

Robert Bruce Donaldson

(1826 – 22 Nov 1907)

Donaldson. On Friday, November 22, 1907 at 9 o'clock p.m. at his residence, 1216 16th street, Dr. Robert E. Donaldson. Funeral from New Church, 16th and Corcoran streets, Monday, November 25 at 2 o'clock.

The Evening Star, November 23, 1907

Prominent Resident Dead

Dr. Robert B. Donaldson Victim of Indigestion

Was Past Grand Master of the Masonic Order in District, Funeral Monday.

Dr. Robert Bruce Donaldson, senior past grand master of the Grand Lodge of Masons of the District of Columbia, and one of the prominent older residents of the Capital city, died at the family residence, 1216 16th street northwest, last night at 9 o'clock. The deceased was eighty-one years of age. Death was due to an attack of acute indigestion.

Dr. Donaldson retired from the active practice of dentistry fifteen years ago. His health was good, and yesterday afternoon he went for a drive. Returning, he expressed himself as being in unusually good physical condition. After eating dinner with the members of his family Dr. Donaldson retired to his room. Shortly after 8 o'clock he complained of pains in his chest, and immediately thereafter, as stated, suffered an attack of acute indigestion.

A physician was summoned, but upon his arrival it was seen that Dr. Donaldson had but a short time to live, death occurring shortly thereafter.

Dr. Donaldson came of Scottish stock, his parents having settled in Virginia in the early part of the past century immediately upon arrival in this country.

The deceased was born at Waterford, Loudoun county, Va., and later attended the Benjamin Hallowell School, in Alexandria, where he received his early education. Upon leaving this institution he entered the office of the late Dr. Finley Hunt of this city, where he studied dentistry. Afterward opening an office in this city, he rapidly secured a lucrative practice, which he enjoyed until the time of his retirement, as stated, about fifteen years ago.

Honored by Masonic Order

During his life spent in this city Dr. Donaldson, by his genial, kindly ways, won for himself a host of friends. Early in life he became a Mason, and subsequently arose to the position of grand master of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. At the time of his death he was a member of Federal Lodge, No. 1, F.A.A.M., and Washington Commandery, No. 1, Knights Templar.

He was a thirty-second degree Scottish Rite Mason.

In 1854 Dr. Donaldson married Mary Anne M. Hall of Maine, who, with one son, Henry A. Donaldson, survives him. According to the arrangements completed this afternoon, the funeral will be held Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock from the New Church, corner 16th and Corcoran streets northwest, Rev. Dr. Frank Sewall, the pastor of the church, will conduct the services. The pallbearers have not as yet been selected, but, it is stated, they will be chosen from among the associates of the deceased in the Grand Lodge of Masons of the District of Columbia. The interment will be in Congressional cemetery.

A special communication of the Grand Lodge, F.A.A.M., has been called to meet Monday next at 1:30 o'clock, and the members will attend the funeral in a body.

The Evening Star, November 25, 1907, p. 15

Last Tribute Paid

Services Over Remains of Dr. Donaldson

Funeral services over the remains of Dr. Robert Bruce Donaldson, senior past grand master of the Grand Lodge of Masons of the District of Columbia, were held this afternoon at 2 o'clock in the New Church, corner 16th and Corcoran streets northwest. In attendance, besides a large number of relatives and friends, were many high in Masonry in the District of Columbia who were associated with the deceased in his work in the Grand Lodge and subordinate bodies.

Rev. Dr. Frank Sewall, pastor of the church, conducted the services. The honorary pallbearers were Justice Job Barnard and Messrs. John Joy Edson, Thomas M. Gale, Daniel McFarlan, Edward Stellwagen, Jose M. Yznaga, George Gibson, E.G. Davis, James A. Sample, Jesse W. Lee, jr., and W.G. Henderson. The active pallbearers, who were chosen from the Masonic bodies of which the deceased was a member, were: J. Henry Small, jr., and Luther R. Ginn, representing the Grand Lodge of Masons of the District of Columbia; Walter A. Brown and G.Y. Atlee of Federal Lodge, No. 1, F.A.A.M.; Richard B. Nixon of Columbia Chapter, No. 1, Royal Arch Masons, and Henry S. Merrill of Washington Commandery, No. 1, Knights Templar.

The Masonic services were held in Congressional cemetery, where the interment took place.

The esteem in which Dr. Donaldson was held by the dentists of this city was attested at a meeting of the Dental Society of the District of Columbia held yesterday, when resolutions of regret for his death were passed. The text of the resolutions recited that the deceased was "a man to whom the profession owes much."

Through his death, it was stated, "The society loses one of its founders whose loss will be keenly felt for years to come." In conclusion the resolution recited that by the death of Dr. Donaldson "the profession and the community have lost one whose long life has been devoted to the uplifting of both," and whose "strong Christian personality in his intercourse with his fellowman has endeared him to all."

The Washington Post, November 28, 1907, p. 14

Leaves \$250,000 Estate

Property of Dr. Robert B. Donaldson Goes to Relatives

The will of the late Dr. Robert B. Donaldson, dated September 25, 1907, has been filed for probate. The estate is valued at about \$250,000. Dr. Donaldson leaves his house, horses and carriages to his widow, Mrs. Anna M. Donaldson. The nieces of the testator, Annie, Ida and Alice Donaldson, of Paeonian Springs, Va.; Alice Moor, and Margaret Miller, of Baltimore; Mrs. A.E. Merrill, and Miss Harriet Randall, of Portland, Maine, receive bequests of \$1,000 each.

It is directed that Dr. Donaldson's dental business be continued by the executor, the Union Trust Company, and that from the proceeds and the rental of the premises at 1132 Sixteenth street a monthly payment of \$300 is to be made to the son of the testator, Henry A. Donaldson. The sum of \$10,000 is also bequeathed to the Union Trust Company, to be invested for the benefit of Edward Hall Lewis during his minority, and \$3,000 is given to the Washington Society of New Jerusalem.

The remainder of the estate will be managed and controlled by the executor for the payment of an annuity of \$600 a month to the widow during her life. The son, Henry A. Donaldson, and the granddaughter, Lucy D. Lauck, will each receive half the estate in the event of the death of Mrs. Donaldson.

A History of Washington City, Its Men and Institutions

Dr. Robert B. Donaldson was born in Loudoun county, Virginia, in 1826. Having lost his father in childhood, he was sent to Alexandria, Virginia, to school at the age of seven, where he remained until he was seventeen, when, having his own way to make in the world, and having a natural aptitude for mechanics, he secured a position in this city with a mathematical and philosophical instrument maker, with whom he remained until he was twenty-one years of age. He then commenced the study of dentistry, and in 1852 entered upon the practice of that profession in this city, and for a period of forty-five years enjoyed a large and lucrative practice, during the course of which he served some time as professor of operative dentistry in the Maryland Dental College in Baltimore, and was the recipient of honorary degrees from two dental colleges.

In the course of his long practice, he invented several new and useful dental instruments and appliances, and since his retirement from the practice of his profession he has engaged in the manufacture of dental instruments of his invention, which are highly esteemed in the profession and have a large sale throughout the world where dentistry is practiced. Dr. Donaldson has for many years been prominent as a Mason, and served during the years 1869-70-71 as grand master of Masons of the District of Columbia. He is a director in the Union Trust and Storage Company, and enjoys the respect and confidence of the community.

Harper, Kenton N., History of the Grand Lodge, 1911, p. 359-360

Grand Master, 1869-70

Born at Waterford, Loudoun County, Virginia, October 11, 1826, at the age of seven he removed to Alexandria, where his early education was obtained in a private school. In 1842 he came to Washington, where he was first engaged in mathematical instrument making and manufactured many of the instruments used in the telegraphic service of that day. Later he studied dentistry, and for a few years was associated with his teacher, Dr. R. Finley Hunt, in that profession, after which, for a period of forty-five years, he enjoyed a large and lucrative practice, during the course of which he served some time as Professor of Operative Dentistry in the Maryland Dental College in Baltimore and was the recipient of honorary degrees from two dental colleges. In the course of his long practice he invented several new and useful dental instruments, and after his retirement from active work in his profession, by reason of failing eyesight, engaged in the manufacture of these instruments, from which he acquired a comfortable fortune.

He was summoned to the presence of our Supreme Grand Master at 9 o'clock p.m. on November 22, 1907.

Bro. Donaldson was made a Master Mason in Federal Lodge, No. 1, of this jurisdiction December 4, 1855. He was also an honorary member of Pentalpha Lodge, No. 23, and Hiram Lodge, No. 10.

He became a Royal Arch Mason in Columbia Chapter, No. 1, January 17, 1862, and a Knight Templar in Washington Commandery, No. 1, October 14, 1868. In the Scottish Rite he received the fourteenth degree in Mithras Lodge of Perfection, May 18, 1888; the eighteenth degree in Evangelist Chapter Rose Croix, June 22, 1888; the thirtieth degree in Robert de Bruce Council of Kadosh, April 1, 1889; the thirty-second degree in Albert Pike Consistory, April 15, 1889; and the thirty-third degree (honorary) in the Supreme Council for the Southern Jurisdiction, October 23, 1903.

Symbolic Masonry, however, was our Brother's first and best love, and official honors in other branches of the Fraternity had no attraction for him. He served as Worshipful Master of Federal Lodge in 1863 and 1865; as Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge in 1864, 1865, 1866 and 1867; and as Grand Master in 1869 and 1870.

He was the first President of the Masonic Temple Association and it was his earnest wish that he might live to see the new Temple completed. His last appearance in the Grand Lodge was at the special communication of June 8, 1907, when the cornerstone of the new Temple was laid.

M.W. Bro. Donaldson was a sound Masonic jurist, the advantages he derived in his earlier years from his association with such master minds as French, Whiting and Stansbury being supplemented by a close study of the ethical and philosophical teachings of the Craft. As Chairman of the Committee on Jurisprudence he rendered many years of valuable service to the Grand Lodge. Genial and kindly in his intercourse with his fellow-men, sincere in his friendships, charitable to the unfortunate, a true Mason, an upright citizen, and a devoted husband and father, his memory will be cherished in the hearts of his brethren, and in the love and esteem of his fellow-citizens of the community in which his long and busy life was spent.