Class 1820  Rodney Smith Church

Union A.B. 1816; A.M. 1820
Harvard A. M. (ad eun) 1820
Died 1871

Harvard University
Quinquennial Catalogue
Officers & Graduates
1636-1925
1816

RODNEY S. CHURCH.

Married: In Brooklyn, on the 18th inst., by the Rev. Dr. Hutton, Mr. James Wilson, Jr., of New York, to Miss Catharine C., eldest daughter of Rodney S. Church, of Brooklyn.

Daily Albany Argus, Oct. 21, 1843.
OBITUARY.

Rodney Smith Church.

On Saturday afternoon, at three o'clock, Rodney S. Church, Esq., died at his residence, Nos. 223 and 236 Washington street. Returning his controls to the last, he closed his eyes quietly for the last time on a bed of honors, filled with comfort, at the age of 73 years, 1 month and 3 days. A man of very aggressive character, noticeable in debate, persistent in action, he for years occupied a conspicuous position at the bar, and in the local politics of New York and Brooklyn.

Rodney Smith Church was born April 30, 1796, in the town of Bainbridge, Chenango County, N. Y. His grandfather, Col. Timothy Church, born in Massachusetts in 1750, was an officer in the war of the Revolution. His son, the father of the deceased, subsequently removed to Vermont and still later to the State of New York. Quite early in life the deceased was apprenticed to learn the trade of a carpenter, but his delicate health rendered him unfit for heavy work and he fitted himself to teach school. Having served upon books, he availed himself of his active mind to develop a thorough knowledge of his profession. He determined, by dint of sheer hard study and energy, to graduate at some college institution. After he had succeeded, teaching school from time to time as his pecuniary means would admit, becoming the bridge of a strong character. Side by side with William H. Seward, ex-secretary of State, Mr. Church passed through Union College and graduated with honor. He selected the law as his profession, and a practice established at Albany and New York, which was deemed to the early age of twenty-five years.

In 1839 he removed to the city of New York where he opened an office with a relative of Aaron Burr as his law partner. After a time his growing health admonished him the recollection was imperatively demanded. He therefore retired some months to what was then considered an extensive travel. Previous to this he had published an exhaustive work in two volumes known as a digest of the New York Churches, which appeared in 1830 and was pronounced a valuable work.

Mr. Church was a very outspoken man. In politics he was a Democrat of the old school, and soon after reaching New York his residence, he came to the front in the local politics of the city. During the year 1835, the Democratic party became divided into the regular or factional faction, and the independents. As might be expected of him, Mr. Church joined the latter wing. Levi D. Slay was the head of the new group, assisted by Richard Allen Logan, afterward noted as the author of the celebrated "tommy hogg." With these Church allied, and the numerous crowd went by the expressive name of "sly," Bang & Co. A meeting of the regulars was announced for a certain Tuesday evening, and the rumor got about that the Independents determined to break it up. Prudent ruled the regular; they determined to run no risk, and the meeting was postponed. The lamps were removed from the hall and the door locked. About seven o'clock, Mr. Church came up with some five hundred of his neighbors, and they reached in the north ward, learning that there were no lamps inside, Church opened each man with a small and a box of lorch-fouc matches, then recently invented. The door of the hall was battered down and the throng, with hundreds of others attracted by the excitement, crowded in. Each man drew a match and lighted a lamp. The meeting was called to order, and speeches were made by Messrs. Church, Slay, Mizz, and others. From this occurrence came the nick-name of "lorch-fouc," for years expressly applied to members of the Democratic party by the Whigs.

In the year 1838, Mr. Church removed to Brooklyn, where he has resided ever since. In 1844 he was appointed municipal justice, a position similar to that of the present Fulton avenue, which office he held for four years acceptably. In 1848 he was Alderman of the Fifth Ward, serving two terms. In 1860, or later, he was made a member of the Worthington's party, and by his energy and skill in presenting campaign issues, held it together for several years. The party united to hold their meetings in old Red Hook barn, near where Warren street is now located. The movement afterwards took a national character, and became unpopular by reason of unprecedented threats of tearing down churches and de-

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The married 1st

Maria Adelaide Wilson
dau. of John & Catherine
Wilson, of New York City,
April 18, 1820.

She died April 17, 1828.

He married 2d

Ann Maria Jones,
sister of William, and
Margaret Beck (Caldwell)
Jones, of Bethesda,
Fens, formerly of
Yorkfield, Montgomery,
NY, Oct. 26, 1832.

He then commenced,
and was the Catholic
Churc...
Miss Mary Schermerhorn:
Union College,
Schenectady, N.Y.

My dear Miss Schermerhorn:

It has been a long time since I received your kind letter in answer to one I wrote to the college over a year ago asking if they had any information about my grandfather, RODNEY SMITH CHURCH, who graduated in the class of 1816, and in which you asked for any material I might have for your permanent files.

I am inclosing a photostat copy of an editorial that ran in the Brooklyn Eagle at the time of said gentleman's death, May 27, 1871.

I ran across the editorial, by chance, last spring during one of my genealogical tours in the east, and sad to say I came right through Schenectady on my way home and could not take time to stop. I had been gone two months and dared not make another stop. I should have enjoyed looking over the college where my grandfather graduated as I did over "The Moravian Female Seminary" in Bethlehem, Penn. where my grandmother attended in 1826. It is now called "The Moravian Seminary for Young Ladies".

I have added a few statistics to the editorial as you will notice. I also have a small photograph of Rodney Smith Church should you care to have it.

After receiving your letter I also received one from Mr. Bailey and last fall from Mr. Brewster. I know Union College does not let the grass grow.
January 15, 1935

My dear Mrs. Dillon:

Your letter to Miss Schermerhorn has been called to my attention; and I went to thank you for taking the trouble to send us the copy of the obituary of Rodney Smith Church, and for the additions you have made to the record.

This is a valuable addition to our records; and we should be glad to receive the photograph also.

I am sorry that you could not stop to see Union College and hope that you may come some other time. I am mailing you a catalogue of the Historical Exhibit we held last fall. The picture and the text may add to your conception of what your grandfather's life must have been like at Union.

Sincerely yours,

G. N. Welden
Secretary

Mrs. Thomas J. Dillon
1627 West 26th St.
Minneapolis, Minn.
under its feet. Will you kindly thank the two gentlemen for me.

I am only an amateur typist as you have discovered long ere this but I know you can read it much better than my writing.

Thanking you,

Very sincerely,

Clarissa Church Dillon
RODNEY S. CHURCH, A.M., 1816, a resident of Battleboro, Vt., was a member of the Philomathean Society. (Died: 1871)

Philomathean Catalogue 1830