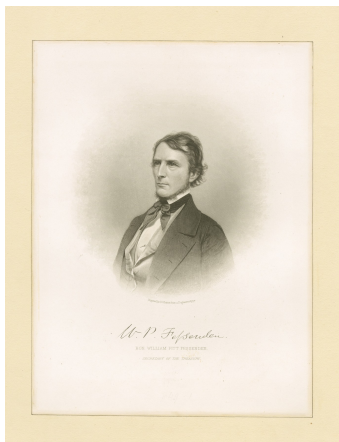




William Pitt Fessenden

October 16, 1806 - September 8, 1869

Died: Portland, Maine

Interment: Evergreen Cemetery, Portland, Maine

William Pitt Fessenden died in Portland, Maine, on September 8, 1869. He was sixty-two. Born in Boscawen, New Hampshire, on October 16, 1806, and raised in Maine, he made Portland his city: a law office, a Whig and then Republican seat in the House, and a Senate career that turned on money, the Union, and a willingness to disappoint his own caucus.

Lincoln called him to the Treasury in 1864 after Salmon Chase left. The war still had to be paid for. Fessenden sold bonds, argued with bankers, and treated the national credit as a fact that could be lost in an afternoon. He went back to the Senate rather than stay in the Cabinet. In 1868, when the House impeached Andrew Johnson, Fessenden was one of seven Republican senators who voted not to convict. The party called it betrayal. He called it the Constitution, and he took the abuse without a speech that would have made him beloved. Reconstruction needed majorities; it also needed men who would not turn a removal trial into a habit.

He was a widower who raised sons into public life and kept a Portland house that did not pretend to be Washington. Colleagues remembered a dry, exact mind and a temper he spent on figures rather than on enemies. Boscawen was the birth. Augusta and the Senate floor were the work. Portland was the end.

He is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Portland. The vote on Johnson is still the sentence most textbooks keep. The Treasury year is the one the bond market remembered.

Services

Died in Portland, Maine, on September 8, 1869. Interment at Evergreen Cemetery, Portland.

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