

## Joseph Goldsborough Bruff

( - 14 Apr 1889)

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*The Evening Star, July 13, 1866*

### **Mary Harris Trial Testimony**

J. Goldsborough Bruff - Witness had been frequently called as an expert as to handwriting, and is an artist and draughtsman employed in the Treasury Department. Witness was handed the letter of September 8th and 12, 1863, and asked his opinion whether they were written in a disguised or natural hand.

Mr. Hughes objected to the witness testifying as to these letters; and the objection was argued by Mr. Hughes and Mr. Wilson.

The Court, after inquiring of Mr. Bruff as to his occupation, business, etc., decided to follow the general rule, and admit no one as an expert unless he came from some business where he had acquired knowledge as an expert.

*The Evening Star, September 2, 1875*

### **Our Old Citizens**

... A communication from Mr. J. Goldsborough Bruff, enclosing a design for a badge for the members of the society, was read. The proposed badge is of dark blue ribbon on which is inscribed in silver "Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia." A brooch clasp with steel spring pin at top secured to a shield medallion, profile bust of Washington in relief at bottom. Medallion and clasp of silver, and entire length five inches. The subject was preferred to a committee composed of the president, the marshal and secretary, for report at the next meeting.

*The Evening Star, July 3, 1885*

### **The Oldest Inhabitants' Association**

The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants will tomorrow, in accordance with their custom, observe the day by a public meeting at their rooms, Corcoran building, at 12 o'clock. Mr. John Marbury will be the orator of the day, and Mr. J. Goldsborough Bruff will read the Declaration of Independence. It is expected that other addresses will be made and short speeches from the members and others will be interspersed with the other exercises. A large attendance is expected on the part of the members.

**Bruff.** On Sunday, April 14, 1889 at 7:45 p.m. at his residence 1009 24th street, Joseph Goldsborough Bruff in the 85th year of his age. Friends and relatives respectfully invited to attend the funeral Wednesday, April 17 at 4:30 p.m.

*The Evening Star, April 8, 1889, p. 1*

### **J. Goldsborough Bruff**

#### **A Venerable Citizen at the Point of Death**

J. Goldsborough Bruff, now in the 85th year of his age, is lying at the point of death at his residence, 1009 24th street northwest, but a few squares from his birth place. Capt. Bruff was a son of Dr. Bruff, the first regularly established dentist in this section, and was born in one of the "Six Buildings" on

Pennsylvania avenue, between 21st and 22d streets, October 2, 1804. Dr. Bruff, the father, before the war of 1812, invented a machine for making bullets by compressing them from cold lead, and a machine having been built and tried at the Washington Navy Yard, an agent of Great Britain offered the inventor a large sum of money to take it to Great Britain, and the offer, though tempting, was indignantly refused. Capt. Bruff, when a small boy, left Alexandria in a sailing vessel, and for some years traveled in many foreign lands. He early developed a taste for drawing and painting, and on reaching manhood he found employment in the engineer bureau as a draughtsman, where he continued for many years. While in this service he was employed on many of the defenses of the sea coast, among them the rip-raps near Fort Monroe. Mr. Bruff, when a youth, engaged the attention of General Jackson, and when the latter became President he recognized in the draughtsman at the Rip Raps the boy who, ten years before, had, by some of his sketches, attracted the general's attention, who presented him with a box of paints. He was also, in his younger days, brought into contact with many of the leading men of the day, including Gen. W.H. Harrison, who was elected President in 1840, President Adams, and a host of others. For many years he has been engaged in the office of the architect of the Treasury, and notwithstanding his advanced age he had been able to perform his work up to a few months since. Much of the ornamentation of the Treasury building is from his designs. In 1849, like many others, he left this city for California, going overland in command of a company formed in this city.

*The Evening Star, April 13, 1889*

#### **Mr. Bruff's Critical Condition**

J. Goldsborough Bruff was in an extremely critical condition this afternoon, and it is very doubtful whether he will live through the night.

*The Evening Star, April 15, 1889*

#### **Death of J. Goldsborough Bruff**

Last evening, shortly before 8 o'clock, Mr. J. Goldsborough Bruff, whose illness has been mentioned in the Star, passed away. His sickness, while prolonged, was painless and the end was not unexpected. Mr. Bruff had nearly attained the advanced age of eighty-five years, but such was the vigor of his constitution that he did not give up the active pursuit of his profession as draftsman until about four months ago. Mr. Bruff was born October 2, 1804, within a few hundred yards of the residence, 1009 24th street, where he died, his father being an owner of one of the famous six buildings on Pennsylvania avenue, between 21st and 22d streets. For the past sixty-three years Mr. Bruff has been in government employ, and there was only one interregnum, when, in 1849, with other young men, he was stricken with the gold fever and started for California to amass a fortune. He was unsuccessful, and in 1851 he returned to Washington and resumed his work in the Treasury department. He was a member of the Oldest Inhabitants association and the Washington Monument association. Mr. Bruff leaves a wife and five children. The funeral will take place at 4:30 p.m., Wednesday, and the arrangements will be under the direction of Federal Lodge of Masons, of which the deceased was a charter member. The interment will be at Congressional cemetery.

*The Evening Star, April 16, 1889*

#### **Funeral of J. Goldsborough Bruff**

The funeral of the late J. Goldsborough Bruff who died Sunday night will take place tomorrow afternoon at 4:30 o'clock from his residence, 1009 Twenty-fourth street. The service will be in charge of the Masonic order to which the deceased belonged. The interment will be in Congressional cemetery.

*The Evening Star, April 18, 1889*

**Funerals.** Funeral services were held yesterday afternoon over the remains of J. Goldsborough Bruff, at his late residence, 1009 24th street. Rev. Dr. Sunderland conducted the services and the members of Washington Commandery No. 1, Knights Templar, were present. A large representation from the Oldest Inhabitants' association were present. The interment was at the Congressional cemetery.

*McMahan, Virgil E. The Artists of Washington, DC, 1796-1996. The Artists of Washington, Washington, DC, 1995.*

**BRUFF, JOSEPH GOLDSBOROUGH**

Designer, graphic artist and draftsman born in Washington, DC in 1804. He entered the military academy at West Point in 1820, where he was trained as a draftsman. Following graduation he served overseas in the Navy, returning to the United States in 1827. He worked as a topographical engineer in Norfolk, VA until 1836, returning in 1837 to the District where he began a career in government service for more than six decades in the fields of drafting, designing and graphic art. He opened a museum in the 1840s and later organized the 64 member Washington City and California Goldmining Association, which he led to the gold fields of California in 1849-1851. The drawings he made during the cross country treks to the West are of considerable historic importance. Some were used, along with his Journals and other papers, in a two volume work published in 1944. Originals of his drawings are in the collection of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. One of his lithographs "Elements of National Thrift and Empire," is in the Library of Congress. Bruff returned to Washington in 1851 and was a member of the Washington Art Association, serving as an officer and participating in its exhibition of 1859 and 1860. In later years he was employed in the office of the architect of the Treasury. He died in the District in 1889. Two of his daughters, Celeste (Nichols) and Zuleima (Jackson) were also artists. REFS: BIAP; COBB; COSENTINO 2; DAWDY; GROCE; READ; TAFT (pp. 251-252); WCD (1865, 1877).