

Joseph A. Mayhew (1866 – 9 Feb 1948)

Mayhew, Joseph A. On Monday, February 9, 1948, Joseph A. Mayhew of 1532 D st. s.e., beloved husband of Ines W. Mayhew, brother of Howard and George Mayhew, stepfather of Mrs. Ann A. Boyd and Mrs. Carrie L. Allen. Friends may call at Wm. J. Nalley's Funeral Home, 522 8th st. s.e., where services will be held on Thursday, February 12, at 2 p.m. Relatives and friends invited. Interment Congressional Cemetery.

The Washington Post, May 9, 1940

Grave Keeper Is Completing Fiftieth Year

Joseph A. Mayhew, 72, stood in the shade of an oak overlooking the Anacostia River at Congressional Cemetery yesterday. He was seeing again the flow of 50 years—a kaleidoscope of history, tinged with sadness, but overtone with peace.

To Mayhew the white markers that he will look at tomorrow at the end of a half-century as foreman of the cemetery are milestones to the moving growth of a city in peace and at war. With the mausoleums to 85 members of Congress, and the score and more of American fighting men, are associations as significant as the developing of the John Philip Sousa Bridge—which the bandsman's grave overlooks.

Buried a Dozen a Day

Unforgettable for the white-haired veteran at the city's oldest cemetery, are the days during the first World War when he was burying daily a dozen victims of the flu epidemic here. Unforgettable, too, those who came back from a dozen fronts and died as an aftermath. He put them to rest, too.

Without looking at the book in the cemetery office, where the graves can be located by a numbering system. Mayhew can take you to stones bearing the names like Moore, Gessford and Humphreys—former Washington police superintendents. He calls the names like a roll of honor.

Powerful, Splendid Funerals

Those were "powerful, splendid" funerals, Mayhew declared—outstanding in the burial plot's 140-year history—though not surpassing that of Sousa, made unforgettable by the requiem of the band. Mayhew of 1501 E street southeast, has liked his job despite its element of sadness.

"I never could get hard hearted" he explained. "You can't escape some of that—it worries you—although they may be complete strangers. Once I buried a woman, the mother of three small children. For two months after I couldn't sleep for hearing those children crying."

Buried at the cemetery too, are his father, Basil, who held the same position for 35 years before him; his mother, his wife, a sister, and a brother. He either buried or assisted at the burials of each of them.

But Mayhew is inclined to minimize the sentiment of his job. Instead he prefers to pass back over the years to the day he first started work there, and then look back towards the growing bridge and the no-less eventual future.