

## **Letitia Barbour Green Stevenson (1843-1913)**

Letitia Barbour Green Stevenson was born on January 8, 1843, in Alleghany City, Western Pennsylvania. Her father, Reverend Lewis W. Green, was a Presbyterian minister and the head of the Allegheny Theological Seminary. Her mother was Mary Ann Peachy Fry. Letitia came from a family with many notable ancestors, including a direct line from George Washington. Her great-grandfather, James Speed, was a captain in the Revolutionary War, and other ancestors included Joseph Fry, a soldier in the war, and Dr. Thomas Walker, a friend of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

In 1855, Letitia's family moved to Danville, Kentucky, where her father became the president of Centre College. There, Letitia met her future husband, Adlai E. Stevenson I, who was a student at the college. Adlai was born on October 23, 1835, in Christian County, Kentucky. He attended both Illinois Wesleyan University and Centre College.

Letitia had a strong education. She attended Walnut Hill Female Institute in Lexington, Kentucky, and Miss Hayne's Fashion School in New York City. At these schools, she learned subjects like Latin and manners, which were part of a "Ladies Curriculum." She was very well-educated for a woman of her time.

When the Civil War began in 1861, Letitia returned home to find her town of Danville turned into a military base and hospital. Both Union and Confederate armies occupied the town because it was located near the border between both sides.

After her father passed away in 1863, Letitia and her mother moved in with Letitia's sister, Julia Scott, in Chenoa, Illinois. There, Letitia and Adlai began courting, and they married on December 20, 1866. They had four children: Lewis Green (born in 1868), Mary Ewing (born in 1872), Julia Scott (born in 1874), and Letitia Green (born in 1876). Sadly, their daughter Mary Ewing died from tuberculosis in 1895.

Letitia was a dedicated mother and wife. She believed that motherhood was a very important role and that women should focus on creating strong families. She also supported women's rights, including the right to go to college and access birth control. She thought women should be able to limit the number of children they had to ensure a stable home life.

In 1892, when Adlai became vice president under President Grover Cleveland, Letitia moved with him to Washington. While Adlai worked in politics, Letitia became the President General of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR). She held this position for four terms, from 1893 to 1898. She was responsible for many important projects, such as placing monuments in memory of George Washington and raising money for the NSDAR's headquarters near the White House. Also during her presidency membership increased by 1,950 in 1893-94 and in 1894-98 increased by 3,488 members.

Letitia also had many responsibilities as the wife of the Vice President of the United States. She was expected to answer requests from the President's wife. She also received many visitors and requests during her receptions numbering from 800 to 1000 requests. She especially enjoyed returning the calls from the wives of Senators and Supreme Court Justices. Letitia also filled in for the First Lady at any functions she could not attend such as dinners and luncheons. She was well liked by the cabinet members and their wives because of her "pleasing personality and her gracious manner and cultivated taste."

Letitia was also very active in her community. She was involved in organizations like the Army and Navy League, the Women's Club in Bloomington, and the Parents and Teachers

Association. She helped organize the Bloomington chapter of the NSDAR, which was named after her and is still active today.

Letitia died on December 15, 1913, at the age of 70. Six months later, her husband Adlai passed away. After her death, many people remembered her as a strong, gracious woman who played an important role in her family, community, and the nation. Letitia and Adlai are both buried in the Stevenson family plot at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington, Illinois.