

## John L. Ford

( - 7 Aug 1896)

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**Ford.** Suddenly, on Monday, August 10, 1896, at 11:30 a.m., John Lee Ford, beloved son of Clem S. and Alice Ford, aged 18 years and 4 months.

Ere sin could harm or sorrow fade,  
Death came with friendly care,  
The opening bud to heaven conveyed  
And bade our Johnnie there.

By His Brother-InLaw, H. Bradley

Funeral from his parents' residence, 1036 Jefferson street, West Washington, Wednesday, 3:30 o'clock p.m. Friends and relatives are invited.

*The Evening Star, August 8, 1896*

### **A Serious Shooting Affair**

#### **Columbus Fearson Dangerously Wounds Young John Ford A Georgetown Tragedy Caused by the Unlawful Attentions of Two Men to One Woman**

Columbus Fearson, a white man 64 years of age, shot and perhaps fatally wounded John L. Ford, a nineteen-year-old white boy, about 8 o'clock last evening, in Cissel's alley, between 32d, Potomac, Water and Grace streets. The affair grew out of the young man paying attention to a woman with whom Fearson was living. Two shots were fired, only one taking effect, striking the right side of the abdomen, passing through the bladder and lodging in the intestines, not far from the skin. Fearson did not attempt to escape after committing the crime, and a few minutes afterward was placed under arrest by Policeman Seymour.

Fearson, who is perhaps better known as Lum, has a wife and three children living, residing on 21st street near L street, but he has not lived at home for several years. For the past two months he has been living in Cissel's alley with Mrs. Lillie M. Cooper, the wife of an engineer on the U.S.S. Maine, a woman well known in that locality.

Ford and Mrs. Cooper have been quite intimate, it is alleged, and the frequent calls of the young man at the house were objected to by Fearson. On more than one occasion he had warned the young man to cease paying visits, but the warnings were unheeded. Only last Saturday the two had an altercation, in which, it is claimed by Fearson, Ford struck him with a stone. Sunday another warning was given, and by way of emphasis Fearson drew a pistol and threatened to shoot the boy if he showed up again. The young man stated that he would visit the house as often as he pleased, and he was carrying out this intention when shot.

### *The Fatal Visit*

The visit which culminated yesterday in the shooting began as early as 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Ford called at the house, and is said to have remained with the woman until after 6 o'clock. He went home, and returned shortly before 8 o'clock. Having some hesitation about entering the place, fearing that Fearson was around, he stood on the outside of the house and whistled for the woman. Instead of seeing her, he saw her irate paramour, who raised a window, and drawing a revolver, fired two shots in rapid succession. Ford immediately sank to the ground, but partially recovering his strength, managed to drag himself to the front of the house, where he fell on the sidewalk unconscious. He was picked up a

few minutes later by the police and was hurriedly driven to the Emergency Hospital. The sounds of the shots attracted quite a crowd to the scene, and many people present solemnly remarked that something had occurred which they had expected to see long before.

Mrs. Cooper, the woman over whom the shooting was caused, is about thirty years of age, and has an attractive face. She left her husband about a year ago, having been living with Fearson nearly half of that time. She met Ford about three months ago. After the shooting she disappeared, and has not since been seen.

#### *The Injured Man*

John Ford, the injured man, is a blacksmith by trade, and lives at 1036 Jefferson street. He bears a good reputation. He lived at the home of his sister, who was aware of his association with the Cooper woman, and repeatedly urged and begged him to cease visiting her, but to no avail. At the hospital he did not express any fear when told that his wound was very dangerous, and would perhaps result fatally.

Lum Fearson is a well-known man and has lived in Georgetown all his life. At present he is employed as a rigger, but in years past had a rather shady occupation. During the robbery of the paymaster's boat on the canal in 1873 he was one of the main witnesses who sent the principals to the penitentiary for a long time. They threatened to kill him when their term expired, but nothing was ever done. He was also connected, so it is claimed, with the stealing of the books and other papers of the old board of public works, before the present form of government in the District, and placing them under the door of Mr. Columbus Alexander, a well-known resident of this section of the city. He was employed by the people behind the scheme. Fearson had a reputation in other ways, but of late has kept himself straight.

#### *Fearson Committed to Jail*

Today Columbus Fearson was taken to the Police Court on a charge of attempted murder. Because of the condition of young Ford the case was continued and the defendant was committed to jail to await the result of his injuries without bond.

*The Evening Star, August 10, 1896*

#### **The Charge is Murder**

#### **Columbus Fearson Must Answer for John L. Ford's Death**

#### **The Latter Dies at the Emergency Hospital From the Effects of the Old Man's Bullet**

John L. Ford, the nineteen-year-old youth who was shot Friday evening last by Columbus Fearson at the house of the latter in Cissel's alley, situated between 32d and Potomac and Grace and Water streets, Georgetown, died at the Emergency Hospital this morning from the effects of his wounds. Fearson, who did not attempt to escape after shooting Ford, and who claimed to have acted in self-defense, is in jail, and the charge of attempted murder against him was changed to that of murder when the authorities were apprised of his victim's death.

The cause of the shooting was alleged by Fearson to have grown out of young Ford's attentions to Mrs. Cooper, who was Fearson's housekeeper. It was said that Ford and the woman were very intimate, and that Fearson, who has a wife and family residing on 21st street near L northwest, with whom he has not lived for several years, objected to it. Ford, however, continued to call frequently at the house despite Fearson's warnings, and a week ago last Saturday the men had an altercation, in which Ford struck his older rival with a stone.

The next day Fearson again warned Ford not to come to his house, and displaying a pistol, declared he would shoot Ford if he did so. To this the latter retorted that he would call on Mrs. Cooper when he pleased.

#### *Story of the Shooting*

Last Friday afternoon Ford spent some time with Mrs. Cooper in Fearson's house, leaving about 6 o'clock. He returned shortly before 8 o'clock, and stood on the outside whistling for the woman. It is said that while Ford was thus engaged Fearson raised a window and fired two shots from a revolver. Ford fell to the pavement and dragged himself to the front of the Fearson house, where he became unconscious and was picked up a few minutes later by the police and removed to Emergency Hospital.

At that institution it was found that one of the shots had taken effect, the ball entering the right side of the abdomen, tearing through the bladder and intestines and lodging on the left side under the skin. Immediate steps were taken to save Ford's life, and an operation was performed, but he was beyond medical relief, and sank steadily until death came this morning.

During his conscious periods he said nothing of the affray, save to declare that his back was turned when the shots were fired. He was kept alive by transfusion, rallying somewhat Saturday evening, but yesterday he became delirious and his parents and his brother and sister were summoned to his bedside. Ford was a blacksmith by trade, and resided at 1036 Jefferson street with his sister. His intimacy with the Cooper woman was known to his family and he was repeatedly urged to break it off, but declined. Persons living in the vicinity of Cissel's alley also saw the course affairs were taking, and were expecting a culmination of them like that reached.

#### *The Principals in the Tragedy*

Columbus Fearson, or "Lum," as he is familiarly called is well known to the police. He was connected with several affairs of an alleged disreputable nature in past years, and it is claimed that by turning state's evidence in 1873 he sent the other principals in the robbery of the paymaster's boat on the Chesapeake and Ohio canal to the penitentiary for long terms. Of late he is said to have been leading a better life and following his occupation, which is that of a rigger. Fearson is nearly sixty-five years old.

Mrs. Lillie M. Cooper, over whom the difficulty arose, is a good-looking woman, about thirty years old, who left her husband, an engineer on the U.S. battleship Maine, a year and a half ago and has been living with Fearson for the last six months. She met Ford three months ago. Mrs. Cooper disappeared after the shooting and her present whereabouts are unknown.

#### *Fearson Unmoved*

When Fearson was informed at the jail today that Ford was dead he made no special comment on it, merely reiterating his declaration that he had fired in self-defense to protect himself from a threatened attack by the dead boy.

Coroner Hammett will hold an inquest on Ford's body at the Emergency Hospital at 11 o'clock tomorrow morning. The police are searching for Mrs. Cooper, who is regarded as a most important witness.

Deputy Coroner Glazebrook will hold an autopsy to determine the exact cause of death.