

Patrick Crowley

(1798 – 26 Nov 1886)

The Evening Star, Thursday, August 24, 1882

The British Occupation of the Capital

An Old Resident's Reminiscences of 1814 -- Recollections Appropriate to This Day

Among the few old citizens of this District whose recollection carries them back to the early history of this city, perhaps there are none whose mental faculties and physical powers are better preserved than those of Mr. Patrick Crowley, residing on I street, between 4th and 5th streets northwest. Mr. Crowley was born in this city in 1798, and has spent most of his days here in various pursuits. He is now eighty-four years old, and with the exception that his eyesight is somewhat impaired, is yet in a good state of preservation. He states that he was an apprentice to Joseph Gales in the printing business, and worked in the office of the "National Intelligencer" when the British made their raid on this city in 1814, and has a vivid recollection of the scenes attending.

The Battle of Bladensburg,

which occurred 68 years ago today, having, like most of the patriotic boys of this city, been an eyewitness of the events. He says the public buildings one after another sacked and destroyed and the red coats under Gen. Ross and Admiral Cockburn run riot among the ruins. The office in which he worked as an apprentice was knocked into "pi" and the type thrown out of the windows. At the time he was bound to the printing trade the "Intelligencer" office was located on the south side of Pennsylvania avenue, between 6th and 7th streets, opposite the Metropolitan hotel. He states that he was well acquainted with Mr. Francis Key, and quite a favorite of his. Mr. Key sent a manuscript copy of

The Star Spangled Banner

to the office of the "Intelligencer" for publication, and gave permission to Mr. Crowley to print it on slips of paper to distribute. He availed himself of this permission, and made about two hundred dollars by its sale on the streets and supplying it to those who wanted it. After it was set to music he used to go about singing it to gatherings on the street corners as he offered it for sale. He supplied a good many copies in Georgetown, where many of the best people of the District lived at that time. For a long time he kept the original manuscript copy, but would never part with it for money. It finally got mislaid and he never knew what became of it, but thinks it was stolen from him, as it was an object of much curiosity.

Ross and Cockburn

Mr. Crowley's description of the fight and rout of the federal soldiers at Bladensburg is about the same as given by others who were present. He recollects the positions of the several commands on the field, the order of engagement and the disorder of the retreat. He says that Gen. Ross was praised for the respect shown for private property and the rights of citizens who did not interfere with his troops, but that Cockburn was despised for his indifference to the rights of the citizens. He showed his character by the associates he made here; among them was a woman of loose character who lived, on F, near 5th street, where he spent a considerable part of his leisure time. The boys knowing how matters stood formulated a plan to capture him there, and the plot coming to the ears of the woman, she decamped and was not seen for some time afterwards.

Crowley. On Friday, November 26, 1886, Patrick Crowley in the 86th year of his age. Funeral from his late residence, No. 1020 26th street northwest, Monday, November 29, 1886 at 2 p.m. Relatives and friends invited to attend. No flowers.

The Evening Star, November 27, 1886

Death of An Old Citizen

He Saw the Battle of Bladensburg and the Burning of the Capitol by the British

Mr. Patrick Crowley, one of the oldest natives of this city, died last night at No. 1020 26th street northwest. Mr. Crowley was born in the year 1800, in the neighborhood of the court house, in this city, and when a boy worked in the press-room of the old "National Intelligencer," and was subsequently pressman of that establishment till about 1830. As a boy he followed the military to Bladensburg and was a witness of the retreat of the Americans and the destruction of the public buildings here by the British. About the year 1830, he engaged in the contracting business, first taking a section of the work on the Chesapeake and Ohio canal, and afterwards he built several sections of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad above Cumberland. He also did considerable contract work for the corporation of Washington, and was a commissioner of streets of the 4th ward under the old municipal government. He was the last survivor of the original members of the Fourth Presbyterian church, and had been for half a century an Odd Fellow and Mason, holding his membership in Central Lodge, No. 1, of the former order, and Federal Lodge, No. 1, of the latter, and he was probably the last member of the old Washington Guards, commanded by Col. W.W. Seaton, a crack organization of half a century ago. He was also one of the earliest members of the Oldest Inhabitants Society. He leaves a widow, (a sister of Deputy Marshal Phillips) and five children, all grown -- Mr. John Crowley, of the Alexandria Ferry company; Benjamin Crowley and Mrs. S. Duvall, of this city; Frederick Crowley, of Illinois, and Gideon Crowley, of Arizona. The funeral will take place at two o'clock on Monday afternoon.