

Peter Lenox

(- 3 Dec 1832)

Lenox. Died in this city, at 8 o'clock on Monday evening, the 3d instant, after a protracted and painful illness, Peter Lenox, Esquire, in the 62d year of his age. His friends, acquaintances, and fellow citizens generally, are invited to attend his funeral, from his late dwelling near the Potomac Bridge, on Thursday morning at 10 o'clock.



PETER LENOX, SUPERINTENDENT.

In the death of Mr. Lenox, our city, as well as his immediate family, has sustained a severe loss. By a long course of active and successful enterprise, he had become so identified with our various interests, and such was his integrity and judgment, his energy and perseverance, and such his zeal in carrying forward whatever tended to the improvement of the city, that he had gained the universal confidence of his fellow-citizens. His opinions were regarded with great respect, and exerted a powerful influence both in private and in our public municipal councils.

The life and character of Mr. L. present some extraordinary traits, and such as are worthy the consideration of those who would make their way in the world by their own exertions. He was born in Williamsburg, Va., in 1770, and resolved at an early age on procuring a liberal education. As he had no patrimony, he first acquired the means of sustaining himself for a few years, and then entered a public school at Richmond, in his native State, but the feeble state of his health soon compelled him to relinquish his design, and to enter upon

a more active employment. Thirty-eight years since, he came to this city, destitute of property and without friends, but by a course of almost unexampled diligence and frugality, and a spirit of well regulated enterprise, he acquired a large and valuable estate. Aware of the advantages of knowledge, and still cherishing the love of learning, his first object was to educate his children, to accomplish which he spared no pains. By nature he was endowed with a high order of intellect, and had he been placed in circumstances favorable to its cultivation, he would have held a distinguished rank among the first men of our country. He had uncommon strength and precision of judgment; was prompt and energetic in action, and in everything manifested decision of character. In all his transactions of life he sustained the character of a punctual, honest man.

W.B. Bryan, "The Beginnings of the Presbyterian Church in the District of Columbia," Columbia Historical Society (April 11, 1904), Vol. 8, pp. 43-66.

Peter Lenox owned a lot in the square bounded by F and G and 10th and 11th. He probably supported the first Presbyterian church (St. Andrew's) located in the same square.

Clark, Allen C., Walter Lenox, The Thirteenth Mayor of the City of Washington, (5/16/1916), Vol. ??, p. 167

... Walter Lenox came from Scotland and settled in Williamsburg, Virginia, at the time the seat of the royal government.

Walter Lenox, the grandfather, married Miss Carter, of Williamsburg. Of their children was Peter, born in the city named, 1771. The father lost most of his fortune consequent to the war of the American Revolution, and Peter, about 1802, came to the federal seat of government to find his fortune. He married Miss Margaret Wilkinson; they had a family fortune of thirteen children.

(Peter was ambitious of a liberal education. He had no patrimony. He acquired the means of support for a few years. He entered the public schools of Richmond. He was forced to relinquish his design because of feeble strength and engage in active employment.)

Peter Lenox was the foreman and then the Clerk of Works at the President's House. He was the Clerk of Works (Chief Carpenter) at the Capitol from October 31, 1817 to 1829. He had a lumber business and was early engaged in the building activities. The profit he progressively invested in realty and on the tax ledgers ultimately opposite his name were many squares and lots.

Peter Lenox was a lawmaker. Alternately and intermittently he sat in the local House of Lords and House of Commons. Of the First Chamber, 1804; of the Second Chamber, 1806, 1807; of the First, 1808; of the Second, 1810, 1811; of the First, 1812, 1813; of the Board of Aldermen, consecutively from 1826 to 1831, inclusive.

Peter Lenox laid aside the compass, the spirit-level and the saw, the emblems and implements of his peaceful crafts, and buckled on the sword when his country called for arms in 1812 and he was commissioned a Captain.

Peter Lenox lived until late in life on the south side of Maryland avenue near the Washington Bridge and at the corner of Tenth and E streets, northwest. He died at the first-named residence, Monday, December 3, 1832. He was accorded Masonic honors under the auspices of the Federal Lodge No. 1. Of him it is written: "By nature he was endowed with a high order of intellect, and had he been placed in circumstances favorable to its cultivation, he would have held a distinguished rank among the first men of our country. He had uncommon strength and precision of judgment; was prompt and energetic in action, and in everything manifested decision of character. In all his transactions of life he sustained the character of a punctual honest man." His portrait has him as a large man of intellectual caste, with the compass and the other instruments of his livelihood. His wife's portrait pictures her as a beautiful woman with a lovely child in her arms -- her thirteenth. His will, probated December 11, 1832, disposes of a large estate and attests his belief in the advantages of a higher education in this provision: "It is my desire that my two sons, William A. and Walter, shall pursue their classical and other studies and receive the best Collegiate education that the Country can afford" and made a charge upon the estate for the education and a maintenance until twenty-one years of age.

Walter Lenox (the 13th mayor) was born in the city of Washington, August 17, 1817. He was a bachelor of arts, Yale, 1837. ...

I.T. Friary, They Built the Capitol, Garrett & Massie, Richmond, 1940, pp. 159-161

The office of Clerk of Works, left vacant by the death of Lenthal, was not filled officially until 1815 when Shadrach Davis received the appointment. Little is known about him, but he seems to have been held in good favor by Latrobe and in ill favor by Commissioner Lane. As has been stated previously, the latter transferred Davis, in 1817, to a position at the President's House in pushing work to completion, while work at the Capitol under Davis had lagged.

Peter Lenox was a man of superior ability and good family connections. He was born in March, 1771, at Williamsburg, Virginia, where the Lenox family had lived since 1700 when their pioneer ancestor came to this country from Scotland. His mother was a Miss Carter, also of Williamsburg.

Walter Lenox, the father of Peter, had been well to do before the Revolutionary War, but had lost his property during that conflict, and the son came to Washington in 1792 with the hope of mending his fortunes. He secured a position as foreman on the President's House, and later was made Clerk of Works.

This position was held by him during the period of construction, prior to the War of 1812, and during the reconstruction made necessary by the vandalism of British soldiers.

The services of Lenox at the Capitol were evidently as efficient as before for he retained the position until the building was considered completed, in 1829.

Like others holding public office at the time, Lenox conducted outside business of his own, and succeeded in amassing a comfortable fortune by dealing in lumber. He built for himself a large, four story, brick house on Maryland Avenue, near the river.

Peter Lenox was a prominent citizen of the Capital City in its early days and, judging from his portrait, was distinguished in his personal appearance. He served at various times on the city council, was a successful investor in real estate, and received a commission as captain during the War of 1812. His death occurred in 1832.

Will of Peter Lenox, of Washington, D.C. (dtd. Nov. 25, 1832, probated Dec. 11, 1832, Will Book 4, pp. 163-170(164-172); O.S. 1619; Box 11)

To wife Margaret Lenox, all household furniture, horses and carriages, freely occupy during her life any house or tenement; annually of \$1,000.

To daughters Angelica Simpson, Lucy Lenox, Julia Keep, Margaret Lenox, annuity of \$500.

Two sons William A. and Walter shall pursue their classical and other studies and receive the best collegiate education that the country can afford; under age.

To Sisters of Charity, for education of the young in the City of Washington, \$100.

To Orphan Asylum of the City of Washington, to aid in the support of destitute orphans.

To Catharine McGowan, \$50.

Servant John and his sister Dolly shall be manumitted at the expiration of 10 years after my decease; servant Peter shall be manumitted at the expiration of 5 years; servant Frederick shall be manumitted at expiration of 2 years; Dolly, the mother, shall either be free, immediately, or remain in the services of any member of my family whom she may select at her option.

To Mrs. Sunderland, for services rendered to one of my children, \$100.

Upon the arrival of my son Walter to the age of 21, or when all my children shall be of age, the following distribution:

To daughter Angelica Simpson, property; in Square 380 the 2-story brick house on the corner of 10th St. W and C St. N. and lot of ground on which it stands, and stable on same lot; in Square 458, Lot 1, with improvements; in Square 327, Lot 26 with improvements.

To daughter Lucy Lenox, property: a 3-story brick house on Pennsylvania Ave., in Square 380, being the most western except on in that row, and adjoining the other hereinafter mentioned as bequeathed to my son Walter; in Square 380, the house on the corner of 10th and C sts., N.W., with the lot on which it stands; in Square 258, a 2-story brick house on 13th and D sts., N.W.; Lot 12 in Square 321; in Square 347, east half of Lot 2 with improvements; in Square 263, Lot 16; in Square 327, Lot 28; in Square 258, a brick house or tenement on D St., N.W.

To son William Lenox, my gold watch; property: Lot 1 in Square 408, with a 3-story brick house thereon; in Square 461, lot on the corner of Pennsylvania Ave. and 7th St. W., formerly part of the estate

of the late John Cambell, with all improvements thereon, now occupied by Mr. White a a store, and by Mr. Lloyd as a tavern, also a brick stable on the same lot: Lot 1 in Square 346; in Square 321, Lots 1 and 2, and part of Lot 15; Lot 1 in Square 370, Lot 2; in Square 371, fronting K and 7th sts., Lot 4 with improvements; in Square 453, Lot 5; in Square 299, lots 2, 3 4, 5 and 6; in Swuare 270 the west half of the square, calculating by front fee tof Water St., together with the wharf and the water privileges; north half of Lot 12 in Square 408 with brick tenement or warehouse thereon; in Square 247, Lot 9; in Square 368, lots 1, 2, 11and 22; in Square 865, Lot 2; in Square 654, one-half of Lot 7; in Square 1066, Lot 4; in Square 1105, Lot 3.

To dau. Julia Keep, property in Square 380, the most western of the four 3-story brick houses; in Square 380, the three 2-story houses, and lot from the corner of 10th and C sts.; in Square 258, a 2-story brick house and lot, fronting on 13th and D sts. N; in Square 347, west half of Lot 2 and improvements thereon; in Square 263, Lot 17; in Square 327, ot 29.

To daughter Margaret Lenox, property; in Square 380, the four 2-story brick houses, and lot north from the corner of C and 10th sts.; in Square 258, a 2-story brick house and lot, fronting on 13th St.; in Square 346, lots 7 and 8, with improvements thereon, subject to a lease to the Sisters of Charity; in Square 347, the west half of Lot 1 with improvements thereon; in Square 263, Lot 18; in Square 327, Lot 27; one half of Lot 8 in Square 142 with improvements; \$1,000 in stock of Corporation of City of Washington.

Exrs.: Lucy Lenox, daughter; Lewis H. Machen, and guardian of minor sons; John McClelland

Wits.: Ignatius Mudd; Archibald Cheshire; William Radcliff, Jr.

Codicil, Nov. 27, 1832; in lieu of Lot 2 in Square 370 to son Walter, Lot 10 in Square 370

Wits.: Ignatius Mudd; Archibald Cheshire; A. Shepherd