

Charles Knott

(- 9 Jul 1885)

The Evening Star, July 9, 1885

Attempted Murder and Suicide

Shocking Tragedy in East Washington This Morning

Charles Knott Shoots Three Times at Mrs. Catherine Morris and Then Kills Himself

A little two-story frame house, No. 932 3d street southeast, the last of a row of houses of a similar character, was the scene this morning of a shooting tragedy, which threw that portion of the city into great excitement. The house is that where George Morris, a track hand on the Baltimore and Potomac railroad, which runs along K street, almost at the door of the house, lived with his wife Catharine Elizabeth, his little daughter and two railroad men, who boarded with them.

Mrs. Morris is a woman about 22 years of age and of rather comely appearance. To this house, about 9 o'clock this morning, in went a young man named Charles Knott. A lady, a neighbor of Mrs. Morris, who was making a call at the house, was the only person there besides Mrs. Morris. When Knott came in the visitor took her leave. A few minutes later pistol shots were heard in the house. Then Mr. Cross, the railroad gateman at the corner of 3d and K streets, heard a woman's scream. Instantly Mrs. Morris rushed wildly out of the back gate screaming for help. Blood was flowing from a wound in her head, and she presented a frightful appearance. The astonished gatekeeper intercepted her and caught her in his arms.

Meanwhile, neighbors and workmen in the neighborhood hastened to the spot. Mrs. Morris was carried into the back part of her house. In answer to the inquiries she said the man who shot her was still in the house. This caused a sensation. He was supposed to be in the front room, but who would go in to seize the murderer. Police Officer Rauke who arrived just then settled the matter by going boldly into the front door, and was followed by Mr. Cross and others.

"I Guess He's Done For."

There, lying in the middle of the floor of the little parlor, prone upon his face, was the body of Knott.

"I guess he's done for," said one of the officers' posse, as he turned the body a little with his foot and looked into the ashen face. The pistol, a seven shooter 'Victor,' with which all of this bloodshed was accomplished, was still clutched in the dead man's hands. There was a pool of blood about his head and his shirt bosom was dappled with blood. There were two wounds. One bullet had penetrated his skull, and another entered the breast near the heart. It is supposed that he died almost instantly after shooting himself.

The Story of the Tragedy

As elicited in fragments from Mrs. Morris, was as follows: Knott, when he entered the house asked her for a picture of his, which she had. She went out into the back room to take the photograph from her album. He followed her and when she turned to see what he wanted he raised the pistol and fired. She tried to escape by running out to the back yard. He fired at her three times and two of the bullets took effect, one entering the skull near the temple and the other passing through her lungs. She escaped out of the yard, and it was at that point that she was received into the arms of Cross, the gateman. Knott, it is supposed, returned to the front room or parlor, and standing in the middle of the floor shot himself twice. Five chambers of the revolver were emptied.

Mrs. Morris' husband was at work on the railroad about two hundred yards from the house. Knott was seen by railroad men before the tragedy watching Morris. It is supposed that he was awaiting an

opportunity of going to the house when he would not be seen by Morris. The latter, however, was so near at hand as to be among the first to arrive at the house after the tragedy.

Dr. Herbert, who left Mrs. Morris about two o'clock this afternoon, had succeeded then in extracting the bullet, which was lodged in her lungs. He told a Star reporter that he would not at that time undertake to remove the bullet from her head. She was, he said, in a very critical condition, though her youth and strength were greatly in her favor. He thought the chances were against her, though he had known even worse cases to recover.

The Motive for the Tragedy

Remains somewhat a mystery. Even among the gossips of the neighborhood no suggestion is made prejudicial to Mrs. Morris' character. Knott, who was about 30 years of age and unmarried, lived with his aged mother on 7th street southeast, near Virginia avenue. He was, it is stated, a shoemaker by trade, and sometimes worked as a florist, but appears to have had no regular occupation.

Last winter Mr. Morris was engaged in boating, and necessarily absent from home a great deal of the time. Knott frequently visited his house, until Mrs. Morris being apprised that an evil construction might be put upon his intimacy, informed him, through his mother, that she had no objection to his visiting the house when her husband was at home. This caused him to stop his visits, and he had not been near the house for some time until today. It is thought that he had conceived a strong attachment for her, and that his jealousy prompted him to the tragedy which shocked the community this morning. Relatives of the Morris family to whom a Star reporter talked, think that Knott was insane.

Coroner Patterson will hold an inquest tomorrow over Knott's remains.

The Body of Knott

Was left lying in the middle of the parlor all the day, waiting until his mother could be found. The persons in the house gave their sole attention to the woman, who was lying in extreme agony in the little back room to which she went for the photograph album. The curb stones and fences of the neighborhood were lined all day with idlers and gossips who talked over the case and questioned the policemen, the reporters, physicians and others as they came out of the house.

At half-past 2 o'clock this afternoon, Mrs. Morris was resting quietly, and was thought to be doing well. The remains of Knott will be removed this afternoon to the dead house at the asylum should no claim be made for them.