

William Thompson

(1 Dec 1788 – 8 Aug 1878)

The Evening Star, August 7, 1878

Locals

We regret to learn that Mr. William Thompson an old and respected citizen of Washington, formerly a justice of the peace is lying seriously ill with paralysis.

The Evening Star, August 9, 1878

Death of an Old and Respected Citizen

The many friends of Mr. Wm. Thompson, a well-known justice of the peace in this city for about forty years, will regret to learn that he died about 5 1/2 o'clock yesterday afternoon at the family residence, on the corner of 5th and M streets northwest. Mr. Thompson was a native of Hull, England, born December 1st, 1788, and he was therefore in the 90th year of his age. He received a liberal education, and it was intended that he should succeed to the large mercantile business conducted by his father, but his tastes were for literature, and he had such a dislike for the arbitrary features of the British government that he declined entering into business, choosing rather to try his fortunes under this government. In 1819 he made his way to Montreal, Canada, and after spending a few months in that city and Quebec, he reached Baltimore in the following spring. Here he found a number of friends, and he began to teach stenography, having for his students a number of members of the bar, some of whom subsequently became noted as leading men in the country. As a teacher of stenography he followed the courts from county seat to county seat, and in this work he became acquainted with many of the leading families of Maryland. He then went to the western part of Virginia, Pennsylvania and the eastern part of Ohio, then regarded as the far west. In his stenography classes he also taught grammar and elocution, and among his pupils were Senators Robert J. Walker, Stewart, McKennon and Wiley. In 1824 he located at Morgantown, Va., and published there a Whig paper, advocating the election of Henry Clay to the Presidency, which enterprise he abandoned after Mr. Clay's defeat. About this time he published a book called the "Fayette Remembrancer." He then, with his wife, to whom he had been married about four years previously, started the Uniontown (Pa.) Academy. In 1829 he determined to make this city his home. At that time there were but two public or free schools in the District, (the Eastern and Western Lancasterian schools) and but few private schools. He established a school for boys near the corner of 6th and H streets, but subsequently removed to Louisiana avenue, near the City Hall. Mrs. Thompson took charge of a girl's school, and among her pupils was Mrs. Amadon, who for many years was known as one of the best teachers in the District. Mr. Thompson about this time became the political correspondent of the New York "Courier," then edited by Gen. James Watson Webb, and of the Baltimore "American," and subsequently he became the local editor of the "Metropolitan," published in Georgetown. In 1834 he published the Washington "Mirror," which was the only paper at that time which gave any considerable attention to local affairs. This paper he sold to Mr. Rufus Dawes, who changed its character to a literary journal, and it failed in 1836. About this time Mr. Edward Dyer suggested to him that he should take a commission as a justice of the peace, and he procured the commission for him. Mr. Thompson was then made a police magistrate. He was subsequently for about ten years a reporter for the "National Intelligencer." He then established the "Saturday News," afterwards the "Washington News," a weekly paper, and edited it up to about twenty years ago. He held the position of justice of the peace for about forty years, and for a long time was one of the police justices under the board of police, holding that position until the establishment of the

Police Court, about eight years since. As a journalist and citizen he advocated many municipal reforms, and being from the first opposed to the old fee system, he was an earnest advocate of the Metropolitan police. Mr. Thompson was a man of the strictest integrity, and one of the best and most valued citizens of the District.

The Evening Star, August 12, 1878

The Funeral of the Late William Thompson took place at 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon from All Souls' church, corner 14th and L streets, and was attended by a large number of relatives and friends of the family, and by many old citizens, members of the Oldest Inhabitants Society and others. Many of the personal friends of the deceased called at the family residence, corner of 5th and M streets during the day to take a parting look at the remains. The body was encased in a rosewood casket, covered with black cloth and neatly trimmed with silver mountings. On the lid was the name, date of birth, and death of the deceased, and over the breast was placed a large cross, wrought of beautiful white exotics. The simple and appropriate funeral services of the Unitarian church were divided between the residence, the church and the cemetery by Rev. H.R. Wailworth of Baltimore, who, at the request of the family, officiated in the absence of Rev. Mr. McCauley, the pastor of the church. In his discourse he made reference to the great progress of the age covered by the long and upright life of the deceased; the wonderful inventions and the general march of education and science; and especially to his long and honorable official life as a magistrate in this community. The remains were deposited in the family lot at the Congressional cemetery. The pallbearers were Messrs. Frederick Bates, M.R. Dawes, Germond Crandall, Wm. B. Smith, C.C. Callan and H.O. Noyes, and the undertakers were the Messrs. Lee.