

Bessie J. Kibbey

(- 19 May 1949)

Kibbey, Bessie J. On Thursday, May 19 1949, at her residence 2025 Mass. Ave. nw., Bessie J. Kibbey, granddaughter of the late William B. and Sarah A. Kibbey. Friends may call at Gawler's Chapel 1756 Penna. Ave. nw., until Tuesday, May 24. Services will be held at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Mass. And Wis. Aves. Nw., on Wednesday, May 25, at 10 a.m. Interment Congressional Cemetery.

The Evening Star, Friday, May 20, 1949, p. A12

Miss Bessie J. Kibbey, Lifelong Sponsor of Charities, Dies at 92



"Cousin Bessie" Kibbey, the bountiful custodian of the McClellan Saddle money.

Miss Bessie J. Kibbey, 92, for 50 years chairman of the Admissions Committee of the Washington Home for Incurables, died last night at her home, 2025 Massachusetts avenue N.W., following a long illness.

A native of Washington, Miss Kibbey was a life-long sponsor of charities here, and was active in mission work. She had been a member of the Board of Governors of the Home for Incurables for 55 years. She retired as head of the Admissions Committee three years ago.

Referred to by friends as "one of the city's greatest philanthropists." Miss Kibbey donated money for the city's first playground and was one of the original backers of the Washington Cathedral.

Although Miss Kibbey was a life-long resident of the District, very little was made public about her activities. Friends said her father was killed at sea when she was an infant and that her mother died shortly afterward. She was raised by her grandparents, it was said, her grandfather coming here from England.

It was said her early home near Third and C streets N.W., was given by her to start the first Young Women's Christian Home here. The New Municipal Center now stands on the site.

Miss Kibbey was a member of St. Alban's Church and was a member of the Board of Lady Visitors of Children's Hospital.

Funeral arrangements have not been completed.

The Washington Post, May 21, 1949, p. B2

Miss Kibbey, Philanthropist, Dies at 91

Miss Bessie Juliet Kibbey, 91 philanthropist and chairman of the admission committee of the Washington Home for Incurables for 50 years, died Thursday night at her home, 2025 Massachusetts ave. nw., following a long illness.

Miss Kibbey, a lifelong resident of Washington, was born in a house at 311 C st. nw., which she later gave to the Young Women's Christian Association. The new Municipal Center now stands on the site.

Termed by friends as "one of the city's greatest philanthropists," Miss Kibbey performed her charitable works without benefit of publicity. She was particularly interested in organizations which promoted the welfare of boys and girls.

A member of the congregation of St. Alban's Episcopal church, she was one of the original backers of the Washington Cathedral. She was for 55 years a member of the board of governors for the Home for Incurables and was a member of the board of lady visitors of Children's Hospital.

Orphaned at an early age, she was cared for by her grandparents, William B. and Sarah A. Kibbey. According to friends her father was killed at sea and her mother died soon after.

Miss Kibbey was an extensive world traveler and spent much time abroad. She left no close relatives.

Funeral services will be conducted by the Rt. Rev. Angus Dun Episcopal Bishop of Washington, Wednesday at 10 a.m., at St. Alban's. Burial will be in Congressional Cemetery.

Richard T. Feller and Marshall W. Fishwick, *For Thy Great Glory*, The Community Press, 1965
p. 6 -- referring to the collection of donations to begin the National Cathedral: Bishop Satterlee made "every exertion to secure the money needed," and gathered \$83,000 from Mrs. Percy R. Pyne, Miss Bessie Kibbey, Mr. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Mrs. Woerishoffer, W.K. Vanderbilt, Miss M.W. Bruce.

Pp. 64-65 -- referring to the Kibbey Carillon:

It was not until the 1920's that definite steps were made toward procuring bells for the National Cathedral. A few years after the first American carillon was installed at Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1922, Miss Bessie Kibbey of Washington, D.C., called on Dean Bratenahl at the Cathedral. On June 5, 1925, she asked him "to obtain a brief statement as to the number of bells that would be required for our Cathedral, what they would cost and where we could obtain a man to ring them." The following February, after discussions and investigations, Dean Bratenahl announced to the Cathedral Chapter that a carillon was being given to the Cathedral for its future Gloria in Excelsis Tower. Miss Kibbey, one of the earliest contributors to the Cathedral, left in her estate at her passing in 1949 the sum of \$150,000 for the carillon which she hoped would be one of the finest in America.

When it came time to build the Central Tower it was decided that, in addition to the 53-bell Kibbey Carillon, a 10-bell English ring would be installed simultaneously in the Gloria in Excelsis Tower. It would thus become the only tower in the world with both a carillon and a ring of bells.

In the spring of 1963 Richard Feller and Richard Dirksen, with newly appointed Carillonneur Ronald Barnes, went to Loughborough, England, to the Taylor Bell Foundry, to inspect and accept the Kibbey Carillon for Washington Cathedral. The sight of the fully assembled instrument drew these words from the awed Mr. Dirksen:

"There it stood! A gigantic gray skeleton of steel, towering into the smoky heights of the dusky shop and up amid the whirring pulleys which drive the wheels to many machines ... At the four corners and at the floor level were the great lower bells, the largest quite impossible of belief. Amid the whole, a polished oak clavier stood silent, bristling with wooden playing levers and with its many shining rods and wires extending above to the clappers of the bells. That is what I saw, but what I felt was something else entirely. As I stood speechless, staring at this wrought monster, a fear gripped me, and a few beads of sweat broke out: It was too big to go into the tower!"

Mr. Dirksen's fears were unfounded. The bells were approved, dismantled, and sent across the Atlantic. The bells themselves varied from one weighing 15 pounds to one weighing 24,000 pounds.

In June 1963, the 63 newly-arrived bells (53 carillon and 10 English ring) were hoisted to their permanent home. The Washington newspapers described the Cathedral as the scene "of an unusual show yesterday [June 28] as the last of 63 bells, weighing a total of 120 tons, were raised to a tower over the North Transept of the edifice." The delicate task was completed without mishap. On September 22, 1963, the Cathedral Carillonneur played the Recital of Dedication.