

Joseph Stevenson Sessford (22 Apr 1818 – 8 Mar 1901)

The Evening Star, April 8, 1858

Outrageous Assault

Mr. J.S. Sessford, the treasurer of the theatre, was assaulted on the night before last, at the restaurant of Mr. Hancock, by a party of rowdies, a part of whom were Washingtonians, and a part from Alexandria. He had stepped in there to see a gentleman, and while standing in the bar room was assaulted and struck several times by a man named Burch, who stood facing him, and at the same time he received several blows from some four others who were in the rear. Desirous to avoid a reencounter at such fearful odds, he backed out of the place as soon as possible, without endeavoring to defend himself. We understand he has caused warrants to be issued for the arrest of these scape-graces.



The Evening Star, Saturday, March 9, 1901

Joseph Sessford Dead

Widely Known and Generally Popular Washingtonian

Prominent for Many Years in Local Theatrical Circles -- Sketch of His Life.

Mr. Joseph Stevenson Sessford of the National Museum died yesterday at his residence, No. 147 Carroll street southeast, after an illness of two months. The funeral will take place at 2 o'clock p.m. Monday and interment will be made in Congressional cemetery.

Mr. Sessford was born in Washington sixty-seven years ago and had resided here continuously since. His parents came to the District in 1820, from Newcastle, England, but were originally Scotch, the family being prominent in Roxburgh, just across the English border. He became popular early in life and continued so until the end. His tall, spare figure – he was six feet five inches in height – was a familiar one to Washingtonians and his genial disposition, charitable nature and fund of pleasant anecdote made him generally liked and assured of welcome wherever he went.

Interesting Theatrical Experience.

Previous to entering the government service in the National Museum, which was about twenty years ago, Mr. Sessford was prominently identified with several of the local theaters in responsible positions. He was the assistant treasurer of the old Washington Theater, then a leading playhouse, that was formerly Carusi's saloon and is now the Lyceum Theater, and during the war took the same position with Ford's Theater on 10th street and was in the box office the night that John Wilkes Booth shot President Lincoln. His last theatrical connection was with the National, from which he retired to take the place he held at the time of his death.

Wide Acquaintance With Actors

Few men had a wider acquaintance with the leading actors of the last and previous generations than Mr. Sessford, and his memory was replete with stories and anecdotes about all of them, from the elder Booth and Forrest down to John T. Raymond and the later comers. The news of his death caused general expression of sorrow throughout the city when it became known.

Mr. Sessford is survived by a widow, Mrs. Sarah Weedon Sessford, who was the daughter of H. Alexander Weedon, who ran the line of stage coaches from the navy yard to Georgetown before street cars were established in Washington, and by three sons, Dr. Joseph S.F. Sessford, H.W. Sessford and C.E. Sessford. He was one of the early members of the Knights of Pythias, joining that order shortly after its establishment in this city by Justus H. Rathbone and one of the few surviving members of the original Damon Lodge.