

## George Custis Henning

(3 Feb 1833 – 30 Nov 1913)

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*The Evening Star, March 27, 1861*

**Hymenial**--A wedding is an entertainment that always "draws" whether the times are flush or tight; and when the happy candidates for matrimony have a wide circle of friends, and the affair comes off in



GEORGE CUSTIS HENNING

church, the pressure is occasionally tremendous, as was the case last night at Ryland Chapel, where fortunate Mr. George C. Henning was married to one of the sweetest belles of the Seventh Ward, (a ward famous for its pretty girls moreover,) Miss Maggie Bird.

The bridesmaid was Miss Anna V. Fowler, the groomsman, Mr. William West, and the officiating clergyman Rev. Mr. Coombs. The short marriage ceremony of the Methodist Church was soon over, and then, of course, there was some kissing and hand-shaking.

George has already made his mark as an enterprising young business man, and now that he has done the correct thing, and donned the matrimonial harness, he is sure to prosper.

*The Evening Star, October 19, 1870*

Gentlemen buying underclothing this Fall, will do well to examine my stock. Buying directly, in many cases, from manufacturers by the package, I am able to offer great inducements to consumers by saving the jobber's profit. The assortment is extensive and embraces a variety of grades. Geo. C. Henning

No. 410 Seventh street, N.W.

*The Evening Star, April 27, 1889*

### **Geo. C. Henning**

Mr. George C. Henning, of the firm of Saks & Co., may well be termed the pioneer of the clothing business in Washington. He was born in South Washington, in February 1833, and attended the school kept by Joshua L. Henshaw, at the corner of 14th and G streets northwest. Mr. Henning first started in business with Mr. John A. Ruff, in 1847, as boy of all work. In 1859 he went into business on his own account near the corner of 7th street and Maryland avenue southwest, within a stone's throw of his birth place. Here he carried on a successful business. He dates his first substantial start in business from advertising in *The Evening Star*. The close of the civil war found business generally dull and depressed. A general commercial readjustment was in progress, which left many mercantile wrecks, particularly in Washington. Casting about for some method of reviving his waning fortunes, he thought of advertising. On his way to *The Star* office with a week's advertising matter in his pocket, and with the money to pay for it, he seriously debated with himself if it would not be better to keep his money to meet obligations soon to mature. First impressions conquered, the advertisement was inserted and immediate results began to flow in. This was in 1866. His places of business becoming too small as well as too remote for his fast-increasing trade the next year he moved to 410 7th street, where he inaugurated a novelty in the clothing trade, "One Price Only." Nearly everybody prophesied failure. It was an unheard of thing, many said, to stick to one price in the clothing business. "It could not be done" was the general verdict.

But it was done, and Mr. Henning credits it all to printer's ink and pluck. Shortly afterward he inaugurated another reform, which now prevails in nearly all large and reputable houses throughout the United States. It was that of refunding the purchase money for goods returned. This result, Mr. Henning says, was reached from two considerations. Under the old system you first quarreled with the customer, and if he was a better quarreller than you he got his money back anyway. Whether he did or did not you lost a customer. The old way, Mr. Henning argued, gave the man who bought on credit an advantage over the man who bought for cash. In 1885 Mr. Henning associated himself with the house of A. Saks & Co. at their present place of business, accompanied by the usual forebodings of the pessimistic, who thought the enterprise too big for Washington. But the grand results have proved that the prophets of evil were false prophets indeed.

*The Evening Star, March 22, 1890*

### **New National Banks**

#### **Recent Additions to the City's Fiscal Institutions**

#### **The Men Who Manage Them**

#### **The West End and the Traders Bank Already Opened—**

#### **The Lincoln Bank About to Begin Business—**

#### **Sketches of Promising Business Concerns**

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#### **President Henning**

Mr. George C. Henning, the president of the new Traders national, is a well-known man in Washington. Born in South Washington fifty-seven years ago, he has made this his home and the scene of his business successes. Mr. Henning started in business first as boy of all work with Mr. John A. Ruff when he was about fourteen years of age. In 1859 he went into the clothing business on his own account near the corner of 7th street and Maryland avenue southwest. By judicious advertising and business sagacity Mr. Henning's trade increased so rapidly that in 1867 he found his quarters entirely inadequate for his needs and he moved to 410 7th street, where he inaugurated two novelties in the clothing business that could not help but succeed. He adopted the strictly one-price system and also that of refunding money on returned purchases. In 1885 Mr. Henning associated himself in business with the house of A. Saks & Co. at their present large establishment and there he remained until quite recently, when he resigned to accept the presidency of the new bank. There are few men in the city who have a larger circle of friends and acquaintances than Mr. Henning, and it is not likely he will find this any hindrance or drawback in his new business departure.

*The Evening Star, October 15, 1902*

#### **Mrs. Henning's Allowance**

#### **Order Made by Judge Hagner to George C. Henning**

In connection with the proceedings for maintenance instituted by Mrs. Caroline Henning against her husband, Mr. George C. Henning, president of the Traders' National Bank, Judge Hagner, in Equity Court No. 1, has signed an order directing that Mr. Henning pay his wife an allowance of \$100 a month, pending the final determination of the case. In consideration of this allowance Mrs. Henning is to surrender possession of house 1728 20th street the 1st of November to Miss Alice B. Henning, daughter of Mr. Henning by a former marriage. The title to this property was deeded by Mr. Henning to his daughter, August 25 last.

*The Evening Star, October 16, 1902*

### **The Henning Case**

#### **Order for Payment of \$100 Monthly is Made Final**

By agreement between the parties, the order of Justice Hagner in connection with the proceedings for maintenance instituted by Mrs. Caroline Henning against her husband, Mr. George C. Henning, president of the Traders' National Bank, was today made final. This terminates the litigation. Under the provisions of the final order Mr. Henning is directed to pay his wife an allowance of \$100 a month, the first payment to be made forthwith, and to bear date of October 1. Mr. Henning is to pay his wife's attorneys a fee of \$100, and also is to settle the court costs entailed by the action. The order further provides that Mrs. Henning shall surrender possession of house, 1728 20th street to Miss Alice B. Henning the 1st of November.

*The Evening Star, February 3, 1908, p. 3*

### **This Is His Birthday**

George Custis Henning is a local product. He made his first noise in the world, February 3, 1833. Mr. Henning was only fourteen years and when he located from the sheltering arms of parental influence and embarked in a business career in a little canoe of his own. A few years later he engaged in the clothing business under the name of George C. Henning & Co. and after a few more years entered the firm of Saks & Co. as partner. He continued in this relationship until 1890 when he conducted the organization of the Traders National Bank of which he became president.

A couple of years ago he retired from that organization to give his entire time to the duties of secretary and treasurer of the Washington Safe Deposit Company and National Metropolitan Insurance Company.

Mr. Henning was a Union man and served in Company A of the National Guard. Cupid knows him well. He has been married three times.

*The Evening Star, December 1, 1913, p. 2*

### **Year's Illness Fatal to George C. Henning**

#### **Lifelong Resident of City and Pioneer Merchant to be Buried Tomorrow**

George C. Henning, a lifelong resident of this city, and one of its pioneer business men, died yesterday, following an illness of about a year. Funeral services will be held at his late residence, 1728 20th street, tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock. Interment will be in Congressional cemetery.

Until a few months ago Mr. Henning was secretary and treasurer of the Washington Safe Deposit Company. He was the principal organizer and first president of the Traders' National Bank, and until its liquidation was one of the directors in the Metropolitan Fire Insurance Company.

#### *Pioneer in Clothing Business*

Mr. Henning was a pioneer in the clothing business here. While still a young man he opened a clothing store on the west side of 7th street near D street, where he built up a large trade. He introduced many features which in that day were novel, and invented several devices used in connection with the manufacture of clothing.

He later became a partner in the firm of Saks & Co., in which position he remained until 1890, when he became interested in the organization of the Traders' Bank.

Mr. Henning was very familiar with the history of the District. During his early life he was especially interested in church work and music. He owned considerable land on the eastern shore of Virginia, where he spent his summers for a number of years.

He was a member of Company A of the old National Guard of the District of Columbia, and while serving in that organization participated in the inauguration of President Lincoln, March 4, 1861.

He leaves three children, Prof. George N. Henning of George Washington University, Miss Alice Henning, also of this city, and Dr. Robert E. Henning of Minnesota.

*The Evening Star, December 2, 1913, p. 3*

#### **Funeral of George C. Henning**

Funeral services for George C. Henning, who died Sunday, were held this afternoon at his late home, 1728 20th street n.w. Interment was in Congressional Cemetery.

*The City of Washington, Its Men and Institutions*

George Custis Henning, president of the Traders National Bank, was born in Washington, D.C. on February 3, 1833. He is the son of George W. and Sarah Custis (Lewis) Henning. In 1847 Mr. Henning embarked in mercantile pursuits, and later engaged in the clothing business, under the firm name of George C. Henning & Company, where he continued for some years until he entered the firm of Saks & Company as a partner. He continued in this firm until 1890, when he engaged in the organization of the bank, whose affairs he has so successfully since piloted.

Mr. Henning was a Union man and served in Company A, National Guard, on March 4, 1861, the day of President Lincoln's inauguration, but was shortly afterward mustered out of service. Mr. Henning has married three times. He resides at 1728 Twentieth street, northwest.

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