

Alexander Dromgoole Sims

(12 Jun 1803 – 22 Nov 1848)

The National Intelligencer, December 15, 1848

A message was received from the House of Representatives by Mr. Campbell, their Clerk, announcing the death of the Hon. Alexander D. Sims, a Representative from the State of South Carolina, and the action of the House with reference thereto.

Mr. Butler, Mr. President: My late colleague, the Hon. Alexander Dromgoole Sims, whose death has just been announced by the resolution read, took his seat in the House of Representatives for the first time, in the Twenty-ninth Congress. A few days before his sudden death, which took place on the 16th of the last month, at Kingstree, South Carolina, he learned that he had been returned for the third time, by the same district, to Congress. These marks of popular favor were honorable evidence that he had won and retained the confidence of an intelligent constituency.

Mr. Sims was born in Brunswick county, Virginia, on the 12th of June, 1803. His highly respectable parents, though in moderate circumstances, belonged to that class of persons who placed a high value on the advantages of a liberal education, and two of their sons attained eminence and distinction, and, by their success in life, made a worthy requital for the sacrifices of their parents.

The deceased, of whom I am speaking, if not a scholar in the highest import of that term, was a gentleman of excellent intellect, of various and elegant literary attainments. His brother (late a professor of Alabama University) was an eminent divine and ripe scholar. My colleague, after passing through his ordinary academic course, became a student in the North Carolina University, and continued in that institution until his junior year, when, perhaps attracted by the high reputation of Dr. Nott, for whose character he seemed to have entertained a pious veneration, he joined one of the higher classes in Union College, in the State of New York, and was graduated in that institution in 1823, leaving behind him a high reputation for capacity and attainments, especially in those branches of learning comprehending the tasteful pursuits of literature and the philosophy of the human mind.

On his return from college he studied law in the office of his uncle, (the late Gen. Dromgoole,) and for one or two years after his admission to the bar he practiced in the courts of Virginia. His success not being equal to his expectation or the aspirations of his ambition for he was an ambitious man he removed, in 1826, to Darlington district, South Carolina, and took charge of an academy. In this situation he was eminently useful, and laid the foundation of many enduring friendships, to which he may perhaps have been indebted for his subsequent success in life. Some of his pupils are now citizens of distinction, and bear testimony to the excellence of their teacher and preceptor, and perhaps the highest and most honorable monuments he has left behind him are intelligent citizens who acknowledge with gratitude the instructions derived from him.

Mr. Sims was admitted to the Bar of South Carolina in the year 1829 and soon acquired a lucrative practice. As a counselor, solicitor, and advocate, I can speak of him with unfeigned pleasure. He was engaged in the most important causes on his circuit, and was always equal to them. In the Supreme Court some of his arguments are marked by research, learning, and ability.

His ambition aspired rather more to political distinction than to forensic reputation, and before he entered upon the responsible duties of public life he took an active part in popular meetings in the exciting politics of the time. In 1840 he was returned a member of the Legislature of South Carolina. His efforts here enhanced his reputation among his constituents and fellow-citizens, and he was transferred to the Congress of the United States.

His career in that body is better known to others present than to myself. Judging from a notice taken of him in a late book of biographical sketches, he has acquired something like a historical

reputation. In early life he was thoroughly schooled in the doctrines of the Republic party, and throughout his political career he adhered to them with consistency and firmness.

Mr. Sims possessed in a very high degree what is implied in the term address. He was a pleasing speaker, a man of frank and conciliating manners, and of kind and tolerant disposition.

The triumph of his late success, and his sudden death, were brought in instructive proximity with each other, and are mournful commentaries on the mutability of human life, and the nothingness of human ambition.

If he had faults, Mr. President, (and who of us is without them?) the heart knoweth its own bitterness; let them sleep with him in the grave, the common lot and the rebuking leveler of mankind.

Mr. President, I offer the following resolutions:

Resolved unanimously, That the Senate has heard with deep sensibility of the death of the Hon. Alexander D. Sims, a Representative from the State of South Carolina.

Resolved unanimously, That the members of the Senate, from a sincere desire of showing every mark of respect to the memory of the deceased, will wear the usual badge of mourning for thirty days.

Resolved unanimously, That, as a further mark of respect for the memory of the deceased, the Senate do now adjourn.

And the Senate adjourned.

The National Intelligencer, Monday, January 8, 1848

The occurrence of four deaths amongst the members of Congress, being unexampled in one session, is well calculated to produce anxiety in the friends of the members, generally, at home; and we were about to make a remark or two with the view of removing unreasonable apprehensions at a distance, when the following appropriate observations met our eye in the Gazette of this city, which suit our purpose as well as any thing we could say, and we therefore copy them.

During no previous session do we recollect that we have ever been so unfortunate, in the loss of our National Representatives; however, as to the general health of our city, we again repeat, a fact speaks for itself, our resident citizens enjoy their usual share of good health; as the official bill of mortality, for December, which we have published, will testify; 22 adults and 4 children are the total number of deaths for thirty-one days, in the most inclement and changeable season of the year; and that, in a population of about 14,000 souls. These remarks are submitted merely with a view to meet, at the threshold, imputations, from any quarter, that may operate against the character of our city, for its usual good health, and its salubrious atmosphere.

We would add to the above a single remark that, when we consider the number of persons of which the National Legislature is composed, being about 230 assembling here and residing during the most inclement months of the year when we consider also, the great change of habits which many of them undergo, as to exercise, irregular meals, confinement in boarding houses, etc. and remember, moreover, that many of them are men far advanced in life when we consider these circumstances, we ought rather to feel surprise, that deaths in this body have heretofore been so rare.

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989

A Representative from South Carolina; born near Randals Ordinary, Brunswick County, Va., June 12, 1803; attended the rural schools of his native county and at the age of sixteen entered the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; was graduated from Union College, Schenectady, N.Y., in 1823; read law with General Dromgoole in Brunswick County, Va., and later was admitted to practice; moved to South Carolina in 1826 and settled in Darlington; assumed charge of Darlington (S.C.) Academy in 1827; was admitted to the bar of South Carolina in 1829 and practiced in Darlington; also engaged in literary

pursuits; member of the State house of representatives 1840-1844; elected as a Democrat to the 29th and 30th Congresses and served from March 4, 1845, until his death; had been reelected in 1848 to the 31st Congress; died in Kingstree, Williamsburg County, S.C., November 22, 1848; interment in First Baptist Cemetery, Darlington, Darlington County, S.C.

[Note: Nephew of George Coke Dromgoole.]