

## Clement T. Coote

(1784 – 13 Nat 1849)

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**Coote.** In Baltimore on Sunday morning the 13th inst. of paralysis, Mr. Clement T. Coote, a native of England, but for the last 32 years a residence of this city. His friends and acquaintances are respectfully invited to attend his funeral from the residence of Purser William Speiden, on F street near the Navy Department, this afternoon at 4 o'clock.

*The Evening Star, October 11, 1892*

### **Saw the Corner Stone Laid**

#### **Mr. John H. Semmes' Recollections of an Interesting Ceremony**



CLEMENT T. COOTE,  
GRAND MASTER, 1834.

"I remember the laying of the corner stone of the Washington monument," remarked Mr. John H. Semmes, the well-known B street, commissions merchant, to a Star reporter today, "as distinctly as if it had happened yesterday. If I remember the year rightly, it was the 4th of July, 1848. But some of my friends have claimed that it was in 1849. It was a beautiful day and there must have been not less than 10,000 people present. That, you know, was a big crowd in those days. All of the dignitaries of the government were there and Robt. C. Winthrop delivered the oration.

"The corner stone was laid by old Squire Clement T. Coote, who occupied some prominent position in local Masonic circles then. My position as one of the assistant marshals of the day's parade brought me just beside the old gentleman as he conducted the ceremonies, and I and Gen. Peter F. Bacon, I think, supported him, as he was quite feeble.

"Gen. Bacon at that time was the commanding officer of the District militia, but I forget whether he was the chief marshal of the parade or not. I am inclined that it was someone else. I remember

well that the marshal of the parade agreed that day to keep our trappings, and when the monument was completed to again use them. But just before the monument was finished I loaned mine out and never got them again. But as it was I forgot the day of its completion, so I missed it after all.

"After the laying of the corner stone the procession was reviewed by the President Polk, I think it was, in front of Willard's Hotel.

"I never knew just why it was decided to put the monument just where it is, although I believe it was placed there because Architect Mills considered that a better foundation could be secured there than anywhere else. Mr. Mills was from South Carolina, and was, I think, the original architect of the monument. The monument lot in those days was nothing but hills and gullies, and it seemed almost incredible that such great and beautiful changes have taken place there. But such changes have taken place everywhere throughout the city, and it is very pleasant to have been permitted to live to behold such wonderful changes."

**Harper, Kenton N., History of the Grand Lodge, 1911**

*p. 342-343: Grand Master, 1834*

Brother Coote is an interesting figure in the history of Free Masonry in Washington during the period of persecution from 1830 to 1840, and his years of service to the Fraternity, both in his lodge and in the Grand body, were troublous, indeed, but were met by him, in the language of a biographer, "with a patient and rather formal dignity."

Happily, however, he lived to see Masonry again in the full tide of prosperity, and until the period of the Civil War was felt the influence of the stalwart service he had given to the Craft in the hour of trial.

He passed away in the City of Baltimore, May 12, 1849, and his remains were interred May 15 at Congressional Cemetery, this city, the Grand Lodge conducting the ceremony with M.W.G. Master B.B. French in the East.

At the communication of the Grand Lodge, called to attend his funeral, Past Grand Master Keyworth presented a package of Masonic books and papers, late the property of Bro. Coote, which had been entrusted to him to turn over to the Grand Lodge to be placed among the archives. The bequest was accepted and the disposition requested made.

Bro. Coote was engaged in the dry-goods business on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., between Ninth and Tenth Streets, was interested in a brewery on New Jersey Avenue near the Eastern Branch, was a lawyer by profession, and long held the position of Justice of the Peace with an office at the corner of Sixth and C Streets, N.W. Of forceful, aggressive character he took great interest in the rather strenuous local politics of the day, as is evidenced by a so-called "broadside" aimed at him, which was published and circulated, and a copy of which may be seen in the Library of Congress. Withal he was a citizen of prominence and note. He served as a Councilman in 1826, and as Alderman from 1827 to 1834, most of the time as President of the Board.

In Masonic circles his activity and interest dated from his admission to the Order, in which he soon became a zealous and prominent member. He was initiated in Federal Lodge, No. 1, January 2, 1826; passed October 2, 1826, and raised October 14, 1826; was Secretary in 1827; S.W. 1828-29, and Master from 1830 to 1833, with a hiatus from November 1, 1836 to November 17, 1837, during which period the charger of his lodge was in the hands of the Grand Lodge. He served as Junior Grand Warden in 1830, Senior Grand Warden in 1831, Deputy Grand Master, 1832-3, and Grand Master in 1834, and as indicating something of the unusual difficulties of his position it may be noted that in October, 1834, Federal Lodge ordered the surrender of its charter, but Bro. Coote and a few others, who had resisted this movement for some time, were able to postpone compliance with the mandate of the lodge, and the actual surrender did not take place until November, 1836, a forcible reason for the delay being found in the fact that it may be presumed that W. Bro. Coote, as Grand Master, did not desire to be left without the semblance of a lodge behind him.