

Joseph Shillington (- 7 Oct 1887)

The Evening Star, August 27, 1855

Col. Joe Shillington

Our esteemed and enterprising fellow-citizen, who is now making the tour of Europe, is, according to the latest private accounts, enjoying himself finely; visiting the principal cities, and participating in all the enjoyments compatible with his gallant but modest character. We take this opportunity to say we doubt the rumor that the main object of his visit to "fatherland" was to get himself a wife, as (whether with justice or not we cannot say) it has all along been reported that he was made an unwilling captive to the charms of a fair Washingtonian before he left the city. Time, however, will verify or contradict the assertion.

As our friend Joe is observant of men and things, we may anticipate that he will enable us, on his return, to present to the public some of his notes of travel, including his items taken in the camp of the Allies before Sebastopol!

[Note: Owner of Bookstore, Odeon Building, corner 4 1/2 street and Pennsylvania ave. (1854)]

Shillington. On Friday, October 7, 1887, at 4:30 p.m., Joseph Shillington, aged 64 years. Funeral from his late residence, 216 E street northwest, Monday, October 10th, at 2 p.m. Friends of the family invited to attend.

The Evening Star, October 8, 1887

Joseph Shillington Dead

The Veteran Bookseller Passes Away--

Sketch of a Long and Honorable Career

Mr. Jos. Shillington, the well-known bookseller, died yesterday afternoon at his residence, 216 E street northwest. He has been so long a familiar figure in this city and had such a large circle of friends and acquaintances that his death will cause general regret. Among his intimate friends the news of his death confirmed what his condition had for some time led them to apprehend. Last December, Col. Shillington, as he was generally known, had a stroke of apoplexy, from which he never recovered. He has, however, been able to attend to his business, until about two weeks ago when he was taken sick and was confined to his bed. No immediate fatal results were anticipated until a few hours before his death, when his symptoms became alarming, and he gradually passed away. He was sixty-four years of age.

Mr. Shillington was born March 12, 1823, in Ireland, on the estate of Gen. Ross, who commanded the British force which destroyed the Capitol and other public buildings in this city in 1814, and who was afterward killed at North Point, near Baltimore. Robert Bonner, of New York, was born in the adjoining house, and Mr. Oliver, one of the iron kings of Pittsburg, was born nearby, and the families have always kept up the friendships formed in the old country. Mr. Shillington had an uncle on his mother's side, who had settled in Baltimore, and when about twelve years old he came over to this country and went to his uncle's house. After some three days spent in looking about the town, having seen that the Baltimore Sun was delivered to subscribers by boys, he went to the office and asked for a place as a carrier. His intelligent appearance was at once remarked, and he was given a route, which he managed several years. He had by this time secured the confidence and esteem of Mr. Abell, the editor and

proprietor of the Sun, and when it was determined to increase the circulation of the Sun in this city, Mr. Shillington was selected to superintend the business. He came here for that purpose about the year 1841, and soon had several well-patronized routes of that paper established. This was before the days of the telegraph, and the railroad facilities were very limited. The Baltimore and Ohio was the only railroad from the capital, and there were but two trains to Baltimore daily. Mr. Shillington was one of the first to learn of the bursting of the "Peacemaker," the big gun on the United States ship Princeton, in the Potomac, when two members of the Cabinet and other prominent persons were killed. The President and a distinguished party had gone on board the vessel to witness the experiments with the new gun. After this unexpected and fatal termination of what was a gala occasion, Mr. Shilling secured an accurate account of the occurrence and at once went to the Baltimore and Ohio depot, then situated on the west side of 2d street, north of Pennsylvania avenue, but found that the afternoon train had left. Realizing that he had a prize if he could only reach Baltimore, he took the responsibility of chartering an engine and car. He reached Baltimore and at once hurried to the office with the important news. The paper had already gone to press, but the press was stopped, and the account appeared in the next morning's issue, appropriately headed, "And Joshua Commanded the Sun to Stand Still."

In 1847, over forty years ago, Mr. Shillington opened a news and periodical establishment at the corner of Pennsylvania avenue and 4 1/2 street, where he has been located ever since. Being a man of much personal magnetism, genial and whole-souled, of a ready wit and keen intelligence, he made the acquaintance of many of the most famous men of the day, with whom he was always on the closest and most intimate terms. Among these were Calhoun, Clay, Webster, Benton, Buchanan, Chief Justice Taney, Edwin M. Stanton, and many in military and naval circles.

Mr. Stanton, prior to the war, had his law office on C street, near 4 1/2 street, and used to frequent Shillington's bookstore a good deal. Stanton, at this time of his life, was of rather a genial, sunny disposition, with a turn for humor that made him a delightful companion. Many of the old personal friends of Shillington who used to drop into his place of an evening--such as M.W. Galt and his brother William, Fred. Pilling, John McDermott, George Oyster, and others--will recall the keen encounters of wit between Stanton and Shillington; with Stanton seated on an empty book box on one side of the counter and Shillington leaning over the other, his right forefinger extended, and that irresistible twinkle of the eye accompanying the premonitory "Let me tell you now!" that was sure to be followed by a pungent rejoinder to the humorous stroke of his brilliant adversary, in those days Shillington's store was the main resort of the olden times newspaper correspondents--such as George B. Wallis, of the New York Herald, Francis Grund, of the Philadelphia Ledger, and Eliah Kingman, of the Baltimore Sun.

Mr. Shillington was from the first a democrat, but during the war was an ardent unionist. At the beginning of the war, when the communication northward was cut off, Mr. Shillington at the instance of the Postmaster General, opened communication with Baltimore by pony express, by which valuable service was performed. Mr. Shillington never held a public office, although he was frequently urged in ante-bellum days to become a candidate for the city councils. He, however, served one or two terms, with his usual conscientious discharge of duty, as a commissioner to select names for the jury box. He was married a few years before the war and his estimable wife survives him. He leaves four children, two sons and two daughters. His oldest son, Joseph, is a young lawyer of marked ability, practicing now at the Washington Bar.

There will be a meeting at 4 o'clock this afternoon at Parker's, of the booksellers and stationers of the city, to take appropriate action in regard to the death of Mr. Shillington.

Funeral Arrangements

The funeral will take place from the residence, at 2 o'clock on Monday afternoon, and the officiating minister will be Rev. Dr. Sunderland, a friend of the deceased for over thirty years. The interment will be in the Congressional Cemetery. The pall-bearers will be some of the oldest friends of the deceased.

The Evening Star, October 10, 1887

Funeral of Joseph Shillington

The funeral of the late Joseph Shillington took place this afternoon from the family residence, 216 E street northwest, and was the occasion for the assemblage of one of the largest gatherings of the older citizens of the District seen here for years. Many of those present had been friends of the deceased for over a third of a century. The corpse attired in a plain suit of black, was, in accordance with the expressed wish of the deceased, placed in a plain cloth-covered casket, devoid of any ornamentation save the handles and screw heads. There were many floral tributes on and about the coffin. The services were those of the Presbyterian Church, conducted by Rev. Dr. Byron Sunderland, a long tried friend of the deceased. The pastor spoke feelingly of his person relations with the dead and of his high character, etc. At the conclusion of the services the corpse was borne to the hearse and taken to the Congressional Cemetery for interment, the following named gentleman acting as pall-bearers: Wm. Galt, Crosby S. Noyes, W.B. Morrison, Frederick Pilling, W. Rives, Geo. M. Oyster, Benjamin Charlton and O. Bestor.

Action of the Booksellers

At a meeting Saturday evening of the booksellers and stationers of Washington to take action in regard to the death of Mr. Joseph Shillington there were present Messrs. W.H. Morrison, E. Morrison, Robert Beall, W.H. Lepley, W.B. Easton, R.C. Ballantyne, J.C. Parker, C.C. Pursell, John F. Paret, Messrs. J. Bradley Adams and E.J. Burt sent word regretting their inability to attend the meeting. Preambles and resolutions were adopted paying tribute to the upright character and genial qualities of the deceased, recording their "sincere and heartfelt regret that the familiar form and face will no more be seen among us," making expression "of the debt of gratitude under which we stand collectively and individually to our departed friend for his precept and example as citizen and business man," acknowledging "the comfort and assistance we have often received in times of trouble, both in our business and family circles, by his cordial sympathy and warmth of heart," and extending "to his family and many friends our most sincere and heartfelt sympathy and condolence."