

Jeremiah Williams (1774–1857)

Jeremiah Williams' founding subscription for Christ Church was a relatively modest five shares worth \$125. He was not a member of the founding Committee of Eight, but he was a pew owner and was elected to the Vestry of the church in 1819. He served as a delegate to the Diocesan Convention in Baltimore in 1824.

Jeremiah Williams was the son of Thomas Owen Williams (1748-1818), of "Seat Pleasant" in Prince George's County, a former Revolutionary War Major of the militia and a land speculator with distant Welsh origins, and Mary Clagett Berry (1746–1811). Jeremiah was a first cousin of the three Clagett brothers profiled earlier. He does not appear to be related to the Revolutionary War hero General Otho Holland Williams, who owned a house at what is now 31st and P Streets in Georgetown. However, he was a cousin of Harriet Beall Williams who raised many eyebrows in Georgetown when, in 1839 at age 16, she was courted by and married the 63 year old bachelor Russian Imperial Minister to the United States Baron Alexander de Bodisco (by all accounts the marriage was a happy one; they attended Christ Church and baptized numerous children there, including their first child, Nicholas Alexander de Bodisco, whose sponsors were "His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias" and "his parents").

Jeremiah Williams was an important shipping merchant in Georgetown, whose Jeremiah Williams & Co. owned wharves and warehouses. Later city directories also list him as an auditor at the Department of the Treasury, so it is likely that, like a number of well-off Georgetown merchants, he held a government sinecure simultaneously with his private sector ventures.

In 1801 Jeremiah Williams purchased a frame house at what is now 3035-3037 Dumbarton Avenue and lived there the rest of his life. His

stepdaughter Eleanor M. Carter, who married William Benton Boggs, a Navy paymaster and Vestryman at Christ Church, eventually inherited the house and most likely erected the present mid-19th century house on the site of the earlier frame one. The house has since been divided into two dwellings which at various times in the 20th-21st centuries have belonged to Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, NBC news correspondent Richard Harkness, National Gallery Director J. Carter Brown and currently the author Kitty Kelly.

Jeremiah Williams was married to Susan Katherine Steuart (1781–1865). Her father was from Ayrshire, Scotland. Her niece Marion Steuart was reportedly engaged to the widowed President Martin van Buren when he was Governor of New York. It is not known if Jeremiah and Susan had any children beyond the stepdaughter Eleanor noted above, who was the daughter of Susan's sister Ann Steuart Carter. It appears that Eleanor was the sole heir. Jeremiah's will was dated January 17, 1857, and he died February 8, 1857. His funeral was at Christ Church. Susan's will was dated March 17, 1858 but she did not die until 1865. Both are buried at Oak Hill Cemetery.

