

William Ryland

(1770 – Jan 1846)

The Paul Pry, June 27, 1835

The Navy

The people begin to discover we have not deceived them in our opinion of the Navy. Congress had better give them a little more money next session--nothing like it. If you must have a nobility, give the dear fellows the cash and let them show style. We wonder Congress has never overhauled the Navy Yard in this city. About twenty to thirty lazy, proud, contemptible upstarts, are paid to look after about a dozen Marines, whom the sight of a tom cat would put to flight; and the "poor in spirit" Saint, old Parson Ryland, with his fat white mane and tail horse to ride about the lot, and \$50 per month, by the President, for praying to the winds, and \$75 for Penitentiary prayers, or some other thing. Is this not distressing to see the President pampering this old leech till he is fit to burst, while others more honest and worthy want but little of starving. The President has the Navy Yard crammed with these idle beggars--all drawing the people's money. We should not at all be surprised if the whole city was to sink by an earthquake.

The National Intelligencer,

The Late Rev. Wm. Ryland

At a meeting of the Official Members of the Wesley Chapel Station, held in the Church on Monday evening, January 19, 1846, on motion Charles W. Boteler, Sen., was called to the chair, and Benjamin E. Gittings appointed secretary, to take into consideration the propriety of paying due respect to our departed friend and brother, the Rev. William Ryland, when the following preamble and resolutions were adopted:

Whereas in the dispensation of Divine Providence the Rev. William Ryland, late Chaplain of the United States Navy, and for many years a laborious, successful, and zealous Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, has been removed by death from our midst; and whereas we having esteemed him as one of our most efficient Ministers, and feeling much indebtedness to him (as a station) for the services he rendered us in the establishment and erection of Wesley Chapel, and also for the interest he manifested in the general welfare of the whole Church, be it

Resolved, That while we bow with humble resignation to this afflictive dispensation of Divine Providence, we cannot but regret that Christianity has lost one of her best advocates and Methodism one of her brightest lights.

Resolved, That we deeply sympathize with his afflicted family in their bereavement.

Resolved, That the Rev. N. Wilson be respectfully requested to preach a sermon, suitable to the occasion, in Wesley Chapel.

Resolved, That the Official Body of this Station (with such of the members as may be disposed to join them) attend the funeral of our departed friend and brother in a body, from the Chapel, at 12 o'clock M. Wednesday, (this day) which takes place at his late residence near the Navy Yard.

Resolved, That the Intelligencer and Union, of this city, and the Baltimore Sun be respectfully requested to publish the proceedings of this meeting.

Chas. W. Boteler, Sen., Pres.,

Benj. E. Gittings, Sec.

Will of William Ryland, of City of Washington, D.C. (dtd. Oct. 27, 1842, probated Jan. 23, 1846, Will Book 6)

To Miss Joanna Mather Ruff, niece of my deceased wife, all personal property.

To Mrs. Margaret Rosensteel, widow of my bro. Joseph Ryland, \$200.

To Mrs. Margaret Black, formerly Margaret Rosensteel, \$200.

To Thomas Mather, Mary Mather and Rebecca Mather, \$100 each.

To George Ryland Ruff, \$150.

To John Albert Ruff, \$200.

To Mrs. Mary Anne Sadler, \$200.

I, William Ryland, having determined to dispose of in my lifetime all my real estate, have therefore intentionally omitted to devise the same or any part thereof.

Exrs: Enoch Tucker; Thomas Pursell and Gilbert L. Gilberson

To the Treasurer of the Missionary School of the Methodist Episcopal Church, formed in New York in 1819, lot situate in City of Washington known as Lot 3 in Square 491, with buildings and improvements.

Wits.: James H. Brown; Charles D. Welsh; Josias Adams; James Crandell

*The Navy Yard Section During the Life of the Rev. William Ryland
Columbia Historical Society, Volume 4*

William Ryland, who was pastor of Ebenezer in 1827, was one of President Andrew Jackson's intimate friends. He was born in 1770, and died in 1846. His tomb in Congressional Cemetery is among the most noticeable in the older part of that beautiful home of the dead, and is side by side with those of his wife and of his niece, Joanna Ruff, aunt of the late George R. and John A. Ruff, well-known citizens of Washington. Mr. Ryland was one of the greatest orators of his day. He always spoke with impassioned earnestness, but never lacked in dignity. He was very liberal, although a very strict economist. A story has been told of him which finely exhibits both these traits. Two ladies had called at his house to solicit aid in some charitable undertaking they were interest in, when, waiting at the door, they overheard Mr. Ryland reproving his servant for throwing away a small piece of a partly used candle. The ladies looked at each other in some astonishment, and one remarked to the other that it would be useless to apply to such a man for the aid they were seeking; but after some hesitation they decided to try, and were very much pleased to receive a large contribution. One of the ladies then told Mr. Ryland of what they had heard, and expressed some surprise that he could attach importance to the waste of a piece of candle, and yet give away his money so liberally. "Madam," said he, "it is by the exercise of such economy that I am able to be generous."

Among his many acts of liberality was the donation of the ground upon which Ryland Chapel in South Washington--named in his honor--now stands.

When General Jackson became President of the United States in 1829, he appointed Mr. Ryland Chaplain in the Navy--his duties being among the sailors and marines of the navy yard and the marine barracks--and this office he held until the day of his death. During this time he was also a member of the United States Colonization Society, an institution that has had among its members some of the greatest men in the land. Mr. J. Ormond Wilson, the present secretary of that society, informs me that its records show that Mr. Ryland was not content with the mere honor of membership; he was very active in endeavoring to have the society fulfill loyally its high function. Among other things, it seems he succeeded in having a rule adopted which forever prohibited the sale or manufacture of intoxicants within the territory of the Society's colony of Liberia.

Previous to his appointment in the Navy, Mr. Ryland had filled the office of Chaplain of the United States Senate, to which position he was re-elected four times, and of Chaplain of the House of

Representatives, which he held for one term.; and in both of these places he acquired the respect, the confidence, and the personal regard of the entire membership of those great bodies.

His residence during his chaplaincy was on Eighth near G Street southeast, opposite the marine barracks--the building is still standing, being now known as No. 715 Eighth Street southeast--and here General Jackson was a not infrequent visitor. It is said that the President had such faith in his loyalty and good judgment that he would sometimes consult him on important matters of state. Although having great influence with Jackson, and being often called on by persons who had something to ask of the Administration, Mr. Ryland was very careful to avoid everything which would tend to make him appear officious; and while he did exert his power on many occasions where he felt it to be proper, it is a fact bearing the strongest evidence of his ability and his high sense of propriety, that he was never refused. The venerable Judge James Lawrenson, so well known in this city up to his death a few years ago, once told me that it was a common saying in Washington in General Jackson's day, "If you want to have anything done by the President, even after Congress and the Cabinet have all failed, go to Billy Ryland."

When Mr. Ryland entered the ministry in 1802, a friend of his who was engaged in the tobacco business in Baltimore bantered him on the subject, being sure that he would soon repent of the step and retire. He said: "Now, Ryland, I am so confident that you will not continue in this thing, that I promise to send you a hundred of my finest cigars every year you remain a minister." For forty-four years the promise was faithfully kept. It is said that General Jackson enjoyed many of the cigars, although he very much preferred a corn-cob pipe.