

KELLY, WILLIAM NEEDHAM

01

KELLY, WILLIAM NEEDHAM, born at Beverly, Essex County, Massachusetts, October 18, 1835; son of Moses and Hannah (Needham) Kelly; married ^{Isabel} Martina, daughter of Varney A. and Nancy A. (Ball) Stephens, at Prescott, on January 29, 1868; daughter, Edith (Mrs. _____).

His first employment was a clerk in a Boston dry-goods store; went to California via Panama in 1858 and soon left San Francisco for Nevada County where he became agent for a saw mill and later engaged in hydraulic mining; made his way on horseback to Prescott, A.T., in 1865, a distance of nearly 1,000 miles; operated a butcher shop for over a year which he sold and returned to California in December, 1867.

In San Francisco he formed a partnership with two brothers, D. and A. Henderson, and arranged for a stock of goods to be shipped by sea to San Pedro and then hauled by wagons from there to Prescott arriving in March, 1868, when they opened a general merchandise store; after two years he sold his interest in the business and engaged in prospecting and mining; in 1872 he joined with his father-in-law in establishing a mercantile business under the name of Kelly & Stephens.

Appointed on October 24, 1872, by President Grant, on recommendation of Delegate McCormick, as Register of the District Land Office at Prescott to succeed Henry A. Eastman who had resigned on account of poor health; in applying for reappointment in 1876 he wrote:

My term of office as Register of the United States Land Office at this place expires in December next. I desire a reappointment. I was politically opposed to our present Delegate at the time of his election and do not, therefore, like to ask his assistance.

I am a native of the State of Massachusetts and am consequently a born Republican. I resided at You Bet, Nevada County, California, from 1858 to 1865 and rendered all the assistance I could to the cause. The position is not very lucrative (about \$900.00 per annum), but in connection with my business affords me a good living.

However, Hiram S. Stevens, the Delegate from Arizona, asked that he be reappointed stating that "Mr. Kelley has performed the duties of his office to the entire satisfaction of the public"; he was again named by President Grant on January 16, 1877, to serve for another four years; when that term expired he was renominated by President Hayes on January 7, 1881, but the Senate failed to act before Congress adjourned on March 4; on March 18, his name was resubmitted to the Senate by President Garfield but again no action was taken; the ensuing delay was the reason for a letter written on January 31, 1882 by John A. Rush of Prescott to Granville H. Cury, the Delegate to Congress, which reads in part:

Mr. Kelly has held the office for about nine years. He was renominated by President Garfield and the nomination sent to the Senate during the deadlock of the Senate last spring. The Senate adjourned without acting on the nominations. Mr. Kelly is still the Acting Register, although nearly a year has elapsed since the expiration of the four years for which he was last appointed. Up to this time he has no advice of any further action upon the part of the President or the Senate.

I desire to enlist your good offices in behalf of Mr. Kelly for the reason that from his long connection with the office he is familiar with all of its details such as railroad reservations and the return of proceedings in matters pertaining to pre-emptions, homesteads and the procurement of missing patents & c. He has always been most accommodating in giving to our people such necessary information as he might consistently give to aid them in availing themselves of the benefits of the land laws of the United States and this without any charge.

In a word Mr. Kelly has given universal satisfaction as an officer and it would be a great disappointment as well as a great inconvenience to our people to have his place filled by another. It is true he is a Republican, but under existing circumstances we must expect the office to be filled by one of his politics.

Shortly afterwards Delegate Cury wrote to the Secretary of the Interior:

I take great pleasure in endorsing Mr. Kelly as an honest, efficient officer, and a reliable gentleman in every sense of the word and one who has become deservedly popular with the people of the Territory, by a correct and faithful discharge of the duties of his office in the past.

The real difficulty was that he lacked ~~any~~ personal friends in the Administration at Washington with the result that, after the death of President Garfield, President Arthur nominated Thomas Wing of Chicago to be Receiver of the U.S. Land Office at Prescott on the recommendation of William Aldrich and two other Illinois Congressmen supplemented by the concurrence of Senators Ferry of Michigan and Saunders of Nebraska; their endorsement stated that Wing had been "one of its most devoted workers through the whole life of the Republican Party"; it was incidentally stated that he wanted to go to Arizona because he had three sons living in the Territory; Kelly turned over the office to Wing on August 3, 1882, after a service of nearly 10 years.

In the meantime he was elected Mayor of Prescott on January 6, 1880, reelected in 1881 and 1882 and served until January 1883; the mercantile business in which he was interested continued to prosper until they were burned out by the great Prescott fire of July 14, 1900; died at Prescott, Arizona, January 7, 1917, aged 81, buried Masonic Cemetery, Prescott; the following is taken from an obituary printed in the Prescott Journal-Miner:

The death of this beloved Hassayamper occasioned profound sorrow, death coming after an illness of only a few hours, at his home Sunday morning. He was on the streets Saturday, and was rapidly regaining his former health, after being ill for many months. Personally Mr. Kelly was of a genial and generous nature, and with his conscientious regard in business dealings the loss of this good man and exemplary citizen is to be deeply deplored. He also was an ardent Mason and among the oldest in the State, joining Aztlan Lodge of Prescott nearly 50 years ago.

The Prescott Courier also said of him:

Deceased was one of the very few remaining citizens of this community who came here when Prescott was a mere hamlet built of logs and canvas. During many years of its early history, the general merchandising firm of Kelly & Stephens was one of Prescott's leading business enterprises, and for at least thirty years the deceased was a leader in all things which went to build up the community. The remaining old-timers well remember the old store which stood on the northwest corner of Gurley and Montezuma streets. There the firm conducted its business until the conflagration of 1900 swept it away, never to be replaced.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Great Register of Yavapai County, A.T., 1876-1908.
 McFarland & Poele - Historical and Biographical Record of the Territory of Arizona, Chicago, 1896, p. 489-490.
 Chapman Publishing Co. - Portrait and Biographical Record of Arizona, Chicago, 1901, pp. 689-690.
 Proceedings, Arizona Grand Lodge, F. & A.M., 1918, p. 319.
 Parish, T.E. - History of Arizona, Vol. 4, pp. 132, 135.
 Elliott, W.W. & Co. - History of Arizona Territory, S.F., 1884, pp. 311, 312, 313.
 U.S. General Land Office, Washington, D.C. - Old files.
 The Prescott Courier, January 13, 1917, p. 4, c. 4. (obituary)
 The Journal-Miner, Prescott, January 9, p. 3, c. 4 and January 10, 1917, p. 5, c. 5 (obituary), June 6, 1:3 and June 10, 1901, 1:4; March 7, 1920, 3:4 (death of Mrs. Martina Kelly)
 The Prescott Courier, March 11, 1:1 and July 22, 1882, 3:1; November 29, 2:7, December 13, 1:7, and December 20, 1889, 3:1.

WANTED

Any references to him from the index of the Prescott Arizona Miner.