

## Archie S. Miller

( - 18 Nov 1898)

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### **Dies of Yellow Jack**

### **Fatal Case of Fever at the Hotel Johnson**

### **Archie S. Miller The Victim**

### **Was a Civil Engineer and Lately From New York**

### **No Cause for Alarm**

A death from yellow fever occurred in this city at the Hotel Johnson, corner of 13th and E streets northwest, yesterday afternoon. Archie S. Miller, a civil engineer, aged 32 years, single, was the victim of the dread disease. He had only been in Washington two days, having come from New York city, where he arrived recently from Nicaragua.

There is no occasion for alarm on the part of the people of the District, as the cool weather and the precautions taken by the health department and marine hospital officials render the likelihood of a spread of the disease very remote. Health Officer Woodward gave to The Star this afternoon a dictated statement of the history of the case, first submitting it to the District Commissioners.

### *Dr. Woodward's Statement*

The statement is as follows:

"Mr. Archie S. Miller, a civil engineer, employed by the Nicaraguan canal commission, died at the Hotel Johnson yesterday of yellow fever.

"Mr. Miller has been in Nicaragua since April last. He left there about two weeks ago on a steamer bound for New York, but which stopped at Port Limond, Costa Rica, an infected point, to take on a cargo of fruit. He arrived in New York on Monday last.

"His whereabouts from the time of his arrival in New York until the time of his registration at the hotel Wednesday morning are not known. After registering he went out, and was brought back to the hotel unconscious about 5 o'clock p.m. by some unknown party, who assisted him to his bed, and left without giving any warning as to the man's condition.

"The case was believed to be an 'ordinary drunk,' which the patient would sleep off. He was not, therefore, disturbed Thursday to clean his room, the chambermaid finding him in bed, apparently asleep, at the time of her several visits.

"About 3 o'clock yesterday morning an inmate of one of the neighboring rooms was disturbed by a noise from the apartment occupied by Mr. Miller, and notified the hotel authorities, who at once summoned a physician. The probable nature of the case was promptly suspected and steps taken to properly isolate it. The health department was notified and secured the services of experts from the United States marine hospital service. The unconsciousness of the patient rendered it impossible to secure any history of the case from him, and a definite diagnosis was, therefore, impossible. The patient died at 2 o'clock p.m. The body was wrapped in cloths saturated with antiseptic solution and removed to the morgue.

"As it was necessary, however, to perform the autopsy by daylight it had to be postponed until this morning. Experts from the marine hospital service, who had seen many such autopsies and who were familiar with the post-mortem features of the disease, were present, so that the case might not by any chance be left in doubt. The autopsy findings were, however, so clear that there can be no possible question of the nature of the disease.

### *Apartments Disinfected*

"The apartments at the hotel were disinfected yesterday afternoon with chlorine and subsequently with formaldehyde gas, both being most powerful disinfecting agents.

"The room and its contents have been, since that time, scrubbed with solution of corrosive sublimate, except the bedding, which has been burned. His baggage has never been removed from the railroad station, and will be taken in charge by the health department.

"There is no reason to anticipate danger from the premises, and no likelihood of the spread of the disease in this city at the present period in the year, as the temperature is below that at which it develops.

"The body was wrapped in an antiseptic sheet, placed in a coffin filled with quicklime, and will be buried this afternoon.

"After Mr. Miller's death a letter reached the hotel addressed to him, and was opened by his most intimate friend. It was from a companion who had been with him on the way from Nicaragua, and showed that Miller had been quite ill while on the steamer, and that the writer of the letter, at present in Pittston, Pa., was at the time of writing--the 17th instant--himself suffering from symptoms which, to a well-informed physician, would appear suspicious.

"The United States marine hospital service will look after the case in Pittston."

### *A Genuine Case*

When The Star reporter reached the sixth precinct station, on New Jersey avenue, where the morgue is located, 1 o'clock this afternoon, Coroner Carr was about to drive away in his carriage.

"It is a genuine case of yellow fever," said the coroner. "I am not at liberty now to say anything more about it than that the health officer will inform the press of the circumstances. No one need be alarmed."

With this the coroner drove away. Standing on the station steps were Sergeant Falvey, several officers and two gentlemen in civilian clothes. Upon inquiring about the case the sergeant informed the reporter that one of the two civilians had been with Miller in Nicaragua and knew all the facts. Just then a policeman came outside the station and warned the civilians to say nothing with regard to the matter.

Therefore, they refused to talk, and in a minute hastened away, taking a Metropolitan car uptown. A health office employee armed with a brass and glass disinfecting machine, came from the morgue and stated that Dr. Woodward could be seen there. Entering the passageway at the side of the station, a walk of fifty feet brought the reporter to the morgue. Glancing through the open doorway, a body wrapped in white cloth could be seen lying on one of the tables.

Dr. Woodward, accompanied by another gentleman, came to the doorway and talked briefly to The Star man.

"Yes, the autopsy has just been held," said he, "and the nature of the case as yellow fever fully determined. Every precaution has been taken, and the body packed in lime, will be disposed of this afternoon. There is no fear of a spread."

### *Mr. Johnson's Statement*

Proprietor E.L. Johnson, of Hotel Johnson, was seen this afternoon by a Star reporter, and made the following statement of his knowledge of the case:

"Mr. Miller is an old friend of the house and has stopped with me upon at least a dozen occasions. Before he went to Nicaragua he spent ten days with me and he had come here this time upon an order from the department bringing him home. He came to the hotel about 7 o'clock Wednesday evening, and, stating that he was not well, was shown at once to his room.

"No further attention was paid to him until the following morning about 7 o'clock, when the chambermaid went to the room, and, opening the door, saw him lying in bed, with his face next to the

wall. Thinking him asleep, and not desiring to disturb him, she left. Returning at 10 o'clock, she found him still in bed, and again went away. A third time, at 1:30 o'clock, she went to the room, but upon reaching the door, and hearing talk going on inside, believing him to be with friends, she again refrained from her efforts to change the room.

"Nothing more was heard from Mr. Miller and no further calls were paid to his room. Along toward morning Mr. Houchens, a mail contractor who occupies a room adjoining, called the bellboy and told him he had heard groans coming from Mr. Miller's room. The bellboy reported it to Night Clerk Coleman, who at once went to the room, and opening the door, found Miller unconscious, but groaning.

"He at once called Dr. Hooe, formerly of the Emergency Hospital, having an office now on 13th street below F street, and after the doctor had made an examination he called Dr. W.W. Johnson in consultation. The sick man was then in a state of collapse, and their first diagnosis was that the case was one of pernicious malarial fever.

#### *An Expert Called*

"At 10:30 o'clock Dr. Johnson thought it best to also call in consultation Dr. F.V. Brooks of No. 465 Florida avenue, a son of James A. Brooks, at one time chief of the secret service. Dr. Brooks is an expert in yellow fever cases, and, although he did not so express himself, he had concluded upon examination that it was very probably yellow fever.

"He made the customary tests and at the same time the health office was notified, and a little later the Marine Hospital authorities were informed of the suspicious character of the case. The physicians ordered the room under quarantine and Dr. Hooe locked himself in it, in order to prevent the possibility of anyone entering. Upon the arrival of the authorities the matter was placed in their hands and every precaution was taken by them to prevent the spread of any infection.

"The room was disinfected, the body wrapped in antiseptic cloths, and the contents of the room were taken out and burned by the health authorities, so that, so far as I am concerned, I have done everything that can be done to protect my guests and the public.

"The father of Mr. Miller, who lives at Danville, Va., was telegraphed for and arrived last evening. "Mr. Hankins, who is also connected as an engineer with the Nicaraguan commission, called at the hotel and rendered every assistance in his power. He was an old friend and associate of the deceased."

An official at the marine hospital stated to The Star this afternoon that the case is entirely in the hands of the local health authorities.

"There need be no fear," said he. "It is so cold now that the fever could not spread. Every safeguard, however, has been employed."

*The Evening Star, November 22, 1898, p. 2*

#### **The Miller Case**

#### **Conflicting Opinions Respecting Character of Fatal Disease**

#### **Dr. Doty of the Same Opinion Still**

#### **Review by the Chief Surgeon of the Marine Hospital**

#### **Cause of Yellow Fever**

Before Mr. Doty, the quarantine officer of New York, returned to the metropolis this morning he had something more to say to the marine hospital service in continuation of the controversy over the Miller yellow fever case. He remains unconvinced that the case was what it was diagnosed and autopsied to be, and answered in a general way the scientific exposition of the opposite side of the dispute in The Star yesterday. Going beyond the original point of attack, he enters upon new issues with the marine hospital service.

### *The Opposite View*

The attention of Dr. Preston H. Bailhache, surgeon-in-charge at the marine hospital, was called to Dr. Doty's statements this afternoon.

"It is useless for him to attempt controversial argument. I will not help him in it," said he. "There is nothing to be said beyond what was contained in The Star's very accurate and technical description of the case yesterday. I will add, however, that not any of the physicians taking part in the autopsy or who saw the case dissents from the yellow fever diagnosis. There is no chance to dispute it--all the evidences and symptoms were apparent.

"Dr. Doty was notified November 4 that the Allegheny had touched at an infected port, and there our responsibility ended."

"But," said the reporter, "Dr. Doty insists that the vessel passed quarantine all right."

"Ah," replied the doctor, "there is the point. Was she all right? Miller had been sick and got up to pass the officers."

"Dr. Doty says your office was negligent in failing to inform him of the Miller case until Sunday last, two days after the death."

"We notified him early as we could," replied Dr. Bailhache. "He ought to have been watchful after the 4th instant, and caught Miller and Herbert at New York. No, I'll not say why he was not informed on Friday or Saturday. We won't keep up the controversy. We are wholly satisfied with our work in the matter. Miller had yellow fever."

With regard to Dr. Doty's statement that the germ of yellow fever had not been found, Dr. Bailhache handed the reporter the "Public Health Report," issued by the Treasury Department November 11. It contained the preliminary reports of Surgeon Wasdin and Passed Assistant Surgeon H.D. Geddings of the marine hospital service, who were detailed in 1897 by the President to investigate in Havana, Cuba, the cause of yellow fever.

### *Interrupted by War*

Suitable rooms were provided in Havana and a laboratory established, and the work was continued until interrupted by the war. These officers have been directed to return to Havana and continue their investigation, the laboratory having been undisturbed during the war.

Dr. Geddings reports that in sixteen cultures the Sanarelli organism was found to the extent of 76.93 per cent. He concludes by indicating that the bacillus interoides of Sanarelli is the specific agent in the causation of yellow fever.

*The Evening Star, November 23, 1898, p. 9*

### **Death From Yellow Fever**

#### **District Health Officer Mentions Miller Case in Weekly Report**

The death which occurred from yellow fever on the 18th instant was the first ever recorded from that cause in the District of Columbia. The deceased was a civil engineer who had arrived at New York on the steamer Allegheny on the 16th instant from Greytown, Nicaragua, via Port Limon, Costa Rica. The probable source of the infection was Port Limon, at which the steamer touched on the 7th instant. The deceased was, according to the statement of a fellow passenger, taken sick during the voyage, but at the time of his arrival at New York, on the 9th day, was able to pass the quarantine officers and come to this city, where he arrived during the afternoon. He registered at a hotel about 7 o'clock, as nearly as can be learned, went immediately to his room, and apparently became unconscious shortly afterward; this was on the 9th or 10th day after leaving Port Limon, and if the disease developed after the ordinary period of incubation of four or five days, was the 5th or 6th day of his illness. Nothing more is known of him until about 3 o'clock the morning of the 18th instant, when the occupant of the adjoining room was

aroused by noises in the apartment occupied by the deceased. A physician was immediately called, and from the fact that the patient had been in a country known to be infected with yellow fever, and because of the serious nature of the disease and the presence at that time of characteristic black vomit, suspected the infectious character of the malady and took proper steps to have it definitely diagnosed. Specimens of urine showed the presence of albumen and no casts, and an examination of the blood failed to reveal any evidences of malarial infection. The patient died about 2 o'clock without having recovered consciousness. An autopsy performed the next day revealed the characteristic lesions of yellow fever and no evidence of disease of any other variety. There is, therefore, no question as to the correctness of the diagnosis. It is not, however, probable, and, in fact, is scarcely possible, that there should be any spread of this disease in this District at the present season of the year.