

James Croggon

(11 Oct 1835 - 22 Aug 1916)

The Evening Star, June 19, 1909

**Croggon's Picture Presented
Founder is Honored by Sons of Jonadab
Original of Portrait Responds to
Tributes of Associates—Tells of
Origin of Order.**



James Croggon, one of the five founders of the Order of the Sons of Jonadab, was honored last night by members of Pioneer Council, No. 1, in the ceremonies attending the presentation of his picture to the council.

The picture, a large photograph embellished in water colors by an artist member of the order, heavily framed in oak, was presented by a committee and received by the worthy chief. Several speeches were made in opening meeting, and at the completion of the exercises refreshments were served. Members of Mr. Croggon's family and friends from other councils were present.

Mr. Croggon and Judge Samuel C. Mills are the survivors of the five men who found the order September 13, 1867. There is a bust of Judge Mills in the council room above the seat of the worthy chief.

Committee Procures Portrait

Several weeks ago a movement was started to pay a similar tribute to Mr. Croggon. The matter was placed in the hands of a committee, composed of A.H. Ragn, B.F. Larcombe and Frank J. McKenna. They obtained an excellent photograph of Mr. Croggon, had it enlarged and embellished by Leopold Oljeska, an artist member of the council.

Worthy Chief C.F. Sudwarth presided at the meeting last night, and after an informal opening, the committee made its report and presented the picture. As chairman of the committee, Mr. Ragan, making the presentation, said in part:

"We are sure that as time passes this picture will be treasured as our tribute to an associate of Judge Mills in founding this, the Pioneer Council No. 1, Sons of

Jonadab, which has proved to be a power in the emancipation of the drinking man. In the reconstruction period in 1867-70 there was much drinking in Washington and especially about the city hall or council house, which was at that time a stamping ground for drinking men.

“Numerous saloons in the vicinity were well patronized. It was about the courthouse that there was the most need for temperance and missionary work. Among the parties concerned in correcting this evil were Brother Mills and Brother Croggon.

Foundation of Order

“The idea of the formation of a new temperance organization found favor. These two men with three others laid the foundation of our order in 1867.

“In a few weeks the numbers increased and a hall was hired. The first meetings were held Saturday nights, the time men usually spend in drinking. Since then the order has flourished.”

In accepting the picture for the council, Worthy Chief Sudwarth declared that Mr. Croggon and the other founders of the order builded better than they knew, and that the superstructure that arose on their foundation far surpassed their original conception. He said that their plan had succeeded so well that they must have been guided by a Higher Power.

He told of the growth of the order and of the gratitude its members felt toward Mr. Croggon and the other founders. To show the work accomplished by the order he compared the conditions existing today with those that obtained just following the civil war, when, he said, almost everybody in Washington drank more or less.

Mr. Croggon's Response

Mr. Croggon was then called upon. As he arose to speak he was heartily applauded. He expressed his appreciation of the honor that had been conferred upon him by his brother members of Pioneer Council and then gave some personal recollections of the days when the order was started.

He told of how the five men who founded it met September 13, 1867, took the pledge and then entered upon the work of inducing others to join them. In order to organize the work and make it effective, each man offered suggestions and these were collected and compared.

From them a ritual for the newly formed order was evolved. Commonplace emblems and peculiar songs were adopted and ceremonies prepared which were calculated to make a lasting impression upon those who took the pledge and were initiated in the order.

Mr. Croggon explained that one of the characteristic features of the Son of Jonadah, which distinguishes it from other temperance bodies, is that a violation of the pledge works permanent expulsion. This, he said, has done more than anything else to help the members of the order in keeping their obligations.

The Sons of Jonadab, like all other orders, he said, had its ups and downs, but it was now flourishing and prosperous and had many noted reformations to its credit.

A letter was read from Judge Mills, who expressed regret that he was unable to be present. A verbal message from him was brought by Judge Nichols, who spoke of the lasting benefits of the order and of the gratitude due its founders.

The Evening Star, October 12, 1910, p. 18

Veteran Report Is Seventy-Five Years Old

James Croggon Was Member of Staff of The Star From 1862 to 1894

James Croggon one of the veteran newspapermen of this city, and one of the five founders of the Order of Jonadabs, celebrated his seventy-fifty birthday yesterday.

Mr. Croggon was born October 11, 1835, on the site where the Sun building now stands, on F street northwest, his parents being Henry B. and Mary A. Croggon. While a boy he attended Henshaw's Public School, located at that time at 14th and G streets northwest. This was one of Washington's first schools.

In 1862 Mr. Croggon entered the service of The Star and was an active member of the reportorial staff until 1894. Since then he has written many articles, not least of these being his articles on Old Washington, which have appeared in The Star at various times.

Mr. Croggon celebrated his birthday quietly, a few of his friends and relatives being present at his home yesterday evening. Many tokens of remembrance were sent to him. He is a member of the Oldest Inhabitants' Association and the Veteran Volunteer Firemen.

The Evening Star, October 11, 1913, p. 7

**James Croggon Observes Seventy-Eighth Birthday
Newspaper Man First Became Reporter on The Star in 1862 --
Still Contributes Articles**

James Croggon, one of the oldest if not the oldest newspaper man in Washington, celebrated his seventy-eighth birthday anniversary today. Although not now regularly employed, Mr. Croggon is still an active writer and his articles on "Old Washington" appear at frequent intervals in The Star.

Mr. Croggon celebrated the anniversary of his birth quietly, only a few friends and relatives dropping in to wish him "many returns of the day." Mr. Croggon began work as a member of The Star's reportorial staff in 1862 and continued his work as a member of the active staff until 1894.

Wrote Civil War Articles

The veteran reporter wrote many of the articles which appeared at the time of the civil war and recorded the progress of that great struggle. In this capacity he came in contact with a large number of the prominent figures in the war.

He was educated in Henshaw's Public School, one of the first schools of the District, and which stood at 14th and G streets at that time. He was born on the site where the building at 1315-17 F street now stands, his parents being Henry B. and Mary A. Croggon.

Mr. Croggon is one of the five founders of the Order of Jonadabs. He also is a member of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia and of the Veteran Volunteer Fireman's Association. He has three daughters, all of this city, and two sisters, Mrs. Elizabeth Welch of Pelham N.Y. and Mrs. Belle Langley of Decatur, Neb.

The Evening Star, June 16, 1914, p. 22

**Knocked Down By Auto
James Croggon, Veteran Newspaper Man, Sustains Severe Shock**

James Croggon, one of the oldest newspaper men in Washington, and for years a reporter on The Star, was knocked down at the corner of 10th and F streets Saturday afternoon by an automobile.

Mr. Croggon was walking east on F street and at the corner of 10th started to cross the street in order to get in the shade. He had just stepped from the curb when a big limousine backed out from the curb and knocked him to the ground. He was assisted to his feet and, while no bones were broken, he sustained a severe nervous shock and required the services of a physician.

The Evening Star, September 14, 1915, p. 20

**Sons of Jonadab Honor Only Surviving Founder
James Croggon, First Secretary of Order Presented With a Purse of Gold at His Home**

James Croggon, only surviving founder of the Sons of Jonadab, and first secretary of that organization, was presented with a purse of gold last night by a delegation on behalf of the entire order,

the occasion being the forty-eighth anniversary of its organization. The presentation took place at Mr. Croggon's home, 106 C street northeast, and came entirely as a surprise to him.

C.F. Sudwarth, sovereign chief of the Sons of Jonadab, in making the presentation, spoke in most complimentary terms of the work accomplished by Mr. Croggon and his early associates in founding the temperance order.

Came to Pay Honor and Homage

"We have not much in the way of archives," said Mr. Sudwarth, "but your deeds are known throughout the city. Everywhere there are citadels of happiness, raised where you have saved some man. So we have come here tonight to pay you homage and honor. We want to express our appreciation, as best we may, of the work which you did in founding this order.

"I am certain that even the most sanguine of its founders never anticipated seeing it grow to the size it has, reaching out in every direction. Results of your work are to be seen on every side."

When Mr. Croggon had recovered sufficiently from his surprise he thanked Mr. Sudwarth, and then proceeded to relate the early history of the order. He gave many interesting reminiscences and anecdotes of the time when the organization was in its infancy. He also related the history of the ritual, and explained he was the first initiated, acting as a "dummy."

Gives Order First Record Books

During the evening Mr. Croggon presented the association's first three record books to the order, T.L. Farley, recording secretary of Pioneer Council receiving them. The books, their pages yellowed by the years, were inspected with great interest. A letter of regret that he could not attend was read from John B. McCarthy.

Edward Ray, who was initiated into Pioneer Council last night by a team from Empire Council, was introduced to Mr. Croggon as the "Baby" member, thus bringing the oldest and youngest members together.

In addition to those already named, the delegation included Charles Brown, C.A. Rossiter, Robert Bilsborough, William Anderson, H.E. Talbott, A.H. Ragan, H.M. Pumphrey, George W. Harker and S.B. Taylor.

Croggon. On Tuesday, August 22, 1916 after a long illness, James Croggon. Funeral from his late residence 106 C street northeast, Thursday afternoon, August 24 at 2:30 o'clock. Interment at Congressional Cemetery.

The Evening Star, August 22, 1916

James Croggon Dies, Result of Paralysis

Was Veteran Newspaper Reporter, for Years Connected With the Star

Wrote Graphic Story of President Garfield's Assassination —

Funeral Services Thursday Afternoon

James Croggon, who for many years was a reporter for The Star, died at 8:40 o'clock this morning at his home, 108 C street northeast, as a result of several attacks of paralysis, the last two having occurred Tuesday and yesterday. Mr. Croggon, who was approaching eighty-one years of age, had expected the end for some time, and had made such preparations as indicating his wishes as to pallbearers, so as to include some of the representatives of The Star, with whom he had been closely associated; members of the order of the Sons of Jonadab and of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of

Columbia and other organizations. Members of Mr. Croggon's family were with him at the time of his death as was Charles T. Smith.

An incident connected with the work with which he had been so long and faithfully identified was his habit of insisting during his last days, even when he lacked the strength, that *The Star* should be brought to him and placed in his hands each afternoon.

Funeral Services Thursday

The funeral will take place Thursday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock from the family residence. In the absence of Rev. Francis M. McCoy of Waugh M.E. Church--of which church Mr. Croggon was a lifelong member--the officiating clergyman will be Rev. L.M. Chambers of McKendree M.E. Church. Interment will be in the Congressional cemetery. The pallbearers will be G.A. Lyon, Charles M. Shinn, C.P. Sudwarth, W.M. Hairston, S.H. Walker, Washington Topham, Charles T. Smith and Benjamin W. Reiss.

One of the most important pieces of work done by Mr. Croggon for *The Star* was the reporting of the assassination of President Garfield. Mr. Croggon was in the old Pennsylvania railroad station at the time Guiteau fired the shot which resulted in the President's death, having been assigned to report the departure of President Garfield from Washington, and as he was on the spot, in connection with that work, he sent to *The Star*, by chance-gathered messengers and in other ways through the enormous crowds, vivid, first-hand pictures of the scenes connected with the assassination.

Many young newspaper men and others eagerly listened to the reminiscences of "Uncle Jimmie," as he was familiarly known, of the reporting of the Garfield assassination, and how he got his reports to *The Star* by throwing them out of a window on the second floor of the Pennsylvania depot when the police lines prevented egress from the building.

Began Newspaper Work in 1862

Mr. Croggon was probably the oldest newspaper man in Washington. He entered the work in 1862, writing many stories of the civil war and coming into contact with many of the historic characters of that time. He continued in active newspaper work until 1894, at which time he retired. He wrote special articles, however, until July, 1915. Probably the best known of these were those in a series on "Old Washington." During his long service he met many prominent persons and had many interesting experiences. His memory for names, dates and other data was remarkable and stood him in excellent stead in his reminiscent work.

He was a native of Washington, having been born October 11, 1835, on the site now designated as 1315-1317 F street northwest. He attended Henshaw's public school, one of the earliest public schools established here. During his life he saw hundreds of acres converted from pasture lands and wood lots to business places and residence sites. He began his career as a clerk in the grocery establishment of the late B.W. Reed, which was located on the present site of the Ebbitt House, but he soon turned to journalism.

Was a Sole Surviving Founder

The veteran writer was one of the founders of the Order of Jonadab, of which was the sole surviving founder at the time of his decease. His also took a keen interest in the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia, of which he had been a member for many years. He also belonged to the Veteran Fireman's Association.

Mr. Croggon was the eldest of the family of Henry B. and Mary A. Croggon. Two sisters survive him, Mrs. Elizabeth Welch of Pelham, N.Y., and Mrs. Belle Langley of Decature, Neb. Two brothers, Henry and John Croggon, both of whom were for many years employed in the Treasury Department, are dead.

Mr. Croggon leaves one son, James H. Croggon, of Glenburnie, Md., and three daughters, Misses Louisa, Fannie and Josephine H. Croggon, all of this city.

The Evening Star, August 24, 1916, p. 7

Funeral Rites Held For James Croggon

Sons of Jonadab, of Which He Was Sole Surviving Founder, Conduct Services at the Grave
The funeral of James Croggon, who was for many years a reporter for The Star, and who probably was the oldest newspaper reporter in Washington, took place this afternoon from the family residence, 108 C street northeast, at 2:30 o'clock, interment being in Congressional cemetery. Mr. Croggon, who died early Tuesday morning, at the age of eighty-one years, as a result of paralysis, enjoyed a wide acquaintance in Washington, and many persons connected with the newspaper profession, as well as others who are in public life, attended the funeral services.

Miss Bertie Thompson, the soloist of Waugh M.E. Church, of which church Mr. Croggon was a lifelong member, sang "Face to Face" at the services at the house, which were conducted by Rev. L.M. Chambers of McKendree M. E. Church, in the absence from the city of Rev. Francis M. McCoy of Waugh Church. Representatives of the Order of the Sons of Jonadab of which Mr. Croggon was the sole surviving founder, conducted special services at Congressional cemetery. Representatives of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia and other organizations of which Mr. Croggon was a member attended the funeral, the youngest reporters and others on The Star also being present as a mark of respect to Mr. Croggon's long service on The Star.

The pallbearers were G.A. Lyon, Charles M. Shinn, C.F. Sudwarth, W.M. Hairston, S.H. Walker, Washington Topham, Charles T. Smith and Benjamin W. Reiss.

Forman, Stephen M., **A Guide to Civil War Washington**, Washington, DC: Elliott & Clark Publishing, 1995.

Croggon was an Evening Star reporter who viewed Booth's body at the U.S. Arsenal.