

## John H. Fowler

(22 Oct 1842 – 9 Sep 1884)

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**Fowler.** Suddenly on Tuesday, September 9, 1884, 10:30 a.m., John H., beloved husband of Sarah J. Fowler, aged forty-two years,

Unveil thy bosom, faithful tomb;  
Take this new treasure to thy trust  
And give these sacred relics room  
To slumber in the silent dust.

Nor pain, nor grief, nor anxious fear,  
Invade thy bounds; no mortal woes  
Can reach the peaceful sleeper here,  
While angels watch the soft repose.

Break from his throne, illustrious morn;  
Attend, O earth, his sovereign word;  
Restore thy trust; a glorious form  
Shall then arise to greet the Lord.

By His Wife

*The Evening Star, Sept. 9, 1884*

### **Shot Dead by a Negro Rough**

### **A Policeman Brutally Murdered**

### **Officer Fowler Killed in the Performance of His Duty**

### **By a Negro Desperado in the Presence of Numerous Bystanders,**

### **Who Were Vainly Appealed To Aid Him**

This morning, about 10:20 o'clock, Officer John H. Fowler of the Metropolitan Police Force, was shot and killed by John Langster, alias "Guinea" Lancaster, alias Robinson. Office Fowler was in charge of the chain gang, which was at work cleaning alleys near the Baltimore and Ohio railroad depot. Lancaster managed to get away from the others, and he was pursued to an alley between E and F and 1st and 2d streets northeast, by Officer Fowler, who found him in an out house, and called on him to surrender. Lancaster defied arrest, and Fowler said then he would have to shoot, when Lancaster told him that he could shoot too. Officer Fowler then seized him and started to take him out, when a negro named Wilson rushed up. Lancaster then struggled to get away, and Officer Fowler drew his pistol, for the possession of which the prisoner struggled with him, during which time the officer fired one shot in the air. The prisoner then got possession of the pistol and at once fired at the officer, the ball passing through the right hand and into the right side of the policeman, in the region of the liver. While the officer was struggling he vainly called for help, but although there were several men about none went to his assistance. A number of boys--Joseph L Pearson, W.S. Chesley, Thornton Chesley, A. Hamilton and E. Holmes--were playing baseball in the neighborhood, and one of them offered his bat to a man to go to the assistance of the officer, but the man refused.

Immediately on receiving the shot Mr. Fowler put his hand on his side, and fell near the corner of 1st and E streets, and said: "I am dead," and the prisoner during the excitement got away.

### *The Murderer Captured*

He was pursued to No. 311 D street by Officers Boland, Boyle and Slack, with Lieut. Kelly. The fugitive threw away the pistol in his fight. The first named officer found him in a basement in the act of pulling his clothes--the striped ones--off. When told that there was one more load in the pistol, he said: "I am sorry I did not know it, for I would have given him that too." He was taken to the seventh precinct station, where he refused to give his name, and he was locked up.

Some of the officers and citizens bore Mr. Fowler to the room of Lieut. Kelly at the seventh precinct and Mr. Stockskill, a medical student, and Dr. Magruder were soon at his side, but he died within a few minutes. Officer Fowler was regarded as one of the best officers on the force and resided with his family at the corner of 9th and C streets southeast, where he leaves a wife and three small children. He was born and reared in the west end and his wife is a daughter of Mr. Joshua Lloyd.

The affair drew to the neighborhood of the station an immense crowd, but only a few, other than the witnesses, were allowed to enter.

### *Two Men Arrested for Refusing to Assist the Officers*

Officers Coghill and Boland selected from the crowd Robert Jackson and John Miller, two colored men, and charged them with refusing to assist the officer, and they were locked up. Both of them protest that they are innocent of any charge.

### *Coolness of the Murderer*

Soon after they were locked up Lancaster commenced to sing as if he had nothing on his mind. Several parties gathered about his cell, and the prisoner, recognizing one in clerical garb, said to him: "God told me to kill him."

"Did God tell you to shoot him twice?" he was asked.

"No," said he, "I am a good shot; one shot is enough. What did he shoot at me for? One shot sung right past my ear, and when I got it I shot."

"Yes," said one of the prisoners, "you shot at the officer twice, among the first shot right at his head."

"No, I didn't," said the prisoner, "I am a dead shot."

His manner was such that even the clerical gentleman remarked, "I can hardly look at the officer and hear this ribaldry without wishing for lynch law. In such a case lynch law would not be out of place."

### *The Prisoner Playing Crazy and Mimicking the Widow of Fowler in her Grief*

Mrs. Fowler arrived at the station at 11:30 o'clock with a lady friend, and was nearly frantic with grief. A short time afterward Mr. Mitchell, the undertaker, and Mr. Joshua M. Lloyd, her father, were sent for, and in the meantime the prisoner disrobed himself and attempted to play crazy, and mimicked Mrs. Fowler in her grief.

### *The Coroner's Jury*

Dr. Patterson, the coroner, and Dr. Townshend, the health officer, were soon at the station. The former directed a jury of inquest to be summoned, and the following were sworn: Daniel Sheehan, J. Fred. Kelley, Henry H. Hoff, C.P. Shettle, W.O. Patton and Charles Speht. In consequence of the prevailing excitement the inquest was adjourned till ten o'clock tomorrow, and the witnesses were directed to appear at that time.

### *Lancaster's Record of Crime*

Some three years ago Lancaster, after being committed to the Reform school, made an attack on Mr. Newman, foreman of the chair shop, for some fancied wrong, and the foreman had to knock him

down before he could quiet him. His acts on this occasion were disgraceful, and recently he made an attack on Mr. Farnham, one of the teachers, and head of a colored family of the reform school. He had to be severely punished for this attack. Some time since he was fined \$50 in the Police Court for cutting a man with a razor. He was arrested for assault and battery with intent to kill his father by shooting at him. The charge could not be sustained, and he was sentenced to three months for carrying concealed weapons.

*The Evening Star, September 10, 1884*

### **Shot Dead By A Negro**

### **How Policeman Fowler Was Killed**

### **The Story of "Guinea" Langster's Bloody Deed Told at the Coroner's Inquest Today--The Verdict--The Prisoner Feigning Insanity--The Prisoner Attempts to Strike a Witness**

The murder of Policeman John H. Fowler by the negro John Langster yesterday morning, a full account of which was published in THE STAR last evening, attracted a very large crowd about the seventh precinct station-house, where he was confined. There was a good deal of excitement, and many threats were made of lynching. In order to avoid any possible trouble Langster was removed about dusk to the fifth precinct station. The officers found when they tried to enter his cell that he had stuffed the keyhole of the lock with chewed meat, paper, etc., rammed in with a match. Afraid that he might be taken by force, he had done this in the hope that it would prevent entrance to his cell. After half an hour's work the keyhole was cleared, and Langster was brought out handcuffed and placed in the patrol wagon. He remained at the fifth precinct station-house all night and pretended to be crazy whenever his cell was approached.

The autopsy of Policeman Fowler at 3 o'clock revealed the fact that ball had entered the body between the tenth and eleventh ribs, passed through the liver, severed the vena cava, one of the principle veins in the body, and then lodged in the spine, from which it was chiseled out. The body was then turned over to the family of the deceased.

### *Born That Way*

Yesterday afternoon a gentleman named Hudson took the prisoner a lunch, with the view of getting him to talk. This act of kindness appeared to have a softening effect upon him, and he ate what was brought with a relish. Mr. Hudson remarked while the prisoner was eating, "That was a terrible act," and the prisoner replied, "Yes, I was born that way."

Lieut. Kelly asked, "What way?" and he answered, "Afflicted with quick temper."

### *Why and How the Removal of the Prisoner Was Effected*

Lieut. Kelly, in view of the talk of lynching, yesterday afternoon asked that his reserve force be increased. Major Dye, however thought that the best way would be to remove the prisoner, and the fifth precinct was suggested as the proper place of confinement for the present. Lieut. Kelly therefore ordered a cab to be driven to the station at 7-1/2 o'clock, and at that hour but few persons were around. In a little time, however, the street swarmed with people, and it would have been unsafe for him to have appeared. The cab was therefore ordered away to return about 8 o'clock. It had been discovered when the cab drove up that he had obstructed the lock, as stated above, and it took some time to pick the stuff out. At 8 o'clock, however the prisoner was put into the cab, and Lieut. Kelly gave orders to take him to jail to deceive the crowd, and he safely reached the fifth precinct station, where he was locked up.

### *The Prisoner's Antics This Morning – He Denies the Shooting*

He remained very quiet all last night, but conversed freely with all who visited his cell. This morning he commenced his antics of yesterday again-singing and laughing alternately. He related all about how the homicide occurred, but denied doing the shooting. He said Officer Fowler had always treated him well and had several times spoken to Superintendent Stoutenburg in his behalf when he had been doing wrong, to prevent his being punished. Yesterday morning he made up his mind, he said, to escape from the gang at all hazards, and would have done so had it not been for the rest of the gang. When he closed with Officer Fowler, after that officer fired his pistol in the air, he did not take the pistol from him, but in the tussle, as the officer was about to aim his revolver at him, (Langster,) he turned his arm under, and the officer shot himself. He did not shoot him at all. When roused up this morning he said he would not get up unless someone gave him a cigar. The station-keeper gave him a cigar, as he wanted, and he soon after partook of breakfast, remarking, as he finished, "That's much better breakfast than I got yesterday morning." After breakfast he was put into the fifth precinct patrol wagon, several men accompanying it, and was taken to Mr. G.W. Davis's photograph gallery, where his picture was taken. During this operation he acted very mulish and stubborn, and would not consent to sit in the chair; but after the officer forced him into the seat he remained quiet until the work was done, when he was carried in the same wagon to the seventh precinct station-house, to be present at the coroner's inquest.

### *The Inquest Today*

Shorter after 10 o'clock a.m., Dr. Patterson, the coroner, summoned the jury, which was sworn in yesterday, as stated in the STA, and began the inquest. The jury was as follows: Daniel Shehan, J. Fred Kelly, Henry H. Hoff, C.B. Shettle, W.O. Patton and Charles Speht. A number of idlers had gathered about the station house, although there was no prospect of seeing or hearing anything. The excitement which had prevailed yesterday in the vicinity had quieted down and no further talk of lynching was heard. The coroner and the jury occupied a room in the second story of the station house, and the singing of the prisoner, who sat half naked in one of the cells below, could be plainly heard in the room above. He had refused to keep his clothing on and was still pretending to be insane.

### *A Boy's Testimony*

The first witness sworn was a boy about fifteen years old named Thornton Chesley, who testified that he followed the policeman, whom he saw running after a convict into an alley. When the policeman, Fowler, came up to the man he said: "Surrender now; I don't want to shoot you. I have always been a good friend of yours." The witness said that the convict refused to surrender, and then the two began to struggle together. The witness described the position of Fowler when he fired the pistol, and said that he fired right over his head. The policeman told the convict that he didn't want to shoot him, but wanted him to come along without any trouble. The convict, however, said: "You will have to shoot me."

### *Fowler Could Have Shot the Prisoner If He Had Been So Inclined*

In answer to a juror the witness said that Policeman Fowler could have shot the convict if he had wished to. The witness said that he got on the policeman's horse and went for help, and after he had gone he heard two shots. While Fowler was struggling with the convict he had asked a colored man to help him in the name of the law, but the man had refused.

### *Saw Langster Shoot the Officer*

W.T. Clark was the next witness and he said he boarded at 415 D street, and went out in the alley and saw a policeman tussling with a convict. He stepped back to tell the lady with whom he boarded she had better close up her house, and when he was away he heard two shots. He came back into the

alley at once and saw the convict with a pistol in one hand and with his arm about the officer and he saw him shoot the officer in that position.

#### *A Sixteen-Year-Old Boy's Story*

A. Hamilton, a boy about sixteen years old, was the next witness, and he testified that he saw two men struggling in the alley, and saw a pistol brandished in the air and heard a shot, but he did not know who fired it.

#### *"Guinea' Has Done It For Me This Time"*

John G. Crozan, the next witness, testified that he was in the alley and heard two shots, and running father up, he saw the police officer standing there. The officer put his hands on his hips and said: "I am shot. 'Guinea' has done it for me this time." Mr. Houck, who had followed him, and others then carried away the officer; but the convict stood there with a pistol in his hands. The others left with the officer, and the witness was afraid to go up to the negro because he had a pistol in his hand. The witness stayed behind the others to watch the man, and when he turned and ran up 2d street the witness followed him a short distance.

#### *"My Wife and Children"*

Henry T. Houck, the next witness, testified that he heard the excitement and came out in the alley from 1st street. He saw two shots fired, and then the officer walked towards the witness and fell into his arms. The only words the officer said while he was being taken to the station was, "My wife and children." When he reached the station he inquired about his wife. The witness heard the shots, but did not see the firing.

#### *Another Boy's Graphic Account of The Death Struggle*

Alfred S. Wilson, another of the boys who witnessed the struggle in the alley, testified that after the officer shot over the convicts' head he held the pistol back of him, and the convict, after a contest, finally seized it, and the colored man who was helping the officer ran away. After the convict had gotten possession of the pistol he shot at the officer twice, but each time the officer knocked the man's hand up so that the balls went into the air. But the third shot hit the officer. The officer staggered, and as he was being borne away he said: "Oh! Let me lie down on the grass and die."

When the witness spoke of the colored man running away Robert Jackson, the man referred to who was standing in the rear of the room, called out: "Coroner, swear me. I would like to say something while all these boys are talking."

"In a moment," said the coroner, "your turn will come."

"I want to say--," went on Jackson, but he was silenced by Lieut. Kelly.

#### *Robert Jackson's "Time For Disappearing"*

Robert Jackson then testified that he was passing down the alley with his bag, as he was a rag gatherer. He stopped at the corner and saw the officer struggling with the convict in the other alley. He had heard a pistol shot, but did not see any shooting up to that time. The officer called him and he went toward him, and the officer told him to take hold of the convict's arm. The convict finally got the pistol from the officer and held it in his left hand. The witness shoved the convict around, as he saw him trying to shoot him (the witness). The pistol went off and the ball went above the head of witness. After that, when he found the convict was shooting, the witness said: "I jist vanished up the alley; but I didn't run away, as some people say I did." The witness went on to say that he assisted the officer at once.

Edward Holmes, the next witness, testified to the general facts of the occurrence, but said that he did not see the shooting.

### *Testimony of Another Boy*

W.S. Chesley, another boy, testified that he went into the alley opening on 2d street and saw the convict holding on to the fence with both hands while the officer was pulling at him. He thought that the officer was trying to put the nippers on his legs. During the struggle a colored man in the alley told them to get out as they were injuring his property. The witness said that the officer called for assistance, and then recounted what passed between the convict and the officer, agreeing with previous witnesses.

### *The Prisoner Brought In*

Officer Boyle, who was with Officers Bolan and Slack and Lieut. Kelly when the man was arrested, came in the room where the jury was seated and brought with him the prisoner Langster. He wore only his convict pants having torn up his shirt last night. He shuffled along to a seat pointed out to him and then looked all about the room with an ugly scowl upon his face. This expression remained unchanged. His bare breast showed a powerful development.

### *Officer Boyle's Testimony as to Damaging Admissions of the Prisoner*

Officer Boyle testified that the prisoner had told him he had shot Officer Fowler; that God had told him to do it, and that it was only necessary for him to have one shot, as he was a good marksman, having been in the United States army. The prisoner expressed regret when told that another ball remained in the pistol; that he had not known it as he would have shot the s-- of a b-- that looked under the bed where he had concealed himself when arrested.

### *An Exciting Scene - The Prisoner Tries to Strike A Witness*

Robert Jackson was called again, and was describing how the convict had shot the officer, when the prisoner, who was seated near, with a most malignant expression on his face, started up with the intention of striking the witness. Lieut. Kelly grasped him about the neck with both hands, and forced him back in his chair.

The prisoner glared at his intended victim in impotent rage, and muttered between his teeth.

"You are a liar, you s-- of a b--. I'll slug you."

After this episode the hearing was resumed, and Dr. Hartigan testified as to the results of the autopsy which are given above. He said that death resulted from hemorrhage. The hearing was then concluded.

### *The Verdict*

After consultation the jury at once brought in the following verdict: "That he said John H. Fowler came to his death between 10 and 11 a.m., September 9th, 1884, at the seventh precinct station corner of 1st and F streets northwest, city of Washington, D.C., from a pistol shot wound of the abdomen, inflicted with a pistol in the hands of John Langster, alias George T. Hudson."

### *More Deviltry Of The Prisoner*

Langster was at once removed to his cell, and an officer going there a few minutes later found that he had written on the wall:

"John Langster, murderer of Policeman Fowler."

He had also stuffed the keyhole up again as he did last night.

### *The Prisoner Taken To Jail*

Preparations were at once made to remove the prisoner to the jail, where he was taken in the ambulance, under the charge of several officers.

During the progress of the inquest a crowd gathered about the station house, composed mostly of children. These curious youngsters peered into the windows and shouted about the door, and elevated into heroes the boys who were summoned as witnesses. These boys were nothing loath to exhibit themselves to the numerous admirers, and after stepping out of the station house would walk back again right past the officers at the door amid the speechless admiration of the youthful spectators.

Shortly after 12 o'clock Officer Wheelock drove up in the patrol wagon, and Lieut. Kelly going into Langster's cell placed handcuffs upon him and brought him out. Officers Boyle and Harlowe got in the wagon with the prisoner and Lieut. Kelly, and it was driven rapidly off to the jail. The prisoner had been furnished with an old undershirt and a coat and had a handkerchief knotted about his neck. He looked more civilized than when he was before the jury, but his face still wore the scowl.

*The Washington Post, September 10, 1884, p. 4*

### **A Policeman Murdered**

#### **Officer Fowler Shot Dead By A Negro Rough In Discharging His Duty Fatal Attempt to Re-Arrest an Escaping Member of the Chain Gang Yesterday – How the Crime was Committed – The Murderer a Man of Bad Character**

John Langster, alias "Guinea," a negro member of the chain gang, sat yesterday morning on the curbstone of First street, near D northwest. Apparently he was pulling grass out of the gutter; in reality he was working at his leg irons with a little piece of wire he had picked up in the street. His efforts were at last successful, and quietly ridding himself of his shackles, he stood up. Nobody was noticing him, and he moved slowly up First street and stood for a moment under the awning of Holmes' grocery store, at the corner of First and E streets, as if undecided what to do next. Then he spied the alley running from First to Second streets, between D and E, and hastily retraced his steps to it. As he disappeared in the alley Officer Fowler, in charge of the gang, caught sight of him and started in pursuit. When about half way up the alley the man stood at bay.

"Will you come back to work?" said the officer.

"No," was the dogged reply.

The policeman advanced a step further, pistol in hand, and the negro made a movement as if he would assault him. Quick as thought, knowing the desperate character of the man with whom he had to deal, the officer fired a shot into the air, hoping to intimidate him. The action had the opposite effect. Langster, enraged and furious, sprang upon the officer, who attempted to handcuff him. "Help me," shouted the officer to two colored men standing near by, but they refused their aid. In the struggle which followed and which only lasted a few moments, Langster wrenched the pistol from the officer's hand and pointed it at him with an oath. Twice he fired without effect, and then pinning the muzzle of the revolver so close to the policeman's side that the powder burnt the vest, he fired the third time. The ball sped on its fatal errand. The wounded man walked a few steps, the blood gushing from the gaping hole in his side, while his murderer ran up the alley into Second street. Sergeant Boyle, who lives near by, and who had been roused out of bed by his wife and had run half dressed into the street, came upon the scene a moment later and found Fowler standing up, supported by a gentleman named Henry Houck.

"I am done for, Sergeant, I am dying," was the remark of the wounded man.

"Who did it?" said the Sergeant.

"Guinea," was the reply.

The sergeant made a cheering remark, but the officer shook his head.

Officer Coghill, arriving at this juncture, was sent to arouse the reserve at the station-house. "Come," said the sergeant, then, "we can't let this man die in the streets; let us take him to the station and send for a doctor. Here, Will Atkinson, help us," said he, speaking to a man standing near by. The man addressed picked up the wounded officer as if he were a baby and the party moved slowly to the station, carrying him as tenderly as possible. "Oh, put me down and let me die here," he groaned, ere a hundred yards had been passed. He was taken into the station house, laid on a mattress and Drs. Bayne and Magruder, police surgeons, summoned. When they arrived, ten minutes later, Fowler was dead.

In the meantime the vicinity of the sad affair had become wild with excitement and officers and citizens were searching yards and dwelling houses for the murderer, Lieut. Kelly, who was at police headquarters, was immediately notified and with Officer Slack hurried over to the scene. He found the square, bounded by D and E and Third and Fourth streets, surrounded by officers and was told that Langster had been followed to that square and that he was now hiding somewhere within it. The lieutenant climbed a fence near Ward's dairy, being joined almost immediately by Sergt. Boyle, and both looked into the adjoining yards.

In a few moments Officer Boland appeared at the door of the rear basement of No. 311 D street and beckoned to the officers on the fence: "I have got him," he said, as they approached; "he is here under a bed." The officers entered, and there on the floor under the bed, crouched Langster with Fowler's pistol still in his hand. He had stripped himself of all of his clothes except his undershirt, and was wrapped in a quilt. His striped pants and shirt were on the floor near the foot of the bed.

He made no resistance when ordered to come out, and obeyed Lieut. Kelly's command to put up his hands. While doing this, Serg't Boyle picked up the pistol and remarked, as he examined it, that another load remained. Langster turned to Boland, and with a savage grin, exclaimed, "If I had known that I would have put you in hell, too!" While being taken to the station house the officers were informed that Fowler was dead. At this Langster burst out in a loud laugh. Afterwards, when the widow of the murdered man arrived at the station, Langster brutally mocked her grief.

When first locked up in his cell Langster was seen by a POST reporter. He maintained an obstinate, sullen silence, but the gift of a cigarette induced him to speak.

"Had you any intention of killing Fowler when you left the workhouse this morning?" queried the reporter.

"No," was the reply, "but I had made up my mind to escape, no matter what stood in my way."

"Why?"

"I wanted to pay my fine."

"How did you get possession of the pistol?"

"Well, the officer was going to shoot me, and I caught hold of the pistol and turned it towards him and fired. I then wrenched the pistol away and fired again. Then I ran away."

Later in the day, however, Langster began to sham insanity, looked in a dazed way at his questioners, and, if he replied at all, made an incoherent remark. Towards night he abandoned this shamming and said he was sorry for what he had done. When first locked up he expressed a wish to be hung at once, so as to show how game he would die, but his spirit of bravado did not last long.

During the afternoon there was an immense throng of excited persons around the station house. A man asked Lieut. Kelly if a crowd would be fired upon should the station be attacked. He was assured it would, but Lieut. Kelly having heard other significant rumors thought an ounce of prevention worth a pound of cure. He waited upon Maj. Dye about 4 o'clock and asked for an extra detail of four or five men at his station. The result of the conference was an order for the removal of Langster to the Fifth precinct station. When the officers went to unlock his cell at 7:30 o'clock they found that he had stuffed the key hole of the lock with chewed meat, paper, etc., rammed in with a match. Afraid that he might be taken by force, he had done this in the hope that it would prevent entrance to his cell. After half an

hour's work the keyhole was cleared, Langster brought out, handcuffed, placed in a cab with Sergt. Boyle and Privates Boland and Karcher and hurriedly driven away.

The autopsy at 3 o'clock revealed the fact that the ball had entered the body between the tenth and eleventh ribs, passed through the liver, severed the vena cava, one of the principal veins in the body, and then lodged in the spine, from which it was chiselled out. The body was then turned over to the family of the deceased.

An inquest will be held this morning at 10 o'clock, the jury summoned being Daniel Sheehan, J. Fred Kelly, Henry H. Hoff, C.P. Shettle, W.O. Patton and Charles Speht. The witnesses summoned are John G. Crogan, Thornton Chesley, A. Hamilton, W.D. Atkinson, Joseph S. Parson, W.W. Clark, Alfred S. Wilson, W.S. Chesley, Ed. Holmes, Robert Jackson, John Miller, Henry T. Houck and Thomas Smith.

Officer John H. Fowler was born in this District on October 22, 1842. He was appointed a station-keeper in the Police Department May 17, 1879, and two days afterwards was appointed on the police force as a private of class one. He was promoted to the second class in the summer of 1883, and in October was detailed to take charge of the workhouse gang, which was put to work cleaning out gutters, alleys, etc. He took great interest in the work. He leaves a wife and four children.

Langster is a vicious looking mulatto, twenty-one years of age and unmarried. He was committed to the Reform School some three years ago and during his stay attacked Mr. Newman, foreman of the chair shop, for some fancied wrong. He also assaulted several of his teachers. Some time since he was fined \$50 for cutting a man with a razor. He was arrested last July for assault and battery with intent to kill his father by shooting at him. The charge could not be sustained and he was sentenced to three months for carrying concealed weapons. He escaped July 28, but was captured and recommitted on August 11 for ninety days. He bears a bad character. He was secured behind a double row of doors at the Fifth Precinct last night and an extra detail was on hand to preserve peace.

Robert Jackson and John Miller, the two colored men who are alleged to have refused to assist Officer Fowler, were arrested. They protest that they are not the men.

The portion of the chain gang with which Langster was working did not attempt to escape during the excitement and shortly afterwards, Officer Barnes, who had charge of them in company with Officer Fowler, conveyed the gang back to the workhouse.

*The Washington Post, September 10, 1884, p. 2*

The country appears to have entered upon an era of crime for which there is no parallel in our history. The criminal record, as shown by the daily papers for the past eight weeks, is simply appalling. Our own city seemed to promise, for a time, a creditable abstinence from the carnival of diabolism, but this promise has failed. The week opened with a brutal murder – the deliberate stabbing of a colored man by one of his colored associates. Yesterday a ruffian in the “chain gang” wrested a pistol from the possession of Officer Fowler, one of the best members of the police force, and shot him dead. It is not improbable that the leniency shown by the courts in disposing of recent murder cases may have been mistaken mercy. At all events, there is now a necessity and a demand for rigid enforcement of the criminal laws in this District.

*The Evening Star, September 11, 1884*

**Relief for the Family of the Murdered Policeman  
Contributions to the Fund  
What His Grand Army Comrades Say**

Headquarters Geo. G. Meade Post, No. 5,  
Department of Potomac, G.A.R.

Washington, D.C., September 10th, 1884

To the Editor of the Evening Star:

The suggestion of Lansburg Bros. is a noble one, and one that should be seconded by all charitable people. I have known John H. Fowler personally and as a member of this post for several years, and know that the District has lost one of its best officers and his family a kind and loving husband and father, and that when he died his widow did not have a dollar in the world to buy bread for herself and four small children. You can put Meade Post, No. 5, G.A.R. down for \$50, with a belief that we can double the amount at our next meeting. We will also give a lecture benefit at an early day for the same cause.

M.A. Dillon  
Post Commander

#### *The Woman In The Case*

In addition to his name which the prisoner had written twice on the walls of his cell, with a degree of chirographic excellence which does credit to the reform school, he had also written "Miss Katie King, 1359 H street northeast."

Langster told one of the officers that he could have written better if he had been feeling well. The officer remarked that he was not feeling in such high spirits as he was yesterday.

#### *The Remains Of Officer Fowler*

were removed to the residence of his father-in-law, Mr. Joshua Lloyd, at 243 8th street southeast, by Mr. Mitchell, the undertaker. The funeral will take place at 3 o'clock on Friday.

(Followed by a list of other contributions)

*The Washington Post, September 12, 1884, p. 4*

#### **The Murdered Policeman**

##### **Major Dye's General Order – Arrangements for the Funeral Today**

The following general order was issued yesterday by Major Dye, Superintendent of Police, in reference to the death of Officer Fowler:

It is the painful and melancholy duty of the Superintendent to announce the death of one of the most respected, faithful and courageous members of the force. John H. Fowler entered the department as Station Keeper in March 1879. He was shortly afterward advanced to the position of first-class private on the force, and more recently promoted to the second class, and selected for the duty he was engaged in at his death, because of his valuable experience and his peculiar fitness for the place. His death at the post of duty, by the hands of a dastardly desperado, has stirred the feelings of the community, and caused an expression of universal regret that we have neither certainty nor celerity to boast of in the execution of our criminal laws. The family of the deceased have our heartfelt sympathy in their bereavement.

The funeral of the officer will take place from his late residence 243 Eighth street southeast, at 3 o'clock this afternoon. The arrangements will be in the hands of Meade Post, G.A.R., of which deceased was a member, and the police department. The pall-bearers will be policemen and members of the post. Besides Meade Post, an escort of thirty-five policemen will accompany the remains to Congressional Cemetery. The services will be conducted by Rev. Mr. Andrews, of Christ P.E. Church, assisted by Grand Army Chaplain Burkhardt.

*The Washington Post, September 13, 1884, p. 4*

## **The Late Office Fowler**

### **His Remains Followed to Congressional Cemetery by a Large Concourse**

Surrounded by the beautiful floral tributes of loving friends, the remains of Policeman John H. Fowler lay in state yesterday at the residence of his father-in-law, Mr. Joshua Lloyd, 213 Eighth street southeast. At the foot of the casket, which was of fine black velvet cloth with silver mountings, stood the tribute of the men of the First Precinct, a large figure of the "Heavenly Gates," in purple and white flowers, with the initials "J.H.F." Beside it was a "broken column" in pure white, from the Eighth Precinct. Upon the casket was a large policeman's badge of white flowers, with Fowler's number, "23," in purple upon it. This was the gift of Lieuts. Guy and Boteler. Wreaths and crosses lay upon and around the casket, a silent testimony of the esteem and regard in which the murdered policeman was held.

Outside a large and sympathizing crowd was collected. A squad of thirty-two policemen in regulation uniform, detailed from each precinct, and under the command of Lieut. Boteler, of the Eighth Precinct, was drawn up in front of the house. The Secretary of War, and the District Commissioners had issued general orders in their departments permitting the G.A.R. Men to attend the funeral, and about 250 availed themselves of the opportunity. They stood on the left under Commander D.M. Dillon, of Meade Post, No. 5, of which Mr. Fowler was a member, Dr. C.D. Andrews, of Christ Church, officiated at the house, and then the coffin was borne out by the pallbearers, Capt. Joseph Torrens, M.C. Leonard and George Burke, of the Grand Army, and Sergt. J. Daley, and Officers Joseph Acton and J.W. Howell, of the police force. As it was carried out all hats were raised, and when the weeping wife followed many an eye in the crowd was wet with tears. The police force led the procession, followed by the Grand Army men; then came the hearse and a long line of carriages, in one of which were Maj. Dye, Superintendent of Police, and Capt. Vernon. At Congressional Cemetery, where the interment took place, Chaplain P.H. Burkhardt, of Meade Post, performed the last ceremonies before a large concourse of people. Mr. J.M. Mitchell had charge of the funeral.

Commander Dillon, of Meade Post, No. 5, G.A.R., has issued the following appeal to the public:

John H. Fowler, whose duty it was to protect us while asleep or awake, has fallen by the hands of a cowardly assassin., He was a poor man, honest, upright, kind and generous, ever watchful of our interests and our lives. He had no insurance on his life, his salary small, his family large and helpless, they are now left without a dollar in the house, and, as he offered up his life in protecting ours, we should offer our purses in providing for his widow and orphans. Let us give with a liberal hand. One cannot do for all, but all can do for one. It has been recommended to me by many prominent merchants and public officers that Meade Post, No. 5, G.A.R., appoint a good and responsible committee to solicit assistance for this worthy object in the city at large and the various departments, which will be done at once.

*The Evening Star, October 15, 1884*

### **Homicide Cases Before the Grand Jury.**

The district attorney has this week presented to the grand jury which reconvened on Monday four cases of homicide, the cases being those of Willie Hood, the colored boy charged with causing the death of Columbus Bailey, a white boy, on September 5th, by fracturing his skull with a brick; Robert H. alias "Cuffey" Burrell, charged with killing Walter Jones, on September 7th, by shooting him; John Langster alias Lancaster, the workhouse convict, who is charged with killing Officer John H. Fowler on September 9th, by seizing the officer's pistol and shooting him, and George Hough, the printer, charged with killing William McMahan on September 27th by cutting him. The district attorney, it is said, will present the other homicide cases pending as rapidly as possible and endeavor to have the cases set for speedy trial.

*Note: Langster was found guilty of murder on October. 30, 1884. He was sentenced to hang, November 17, 1884, but execution was delayed until May 15, 1885.*

*The Evening Star, October 24, 1884*

### **The Fowler Fund**

#### **It Amounts to \$1,097.20**

The Evening Star Newspaper company handed this morning to Mrs. John H. Fowler, the widow of Officer Fowler, of the Metropolitan police force, who was recently killed in the discharge of his duty, the sum of \$1,097.20, the amount contributed for her relief by the people of the District. The contributions were first suggested by Messrs. Lansburg & Bro., the well-known merchants, who headed the list, and they were speedily followed by others, *The Star* being the custodian of the same. Mrs. Fowler says she desires to tender, through *The Star*, her heartfelt thanks to all who have so generously contributed for the relief of herself and family, and to add that she will ever hold them in the most grateful remembrance. In fact, she was quite overcome with emotion and could not find words to express her gratitude.

*The Evening Star, December 6, 1884*

### **Locals**

The widow of Policeman Fowler, who was murdered by the negro, Langster, has addressed a letter to the policemen and firemen of the District expressing her sincere thanks for the handsome sum realized for her benefit, by the game of baseball in which policemen and firemen participated.