

## George W. Goodall

(1822 – 4 Apr 1905)

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**Goodall.** On Tuesday, April 4, 1905 at 12:40 p.m., George W. Goodall in the 83d year of his age.

*The Evening Star, April 5, 1905*

### Friend of Lincoln

George W. Goodall passes away at age of 83. Life-long resident. One of the twelve scouts specially appointed in 1861. Confidential agent of the President and made private reports direct.



### *His career*

A venerable Washingtonian who was so intimately associated with President Abraham Lincoln that the two men were said to be "like brothers," is dead at his home 504 Maryland Avenue, southwest. The deceased is George W. Goodall, who was born in this city eighty-three years ago, and has ever since resided here. His death occurred yesterday morning at his home and resulted from senile debility and exhaustion. While Mr. Goodall had practically been an invalid for a year, his ailment only took a serious turn about two weeks ago, when he was compelled to take to his bed.

Born in Southwest Washington, George W. Goodall's life was coupled with interesting incidents of old Washington and the exciting period at the outbreak of the civil war. Before the first shot of the great conflict had been fired at Fort Sumter, President Lincoln had formed a great attachment for Mr. Goodall it is said. The martyred President admired the frank manliness and when the war was in its incipient stage he selected Goodall for special important and dangerous service in the nearby precincts of the confederacy.

It is stated, as unwritten history, that Mr. Lincoln selected twelve men to act as scouts and keep him personally advised of the movements of the enemy in the country across the Potomac.

These scouts were trusted confidential agents of the President and their appointment and work were kept secret by him. They were in fact, the very eyes of the government, carefully watching the growth and movements of the secessionists in Virginia and prepared to note at once any movement toward the capture and investment of Washington. It was said that Abraham Lincoln placed all reliance in these secret agents, and that many of his famous orders resulted after he had consulted with these men after their return from a trip in Virginia. He gave more trustworthy reports in regard to the opinions and reports of his personal scouts, it is said, than he did to those made by high army officers trained in the art of war.

### *Mission and work of scouts*

These scouts went into the enemy's country, watched their movements, listened to their opinions and plans, gained information as to their resources and forces and then reported faithfully to the great man in the White House and to him alone.

As the war progressed and the military secret service was formed, these scouts were disbanded, but Mr. Goodall ever remained a trusted and confidential friend of Abraham Lincoln, and they were frequently spoken of as "more like brothers than acquaintances." In honor of his distinguished friend Mr. Goodall named his only son Abraham Lincoln Goodall, and the young man is living and proud of his honorable cognomen.

Mr. Goodall never tired of relating some of his thrilling experiences while he was serving as the eyes and ears of Uncle Sam in the early sixties. On one occasion while he was proceeding from the South of Virginia and of the Long Bridge in the direction of Alexandria to learn something of the movements of a body of Confederates that had recently made its appearance in the vicinity of the city, and while he was crossing a large field, he was startled by seeing a cavalcade of southern horsemen emerge from a line of woods in his front. They were coming in his direction and he said "it was a case of think quick and act quick," for to be captured at that time might mean his death.

Directly in front of him was a small ravine. Springing quickly into this he lay prone upon the ground and covered himself as well as he could with earth and leaves. The main body of troopers in gray crossed the ravine immediately where he was lying, but he was not discovered. He lay quiet in the ravine until all danger was over and then returned to Washington. He went at once to the White House and reported to President Lincoln, who took steps to prevent any depredations by the body of confederate cavalry.

On another occasion Mr. Goodall was met on a road in Alexandria county it is said by Dave Porter, a confederate leader. Porter did not take the scout prisoner, as he might have done, but told him to make himself scarce thereabouts, as accessionists were "as thick as fleas on a cur dog." Later when Porter was captured as a spy and was incarcerated in the old capital prison, Mr. Goodall went there to see him, and by interceding with President Lincoln had Porters sentence commuted.

#### *Identified with Local Interests*

George W. Goodall was closely and prominently connected with the upbuilding of Washington from its former ungainliness to its present magnificent condition. He learned the trade of plumber soon after that occupation came in vogue, and was afterward foreman for John Reese. He was known as one of the original Washington plumbers and was closely associated with Alexander R. Shepherd improving conditions in this community. The greater part of his commercial career was spent in business for himself. He did the first plumbing work in the United States Capitol, it is said, and soon after President Lincoln was inducted into office he was made official plumber of the White House. In addition to the White House he also did the plumbing work in the government departments and for a long time was known as the official plumber.

During the regime of Governor Shepherd about all of the sewer work in South Washington was executed by Mr. Goodall. He also worked as a plumber with Mr. John W. Thompson, who was a fellow craftsman, and with Mr. B.B. French when he was commissioner of public buildings and grounds. These men were intimate personal friends it is said.

Mr. Goodall was fire commissioner under Mayor Sayles J. Bowen, and it was he who installed the first steam fire engine in Washington at old No. 4 engine house on Virginia avenue between 4 1/2 and 6th streets s.w.

Speaking of early Washington shortly before his death Mr. Goodall said when he lived at 3d and E streets southwest he would take his wife for a visit to friends in Georgetown. The trip was like going from one city or state to another in those days. The visitors always made preparations for a weeks stay

in Georgetown as though they were going on a long journey. The trip was made in a cart, and in order to reach "Georgetown city" it was necessary to pass through several big cornfields and woods.

Mr. Goodall's parents were born in London, England, and his father Thomas Goodall, crossed the ocean and came to Washington in 1819.

The deceased was a charter member of Lafayette Lodge No. 19, F.A.A.M., and Arame Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, he was a charter member of White Eagle Tribe No. 17, Improved Order of Red Men. He was an Odd Fellow and an honorary member of Independent Council, No. 2, J.O.U.A.M., and an active member of the Volunteer Firemen's Association.

Mr. Goodall is survived by two daughters, Miss Mary E. Goodall and Mrs. Louisa Kahlert, and one son, Abraham Lincoln Goodall.

The funeral will take place at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon, from the family residence 504 Maryland avenue southwest. The services will be conducted by Rev. Weston Bruner of the Fifth Baptist Church and the burial will be at Congressional cemetery. The Masons and Red Men will attend in a body and pallbearers will be selected from their ranks.

*The Evening Star, April 6, 1905, p. 12*

### **Burial of Geo. W. Goodall**

#### **Interment Made Today at Congressional Cemetery**

funeral of the late George W. Goodall, who was an intimate friend of President Abraham Lincoln and whose interesting life history was told in The Star yesterday took place at 2 o'clock this afternoon from the family residence, 504 Maryland avenue southwest.

The service was conducted by Rev. Weston Bruner of the Fifth Baptist Church, and the burial was at Congressional cemetery. There was a large attendance of friends of deceased at the obsequies. The pallbearers, all members of Lafayette Lodge, No. 19, F.A.A.M., were Messrs. George W. Yeatman, Joseph B. Bailey, H.C. Easterday, L.Y. Ellis, J.H. Gripps and Sergt. Robert Doyle of the police department.