

George Clinton

(26 Jul 1739 – 20 Apr 1812)

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989

A Delegate from New York and a Vice President of the United States; born in Little Britain, Ulster (now Orange) County, N.Y., July 26, 1739; completed preparatory studies; served as lieutenant of rangers in the expedition against Fort Frontenac; studied law; was admitted to the bar and commenced practice in Little Britain; clerk of the court of common pleas in 1759 and district attorney in 1765; surveyor of New Windsor; member of the State assembly in 1768; served on the New York Committee of Correspondence in 1774; Member of the Continental Congress from May 15, 1775, to July 8, 1776, when he was ordered by General Washington to take the field as brigadier general of militia; appointed brigadier general by Congress March 25, 1777; Governor of New York 1777-1795; president of the State convention which ratified the Federal Constitution; unsuccessful candidate of the State Rights Democratic Party for Vice President of the United States in 1796; member of the State assembly in 1800 and 1801; again Governor of New York 1801-1804; elected Vice President in 1804 as a State Rights Democrat; reelected in 1808; died in Washington, D.C., April 20, 1812; interment in the Congressional Cemetery; reinterment in the First Dutch Reformed Church Cemetery, Kingston, N.Y., in May 11, 1908.

The National Intelligencer, April 21, 1812

It is with feelings of unmixed veneration for the character of the Revolutionary Hero, the Patriot and Statesman combined in one, that we announce that the venerable GEORGE CLINTON IS NO MORE. He expired about nine o'clock yesterday morning at his lodgings in this city, after an illness of about four weeks continuance.

Immediately after the annunciation of the above melancholy event, both Houses of Congress adjourned. They meet tomorrow morning, earlier than usual to receive the report of their joint committee and authorize the necessary arrangements for the funeral obsequies.

Order of Procession for the Funeral of the Hon. George Clinton Late Vice President of the United States

The committee of arrangement will attend at Mr. O'Neal's, the late residence of the deceased, this day at 2 o'clock p.m.

A detachment of cavalry from the District of Columbia, will assemble there at the same time.

At half past 2 o'clock p.m., the corpse of the Vice President will be removed from Mr. O'Neal's to the Capitol, in charge of the committee of arrangements, escorted by the cavalry.

On their arrival at the Capitol, the corpse will be taken from the hearse and deposited in the Capitol until 4 o'clock.

At 4 o'clock the Procession will move in the following order:

1. The Cavalry
2. The Marine Corps
3. The Chaplains to both Houses of Congress
4. The Physicians who attended the deceased.
5. The Hearse
6. Pall Bearers
 Mr. Tallmadge Mr. Macon

Mr. Sammons Mr. Brown
Mr. Butler Mr. Sevier
Mr. M. Clay Mr. Wright.

7. The Family Mourners
8. The President of the United States (Madison)
9. The Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate of the United States
10. The Senate of the United States as Chief Mourners, preceded by their President pro tem and Secretary
11. The Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives
12. The House of Representatives of the United States preceded by their Speaker and Clerk.
13. The Heads of Departments
14. The officers of government
15. Citizens and strangers.

The National Intelligencer, Thursday, April 23

The mortal remains of the late Vice President of the United States were on Tuesday evening interred at the burial ground near the Navy Yard in this city, in the presence of a concourse of people greater than ever has been gathered together in this city on any similar occasion. The shops were shut at an early hour; and a general gloom pervaded all ranks of Society. The hearse with its escort reached the Capitol about 4 o'clock, and the procession moved thence in about half an hour afterwards, in the order which was announced in our last. The scene was awful and impressive. The martial parade, the glistening arms and nodding plumes of the military corps which preceded the hearse--the solemn melody of the martial band, which attuned all hearts to melancholy--the sable hearse, attended by eight veteran pall-bearers, who partook of the toils of the revolution--the well-known carriage of the deceased--the Chief Magistrate of the Nation mourning the loss of one of its noblest sons--the Senate deploring the loss of a revered President--But why particularly describe the lengthened train? Suffice it to say, that this assemblage of mournful and interesting objects inspired feelings suited to the occasion. When a Clinton descends to the tomb of his ancestors, it is fit that the whole nation bewail the general loss, and history immortalize his name. Hallowed be the ashes of the honored dead!

The National Intelligencer, September 28, 180?

Anecdote of the Venerable G. Clinton

We are informed that our worthy Vice President, George Clinton, who had been detained at the city of Washington, after the rising of Congress, by the illness of his youngest daughter, having taken his passage home with her in the New York revenue cutter, was fired at repeatedly by the British ship of war Leopard, in order to bring her to and search her. The Vice President being then on deck, the captain asked him what he should do, and whether it would not be best to heave too. "Why, captain," replied our venerable Sachin, at the same time taking a pinch of snuff with that coolness so peculiar to himself, "It will be time enough to heave too when the Cutter begins to sink." The captain kept on his course and the Cutter was soon out of reach of the English men of war.

The Evening Star, Wednesday, April 30, 1902

Marked by Sons of American Revolution

Insignia of Order

Eulogistic Addresses by Col. Prime and Gen. Vincent

The Life and Services of a Distinguished Citizen and Former Vice President

There was an interesting ceremony at Congressional cemetery yesterday afternoon at 3:30 o'clock, when the Society of the Sons of the American Revolution placed the bronze marker of the society at the grave of Gen. George Clinton, the patriot and statesman from New York state. The exercises were of a very simple character, and consisted of short addresses by prominent members of the order. The marker is a reproduction of the insignia of the order, and consists of a large cross of the Legion of Honor of France, and on the upper flanges of the cross were the letters "S.A.R.," and on the lower the date, "1775."

Members of the District society and a special committee from the empire state society, accompanied by delegates from other states, drove to the cemetery in carriages. The party alighted at the north gate, and promptly at 3:30 o'clock the delegation marched through the gate to the grave, the color bearers, Albert J. Squier and Lewis H. Cornish, leading the way, followed in order by President General Logan, the committee from the empire state, the committee from the District of Columbia and compatriots from other states.

Arrived at the grave, the monument was draped with the national colors by Command Baird of the navy, and the beautiful wreath of roses and pansies sent by President Roosevelt was placed upon the shaft. Rev. Thomas S. Childs, D.D., then made a fervent prayer, in which he asked for blessings on the history of the past, and especially "for him whom we have come to commemorate," and prayed that the influence of the occasion would be a lasting one. At the close all present joined in repeating the Lord's Prayer.

Col. Prime's Address.

Col. Ralph E. Prime of the New York society then asked Gen. Logan to place the marker in position, which was complied with. Col. Prime then made an address, in which he said:

"We are met here today to mark the grave of a hero. Ordinarily one event in a human life makes a hero, but in the life of the man we are honoring there were many heroic events."

He eulogized Clinton's patriotic devotion to his country and referred to the fact that his grandfather fought under George I in England. The speaker sketched the incidents of Clinton's life, and mentioned the fact that he was elected governor of New York six times in succession, and after an interval of a few years was chosen governor for two more terms. He served two terms as Vice President of the United States under Jefferson and Madison. Before the days of the railroad or the telegraph, he said, Clinton gave up his life in this city.

Col. Prime sketched the important strategic points that Clinton maintained while commanding the highlands of the Hudson and during his administration at Forts Clinton and Henry, and recalled the fact that he was assigned by his old friend, George Washington, to enter New York upon evacuation of that city by the British troops. He declared that it was meet on this occasion for the Sons of the American Revolution to come together and mark the soldierly services of this man.

Gen. Vincent's Tribute

The next speaker was Gen. Thomas M. Vincent of the District of Columbia society, who spoke of the important part Gen. Clinton played in the affairs of this nation during his lifetime. He also stated that from Clinton's papers the society had gotten a map of West Point and all the ground through which he moved, which had been made 175 years ago.

Gen. Logan was the final speaker, and in his brief address he said it had been given to but few men to pass through so much public service, and to do so much for his country as Clinton had done. The revolutionary patriot, he said, was just budding into manhood when Wolfe stormed the citadels of Quebec and the influence of that wonderful exploit of war on the young man could well be calculated.

Clinton, he said, had participated in all the hardships of a soldier. He was governor for a longer period than any other man has ever been.

The speaker paid a glowing tribute to the part of New York state had played in furnishing great men for the country, and said she was, however modest in her claims. "When the state of New York does furnish a man," he declared, "she always furnishes the best, and well may we standing here today do honor to this noble son of the empire state."

The marker was then firmly placed and the colors were dipped three times over the grave.

(See Elbridge Gerry for next portion of the ceremony.)

At the conclusion of the exercises a number of the visitors drove out to the Soldier's Home before returning to the city.

The committee and delegates from states attending were as follows: New York, Ralph E. Prime, William A. Marble, and Charles H. Wight; District of Columbia, Gen. Thomas M. Vincent, Rev. Dr. Thomas S. Childs, Mr. John Paul Earnest; Maryland, Col. Wm . Ridgley Griffith, Capt. F. C. Philbrick, Edward M. Young; Massachusetts, Capt. A.A. Folsom, Capt. F.V. Wright; Pennsylvania, Col. R.M. Guthrie; Virginia, Dr. Benjamin Blake Minor. President Roosevelt and Senator Depew were also on the committee from New York state, but were obliged to be absent from the ceremony.

The Evening Star, Wednesday, May 13, 1908

Gives Up Its Dead

Grave of Vice President Clinton Opened

Body To Be Sent Away

Reinterment Will Be Made at Kingston, N.Y.

Examination of the Remains

Sixteen-Ton Monument That Has Marked the Burial Spot in

Congressional Cemetery Dismantled for Shipment.

The body of George Clinton, first governor of New York, and Vice President during the administrations of Jefferson and Madison, which was taken from its grave in Congressional cemetery Monday, is now resting in the public vault in the cemetery, and will be carried to New York, May 27. The body will be reburied May 30, in Kingston, N.Y., Gov. Clinton's native town, and where he took the oath of office as first governor of the state in 1777.

A committee appointed by the legislature of New York state has been working for the removal of the body for two years. According to the regulations of the cemetery, it is necessary to obtain the permission of every living descendant before a body can be removed. This consumed several months, and only recently have letters been obtained from the sixteen living descendants granting their full permission.

The Disinterment

The disinterment was made in the presence of Benjamin M. Brink, secretary of the New York committee, and Dudley S. Bright of Washington, representing Christ Church, to which the cemetery belongs.

After taking down the sixteen-ton monument and packing it carefully for shipment to Kingston, the coffin was located seven feet below ground, and although the original oak casing had long since rotted away, the metal interior was in an excellent state of preservation.

The casket was taken to the naval hospital, at 9th street and Pennsylvania avenue southeast, where Dr. Lamb made an examination of the body. No jewelry or other articles of identification were found,

but Dr. Lamb announced that the body was that of a person who had suffered from rheumatism. As Clinton's letters contain frequent allusions to his sufferings from the rheumatism, the committee was willing to accept the doctor's announcement as identification.

The body was originally wrapped in a white cloth, which was found darkened from the action of the lead of the casket and water which leaked into the coffin through a small hole. Silk stockings in a fine state of preservation were on the lower limbs.

Removal to New York

When the body is taken to New York it will be accompanied to the railway station by several troops of cavalry and other military bodies, and will be met in New York by militia and escorted from one station to the other.

Gov. Clinton died April 20, 1812. He was born in Orange county, N.Y., July 26, 1739. He was a delegate to the second Continental Congress and was elected Governor of New York in April, 1777. He was Vice President under Jefferson during his second term and continued in that office after Jefferson's retirement and while Madison was President, and died in that office.

The Evening Star, Wednesday, May 27, 1908

Honors Paid Clinton

Notable Escort Follows Body From Former Tomb

Cortege Passes Capitol

Vice President Stands Bareheaded as Casket Passes

House Adjourns in Respect

Women With Flags and Flowers Meet Procession at Union Station

Ceremonies at Grave

After resting for four years less than a century in the Congressional cemetery, in this city, the body of George Clinton, once major general in the revolutionary army, first governor of New York and a former Vice President of the United States was today removed to New York city on its way to Kingston, N.Y. for final interment.

Not since the death of President McKinley has a funeral been marked with such elaborate military honors. The remains were escorted from the cemetery to the Union station by military, patriotic, civic and commercial organizations, representatives of the state of New York and descendants of Gov. Clinton.

For the first time in the history of military funerals, at the request of the War Department, women participated in the ceremonies incident to the disinterment. Gen. J. Franklin Bell, chief of staff, U.S.A., was chief marshal of the procession and the escort included a representative of the President of the United States and the Commissioners of the District of Columbia.

Vice President Stands Bareheaded

Vice President Fairbanks stood with head uncovered on the east stone stairway leading to the United States Senate as the military escort and caisson bearing the remains of Vice President Clinton passed across the Capitol plaza a few minutes before noon.

After the body has passed he glanced at his watch and hurried up the steps to call the Senate to order without waiting for the line of carriages, the G.A.R., Spanish War Veterans and Army and Navy Union delegations to pass.

The House of Representatives on motion of Mr. Sherman of New York took a recess for fifteen minutes to permit members to witness the Clinton funeral cortege as it proceeded past the Capitol.

Perhaps the most picturesque feature of the occasion was the reception of the remains at the Union station by the women's patriotic societies, including flag and flower bearers clad in white, under the direction of Mrs. Isabel Worrell Ball.

The ceremonies at Congressional cemetery, from the historic soil of which the remains of Gen. Clinton had been disinterred, were impressive.

Guard of Honor

The members of the guard of honor, comprising representatives of the Sons of the American Revolution, Sons of the Revolution, Society of the War of 1812 and the Society of Colonial Wars, began to assemble at the mortuary chapel in the cemetery at 10 o'clock this forenoon. This guard was in charge of Dr. Marcus Benjamin, assisted by Col. J.K. Stout.

It was composed of the following:

Representing the Society of Colonial Wars--W.V. Cox, Dr. H.L.E. Johnson, Dr. A.C. Peale, Lewis P. Clephane, Col. W.B. Thompson, Rev. Roland Cotton Smith, Harry O. Hall and Dr. Walter Wyman.

Sons of the American Revolution--Judge Thomas H. Anderson, Harry C. McLean, Wallace Donald McLean, Commander John H. Moore, Philip Walker and Albert A. Gore.

Sons of the Revolution--William Stone Albert, Col. Green Clay Goodloe, Col. James Morris Morgan, Francis P.B. Sands and Joseph I. Keefer.

Society of the War of 1812--Thomas Gerry Townsend, H.W. Van Dyke and Mr. Somerville.

Representing the Washington Chamber of Commerce--Robert N. Harper, president: William F. Gude, Capt. John Doyle Carmody, A. Lisner, Washington Topham and Mr. Magruder.

Services in the Chapel

A simple service was held in the chapel at 10:40 o'clock, preceding the starting of the procession. Rev. Rockwell Randall Hoes, United States Navy, delivered prayer, in which he referred to the distinguished services of the deceased as soldier, patriot, governor and Vice President of the United States. The service closed with benediction.

The bodybearers, eight stalwart members of the United States Engineers, then bore the heavy casket from the chapel and carried it through the cemetery to the main gate, where the caisson was in waiting, the remains being escorted by the guard of honor and a detail of policemen under Sergt. Montgomery.

The large military escort had in the meantime assembled upon the great field fronting the cemetery on the north, under the chief command of Maj. Gen. J. Franklin Bell, chief of staff, United States Army.

Guns Thunder Salute

As the casket and its escort passed through the main gate to the roadway beyond, Field Battery D, United States Army, thundered forth nineteen minute guns, the troops came to "present arms" in salute, the trumpeters sounded the "general's march," the Marine Band played "Nearer, My God, to Thee" and the colors saluted.

The troops had been formed in line of masses, with diminished intervals, facing south. At the command from Maj. Gen. William P. Duvall, transmitted through Adjutant Gen. Alvord, to the line officers, the line was formed, and the march proceeded in the following order:

Maj. Gen. J. Franklin Bell, chief of staff, United States Army commanding,

Maj. Gen. William P. Duvall, general staff corps, United States Army, chief of staff

Lieut. Col. Benjamin Alvord, adjutant, general's department, United States Army, adjutant general.

Capt. Fried W. Sladen, general staff corps, aid-de-camp

Capt. P.D. Lochridge, general staff corps, aid-de-camp

First Lieut. F.C. McConnell, United States Marine Corps, aid-de-camp

The above-named officers of the staff reported to the commanding general at the Congressional cemetery, corner 19th and E streets southeast, at 10:15 a.m., May 27, 1908.

Col. Charles A.P. Hatfield, 13th Cavalry, United States Army; Marine Band, 17th, 44th, 47th and 104th Companies, United States Coast Artillery, four companies United States Marines, one company seamen, U.S.S. Mayflower, detachment Hospital Corps, United States Army, Batteries D and E, 3d Field Artillery, Troops, E, G and H, 13th United States Cavalry, Col. M.B. Clagett, commanding, Washington High School Cadets, and staff; Engineer Band, Regiment High School Cadets, Troop F, 13th United States Cavalry, clergy, caisson bearing the body of Vice President George Clinton, escorted by representatives of patriotic societies; descendants of Vice President Clinton and their official representative; committee from the city of Kingston, N.Y.; representative of the President of the United States, representatives of the board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia, Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce of the District of Columbia, patriotic societies and delegations of citizens.

Aged Veteran Ranks Full

The Department of the Potomac, G.A.R., Col. John S. Walker, commander, turned out with full ranks, notwithstanding their age and the oppressive heat, and were heartily, congratulated on their splendid appearance. These venerable veterans assembled at Seward place, 5th street and Pennsylvania avenue southeast, where they awaited the arrival of the parade, and then joined the line of march.

They were escorted by the Department of the District of Columbia, United Spanish War Veterans, Department Commander Edward L. Cogan in command with Past Commander-in-Chief M. Emmet Urell, Past National Judge Advocate General John Lewis Smith and other officers; also by a delegation representing the Army and Navy Union, U.S.A., comprising Capt. Thomas A. Green, G.L. Snider, C.W. Blush, Van A. Zahn, Clagett and Conrad Rupp.

The entire column of veterans by some hitch in the arrangements was assigned to the extreme left of the line, following the carriages. The failure to admit the veteran fighting men in their proper place in line caused much unfavorable comment.

There was a large assemblage on the East Capitol plaza to greet the remains and funeral pageant as it passed along to the Union station. Many representatives and senators filled the wide stairways.

The troops lined up across the plaza and the caisson, guard of honor and escort of veteran soldiers, passed through solid lines of troops--infantry, cavalry and artillery--from B street southeast, across the plaza and along Delaware avenue to the railroad station.

Ely, Selden Marvin, "The District of Columbia In The American Revolution and Patriots of the Revolutionary Period Who Are Interred in the District or In Arlington," Columbia Historical Society, Vol 21, pp. 128-154

At this point it will be well to record that General George Clinton was originally interred in Congressional Cemetery, where he remained until a few years ago, when his body was transferred to New York with considerable ceremony.