

John T. King

(- 19 May 1876)

King. On Friday, May 19, 1876, from an accident, John T. King in the 55th year of his age. The friends and relatives of the family are invited to attend his funeral from his late residence, 816 6th street northwest at 5 o'clock tomorrow (Sunday).

The Evening Star, May 20, 1876

Fatal Gas Explosion at the Capitol

John King Killed, and S.B. Cutler Severely Injured

A gas explosion occurred at the Capitol about half-past 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon in a small room used for storing documents under the east stairway of the Senate near the restaurant, by which Mr. John King, head carpenter, under the Supervising Architect, was so severely injured that his death resulted a little after 7 o'clock p.m., and S.B. Cutler, assistant superintendent of the document folding room, was severely injured. The concussion was distinctly felt throughout the entire building. The halls on the south side were filled with smoke and stifling gasses, and it was with considerable difficulty that the scene of the explosion could be reached. Carpenters had been employed for some days past placing shelves in the room for the purpose of storing there a lot of books from the folding room. The only opening to this room, where the explosion occurred, was the door leading into it.

How the Explosion Occurred

There was a bracket gas light over the door, and some of the employees on leaving the room must, in turning off the gas, have turned it on again without knowing it, there being no check on the key, which, on account of its height from the floor, was usually turned with a stick. The room was thus filled with the escaped gas. In the afternoon Captain Cutler with Mr. King went to the room to see after the shelving. Mr. King, unlocking the door, entered the room, followed by Captain Cutler a few feet behind. The room being very dark, they both stepped back towards the door, as the smell of gas was oppressive. When Mr. King reached the door he struck a match, and instantly a tremendous explosion occurred, both being thrown with great force against the wall on the opposite side of the hall.

Frightful Injuries of Mr. King

Mr. King was forced against the door jam, which fractured both his knees, and pieces of the door and sash, which were blown off, cut his face and neck in a frightful manner. He was also shockingly burned about the head and arms. When found he was doubled up on the floor of the hall, his head and breast having fallen forward upon his legs. A gash was found extending half way from the nose to the ear over the right eyebrow, the right thigh broken and the bone protruding through the flesh. At first he was supposed to be dead, but finally was seen to gasp, when restoratives were applied by some physicians present, and he was removed at once to Providence hospital.

Captain Cutler Was Stunned

and presented a frightful appearance with his face, neck and hands blistered, hair and whiskers singed close to the skin, but no bones were broken. He was taken into the room of the Sergeant-at-Arms, suffering great pain, and Senators Withers and Dennis, both belonging to the medical profession, attended him, and after his wounds were dressed he was removed to his home. Dr. McCoy, who is

attending him, reports him badly burned, but that he has no internal injuries, and, if erysipelas does not set in, will recover.

Death of Mr. King

Mr. King was attended on his arrival at Providence Hospital by Drs. J.E. Bracknett and Beall, who dressed his wounds and, after administering opiates, made a more extended examination of his injuries and decided that nothing could be done to save his life, as the concussion had done its work. He lingered till after 7 o'clock, when death relieved him of his sufferings, Mr. King, was about fifty years old, of good reputation for integrity, and he leaves a family who reside on 6th, between H and I streets, northwest.

Force of the Shock

The door to the room was torn from its hinges and dashed against the opposite wall, shivering it to pieces. The wall was disfigured and torn, and in one place is to be seen the prints of Mr. King's hand, with portions of the blistered skin still clinging to the hard finish. The walls are blistered and blackened by the heat, and such was the force of concussion that after turning two angles, at least forty or fifty feet from where it occurred, the transom at the head of the Senate stairs was dashed into the room of the official reporters of the Senate, causing no little consternation among that diligent corps. The doors of the Senate restaurant were slammed to and fro, and a hat rack standing in a second room against double doors broken to pieces. The cashier of the restaurant was thrown violently back against the wall.