

John C. Rives, Sr. (- 13 Apr 1864)

The National Intelligencer, April 11, 1864

Death of John C. Rives, Esq.



The death of Mr. Rives took the community by surprise, though it was known amongst his friends that he had been in ill health for some time. He died at his residence, near Bladensburg, yesterday morning, of rheumatic gout. Since January he has been confined by rheumatic gout, which, by preventing locomotion, has operated to heat up his system, and his life was finally terminated early yesterday morning by congestion of the lungs. Mr. Rives was sixty-nine years of age. He was a native of Kentucky, and his first connection with Washington society dates back to about 1821, when he came hither from Edwardsville, Ill., (where he was cashier of a bank, to testify before a committee of Congress in relation to some operations of the Bank of the United States. He was for a while a clerk in the Fourth Auditor's office of the Treasury Department, and subsequently a clerk in Duff Green's Telegraph, establishment, but early in Gen. Jackson's administration he founded with Mr. Blair the *Globe*. After Mr. Ritchie purchased the *Globe*, and changed its title to the *Union*, Messrs. Blair & Rives reestablished the *Globe*, principally for the publication of debates in Congress, and it is now held to be the official record of proceedings. Some three years since Mr. Rives bought out Mr. Blair's interest.

Mr. Rives was a man of remarkable sense and judgment in political affairs, and in regard to election results he was for many years an oracle in this latitude.

Mr. Rives has been distinguished by his patriotic liberality in behalf of the Union cause; and it is estimated that amongst other contributions by him in this District, he has expended not less than \$20,000 for the support of families of District soldiers. In his treatment of his employees he was characterized by the same large-minded spirit, and he retained many persons in his extensive printing house by his just and liberal appreciation of their services. It is known that in one instance, which occurred a few years since, he gave above \$5,000 to a single individual, as a reward of his fidelity during something like the third of a century, and this benefaction was but one of many by him to the same individual.

In another instance he gave \$2,000 to an employee who had served him faithfully for some years. But his acts of generosity, especially to members of the craft, were not confined to his own establishment.

A gentleman taking a subscription paper to Mr. Rives in aid of a sick printer, received a refusal of his signature by Mr. Rives, who went on to say, however, in his characteristic way, that after it had been carried to other employees and printers, he would agree to give as much as was subscribed by all others. He not only redeemed his promise, but the amount not satisfying him he doubled what had been subscribed. These were but single incidents of many told of him amongst those who knew him best.

His loss will be deeply felt by the community but especially by the printers' craft.

Elsewhere will be seen a call for a meeting of the Typographical Society, to take measures to show proper marks of respect for their deceased friend.

The National Intelligencer, April 12, 1864

The Death of Mr. Rives

At a meeting of the Columbia Typographical Society of Washington, held last evening, April 11, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted:

Whereas the unerring will of Almighty God has stricken down the noble form and stilled the generous heart of him who has ever been the printers' kindest and most faithful friend;

And whereas in the death of John C. Rives his country must mourn a severe loss, this community lament the fall of one of the most worthy ornaments, and our society be deprived of its firmest supporter, whose life furnishes a bright example of sterling worth, of the success of industry, enterprise, and virtue, and whose ennobling disinterested acts of public and private munificence present all the characteristics of a man worthy our study and imitation; Therefore, be it

Resolved, That this Society, while submissively yielding to the decree of Omnipotence, feels with unfeigned sorrow the sad necessity which has bereft us of our old and well-tried benefactor.

Resolved further, That to the family of the deceased, who mourn the loss of such a kind and affectionate father, we offer our most sincere condolence.

Resolved further, That as an humble testimonial of esteem, we will assemble at the Government Printing Office Square, at one o'clock, on the 13th instant, to attend his funeral; and also that a copy of these resolutions be communicated to the family of deceased.

Wm. R. McLean, President

J.C. Proctor, Recording Secretary

The National Intelligencer, April 13, 1864

The Funeral of Mr. Rives

The funeral of the late John C. Rives took place at noon today from his late residence, near Bladensburg and was attended by an immense concourse of persons, among whom were many prominent officials, members of Congress, etc. For the convenience of the many persons who desired to attend the funeral at the residence, carriages were in attendance at Jackson Hall, (Globe Office) this morning, and large numbers were brought into requisition for this purpose.

The corpse, which had been embalmed by Dr. Holmes, looked very natural, and was attired in a plain black suit. The coffin was of fine mahogany, covered with black cloth furnished with plain but heavy silver mountings, and a silver plate on the top, bearing the name and age of the deceased. On the coffin was placed a handsome wreath of flowers.

The services at the house were conducted by Rev. Dr. Pinkney, of the Church of the Ascension, (Episcopal) and Rev. Dr. Smith, of the Fourth Presbyterian Church, of this city, after which, the corpse was placed in the hearse, the following acting as pall-bearers -- George W. Riggs, Esq, Hon. Jacob Collamer, Senator from Vermont; Hon. Justin S. Morrill, Representative from Vermont; Michael Caton, Esq., connected with the Globe for many years past; Francis P. Blair, Esq. formerly the partner of Mr. Rives; Lambert S. Tree, Esq. of the city post office; Hon. L. Powell, Senator from Kentucky; Hon. Robert Mallory, Representative from Kentucky; and the cortege, composed of an immense number of carriages, proceeded to Congressional Cemetery.

At the Government Printing Office the cortege was joined by the Columbia Typographical Society and Bookbinder's Association, which followed the remains to the cemetery.

The remains are not to remain here permanently, but will be removed to his place near Bladensburg, where they will be placed in a massive granite sarcophagus in a vault which is now being built there. Mr. Rives some time since ordered two cases to be cut from solid stone, in one of which he wished that his remains should be placed, and in the other those of his wife. The work has been done in the stone-cutting department north of the Patent Office, and the case for Mr. Rives is nearly finished. It measures 8 feet 4 inches in length, 3 feet 5 inches in breadth, and is 2 feet 1 inch deep, and in the clear to 7 feet 3 inches long and 2 feet 1 inch broad. A massive slab, about 6 inches thick is to cover the case and on this is to be cut the name with date of birth and death of the deceased.

The excellent arrangements for the funeral were under the direction of Mr. Samuel Kirby, the undertaker.

The Franklin engine house bell, and other bells, were tolled during the day as a mark of respect for the deceased, and both Houses of Congress adjourned over today for the same cause.

The Evening Star, June 12, 1865

The Late John C. Rives

The remains of the late John C. Rives, together with those of his wife and child, were removed on Thursday from the Congressional Cemetery, where they have remained since their decease, to a vault at his country seat, near Bladensburg, where they were placed in the granite sarcophagus, in which he in his will directed the remains to be placed, under the direction of Mr. Kirby, undertaker. The remains of Mr. Rives was placed in one of these stone coffins and those of his wife and child in the other. The vault in which the remains are deposited, is directly on the line of the railroad, and the stone coffins are in full view of passengers on the railroad.

The Evening Star, June 4, 1916

The Rambler

... At the north end of the hill are earth scars, parapets, gun embrasures and emplacements, which were a part of Fort Lincoln. Lower and toward the north are the ruins of Battery Jameson. Rifle trenches extend across this territory connecting with Fort Thayer, situated on highland to the west and with flanking batteries on the east, between the hill and the Eastern branch. In a trench on the property acquired about the middle of the nineteenth century by John C. Rives are inherited by his son, Col. Wright Rives, who passed away only a few days ago, and which was formerly a part of the Veitch tracts of Scotland and Barbadoes, were laid the bodies of the British who were slain in this, the only part of the Bladensburg battlefield where the fighting was spirited and sanguinary.

John C. Rives, who at one time was a member of Congress, and for many years editor of the Congressional Globe, bought this property in 1847. He bought it from the Veitch family, one of the old families of this part of the country, and numerous members of which are still living in and around Washington. John C. Rives sleeps in a fine old vault in Congressional cemetery, and there his son, Col. Wright Rives, was laid to rest a few days before the Rambler began the writing of this sketch.

One of the references to John C. Rives and this property which has come to the notice of the Rambler is an article written by Col. Clairborn, and published in the New Orleans Delta in 1856. The Rambler has recalled this before, but it is interesting at this time. Part of what Col. Clairborn wrote follows:

Frances P. Blair, better known as "Blair of the Globe," commenced his career as an editor at Frankfort, Ky. Amos Kendall was at one time his associate. Originally friendly to Mr. Clay and connected with him by marriage, he subsequently, with the great body of what was then called the new court party in Kentucky, attached himself to Gen. Jackson and followed the fortunes of that great man to

Washington, where he established the *Globe*. It speedily became the national organ of the democratic party and a prevailing influence at the White House.

If the *Globe* owed its reputation to Mr. Blair, he is mainly indebted for his fortune to the indomitable energy and financial talent of his partner, John C. Rives, who was charged with the business concerns of their extensive establishment. Mr. Rives is a huge, burly figure from Franklin county, the roughest in Virginia. He has a strong, masculine, matter-of-fact mind, a shaggy exterior and very brusque manners. He made a great fortune out of the old *Globe* establishment and still coins money out of the Congressional *Globe*. He never made but one failure; that was when he bought the Bladensburg dueling ground and turned gentleman farmer. Mr. Rives is a man of warm and humane heart. Merit in misfortune finds in him a steady friend.