

John L. Burch (- 16 Apr 1909)

The Evening Star, April 17, 1909

Discouraged, Jumps to Death

John L. Burch Leaps From Railroad Bridge

Dies at the Casualty Hospital Three Hours Later

Content to Face the End

Feeling that his occupation as cabman would amount to but little in the future, because of the improvements being made to perfect horseless vehicles, John L. Burch ended his life last evening by jumping from the top railing of the railroad bridge at 2d and M streets northeast. It was about 6 o'clock when he made the jump, and about three hours later he died at the Casualty Hospital. Coroner Nevitt made an investigation today, and gave the necessary certificate of death, being satisfied that Burch committed suicide.

Burch selected a place to end his life near the spot where John Wahl was accidentally killed a few days ago. When he leaped from the bridge a number of children were playing near where he fell. They were frightened at the sight of the man falling so great a distance, nearly fifty feet.

When Burch, who lived at 641 2d street northeast, left his wife, Mrs. Alice Burch, at home yesterday afternoon he said nothing to her to indicate he was going to end his life, and she was greatly shocked when told of his act. She hurried to the hospital, reaching there after her husband had regained consciousness, and remained with him until he died.

During the time Burch was a patient at the Casualty Hospital he displayed remarkable nerve. With Dr. Moffit he discussed his adversities, recalling his discouraging experience as cabman after he had failed to make a success of the dairy business, and seemed content that his earthly career and troubles would soon end. His wife was hysterical most of the time she was at the hospital.

The Washington Post, April 17, 1909, p. 3

Dives To His Death

Cabman Plunges 40 Feet From Bridge to End Life

No Place For Him In World

John Burch Tells Hospital Physicians That Automobiles Had Put Him Out of Business --

Takes Leap From Railroad Structure, Near Which Children Are Playing --

Survived by Wife

Declaring that he had been "playing in hard luck" all his life, and that death was the only friend that would relieve him of all his worries, John L. Burch, a cabman, 52 years old, of 641 Second street northeast, climbed to the top of the railing of the Terminal Railroad Bridge, Second and M streets northeast, Eckington, last night and dived to the pavement, 40 feet below. He died at the Casualty Hospital soon after being taken there. His left leg was broken at the hip, his left arm fractured in several, and his body was crushed and bruised.

Pedestrians saw the man climb over the railing and place his hands above his head. A minute later the body shot through the air and landed a few feet from a crowd of children playing under the bridge. A hundred persons rushed to his assistance. The Casualty Hospital ambulance was summoned, and Dr. H.W. Moffitt, of that institution, responded.

After the body had been placed in the ambulance Burch regained consciousness and tried to speak. When they reached the hospital he explained to Dr. Moffitt why he dived from the bridge.

"Played In Hard Luck"

"I have played in hard luck all my life," he said. "The older I have become the darker the future has seemed to me. There is no excuse for my continuing this existence. An old cabman has no place in this up-to-date time. I know nothing except cab driving. Automobiles and taxicabs have practically put me out of business. I am in debt. I have money coming to me, but cannot collect it. I hope that I will not recover."

Burch was placed on the operating table, but died within a few minutes. In his pockets several bills, long overdue, were found. A half finished letter, directed to some debtor, saying that he was greatly in need of money, was found among his papers.

Burch lived with his wife at the Second street residence. He has a sister, Mrs. M. Dove, of 3301 Prospect street, Georgetown. Both went to the hospital last night. The inquest will be held this morning.

The Evening Star, April 19, 1909, p. 20

Funeral of John L. Burch

Funeral services over the remains of John L. Burch, who died Friday night at the Casualty Hospital of injuries received in jumping from a railroad bridge at 2d and M streets northeast, were held at 2 o'clock this afternoon at the undertaking establishment of the R.M. Perry Company, 58 G street northeast. Rev. Dr. Marshall, pastor of the North Capitol M.E. Church, officiated. Interment was made in Congressional cemetery. A number of relatives of the deceased from Maryland attended the funeral. Besides his wife, a son, J. Tilden Burch of Boyds, Md.; three brothers, Caly Burch of Boyds, Md.; William Burch of Poolesville, Md., and Robert Burch of Cumberland, Md., survive him.