorney at Law, and Clerk of the Supreme Court of the United States, which office he had filled for a number of years. Mr. C. was one of the oldest and most respected of the residents of this city, and has left, besides his disconsolate family, a large circle of friends, who will seriously deplore his loss. The funeral will take place from his late residence this day at 4 p.m.

Extract from the Minutes of the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, for the county of Washington, June 1, 1825.

"The Court and the members of the Bar having been informed of the death of Elias B. Caldwell, a practitioner of this Court, and being desirous of manifesting their sorrow on this melancholy occasion, as well as their respect for their deceased brother -- it unanimously ordered by the court (with the approbation of the Bar) That the Judges, the Members of the Bar, and the Officers of the Court, do attend the funeral of the deceased tomorrow.

And it is further ordered, That the Judges, the Members of the Bar, and Officers of the Court, do wear crape on the left arm for the space of thirty days, as a mark of respect for the deceased and that the Court now adjourn until Friday next, 10 o'clock.

Test, Wm. Brent, Clerk

City Directory, 1822:

Clerk supreme court office north wing of the capitol; dwelling corner Pennsylvania ave. and 2e Capitol Hill.

Prout

Washington Homes of the United States Supreme Court, pp. 135-136

It was at this time, upon the approach of the enemy, that the clerk of the court, Elias Boudinot Caldwell, took the court records to his home at 206 Pennsylvania avenue southeast, and well that he did, for the British did all in their power to destroy that particular part of the Capitol.

Fate seems to have dictated Mr. Caldwell's appointment as clerk of the court in August, 1800, in place of Samuel Bayard, otherwise he could not have been of such great service at such a critical time. He undoubtedly came here with the court in 1801, for it was in that same year that he purchased the ground upon which he soon afterward erected his home.

More than 20 years ago, James Croggon of the Star wrote up the block in which the Caldwell house stands, and he made such a good job of it that I am going to let you read what he had to say. Here it is, particularly that part that relates to the house where the Supreme Court met in 1814:

"The square between Second and Third streets and A street to the Avenue, known as 761, was also slow in improving. Up to the beginning of the Civil War less than half a dozen buildings appeared. The block was laid off for 18 lots, which were assigned equally to the United States and to Mr. Carroll. About 1805, when the public school system had been inaugurated, lot 6, at the northeast corner of Second street and Pennsylvania avenue, was selected for the site of the Eastern Academy, but in 1810 an exchange was made with Mr. Carroll for a site at Third and D streets southeast.

"Elias B. Caldwell, clerk of the Supreme Court of the United States from 1800 to 1825, was perhaps the first actual settler on the square. He bought the southwest portion, lots 4 to 8, fronting B street, the Avenue and Second street, in 1801 and 1809. Three cents per foot was the ruling ground valuation about 1810. Twenty years later the rate had increased to 7 cents per foot. Joseph Gales, jr., of the *Intelligencer* bought lot 3, on B street, in 1812; Commodore William Zantzinger lot 5, in 1810, and Griffith Coombe lots 1, 2, 3 and 18 in 1819. For a dozen years no other transfers occurred.

"Mr. Caldwell came from New Jersey to Washington, and he soon became one of the city's leading citizens. Erecting a fine, three-story brick residence at the corner of Second street and Pennsylvania avenue, he lived in the Capital City for 25 years, and his circle of friends included members of the legal profession, officers of the Army and Navy and all the leading business men of the time. Mr. Caldwell was popular as the captain of the Washington Cavalry, which was employed in scouting duty during the British invasion. For a number of years Capt. Caldwell was a member of the City Council and Board of Health.

The first elder on record representing a Washington church in the Presbytery.

Member of Board of Health and City Council; Captain of the Washington Cavalry employed in scouting during British Invasion; Lived at 224 B Sreet. From G.R. Brown, "Washington, A Not Too Serious History," 1930, p. 440; Lafayette paid a visit to Elias Boudinot Caldwell, Clerk of the Supreme Court, at his home, 206 Pennsylvania Ave, S.E., where the court held its sessions in 1815, after the invading British had burned the Capitol.