

"Rev. Theodore and Julia Gallaudet Lived Colorful Lives"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

A family history researcher recently visited the Historical Society's library and asked for help in locating information about Rev. Theodore Gallaudet, a brother of Thomas Gallaudet and founder of the university that bears his name. Rev. Theodore Gallaudet served the New Windsor Presbyterian Church from 1853-1855 and the Westminster church from 1856-1857. In helping the researcher I found that Judge Francis Neal Parke of Westminster and Western Maryland College professor Dr. Hugh Latimer Elderdice had researched Rev. Gallaudet in the late 1930s. Former Westminster resident Mary B. Shellman provided the researchers with some information about the minister in 1937:

"Theodore, the son of Octavius Gallaudet, a French Huguenot, and brother of Thomas Gallaudet, the founder of the Deaf and Dumb Institute in New York, came to Westminster from Washington before the Civil War.

He had been private secretary to Andrew Jackson. Mrs. Gallaudet's most intimate friend was Dolly Madison.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Gallaudet were cultured and educated people although rather peculiar. Mrs. Gallaudet was a daughter of Dr. Nathan Smith of Baltimore.

Mr. Gallaudet was a graduate of Princeton University. When he came to Westminster he accepted the principalship of the brick school at the entrance to the cemetery and later taught school in the basement of the Methodist Protestant Church. He gave up teaching and became an agent for the Bible Association and while selling Bibles and Hymn books, he distributed tracts in the rural sections of Carroll County, and to the older residents of the County; he is remembered as a circuit rider, who was entertained in the homes of the farmers.

The Gallaudets lived in quite a few houses in Westminster and many quaint stories are told regarding their peculiarities, among which is the following:

A disagreement grew out of a conversation between the couple and Mr. Gallaudet left home for a business trip before the disagreement was cleared up. The wife, no doubt, thought of this during the day and finally decided to frighten the husband. So she went up stairs, donned her night clothes, and climbed into bed. When she heard her husband enter the house she feigned that she was dead.

Mr. Gallaudet entered the room and calmly looked at his wife, and quoted: 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, Blessed be the name of the Lord.' Mrs. Gallaudet grew quite indignant, jumped out of bed and no doubt resumed the dispute.

Mrs. Gallaudet died in Westminster and was buried in Greenmount Cemetery Baltimore, Maryland. After the death of his wife Mr. Gallaudet rented a room from Mr. Knight on Pennsylvania Avenue, Westminster, Maryland where he made his home until his death. He is buried at New Freedom, Pennsylvania."

Mrs. Gallaudet eventually predeceased her husband and her death was reported in the July 19, 1879 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper:

"Mrs. Julia, wife of Rev. T. Gallaudet, of this city, died suddenly at her residence in the West end of town on Monday night. The deceased had been ill a short time ago but had apparently recovered and was in her usual health. Her daughter had just arrived on the evening train from Washington and they were sitting in conversation, when she suddenly fell off the chair and died almost instantly without a struggle. A messenger was despatched for her husband who was absent, but unfortunately he could not be found. Mr. Gallaudet is engaged in selling books through the country and his whereabouts could not be learned, although every effort had been made. Her remains were taken to Washington, D.C., for interment on Wednesday morning, accompanied by her daughter and friends. The deceased was in the 78th year of her age. She was once a very intimate friend of Mrs. Madison, wife of the sage of Montpelier, and had many letters from her. Mrs. Madison always addressed her as "Dear Julia". Mrs. Gallaudet leaves a husband, two daughters, and one son in the ministry."

Rev. Gallaudet's death was reported in the October 4, 1884 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper:

"Rev. Theodore Gallaudet, a well known local preacher and colporteur, died at New Freedom, Pa., on Tuesday, aged 79 years. The deceased was well known in this city and County where he had resided a number of years. He was a true Christian and a ripe scholar. Of late years he made his home in New Freedom, his wife having died some years ago."

The death of Rev. Gallaudet closed a chapter on a colorful couple who had known presidents and first ladies and who also had become local historical figures themselves.

Photo caption: Rev. Theodore Gallaudet served New Windsor Presbyterian Church from 1853-1855. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Mrs. Edgar Barnes, 1979.