

Wilkins Tannehill  
March 4, 1787 – June 2, 1858

Section 28.52 # 280083

Wilkins Tannehill was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on March 4, 1787, to Josiah and Margaret Wilkins Tannehill. He moved to Kentucky, where he edited a political newspaper and married Eliza Dewees in Lexington on July 21, 1810. Eliza, born April 3, 1789, was the daughter of Samuel & Mary Dewees. Wilkins and Eliza moved to Nashville. They had one son and five daughters.

Tannehill was involved in many business and community activities including editorship of local newspapers, the Old Nashville Bank, Cumberland College later re-named the University of Nashville. He was elected seven times, between 1817 & 1842, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Free Accepted Masons of Tennessee. He was a Charter member of Royal Arch Chapter in Tennessee. In 1824, he published the *Masonic Manual*. While he was the Mayor of Nashville, 1825-1827, he was on the welcoming committee for the May 1825 visit of the Marquis de Lafayette to Nashville.

His support of educational development in Nashville was well known, from helping to initiate the Library Company in 1810 to founding the Tennessee Antiquarian Society as well as establishing colleges throughout the state. In October 1845, he started a learned newspaper called *The Orthopolitan*. One of his last efforts was the opening of the Merchants and Reading Room, a subscription library in the city during 1849.

Eliza Tannehill died on January 26, 1843. Wilkins, who suffered from blindness during his last years, was welcomed into the home of his daughter and son-in-law. In 1850 he was living in the home of William T. Berry, his wife Mary and their seven children.

Wilkins Tannehill died on June 2, 1858, at age 71 years. His funeral was held at the Presbyterian Church. His obituary noted that “more individuals attended the services at the church and the cemetery than comprise the city’s total population.” At the time Nashville had almost 17,000 people. Newspapers throughout the state carried articles about Tannehill. In his *Republican Banner & Nashville Whig* obituary, readers were reminded that “Mr. Tannehill was well known throughout the State as a journalist and literary writer.” The Masons in Springfield, Tennessee, passed a Resolution: “To clothe the Jewels of this Lodge in mourning and wear the badge of mourning during that period.” The Masonic brethren placed a handsome obelisk at City Cemetery near the obelisk for his wife Eliza.

#### Sources

*Tennessee Encyclopedia*. On-line

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United Lodge No.95 Free & Accepted Masons. On-line

*The Tannehill Family*. Octavia Zollicoffer Bond. 1909. City Cemetery website

U.S. Census 1850. Davidson County, TN. Household of Wm. T. Berry

Obituaries. Eliza and Wilkins Tannehill. City Cemetery website

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