

John W. VanHook

(- 9 Apr 1905)

VanHook. On Sunday, April 9, 1905 at 10 p.m. at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. Middleton Smith, 1616 19th street n.w., John W. VanHook. Funeral service at 1 p.m. Tuesday, April 11 at residence. Friends invited (Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York papers please copy).

The Evening Star, April 10, 1905, p. 16

Death of John W. VanHook

Founder of Uniontown, Now Anacostia, in the District

Mr. John W. VanHook died yesterday at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Middleton Smith, 1616 10th street northwest. The deceased was in his eightieth year. Funeral services will be held tomorrow afternoon at 1 o'clock at the late residence, Rev. John McKee, assistant director of St. John's will officiate. The pallbearers, chosen from among his lifelong friends, will be James B. Wymer, Charles Tucker, Charles E. Cook and David G. Browne. Interment will be in Congressional cemetery.

Mr. Van Hook was born in the year 1825 in Philadelphia. When a young man he removed to Baltimore, where he lived until 1852, when he came to this District. He had been engaged in the real estate business and continued in it actively until about twenty years ago. He acquired considerable property, both here and in Baltimore.

He was the founder of Uniontown, D.C., the post office of which is now Anacostia, and he named the streets of that suburb after the ex-Presidents of the United States. He also, in conjunction with John Hopkins of Baltimore, was instrumental in greatly improving and beautifying a large suburban section of that city. During the civil war Mr. Van Hook was commended by President Lincoln and Gen. U.S. Grant for signal bravery in carrying dispatches from Philadelphia to this city via Baltimore at the time when the latter city was the hotbed of confederate sympathizers.

He is survived by four daughters, Mrs. Middleton Smith, Mrs. Emma T. Brown of Washington, Mrs. Tarleton H. Bean of New York and Mrs. David G. Browne of Fort Benton, Mont., and three sons, John C. VanHook of Helena, Mont.; Charles G. VanHook of Seattle, Wash., and James M. VanHook of New York city.

The Evening Star, December 5, 1891

Roadside Sketches by George Simmons

Forty years ago the site of Anacostia was farm lands and was owned by one Enoch Tucker. It formerly belonged to the William Marbury estate and was part of the 'Chichester' tract. There were 240 acres in the Tucker farm, a good part of which was cultivated for truck purposes. Mr. Tucker did not attend to the farm work himself, however, for he was employed as boss blacksmith in the Navy Yard. The farm was either leased or worked on the share plan. The Tucker farm house stood alone in the old days, and until recently, occupied the site of the present new Pyles block, on the west side of Monroe street, just south of Harrison street and the bridge. In 1854 [June 5, 1854] John Fox and John W. VanHook and John Dobler bought the farm from Tucker for \$19,000 and divided it into building lots.

Burr, Charles R., "A Brief History of Anacostia, Its Name, Origin and Progress," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 23. p.173-174:

John Fox and John W. VanHook were the real estate firm of Fox and VanHook for some years prior to 1863. That year it was a firm of commission merchants. In 1864, Mr. VanHook continued as a commission merchant and Mr. Fox became of the firm Fitch, Hine and Fox, attorneys and claims agents. Mr. Fox's business associates are the honorably remembered James E. Fitch and Lemon G. Hine. After 1865, Mr. Fox does not appear in the local directory.

John Welsh VanHook was born in Philadelphia in 1825. At early age he moved to Baltimore. At Baltimore in conjunction with John Hopkins he did much in suburban development. In 1852 he moved to Washington.

Mr. Van Hook was commended by President Lincoln and General Grant for having carried dispatches from Philadelphia to Washington via Baltimore at the time when the last name city was the hot bed of Confederate sympathizers.

He died, April 9, 1905, at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Middleton C. Smith, 1616 Nineteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. He is interred in Congressional Cemetery.

The residence of Mr. VanHook, "Cedar Hill," became that of Frederick Douglass, the preeminent of his race. Officially, in the District of Columbia, the only colored man to be U.S. Marshal and the first Recorder of Deeds. The property passed to the Frederick Douglass Memorial Association.