

David Aiken Hall

(16 Oct 1795 – 24 Dec 1870)

Hall. Suddenly at 2 o'clock Saturday morning, December 7th, David A. Hall. Funeral services at his residence northwest corner C and 3d streets on Wednesday next at 12th.

The Evening Star, December 28, 1870

Funeral of Mr. David A. Hall

The funeral of the late David A. Hall, who died on Saturday morning last at his residence on the corner of C and 3d streets, took place at noon today from the First Presbyterian Church, 4 1/2 street, and was well attended. The deceased was a native of Vermont, where he was educated, and settled in this city about fifty years ago, being about 25 years of age at the time. He was a lawyer by profession and for a long time managed the Greenleaf estate, and amassed quite a fortune. Some years ago he was a clerk in one of the Departments, also for a few years during the latter part of his life. About twelve years ago he received a severe fall, which resulted in his health being somewhat impaired. The body was enclosed in a handsome walnut, cloth-covered coffin, on which was a floral cross and a beautiful wreath. After a prayer at the residence, the corpse was borne to the hearse and taken to the church where the pastor, Rev. Byron Sunderland officiated. The pall-bearers were Col. Robinson, Judge Casey, Prof. Gallaudette, Senator Rolland, Dr. Nichols and Mr. Z.H. Robbins. The remains were interred at the Congressional Cemetery under the direction of Mr. William Hackett, undertaker.

Zevely, Douglass, Columbia Historical Society, ??

David Aiken Hall was born in Grafton, Vermont in December, 1795, and graduated at Middlebury College in that state. He came to Washington when about 25 years of age and commenced the study of law with Judge Elias B. Caldwell (R51/13). Owing to impaired health his studies were interrupted for a time, he having been advised to take a trip on horseback through parts of Virginia. He had letters of introduction from his brother, Prof. F.W. Hall, of Dartmouth College, to ex-Presidents Jefferson and Monroe, by whom he was welcomed in a very hospitable manner. Mr. Hall was lieutenant of a company organized to welcome Lafayette on the occasion of his visit to this city in 1824. He was also president of the New England Society, which he organized, and whose dinners each year were a notable feature of social circles in those days. He continued in the practice of his profession during the greater part of his life and was selected by the late James Greenleaf (R49/23) to administer his estate -- one of the largest in this city in those days -- because, as Mr. Greenleaf said, he was the only honest lawyer, he ever knew. Among Mr. Hall's more intimate and warmest friends was Daniel Webster, with whom he was often associated in legal cases.

Mr. Hall's fondness for flowers (already alluded to) induced him to devote an entire square of ground which he owned on K Street, between Fourth and Fifth N.W., to the cultivation of the rarest varieties, and also to the cultivation of the rarest varieties, and also to that of some choice vegetables under glass. It is thought --"so his daughter writes " that a Victoria Regina, which her father had in that garden, was the first that blossomed in this country. Among the rare vegetables which he raised was a Spanish cucumber, which much delighted the epicurean taste of Mr. Webster, and among the many letters from Webster to him that were found after his death was the following: "Dear Mr. Hall: Have you a cucumber? -- Yours truly, D. Webster." Mr. Webster very often received fish sent to him by friends in Massachusetts, and on one occasion he sent to Mr. Hall a young cod which had arrived packed

in ice, with a note reading as follows: "Dear Mr. Hall : I send you a fish which in my state is called an es-cod. I do not know the derivation of the term, but here is the real thing; try it. -- Yours truly, D. Webster."

Among other distinguished men who numbered Mr. Hall among their intimate acquaintances was Stephen A. Douglass; Major (afterwards General) Harry Prince; and Mr. And Mrs. G.P. Marsh. Mr. Marsh was Minister to Italy from 1861 to 1882.

Mr. Hall's daughter, a letter from whom I have already quoted, says she distinctly remembers (though very young at the time) when her father took her by the hand one day in the parlor and said to Mr. Webster, "This is my little girl," emphasizing the personal pronoun because she was thought to be the only one of several children who resembled her father. She recalls the broad, intellectual forehead, the deep luminous eyes and benignant expression of the mouth of that great statesman as she looked into his face, and naturally feels proud after so many years to have such a recollection.

Mr. Hall was connected with the Whig party, and was secretary of the Whig National Committee during the campaign of 1852, but ceased to take much interest in politics after the failure of the Baltimore convention in that year to nominate Webster instead of Scott. He was a strong anti-slavery man like his neighbor Gamaliel Bailey, but unlike him did not affiliate with the abolitionists, as he thought the slave owners should be compensated for their property. He would never hold slaves with the idea of buying and selling them, but owned them for use as servants, so as to keep them from being sold away from their families, and then encouraged them to buy their freedom by crediting them with wages each month. But his treatment of them so won their devotion that when they found their freedom had been paid for, they would always entreat him earnestly to keep them as slaves. This he would never consent to do, however, but he assisted many of those who could do so to go to Canada with their families.

"None of the gatherings in my old home," writes Mr. Hall's daughter, "brilliant as many of them were, are so impressed upon my memory as the sight of the little group of weeping black men and women that gathered around my father's casket, and in sobbing tones spoke of his goodness to them in the old days of slavery, when he saved them from being sold and separated from kith and kin."

Mr. Hall was twice married prior to 1838. His first wife was the daughter of Mr. Chas. Bullfinch, at one time supervising architect of the Capitol, and also first mayor of Boston. The second wife was a daughter of the Hon. Lewis Condict, a member of Congress from New Jersey from 1811 to 1817 and again from 1821 to 1833; he was also Presidential elector in 1841. A daughter by this marriage is still living in Hartford, Conn. The third wife was Abigail Wolcott Ellsworth, daughter of Major Martin Ellsworth, of Windsor, Conn., and granddaughter of Chief Justice Oliver Ellsworth, of the U.S. Supreme Court, who was the immediate successor of John Marshall in that office. One of her ancestors was the Colonial Governor Roger Wolcott, of Connecticut. Three daughters and one son by this marriage are still living; two of the former in New York City and the other in Buffalo, N.Y. The son, Martin E. Hall, a retired officer of the U.S. Navy, lives at Lowell, Mass.

A correspondence with the son and later with the daughter in Buffalo (Mrs. C.C. Wyckoff) has led to a very enjoyable renewal of an old family acquaintance, and I am quite sure this Society will join with me in an expression of thanks to her for the history she has furnished of her family and former home.