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Civil War Macon: The History of a Confederate City

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Washington Poe

Washington Poe, the son of William Poe, a Revolutionary War soldier from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and his wife Frances Winslow, was related to the famous American writer, Edgar Allen Poe. He was born in Augusta, Georgia, on 13 July 1800, and was orphaned early due to the death of his mother on 22 July 1802, and his father on 13 September 1804. He and his three siblings became wards of Thomas Cumming, a close friend of the Poes, a prominent banker and the first mayor of Augusta. Cumming raised and educated the children. Poe was educated at Sand Hill Academy in Augusta, then sent to a private school in New Jersey which specialized in preparing students for Princeton. He returned to Augusta where he entered in a warehouse and commission business with his brothers, Robert and William. He then returned north and enrolled in Judge Gould's law school in Litchfield, Connecticut. He remained there in 1824, and returned to Macon where he was admitted to the Bar in May 1825. He entered private practice with Oliver Prince, the Intendant of the new town of Macon. In January 1827, he succeeded Edward Door Tracy, Sr. as Solicitor-General of the Macon Circuit. On 24 December 1829, he married Selina Shirley Prince (\*see note below), the fourteen-year-old sister of Mary Prince. During the war Selina was instrumental in organizing the women of Macon in support of the soldiers and their families. Poe joined the Presbyterian Church in November 1828, and became a ruling elder in 1829. He served as mayor of Macon in 1840.

In November 1841, he was appointed legal guardian of Virginia and Frances Prince, children of Oliver Prince who, with his wife, was drowned in an accident at sea. He settled Prince's extensive estate. In 1840 Poe served as a delegate from Bibb County and speaker at the convention held in Macon to ratify the anti-Van Buren presidential slate. Poe, a Whig, admired and supported Henry Clay and was elected President of Macon's Henry Clay Club in 1844. He was also elected in that year to the US House of Representatives. In November 1860, Poe presided over a meeting called in Macon on the day of the 1860 presidential election. He cautioned the people of Macon to be calm

and deliberate in their response to Lincoln's election. In January 1861, he was elected as a Union delegate to the Georgia Secession Convention in Milledgeville. He served in that body as one of three members from Bibb County.

When the war came he was appointed Postmaster of Macon. He participated in public life both during and after the war. In 1870 he delivered the main address at the cornerstone laying ceremony for the new Bibb County Courthouse at the corner of Mulberry and Second Streets. Two years later he served as a Bibb County delegate to the September 1872, state-wide Democratic Convention. Poe cut an impressive figure as a lawyer and a politician. He was erect, tall, stately, and was impressive, with a slender figure. He was gracious in manner and filled "the full measure of the term 'a perfect gentleman'." He died on 7 October 1876, and was buried in Rose Hill Cemetery.

\* my notes:

Selina Shirley Prince - last name is actually NORMAN as was her sister Mary Norman Prince who married Oliver Hillhouse Prince.

see:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~lincolncountynormans/people/norman/george.htm> for the lineage of their parents GEORGE NORMAN & Sarah "Sally" Groce.