

Harry O. Brooke

(- 23 Feb 1904)

Brooke. Suddenly, February 23, 1904 at Congress Heights, D.C., Harry O. Brooke, grandson of Mary C. and the late James C. Brooke. Funeral Friday, February 26 at 2 p.m. from Emanuel P.E. Church, Anacostia, D.C. Friends and relatives invited.

The Evening Star, February 24, 1904, p. 8

Accidental Death

Verdict of Jury in Case of Harry O. Brooke

Killed by Live Wire Last Evening

No Blame Attached to the Electric Company

Harry O. Brooke, twenty-five years old had hold of an electric light wire on Nichols avenue, near Philadelphia street, Congress Heights, yesterday evening when the current was turned on and received a shock which caused his death in a few minutes. Brooke was a blacksmith by trade and had also done some electrical work.

He was in the store of Samuel M. Filius when a clerk in there made a remark about an electric wire breaking and Brooke and Charles Murphy went out to investigate. When Brooke took hold of the wire to get it out of the way of the car his friend Murphy said: "For heaven's sake don't touch that." "It won't hurt me," Brooke said.

Murphy repeated his warning and Brooke repeated the statement that it would not hurt him. It so happened that the break occurred just before the time for turning on the current to feed the street lamps. It was eight minutes past 6 o'clock when he picked up the wire and the current was turned on just one minute later.

At the inquest held today at the sixth precinct station, Murphy told of having begged his friend to let go of the wire. He said the insulation on the wire was broke for a short distance and that Brooke had his hand on this part of the wire.

"Do you know anything about electric wires?" he was asked. "No, sir," was his response, "and if I had I'd been in the fix that he's in." Murphy told the jury that Brooke received three shocks.

Their Evidence Important

Two important witnesses in the case were James Tucker, motorman, and William Miller, conductor of the car that passed the scene of the accident about one minute before Brooke received the shock. Tucker said he had known Brooke for about four years and knew he was acquainted with electric wires as he (Brooke) had done electrical work on the road and at the hospital for the insane. Yesterday afternoon his car was moving south near Philadelphia street when he saw Brooke holding the end of a broken electric light wire. Brooke was apparently holding it out of the way of the car, but this was not necessary, as the car would not have touched the wire. When his car got near where the broken wire was, witness said: "Brooke, let go that wire." "What did Brooke say?" the coroner inquired. "He said nothing but laughed," was the response of the witness.

Witness said he spoke to Brooke for the latter's own sake, as he realized there was danger. The car had gone about twenty feet when witness heard a passenger remark: "The man's dead."

Witness looked back and saw electric flashes coming from the body of the victim. The motorman said he stopped his car to go to Brooke's assistance, but was advised to go to the end of the line, only a short distance away, and summon the patrol wagon.

William Miller was next examined. He told substantially the same story as the motorman, except that he said nothing to Brooke.

Story of Eye-Witnesses

Policeman V.G. King told the jury of his connection with the accident. Brooke was not dead when he reached him, but death occurred before he could be removed. Witness took him to the asylum where doctors examined him and pronounced life extinct.

S.M. Filius, a grocer, witnessed Brooke's action and thought there was no danger, as he knew Brooke had done electrical work. Witness saw Brooke when he fell and ran toward him. He was advised not to touch the body, and he looked for a stick to use in freeing his hand from the wire. No sparks were emitted before the car reached the broken wire. Witness said he felt no shock when he knocked the wire from Brooke's hand with a stick. He thought the man's pulse did not cease to beat for fifteen minutes after the shock was received.

Burton White, an electrician, was also questioned. He reached the scene of the accident just before Brooke died. Witness had his rubber gloves with him and he arranged the broken wire.

He said the wire was a weather-proof one, but he made no careful examination of it. There was a slight break in the insulation about one foot from the broken end.

Deputy Coroner Glazebrook told of the burns on the right hand of Brooke's body, and said his death was due to shock.

The jury returned a verdict of accidental death and attached no blame to the electric light company. In reaching this conclusion the jurors expressed themselves as being of the opinion that Brooke, not being an employee of the company, had no right to touch the wire.

The Evening Star, February 27, 1904, p. 16

Anacostia and Vicinity

The funeral of Harry O. Brooke, the young man whose death resulted Tuesday evening at Congress Heights from handling a live electric light wire, was held yesterday afternoon from the Emmanuel Protestant Episcopal Church in Anacostia. Rev. W.G. Davenport, the rector, officiated. The remains were interred in Congressional cemetery.