

George A. Phillips

(- 17 Apr 1882)

Phillips. Suddenly on April 17th, 1882, in his 38th year, George A., beloved husband of Ella Phillips, and son of George W. and Ann M. Phillips. Funeral services will take place at 1009 Maryland avenue southwest, Wednesday, 19th instant, at 2 o'clock. Relatives and friends respectfully invited.

The Evening Star, April 17, 1882

Fatal Explosion of a Projectile

The Deadly Shell in a Rubbish Heap

Mr. George Phillips and Mr. John Stewart Killed

The neighborhood of 14th and D street southwest (near the long bridge), was thrown into a state of excitement about 8:45 o'clock this morning by a loud explosion which brought hundreds of people out of their houses to learn the cause of it. The report proved to be the explosion of a shell on an open lot belonging to the Capt. Gibson estate, just south of the commissary department, and the instantaneous killing of Mr. George Phillips, and mangling of Mr. John Stewart in a most shocking manner, which must result fatally. The excitement was very great, everybody in the neighborhood running in that direction. A Star reporter was soon on hand and gathered the following particulars: D street between 14th street and the river, has never been graded and appears to be a sort of dumping ground, for all sorts of rubbish. About two weeks ago a colored man dumped a wagon load of rubbish near the rear of Mr. George Phillips home on D street, and among other things were three shells of different sizes. The largest was "an elongated, made for a rifle gun and which was about fourteen inches long and about six inches in width; another was of smaller size, though of similar pattern, and the third was round. These shells Mr. Phillips took inside his yard, where they have been lying ever since.

Breaking The Shell, In spite of a Wife's Caution

This morning about 9 o'clock, Mr. Phillips, in company with Mr. John Stewart, took the largest of these shells out of the back lot, in the rear of his house, and with a short-handled axe commenced to strike it with the view of breaking it to pieces. Mrs. Phillips begged them not to do so, as she said it might be loaded and would do harm, which caution, however, was not heeded. A colored man named John F. Tabbs was the only spectator to the scene. He was seated on a box near Mr. Gibson's brick warehouse, some three rods from where the two men were striking the shell. Mr. Phillips had given it some blows, so Tabbs says, and he called out to them asking if it had a cap on it and Stewart replied, "Yes." Tabbs says he answered back, "For God's sake don't strike it. You'll both be killed." Some colored women were then talking with him, and he told them to run, as the shell might burst and kill them. The women started and ran behind a stable, and he (Tabbs) ran around the brick warehouse, where he was standing at the same moment, and had not got quite around when the shell exploded, making a loud report.

A Frightful Scene

He at once turned and saw the prostrate forms of Phillips and Stewart. He walked up towards them, and at this time other people were running towards the scene, and Phillips was dead a short distance from the place, with his brains scattered against a post in the fence and over the ground about them. Stewart's right leg was blown in pieces from the thigh down and the left broken between the foot and knee, and his left hand terribly mangled. In Phillips forehead was a hole large enough to admit the fist

of a man and the entire brains were out and scattered on the ground. Dr. C.V. Boarman, whose office is at 1114 Maryland avenue, was summoned by someone, who notified him that his instruments might be wanting. He too had heard the explosion and repaired at once to the spot.

Stewart Conscious--His Account Of It

In a short time afterwards, Dr. C.M. Hammett came to the spot and finding Stewart still living, with Dr. Boarman holding with his thumb pressing against the femoral artery to prevent the loss of blood, he assisted in putting on a tourniquet, and thus released Dr. Boarman who had been in this unpleasant position for about fifteen minutes. Another tourniquet was placed upon his left leg to prevent the flow of blood, and by the use of hypodermic injections Stewart was returned to consciousness and was able to speak. He said he struck the blow on the point of the shell which exploded it, but did not suppose it was loaded. The cap containing the fulminate was picked up by someone and showed plainly where the pole of the axe had flattened the lead of which it was made. Both bodies lay on the ground for some time until the police ambulance came and Stewart's mangled body was removed to the Providence Hospital. All the physicians present state that it is not possible for him to recover. The dead body of Phillips was taken up by some of the spectators and carried into his house when the coroner was summoned.

Terrible Force of the Explosion

The shell flew in all directions and was picked up in fragments; one piece flew across the open lot and struck a large hole in the fence enclosing the commissary department. Pieces of Phillips' skull were picked up in different places, and bones from Stewart's legs were found strewn about. A good-sized hole was blown in the ground where the shell lay. No one knows who the colored man was who dumped the shell with other rubbish where it was found by Mr. Phillips.

The Victims

Mr. Phillips leaves a wife and three small children. He was a laboring man, and was engaged on the new portion of the bridge now being made. He was about 36 years old. Mr. Stewart was a single man, brother of Captain William E. Stewart, the well-known fisherman and lived with his mother on F street between 9th and 10th streets southwest. He was about 40 years old, a laborer by occupation. A brother of Mr. Phillips who came upon the ground, fainted on beholding the mangled remains of his brother, and a niece of Mr. Stewart swooned away on coming to the spot where her uncle lay. The two remaining shells were thrown into the channel of the river by Mr. William Faunce, where they can do no harm.

Death of Stewart

Stewart died at 11:30 o'clock at the Providence Hospital