

## The Reverend Ulysses Ward (1792–1868)

This founder of Christ Church was a bricklayer and Methodist minister who appears to have been only briefly, if indeed at all, a member of Christ Church.

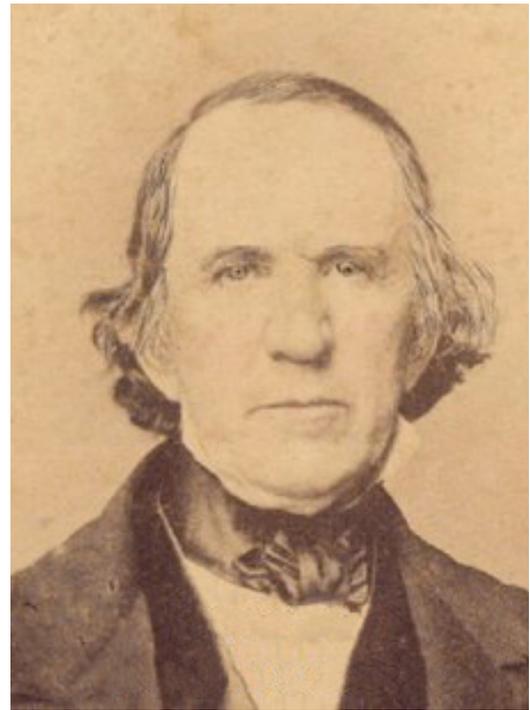
In the organizational documents of the parish the name Ulysses Ward appears as a member of the Committee of Eight elected at the initial meeting on November 10, 1817 at Thomas Corcoran's house that established the church. His name again appears in a document dated December 13, 1817 as one of the 26 committed pew owners. However, he never appears to have actually occupied a pew. In April 1818 he is part of a Committee of Seven prominent founders instructed "to purchase a lot, to contract for a church, to collect the funds" and to "proceed." He also served as a Warden for the term starting April 12, 1819. However, his name is not on the February 8, 1819 list of pew holders.

So who was this mysterious Ulysses Ward?

Ulysses Ward was born in 1792 near Rockville, MD (making him 25 years old at the time of the church's founding in 1817; he and his wife had just had their first child, a daughter named Miranda Virginia). Ulysses was the youngest of eight children of John Ward and Mary Ann Eustatia Forbes. His parents had emigrated from London in about 1770. During the War of 1812 Ulysses Ward served as an enlisted volunteer in an artillery unit under the command of fellow Christ Church founder Judge James Sewell Morsell, so he would have been known to him at the time of the church's founding in 1817.

Ward learned bricklaying in Georgetown and carried on that trade there for a number of years. One of his first major projects was the construction of the houses in Cox's Row on what is now N Street in 1817 (this project was undertaken by

church founder Clement Smith's brother-in-law John Cox). Although there is no explicit evidence, it is highly likely that he was the head mason who physically constructed the first church, which was built of brick. If so, he and his team of masons would have just finished Cox's Row before turning to Christ Church, which they completed in seven and a half months. This supposition about Ward's role is supported by the several referenc-



es in the Vestry minutes starting on November 10, 1819 to a "claim" held by Ward against the church, presumably for failure to pay all of his charges for the construction. The minutes on that date establish a committee to:

...sell pews to U. Ward to the amount of his claim at a discount of twenty-five percent from the limited prices, and further that Mr. Ward shall not be taxed with pew rent on those pews until he shall have disposed of them by rent or sale.



The church's debt to Ward, which was seemingly urgent and distinct from debts owed to lenders like Clement Smith, was still not discharged in May 1820, as noted in the Vestry minutes, and it was only on February 19, 1821 that the debt to Ward appears to have been settled. That is the last one hears of Ward in the context of Christ Church.

But that is just the beginning of the story of Ulysses Ward.

With the rapid growth of the City of Washington he expanded his business and relocated there in the 1820s. He branched into becoming a dealer in lumber and coal and maintained a lumber yard near what is now 12th and Constitution. In 1853 he became president of the Mutual Insurance Company. He acquired and held numerous properties in the City of Washington, and his name appears not infrequently in court records. One of the more interesting pieces of litigation in which he was involved was an 1853 Supreme Court case involving his role as a surety in the administration of the estate of Polish-born Revolutionary War General Thaddeus Kosciusko. On a more mundane level, in 1832 he successfully sued the city to make it license the operation of lime kilns (lime being crucial to the making of mortar). The ruins of the resulting Godey lime kilns still stand by the access ramp to the Whitehurst Freeway on the edge of Georgetown.

Ulysses reportedly embraced the Methodist faith as a youth and was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, probably before and after his sojourn in Christ Church. When the Methodist Episcopal Church split over an issue concerning lay delegation in 1827-28 he joined with some of his friends to found the Methodist Protestant denomination. Although he does not appear to have attended seminary or had a formal ordination, he became a minister in that denomination and served for many years as pastor of its church on 9th Street in the City of Washington.

Long before the temperance movement engaged public attention, he was a staunch advocate of abstinence from alcohol (a stance that no doubt would have set him at odds with many of the founders of Christ Church!). When in business he refused to employ anyone who drank alcohol. For two years he was the editor and proprietor of the Columbian Fountain newspaper, in which effort he was assisted by his son The Reverend James T. Ward. He was a member of the Good Samaritans Division of the Sons of Temperance and was vice president and director of the Washington City Bible Society. He also was a vice president of the Oldest Inhabitants' Association.

Ulysses Ward married Susanna Verlinda Beall (1799-1875), who was a member of the large founding Beall family of Georgetown. They had six children.

Ulysses Ward died at the age of 77 at the home of his daughter and son-in-law on Capitol Hill. He is buried in Glenwood Cemetery. By his diligence and industry at the time of his death he reportedly had accumulated property in Washington and elsewhere worth an astounding \$250,000.

