

## Thaddeus H. Ricker

( - 22 Jan 1918)

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**Ricker.** Suddenly on Tuesday, January 22, 1918, Thaddeus Ricker and his son, (Victor) Hugo Ricker. Funeral services in the chapel at Congressional cemetery, Thursday, January 24 at 2 p.m.

*The Evening Star, January 22, 1918, p. 1*

**Two Men Missing, Two Badly Burned, Result of Blaze  
Fire Wrecks Planing Mill Owned by T.W. Smith in Southeast Washington  
Unable to Search Ruins Because of Intense Heat  
Flames Followed an Explosion, the Result of an Accumulation of Gases in Building**

Shortly before 3 o'clock this afternoon one body, believed to be that of the elder Ricker, was recovered from the ruins of the fire.

Two men missing, whose bodies are thought to be under the smoldering debris, and two firemen, employed at the plant, severely burned is the human toll of a fire in the planing mill of Thomas W. Smith, 1st and Francis streets southeast, about 9 o'clock this morning.

Thaddeus Ricker, fifty-five, of 665 F street northeast, and a son of his were supposed to have been at work in the Smith mill this morning priming window frames. At 1 o'clock this afternoon they had not reported back to M.F. Hobson, contract painter, in the rear of 720 20th street, by whom they are employed.

At Hobson's it was said the two men were to report at the mill at 8:30 o'clock this morning. One of Mr. Hobson's employes telephoned to the Ricker home shortly after noon, but no word had been heard of them there. It was said however, that they had left this morning to go to the mill.

It was suggested at Hobson's that the father and son may have been slightly injured and went to some hospital for treatment.

The fire wrecked a two-story brick building. The firemen are both colored. One of them, Washington Shanklin, twenty-eight years old, of 13 M street southwest, received cuts and bruises about his face, hands and body. The other, Arthur Farmer, thirty-three years old, of 313 A street southeast, had his right leg broken and was cut, bruised and burned. Both are at Casualty Hospital. They were hurried there by Dr. George H. Rawson, member of the hospital staff, as soon as they were rescued, from the burning building.

### *Search for Missing Men*

The search for the two painters was stopped because the ruins were too hot to approach. Both the men at the hospital are seriously burned, but their wounds are not necessarily fatal.

When the fire was extinguished it was found that the roof had been blown off as a result of an explosion of accumulated gases and the side walls of the structure had collapsed, leaving two large boilers and smokestacks apparently not damaged.

Shanklin and Farmer were in the structure handling shavings when the fire started, and the explosion quickly followed. It is said that Shanklin was passing shavings to Farmer, who was passing them to the furnace to be destroyed, and it is believed that when the furnace door was opened the back draft sent the flame from the furnace and ignited the gas that accumulated.

The report was heard some distance away, and nearby residents thought the explosion was in the navy yard, not far away. Navy yard property was in no danger, it is stated, as the District sewage pumping station is between the government reservation and the lumber mill.

An alarm of fire was sent in from box 531, which brought Battalion Chief Proctor and several companies of firemen to the scene. Firemen soon had the fire under control and it was not long before it was extinguished.

The battalion chief and all the companies, with the exception of No. 18 engine company, returned to quarters, No. 18, the first company due, remaining until the last spark had been extinguished and participating in a search for the men who could be accounted for.

Damage to the building, machinery and stock is estimated at \$3,000. The loss is covered by insurance.

*The Evening Star, January 23, 1918, p. 4*

### **Recover Bodies From Debris Of Mill Fire**

#### **Firemen Find Remains of Thaddeus H. Ricker and Son Buried in Ruins**

Firemen of No. 1 truck company, working under the direction of Battalion Chief Proctor and Capt. Edward O'Connor, yesterday afternoon recovered the bodies of Thaddeus H. Ricker, sixty-five years old, and Hugh Ricker, his son, thirty-two years old, painters, who early in the day were reported missing in the fire at Thomas W. Smith's lumber mill, 1st and Francis streets southeast. The two men were in the boiler room changing their clothing, it is stated, when the explosion occurred that set fire to the building.

It was shortly before 3 o'clock when the body of the father was recovered. The body was so burned and crushed that it was almost impossible to recognize it, but it was identified through the low shoes he wore. The body was found beneath the fallen roof and bricks. A few minutes later the body of the son was taken from the mass of debris.

Coroner Nevitt, Fire Marshal Nicholson and Deputy Fire Marshal Ratcliffe visited the wrecked building and the coroner summoned witnesses to appear at an inquest at the morgue at 3 o'clock this afternoon.

Washington Shanklin and Arthur Farmer, the colored employes of the mill, who were seriously burned and otherwise injured, are in Casualty Hospital, and it was reported at the hospital this morning that neither patient would be able to attend the inquest. Attending physicians said they spent a fairly restful night.

Fire department officials say the explosion was caused by gas in the shavings pit. This gas, they say, developed from rosin and other chemicals in the shavings and was ignited from a back draft from the fire under the boilers when the furnace door was opened.

Mr. Ricker and his son were natives of this city and had long been residents of East Washington. The family consisted of father, mother, son and one daughter, Miss Hester Ricker. The son was single and lived with his parents. Both father and son were members of the Ninth Street Christian Church, and Rev. George A. Miller, their pastor, was one of the persons to visit the family home, at 665 F street northwest, to say a word of condolence.

The two fire victims will be buried in Congressional cemetery. Services are to be held at the cemetery chapel at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

*The Evening Star, January 24, 1918, p. 17*

### **Death Called Accidental**

#### **Jury Investigates Killing of Thaddeus Ricker -- Double Funeral Today**

Inquest over the body of Thaddeus Ricker, 65 years old, 665 F street northeast, was conducted at the morgue yesterday afternoon by Coroner Nevitt. He and his son, Hugo Ricker, 32 years old, were killed in an explosion Tuesday at Thomas W. Smith's lumber mill, 1st and Francis streets southeast.

It was testified that a "no admittance" sign warned against entering the boiler room. Ricker's employment did not call for his presence in that building. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death.

Funeral services for father and son were conducted in the chapel at Congressional Cemetery at 2 o'clock this afternoon. Rev. George A. Miller, pastor of 9th Street Christian Church where the Rickers were communicants, conducted the services. Washington Shanklin and Arthur Farmer, colored firemen, burned and injured in the explosion are seriously ill at Casualty Hospital.