

## Joseph Gales

(10 Apr 1786 – 21 Jul 1860)

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*The National Intelligencer, July 23, 1860*

### Death of Mr. Gales

It becomes our painful duty to announce to the readers of this journal that Joseph Gales is no more. He died a few minutes after seven o'clock on Saturday evening last, at Eckington, his late residence, near this city. He was in the 75th year of his age.



Though this melancholy event was not entirely unexpected, in consequences of Mr. Gale's infirm health for some months past, it is none the less true that the blow so long suspended has at last fallen with a weight as sudden as it is afflictive. It is some consolation, however, to know that his end was calm and painless, as his life has been serene and virtuous. Full of years and full of honors, rich in the tributes of veneration and regard awarded by good and great men throughout the land, and beloved, as falls to the lot of few, by all who shared his nearer companionship in the home and the walks of private life, he has been gathered by the great reaper. Death a sheaf fully ripe for the harvest, into a garner made fragrant and precious by the fruits of a life ever noble in its aspirations and ever laborious in good works.

It is not for us, least of all at a moment like this, to write his epitaph, nor are words of formal commemoration needed to indite for our readers that eulogy which they, equally with us, are competent to celebrate in memory of his intellectual greatness. It were better that we should keep silent while as yet the startled ear seems caught by the sound of a voice crying with such thrilling emphasis from the scene of his former activities, like that voice which the Revelator heard from Heaven, saying, "Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their words do follow them."

*The National Intelligencer, July 24, 1860*

### Obsequies of the Late Mr. Gales

The funeral of the late Joseph Gales will take place at Eckington this afternoon, at 4 o'clock.

The funeral procession will proceed from his late residence to the Congressional Burying Ground, where his remains will be interred.

Carriages for the conveyance of the pall-bearers to Eckington will be in waiting at the door of Mr. Seaton, in this city, at 8 o'clock.

The friends of the deceased are generally invited to attend the funeral.

As every person connected with this establishment will be engaged today in paying the last offices to the remains of their late venerated friend, no paper will be issued from this office tomorrow.

*The National Intelligencer, Thursday, July 26, 1860*

The funeral of Mr. Gales on Tuesday, was an event which it was the desire of the people of Washington, without distinction of classes or sentiment, should be marked with an expression of the deep and sincere veneration and esteem in which they held the deceased. Besides the tokens of respect on the part of all the branches of the City Government, which were recorded in this paper on Tuesday

morning, many citizens made individual indication of their sense of the general loss. All the booksellers of the city kept their stores closed for the day, and some private citizens draped their houses in the habiliments of mourning. Notices of the deceased, couched in terms of the kindest remembrance, were prominent in the columns of all the city press.

At the late residence of Mr. Gales, and where he has had his home for the past twenty-five years, a very numerous assemblage of ladies and gentlemen were gathered to witness the last services in the presence of the remains of their venerated and respected friend. The President of the United States was there, and nearly the whole of the City Government, many of the officers of the General Government, and most of the leading citizens of the Federal Metropolis. In the course of the afternoon a numerous deputation from the City Councils of Alexandria came up to participate in the last honors to one for whom the people of that ancient and honorable town have invariable entertained an almost unlimited regard. Owing to the lateness of the hour at which the arrangements of the funeral were completed, the Alexandria delegation, with great regret to themselves, were compelled to return to Alexandria without taking a place in the procession.

At the head of the procession, which passed at a slow pace from Eckington to Fourth street, and thence by New York avenue to Seventh street, and down that street past the office of the National Intelligencer, to Pennsylvania avenue, was the Columbian Typographical Society, on foot. After them followed the employees of the office of this paper, interspersed with other citizens, also on foot. The cortege in carriages came next, conveying the officiating clergy, the Rev. Drs. C.M. Butler, Pyne, and Hall, who had conducted the services at Eckington, Dr. Thos. Miller, the family physician, the hearse, the family and friends of the deceased, the members of the City Councils, and citizens of both sexes. The pall-bearers were Gen. Walter Jones, Gen. R.C. Weightman, Richard S. Coxe, Thomas L. Smith, William L. Hodge, James M. Carlisle, William B. Lee and James C. Welling.

The City Hall was draped in mourning, as were also the office of the National Intelligencer and the Club Rooms of the Bell and Everett Association of this city, and suspended above the hall door of the latter was a large photograph likeness of the lamented deceased, enshrouded in black crape and business was suspended for the day, the members feeling that they had lost a noble leader and an unerring counselor. The office of the Congressional Globe, the residence of the Swedish Minister, and the hotel of Mr. Casparis were also shrouded with emblems of mourning.

As the procession passed the Intelligencer office the firemen's bells were tolled, and the scene was witnessed by many hundreds of persons who had gathered at an early hour in the afternoon for that purpose, all indicating the deep hold which Mr. Gales had on the popular heart.

The procession reached the Congressional Cemetery about seven o'clock, and as the sun departed serenely from a bright sky the remains of the beloved friend and benefactor were deposited in the grave, the clods reminding the spectators, amid the solemn words of the officiating ministers, that this was but the common fate of all, "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes," but also assuring all that there is a resurrection and life to come.

*The National Intelligencer, July 26, 1860*

**Tribute of Respect to the Memory of Mr. Gales in Alexandria** -- At a meeting of a portion of the citizens of Alexandria, assembled on Tuesday afternoon, for the purpose of paying due respect to the memory of Joseph Gales, Esq., whose death had been announced, the following preamble and resolutions were offered by James S. Hallowell, and the same unanimously adopted:

Whereas it having pleased our Heavenly Father to remove from this earthly abode Joseph Gales, Esq., and to transplant his immortal spirit to that "home not made with hands," "eternal in the heavens," therefore be it

Resolved, That it is with sincere regret that we have heard of the death of this distinguished man, whose course through a long and eventful life has been one equally remarkable for its purity and ability.

Resolved, That in his death the country at large, whose best interests he so ably and faithfully advocated for more than half a century, has met with an irreparable loss.

Resolved, That, as a mark of respect due to the memory of the deceased, we will attend his funeral this afternoon at four o'clock.

Resolved, That the chairman of this meeting be requested to communicate a copy of the foregoing resolutions to the family of the deceased, as expressions of our sympathy felt for them in the affliction which they have sustained.

Wm. H. Fowle, Chairman

W.A. Harper, Secretary.

*The National Intelligencer, Thursday, July 26, 1860*

### **The Obsequies of the Late Mr. Gales**

The funeral services performed on Tuesday last in honor of the late Mr. Gales constituted, alike in their appropriate nature and in the number of those who participated in them, a beautiful tribute to his exalted character while living, and to his beloved memory now that he is no more. If he was justly honored throughout the land for those intellectual qualities which won the admiration and respect of his countrymen, the people of Washington and of the surrounding country sought to show, in the last sad offices so spontaneously and generally rendered to his remains, that they mourned in his death not only the wise man and able journalist, but also the good man and the faithful friend.

We cite from the "Constitution" of yesterday the subjoined reference to these manifestations of the deep veneration and affectionate regard in which Mr. Gales was held by those who knew him best:

"Pursuant to an order of the City Council the City Hall and other public buildings were draped in mourning yesterday as a mark of respect for the lamented Mr. Gales. The public schools were closed, and also a number of stores, profound respect for the deceased being thus testified alike by the civic authorities, acting for the whole community, and by private citizens.

"The funeral of the deceased was attended by the President and the members of his Cabinet, the Boards of Aldermen and Common Council, a large delegation of the Columbia Typographical Society, the Bookbinders' Association, the City Council of the neighboring city of Alexandria, and a large number of friends. The procession moved from Eckington, the late residence of Mr. Gales, down New York avenue to Seventh street, and from thence through Pennsylvania avenue to the Congressional Burying Ground, where his remains were consigned to their last resting place. The Intelligencer office, by which the funeral cortege passed, was hung with the drapery of mourning. In the neighborhood of the office, and on both sides of Seventh street, numbers of citizens congregated long previous to the approach of the procession, and quietly waited until it passed."

*Perley's Reminiscences*

pp. 55-56

The 'National Intelligencer' was never devoted to Mr. Adams, as its proprietor had a kind regard for Mr. Clay, but it was always hostile to the election of General Jackson. Mr. Joseph Gales, its editor, wrote ponderous leaders on the political questions of the day, and occasionally reported, in short hand, the speeches of Congressional magnates.

*Historic Houses of George-Town and Washington City*

pp. 472-475

The name "Eckington" brings vividly to mind the story of early Washington journalism at the same time, it brings up the amiable personality of Joseph Gales, junior, for many years editor and owner of the "National Intelligencer." The name also nostalgically recalls the erstwhile rural beauty of the rolling farm land in the northeastern part of the District, now covered by a network of built-up streets.

As a very talented young man, Joseph Gales, junior, came from Raleigh to Washington, about 1807, to assist Samuel Harrison Smith with the "National Intelligencer." A few years later, he and his brother-in-law, William Winston Seaton, became the owners of the paper. Thenceforth, he was closely identified with the city's public life.

In 1810, he was elected President of the Washington Humane Society, an organization composed entirely of young men, whose purpose was to raise money for charities. In 1827, he became a member of City Councils and, in 1828, was elected Mayor. Throughout his life he bent his energies to the furtherance of the public good, both as an influential editor and also as an individual.

Eckington was the fulfillment of an ambition Gales had cherished since the beginning of his employment by the "Intelligencer." In his frequent walks to Sydney, the home of his chief, he was keenly alive to the rare beauty of the spot and resolved to have it for his own some day when he could afford it. Prosperity rewarded his industry and ability before many years had gone by, he bought the farm that had so stirred his admiration.

In the meantime, in December 1813, he married Sarah Juliana Maria Lee, daughter of Theodoric Lee, and a first cousin of Robert E. Lee. She is described as "beautiful, intellectual and accomplished, noted for deeds of charity" and also for her great executive ability." It is scarcely necessary to add, she was an esteemed person in the social life of the young city.

When Joseph and Juliana Gales were on a visit to his parents in Raleigh at the time of the British invasion it is said their city house, at 9th and E Streets, narrowly escaped being burnt the housekeeper had presence of mind to close all the shutters and put a sign "For Rent" on the front door. As the "Intelligencer" was known to be the Government organ, the printing establishment was fired and completely destroyed.

When Mr. Gales bought his farm, about 1815, he named the place Eckington after the village in Derbyshire, about thirty miles from Sheffield, whence his family came and where he himself had passed his early childhood. When he got the place there was only a small farmhouse on it, near the eastern boundary of the property, where the tenant farmer lived. Nevertheless, for some years Eckington farmhouse was a favorite resort of the "Bread and Cheese Club" whither Mr. Gales and his fellow-members often went for a country outing. At such times, to the prescribed and restricted bread and cheese fare of their city meetings, they added a beefsteak dinner with cherries and peaches for which the Eckington orchard was noted -- with, of course, a good country cream.

In 1830 Mr. Gales built his house, at the western border of his property. It was a two-story frame structure with attic and basement, and a back building with kitchen and servants' quarters. A wide portico, with six Doric columns, across the south front of the house commanded a broad sweep of wooded rolling country towards the Capitol and the waters of the Potomac beyond.

The ground floor of the main house contained four large rooms with a wide central hall the upper floor had four large bedrooms and a twelve-foot-square study where Mr. Gales wrote many of his brilliant and statesmanlike editorials.

These editorials were potent in shaping public opinion throughout the country, but the attitude of the "Intelligencer" was so distasteful to the Jackson Administration that President Jackson saw to the establishment of "The Globe" [see Rives] as the administration organ.

His eminence in journalism brought Mr. Gales in frequent contact with all the public men of his period and he knew all the Presidents from Madison to Buchanan -- on friendly terms with most of

them. Eckington, indeed, came to be a welcome "port of call" for Cabinet Members, statesmen, and visiting notabilities, all of whom found satisfaction, and generally profit, in discussions with their host.

In the summer of 1847, Sir James Bucknall Estcourt, one of the British members of the Northeastern Boundary Commission, when he had finished his official labors, spent several weeks at Eckington, accompanied by Lady Estcourt. During their visit, by a happy coincidence, it turned out that Sir James's brother at that very time was Rector of the church at Eckington. On their return to England, Lady Estcourt sent over to the Gale's a sketch of Eckington Church, done by the Rector's daughter -- a gift much prized for its associations.

Eckington's relations with the outside world were not limited to the visits of statesmen and journalists. It was a much-appreciated spot in the city's social life too. The wide hall was not only the customary scene of family prayers but it held crowding memories of merry gatherings for Christmas parties, tableaux, theatricals, wedding festivities and other occasions of cordial entertaining.

There is a story, once current, that a young lady closely connected with the Eckington household had musical ambitions. After arduous vocal training, she aspired to an operatic career. Eventually being given a part in the production of "La Sonnambula," she was to make her debut in the role of the "Sleepwalker," a lady whose traditional costume borders on the limits of scantiness. The "Sleepwalker's" traditional attire Miss ---- deemed not only immodest but positively indecent. She came on the stage wearing the prescribed dress, indeed, but underneath it she had donned an amply-flounced hoop-skirt, corsets and all! That ended her hoped-for future as a prima donna.

Mr. Gales retained his devotion to country life as long as he lived. In 1833 he was elected Vice-President of the Columbian Horticultural Society. He had an excellent garden and, without posing as an accomplished farmer, he delighted in raising fine livestock. One of his most cherished possessions was a silver goblet he received at the Maryland Agricultural Exhibition in Baltimore, in 1824. According to the engraved inscription, it was "delivered by the hands of La Fayette, a premium for fattest swine."

Mr. Gales died in July, 1860, in his seventy-fifth year, deservedly honored and beloved by his fellow-citizens, and nationally esteemed by American journalists. The leading journalists of the country showed their regard by erecting the monument over his grave in the Congressional Cemetery.

*The Washington Post, August 13, 1962, p. A10*

### **Eckington**

An item in your Aug. 2 paper was headline, "Gales St. Block a Playground For . . . Youngsters." I wonder how many people know that the street was named for Joseph Gales, the editor of the first daily newspaper published here, "The National Intelligencer." He lived at Eckington, now Eckington place, named after the ancestral home in England. He married the daughter of Theodoric Lee, brother of Light Horse Harry Lee, and is buried in Congressional Cemetery where there is a monument to him put up by newspapermen.

Rose Lee Exton  
Washington