

George W. Collins (- 1 Aug 1913)

The Evening Star, August 2, 1913 p. 2

Man's Body Found In River

Believed to Be That of George W. Collins, 64, Who Is Missing

George Frye, colored, employed at a stone quarry about a mile above the Aqueduct bridge, reported this afternoon that he had found the body of a one-armed white man floating in the river near his place of employment. The body was made fast to the shore, he stated. The harbor police went for it this afternoon.

It is probable the body is that of George W. Collins, sixty-four years old, member of the G.A.R., and retired from business, who yesterday morning disappeared from his home, 1417 G street northeast, although no description of the body was given by Frye other than he had only one arm.

Mr. Collins' left arm was off below the elbow. Yesterday morning Mr. Collins left home about 9 o'clock. He was in his short sleeves, and he said nothing to his daughter as to where he was going.

"It was the first time he had ever been away without telling where he was going," said William M. Collins, son of the missing man who is employed as clerk in the Navy Department.

Young Mr. Collins said his father was not a robust man, although he had not complained of being ill lately. He was unable to believe his father had jumped overboard. Until the body reaches the morgue late this afternoon there will be no positive identification of it.

The Evening Star, August 3, 1913, p. 2

George W. Collins Drowned In River

Four Stab Wounds in Body Believed by Coroner to Have Been Self-Inflicted

Found By Colored Man Near the Dixie Landing

Victim Had Been Melancholy Owing to Illness--Autopsy Disproves Murder Theory

Rumors of a murder spread through the police department yesterday afternoon following the finding of the body of George W. Collins, sixty-four years old, of 1417 G street northeast, in the river with four stab wounds near the heart.

Detectives from police headquarters hurried to the District morgue, while the police of the seventh precinct started an investigation when informed of the stabs in the body. An autopsy performed several hours later however, led the coroner and the detectives to believe that the wounds were self inflicted.

The autopsy revealed that death resulted from drowning, and not from the wounds, however. The fact that water was found in the lungs showed that death had resulted after the body was in the water, although it is declared by the acting coroner that the wounds would have later resulted in death, as the lungs had been punctured.

Body Found By George Frye

The body was found floating in the river near Dixie Landing by George Frye, colored, while he was crossing to the District side from one of the stone quarries in Virginia.

William M. Collins, a son, was at the morgue about the time the body reached there in charge of the harbor police, and he identified it. Young Mr. Collins, who is employed as a clerk in the Navy Department, was unable to conceal his grief. He had last seen his father alive when he went to his place of employment from his home at 1417 G street northeast Friday morning, and when he reached home

that afternoon and learned of the absence of his father he became alarmed and appealed to the police to find him.

Dr. Charles M. Emmons, acting deputy coroner, performed the autopsy at the morgue, and while he reached the conclusion that death had resulted from drowning he stated the wounds were a contributing cause.

It was found that a knife blade had passed between the ribs and touched the lungs and a serious hemorrhage had resulted.

Police Trace His Movements

As soon as it was learned that there were stab wounds in the body Capt. Schneider of the seventh precinct and Lieut. Giles of the Tenleytown police district started an investigation along the river with a view to tracing Collins' movements prior to his disappearance. Detectives Evans and O'Dea also took a hand in the investigation, the former being in attendance at the morgue when Dr. Emmons performed the autopsy.

Mounted Policeman Kuster learned that Harry Troup, son of a foreman on the canal,, had rowed Mr. Collins across the canal near the outlet lock, about one mile from the Aqueduct bridge, about 2 o'clock Friday afternoon.

In order to reach the river at that point it was necessary for Mr. Collins to cross the canal. He could have reached the towpath as far east as the Aqueduct bridge or he could have passed under it had he gone as far as Lock Cove, about a mile farther west, but he probably had a reason for wanting to cross near the Troup home, where there is an opening in the canal wall.

That reason, the police think, was because he probably had stabbed himself and concluded he had made so bad a job of his attempt or was suffering so much pain that he thought jumping into the water would make certain his death. Even then he had to walk a short distance from shore in order to reach deep water.

Appeared Entirely Sober

Young Troup told Capt. Schneider, Sergt. Easley and Policemen Heide and Law the story of having taken the stranger across the canal. He said there was nothing unusual about the actions of his passenger. He said he merely asked that he be taken over and the boy accommodated him. He said that the man appeared to be entirely sober and that he said nothing as to why he wanted to cross the stream or where he was going when he got across.

It appears that Mr. Collins, a sufferer from stomach trouble had been melancholy at times, although he had never given any intimation that he contemplated taking his life. The condition of his stomach as revealed by the autopsy, Dr. Emmons stated, suggested that he had been a sufferer.

When the autopsy was finished an undertaker took charge of the body and prepared it for burial. The certificate of death was not given last night. It will show that death resulted from drowning, but the question of how he got into the water will be determined probably today. Mr. Collins was a native of Delaware. He served in the civil war and many years of his life were spent in Philadelphia. He resided at the G street address with his son and daughter. Funeral arrangements will be completed today.

The Evening Star, August 4, 1913, p. 14

Declared Suicide Victim

Funeral Services for George W. Collins, Civil War Veteran, Tuesday

Nothing having been ascertained by the police to suggest that George W. Collins, civil war veteran, whose body was recovered from the upper Potomac, has been murdered, following his disappearance

Friday morning from his home, 1417 G street northeast, a certificate of death setting out that he committed suicide was given.

The body was yesterday removed to the late home of the veteran, and arrangements have been made to have the funeral services held there tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock. Rev. E. Hez Swem, pastor of Centennial Baptist Church will officiate. Interment will be in Congressional cemetery.

The Evening Star, August 6, 1913, p. 2

Report Discredits Foul Play

Police Still Maintain That G.W. Collins Committed Suicide

Nothing has been found that would indicate that George W. Collins, whose body was found in the river Saturday, had met with foul play, according to a report based upon investigations made by Detective Evans.

The report tells of the disappearance of Mr. Collins and of the subsequent finding of the body. It says Collins left his home in his shirt sleeves and next was seen about five hours later, when he asked a boy to row him across the canal. He was alone. The four stab wounds in the left chest. Detective Evans suggests, were probably inflicted by Mr. Collins just before he went into the river. The pockets of his trousers showed no signs of having been disturbed, the police say, and nothing was found to suggest he had been robbed.

Some of Mr. Collins' friends are still of the opinion that he did not commit suicide. They have given the police no reason for the belief that he was murdered, however, and the police maintain that the certificate of suicide correctly stated the case.