

William H. Cross

(20 Jan 1845 – 18 Jan 1884)

The Washington Post, July 18, 1884, p. 1

Lieut. Greely Found

Seven of His Party Rescued After Seventeen Had Starved To Death

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Sergt. William H. Cross was born at Washington in 1845, and was raised in this city. He was always a roving disposition, and had made many voyages as engineer on board different ships. His first voyage was to China and Japan, which he undertook before attaining his twentieth year. He was engineer on the Tallapoosa for some years, and in April, 1877, was removed to the Powhatan, and received a gold medal for his noble performance of duty during a fearful storm which struck the ship while off Cape Hatteras. He remained at his post as engineer through the storm and kept the vessel afloat by his strenuous efforts. He was strict in the performance of duty, of a joyous disposition and a great favorite with his messmates. His wife did not know of his death until late last night, having gone down the river with an excursion early yesterday morning. When she received the sad news she was almost prostrated with grief. It was carried to her by her brother, who was called into Gen Hazen's office in the morning and told of the disaster.

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THE LADY FRANKLIN BAY ARCTIC EXPEDITION

Seated (left to right): Private Maurice Connell, Sergeant David L. Brainard, Lieutenant Frederick F. Kislingbury, Lieutenant Adolphus W. Greely, Lieutenant James B. Lockwood, Sergeant Edward Israel, Sergeant Winfield S. Jewell, Sergeant George W. Rice

Standing: Private William Whisler, Private William A. Ellis, Private Jacob Bender, Sergeant William H. Cross, Private Julius Fredericks, Sergeant David Linn, Private Henry Biederbick, Private Charles B. Henry, Private Francis Long, Sergeant David C. Ralston, Corporal Nicholas Salor, Sergeant Hampden S. Gardiner, Corporal Joseph Ellison. Dr. Octave Pavy, who joined the expedition in Greenland, is missing from the group.

The Evening Star, July 31, 1884

Arranging to Receive Cross' Remains

At a meeting of Franklin Lodge, No. 2, Knights of Pythias, at McCauley's Hall last evening, a committee was appointed to receive the remains of William H. Cross, who was the first member of the Greely party to succumb to starvation and exposure. Cross was past chancellor of Franklin Lodge, and a member of the grand lodge. He was a member also of the endowment rank of the order, which will give the family about \$2,000. The committee will wait upon Mrs. Cross and confer with her in relation to a public reception of the body. If she offers no objection it is proposed to have the body lie in state in the lodge room for at least 24 hours.

The Washington Post, July 31 1884

Honors To Sergeant Cross

His Lodge Making Preparations to Receive His Body

William H. Cross, the first member of the Greely party to succumb to starvation and exposure, was Past Chancellor of Franklin Lodge No. 2, Knights of Pythias, and a member of the Grand Lodge. At a meeting of Franklin Lodge in McCauley's Hall, Capitol Hill, last night a committee was appointed to receive the remains of Cross upon their arrival next week. The committee will also wait upon Mrs. Cross and confer with her in relation to a public reception of the body. If she offers no objection it is proposed to have the body lie in state in the lodge room for the last twenty-four hours. Cross was also a member of the endowment rank of the order. This will give his family \$2,000. If a public reception is decided upon lodges from Baltimore, Richmond and other neighboring cities will be invited to attend.

The Evening Star, August 6, 1884

The March of the Arctic Dead

From the N.Y. Herald, Today

Medical Director Sutherland, U.S.A., who is stationed at Governor's Island, yesterday wrote to the health authorities requesting permission for the bodies of the "Arctic Dead" to pass through this city. The application states that the remains will probably arrive here tomorrow and will be taken to the several destinations without delay.

Dr. Nagle, of the bureau of vital statistics, issued permits for the transfer of the bodies as ... Sergeant Wm. Cross, general service United States army, to Washington, D.C.; consigned to Mrs. Mary Cross. ...

The Evening Star, August 7, 1884

One of the Dead Arctic Heroes

Arrangements to Receive Sergeant Cross' Remains

At a meeting of Franklin Lodge, No. 2, Knights of Pythias, at McCauley's hall, Capitol Hill, last evening, the committee appointed to arrange for the reception of the remains of Sergeant William H. Cross, one of the dead of the Greely expedition, reported that Mrs. Cross consented to have her husband's remains lie in state for at least twenty-four hours under the supervision of the order of which he was a member. In view of this it is probable that the committee will make arrangements to have the body remain for that length of time in one of the East Washington churches. The committee also reported that the body would probably arrive in Washington tomorrow, and that the funeral will take place Sunday afternoon, interment to be made at the Congressional cemetery. The following committee of the lodge--William J. Ferguson, William C. Peake, John Jost, Andrew Lauxman and John Minnix--will receive the body upon its arrival.

The Evening Star, August 8, 1884

The Artic Heroes

The Relief Ships Arrive in New York Harbor

Distinguished Persons to Receive the Remains of the Dead Heroes

The Evening Star, August 11, 1884

Sergeant Cross' Funeral

The Arctic Hero Laid to Rest

The Funeral Services Yesterday

The funeral of Sergeant Wm. H. Cross, one of the dead of the Greely expedition, which took place yesterday was largely attended. The street in front of the little house, No. 374 2d street southeast, which was Cross' home, was filled with people. From six o'clock in the morning until the services were held at half past three o'clock there was a constant stream of people passing in and out of the house to view the casket, which was placed in the parlor. The iron casket was covered with an American flag upon which was placed a Knights of Pythias sword and a number of elegant floral pieces. The most conspicuous floral offering was a large mat or pillow of white flowers with a design upon its face representing two signal flags crossed and the inscription "Arctic, 82-84, S.C." This was sent by members of the signal corps. Over the mantel was a large photograph, representing the Greely party. It was taken before the members of the expedition left Washington, and this copy was hung in its present place by Cross himself. It was necessary when the hour for the funeral arrived to close the doors of the house on account of the large number of persons who pressed for admittance. Among those who took part in the services in the house, besides the members of the family and their immediate friends were Prof. J.E. Nourse, of the Navy, and Capt. P.H. Ray, of the Point Barrow expedition. Rev. C.D. Andrews of Christ P.E. church, read the Episcopal funeral services. Mr. Andrews made a brief address referring to the dead as a hero of duty, and drawing from the story of his death and the rescue of the living members of the party an illustration of what Christian endeavor and Christian love should be. Prof. Nourse also spoke briefly, referring to the moral lessons of the occasion and offered a prayer. The casket was borne to the hearse by the following pallbearers: Sergeants John J. Evan and C.P. Cronk, of the signal corps, and William C. Peak, R.C. Langley, B.W. Carpenter, W.J. Ferguson, K.C. Kraft and J.W. Cox, of Franklin Lodge, K. of P., of which deceased was a member. The funeral procession was marshalled by Sergeant Major Dunn, of the Marine corps and headed by the Marine Band. It consisted of the uniformed rank, Knights of Pythias, Sir Knight Commander G.J.L. Foxwell commanding, Franklin and Harmony Lodges, K.P., and a long line of carriages. A detail of sixteen men from the signal corps under Sergeants Rotheril and Cobb, attended the hearse as a guard of honor. A large concourse of people assembled at the Congressional Cemetery to witness the final rites, which were brief. Rev. Mr. Andrews read the Episcopal burial service, and the Knights of Pythias funeral service was celebrated by Past Supreme Chancellor Rathbone, the founder of the order, who initiated Cross in Franklin Lodge. The casket was then placed in a vault.

The New York Times, August 11, 1884

The Arctic Heroes At Rest

Sergts. Cross and Lynn, Corp. Ellison, and Private Ellis Buried

The Washington Post, August 10, 1884, p. 8

Cross, The Arctic Hero

His Remains Lying in State Yesterday – The Obsequies Today

The remains of Sergt. W.H. Cross, the first of the Greely Expedition to succumb to the rigors of the Arctic climate, arrived at the Baltimore and Potomac depot at 6 o'clock yesterday morning and were met by a delegation of five from Franklin Lodge No. 2, Knights of Pythias. They were conveyed to Odd Fellows' Hall, East Washington, where they lay in state until 9 p.m., when they were taken to the residence of the widow of the deceased, No. 324 Second street southeast, from which place the funeral will take place at 3 p.m. today. The guard of honor at the hall consisted of Messrs. William C. Peake, W.J. Ferguson, John Minnis, A. Lauxman, and John Jost, all of Franklin Lodge. The outer casket, there being a metallic one in which the remains are inclosed, is of thick iron, heavily riveted, and bearing a silver plate on which is inscribed:

William H. Cross, Sergeant U.S.A.,
Died January 18, 1884, Aged 39.

Above the plate is a silver representation of a knight's helmet, and a spear and an axe crossed. The weight of the body and two caskets is about seven hundred pounds. An American flag covered the lower part of the casket yesterday, and upon it lay the sash, unsheathed sword and scabbard of a Knight of Pythias. During the day fully one thousand persons visited the hall, hoping to get a view of the remains, but early in the day a telegram had been received from New York not to open the casket under any circumstances, the body doubtless being in an advanced stage of decomposition.

Lieut. B.M. Pursell, by direction of the Acting Chief Signal Officer, Capt. S.M. Mills, yesterday ordered a detachment of eighteen men, in charge of First Sergt. Otto Haltnorth, to escort the remains of the late Sergt. Cross as a guard of honor. Sergt. J.J. Ryan and Private C.P. Cronk, of the corps, have been designated to act as pall-bearers on the part of the bureau, and in recognition of the distinguished services rendered by the deceased. The members of the corps have ordered a beautiful floral design, consisting of a pillow of white roses, with crossed flags, the staffs and border of the flags being in pink with white flowers surrounded by a red cluster, and with an arch above the flags, inscribed, "Arctic, 1881-84, from S.C.," the initials of the Signal Corps.

It is expected that the whole of the order of the Knights of Pythias, including the Uniform Rank, will attend the funeral which will be under the direction of Franklin Lodge No. 2. The services at the house will be conducted by Rev. R. Andrews, rector of Christ P.E. Church, of which the deceased was a member, and at the Congressional Cemetery where the remains will be interred by Past Chancellor N.A. Stevens.

The remains of Lieut. Lockwood also arrived yesterday morning on their way to Annapolis, where the final interment will take place.

The treasurer of the Mutual Benefit Association of the Signal Corps has transmitted to the heirs of the late Sergt. W.S. Jewell, one of the unfortunate members of the expedition, \$250, to defray the funeral expenses of their comrade and associate.

The Washington Post, August 11, 1884, p. 1

An Arctic Hero Rests

Five Thousand People At The Grave of Sergeant Cross

A Touching Popular Tribute to the Brave Washington Boy

Who Found His Death Amid Arctic Snows While Nobly Serving His Country

Amid the strains of mournful music and followed by sorrowing relatives and thousands of sympathizing friends the mortal remains of Sergt. William H. Cross, one of the noblest of the

unfortunate victims of the Greely Arctic expedition, were yesterday borne to their final resting place in the city of his nativity. All day long the neat little cottage on Second street southeast, where the stricken widow resides, was thronged with people, who came to testify their respect for the memory of the heroic sergeant, and their sympathy with those directly bereaved by his sad fate.

It is safe to say that during the day at least 5,000 people looked upon the grim, iron casket inclosing the remains. It reposed in the cozy little parlor of the family residence, 324 Second street southeast, the most sadly interesting ornament of which was a large photograph on the center of the mantelpiece representing with the exception of the surgeon, the entire Greely party, in which group Sergt. Cross is represented standing with others in the rear, the likeness, it is said, being an excellent one. The picture was made in this city just prior to the sailing of the expedition.

The floral tributes were many and beautiful, the largest and handsomest offering being a huge pillow resting at the foot of the casket of white flowers, the gift of the Signal Corps, of which deceased was a member. In the center of the pillow was the floral representation of two crossed signal flags with purple outlines and white grounds, each inclosing a small square of red. Above the flags were the letters and figures in purple, "Arctic '81-84," and below them the letters "S.C." At the head of the casket was a smaller white pillow bearing in purple the word "Rest." A cross was contributed by Col. Rockwell, Superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds, another by Mr. Pruden of the Executive Mansion, and another by a sister of the deceased. There was a bouquet, the gift of Prof. J.E. Nourse, United States Navy. Among the floral offerings was the floral design of a heart composed of white flowers, on which was the touchingly suggestive word "Papa," the tribute of little Charlie, a youth of thirteen, the only child of the deceased.

The detail of sixteen men from the Signal Corps in charge of Sergts. Holtnorth and Cobb, arrived at the residence at 3 p.m., and was soon followed by the Uniformed Rank, Knights of Pythias, preceded by the Marine Band, who were in turn followed by Franklin Lodge No. 2 and Harmony Lodge, K.P., all being drawn upon in line during the services. The pallbearers were Sergt. John J. Ryan and C.P. Cronk, of the Signal Corps, and William C. Peake, R.C. Langley, B.W. Carpenter, W.J. Ferguson, H.C. Kraft and J.W. Cox, of Franklin Lodge, of which deceased was a member. Sergt. Maj. Dunn, of the Marine Corps, acted as marshal for the entire procession, the Uniformed Rank being commanded by Sir Knight Commander G.J.L. Foxwell. The funeral was conducted by Mr. E.M. Boteler, undertaker.

The funeral service of the Episcopal church was read with more than usual impressiveness by Rev. Charles C. Andrews, rector of Christ Church, after which he made a few remarks. The deceased, he said, had come back to rest among the scenes of his boyhood from the frozen North with all its icy terrors. Sergt. Cross was a hero in its best sense, because he was a stalwart, unflinching champion of duty. Men like this are glorious in their life and example. Who would leave the pleasures of home, of family and friends to encounter the perils of such a journey unless he were nerved up to it by a powerful and unconquerable conviction of duty? He went out to aid in opening up the realm of science; he went out to do what in him lay toward enlightening the world. There is much in his example for Christians to ponder over. If he could face indescribable perils and brave death itself from a sense of duty what an example it is to Christians to persevere in seeking a higher life, a nobler existence beyond the portals of death. The occasion should seek our conscience, our very souls. This is no time for eulogy. If it were not for human love these mortal remains might now be resting in Arctic snows. And we have Christ's still nobler love, and it is a sweet thought that love has its mighty enterprises, and that this love of God in its breadth and power surpasseth all human understanding. May that love be developed and understood in order that we may seek to be, in a measure, worthy of the great boon. Men and women are dying around us every day a Godless death. Let us, too, go out and find the lost and dying souls of men. Mr. Andrews closed with a touching allusion to the bereaved household.

Prof. J.E. Nourse closed with a few remarks. He said he more readily attended the obsequies of one in the ranks than those of the highest officer. He had no personal acquaintance with the deceased, but

he knew that he had braved death for his country, and there could be no nobler sacrifice. The expedition, as disastrous as it was, had achieved grand results. He had laid six members of his own family to rest, and knew the keen anguish of bereavement; but sorrow should be assuaged in the presence of the thought that the dead had not lived in vain. He then made a brief prayer, after which the cortege moved to the Congressional Cemetery in the following order: Marine Band, Hearse and Pall-Bearers, Uniformed Rank, Harmony Lodge, K.P., Franklin Lodge, No. 2, K.P., and citizens generally.

Upon arriving at the cemetery the Knights and signal Corps detachment were draw up in line on Coombes avenue, down which the remains were conveyed to a public vault, the band meanwhile playing a dirge. On their arrival at the gate of the vault the Rev. Mr. Andrews repeated the usual service at the grave, and was followed by Mr. Justus H. Rathbone, Past Supreme Chancellor and founder of the order of the Knights of Pythias, who read the service of the order. During his reading he cast a bunch of evergreens upon the casket, his example being followed by other Knights. The remains were then temporarily deposited in the vault.

There were present as mourners at the funeral Mrs. Cross, widow of the deceased, and her son, Charlie, the mother and Mrs. Collins, and two other sisters of the deceased and other but more distant relatives.

Gen. Hazen, chief signal officer, being absent from the city, was not present at the funeral. Among those in attendance was Capt. P.H. Ray, of the Eighth Infantry, U.S.A., who was with the Point Barrow expedition, which went out the same year that Greely did - in 1881.