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James Ramsey Nevitt

(25 Jun 1866 – 30 Aug 1952)

The Evening Star, August 9, 1900, p. 3

New Coroner Appointed
Dr. J. Ramsay Nevitt to Succeed Dr. Carr
Dr. L.W. Glazebrook Reappointed Deputy Coroner--
Order Takes Effect the 16th Instant

Upon the nomination of Commissioner Macfarland, who has immediate supervision of the office, the Commissioners this afternoon appointed Dr. J. Ramsay Nevitt as coroner of the District, to succeed, the 16th instant, Dr. W.P. Carr. Upon Mr. Macfarland's motion, the Commissioners also reappointed Dr. Larkin W. Glazebrook as deputy coroner, to succeed himself the same date. Both appointments are to continue during the pleasure of the Commissioners, the order fixing the terms of these officers heretofore at three years being rescinded.

Dr. Nevitt is one of the best-known of the younger of the local physicians, and has resided here for thirty-one of his thirty-three years. He was born near Richmond, Va. He was educated in the public schools of the District, graduated from Columbian University after a course of four years, and subsequently graduated from the medical department of that university. He was for a time resident student at the Washington Asylum Hospital, and later became the resident physician of that institution. Still later he became a member of the Emergency Hospital's staff, serving under Dr. H.L.E. Johnson, and seven years ago was appointed a member of the District's board of police and fire surgeons, which position he still retains.

Man of Courage

Dr. Nevitt is not only an accomplished physician, but he is also a man of rare courage, as has been attested on more than one occasion when he volunteered for service as physician in charge of the local smallpox hospital. During the Grand Army encampment here in 1893 he was placed in charge of the contagious hospital at a time when it was expected that this country would be visited by an epidemic of cholera. Several cases of smallpox developed here a little later and he continued in charge of the hospital while such afflicted patients were there, as he has done on several occasions later. Dr. Nevitt rendered heroic service at the Louisiana avenue fire several years ago, when he risked his life by rendering medical attention to members of the fire department, who were at the time pinned down in one of the fiercely burning buildings, and at a time, took when the walls threatened to fall in and crush every one within the structure to death.

The Deputy Coroner

Dr. Glazebrook, the reappointed deputy coroner, is also a native of Virginia, and he, too, was born near Richmond. He was educated here. He has held the position of deputy coroner since the office was created, in 1893, and has, it is stated, been very successful in the performance of autopsies, in which he is admitted to be a specialist. Both men are republicans, and it is understood that this fact was a most important consideration in the mind of Commissioner Macfarland in his determination to nominate them. Dr. Nevitt's general qualifications, and the fact that he was most highly recommended for the position, were also material inducements in the minds of the Commissioners, who also desired to pay recognition to his heroic services in assuming charge of the smallpox hospital on several occasions, and for his conduct at the Louisiana avenue fire. Dr. Glazebrook, while a candidate for the position of coroner, expressed his satisfaction with the appointment of Dr. Nevitt, of whom he entertains a very

high regard, and the former's reappointment as deputy coroner was due to the great success he has attained in the office, as well as the many high indorsements filed in his behalf.

Complimented by Police

Members of the police department express themselves as delighted at the action of the Commissioners in appointing Dr. Nevitt to succeed Coroner Carr. At the same time they regret very much that they are to lose his services as surgeon t the department. Dr. Nevitt has given entire satisfaction as a police surgeon, and because of his popularity and recognized ability his services were much in demand. He is regarded by many as the most popular surgeon that has been connected with the police department for many years. The police are satisfied that as coroner he will prove to be as successful as he has been as a police surgeon.

The Evening Star, January 4, 1902, p. 2

Dr. Nevitt Improving

Dr. J. Ramsay Nevitt, who suffered an attack of acute appendicitis a week ago, and who was removed to the Emergency Hospital Thursday last, was apparently much better this morning. He rested well last night, and if his condition continued to improve during the next two days as it has since he reached the hospital, the doctors hope an operation will be found to be unnecessary. It is expected that he will be able to leave the hospital next week.

The Evening Star, December 24, 1913, p. 2

Dr. Nevitt A Success In Santa Claus Role

District Official Gives Joy to Family of Six Little People

Dr. J. Ramsay Nevitt, the District Coroner, recently appeared in the role of Santa Claus and brought happiness to the hearts of a family of six little children, their mother and grandparents. Playing Santa Claus was a little out of the coroner's line, but on an official visit to the vicinity of Good Hope, a week ago, he witnessed a sight that suggested the necessity of a volunteer to make it possible for the children to have a Christmas celebration.

Getting together a number of packages of toys, candles, fruits and clothing Monday afternoon, Dr. Nevitt motored to the house. He found the aged grandfather in front of the house chopping wood, a son of a neighbor assisting him.

When the physician's automobile was brought to a stop on the road about 100 yards from the house, the wood choppers put down their implements and walked to the house.

They were unable to understand the meaning of a stranger coming with his arms filled with packages.

"Guess he's made a mistake," the aged man suggested, calling his wife to the door.

"I was here a few days ago," said the coroner to the grandmother. "Don't you recall that I was here when the baby died?"

They recalled the visit, and when the packages were handed the grandmother and she was told they were for a Christmas celebration for the benefit of the little people, she exclaimed. "People certainly are good to us. I didn't know what we would do to get something for the children, but it's all right now."

The Evening Star, June 19, 1914, p 10

Enters Protest Against Removal of Dr. Nevitt

Civic Betterment Association Informed District Coroner Is Not Republican

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Members of the Civic Betterment Association held a meeting last night and adopted a resolution protesting against the proposed removal from office of Dr. J. Ramsay Nevitt, District coroner, on the grounds that he is a republican, and the appointment of Dr. C.W. Chipman, a democrat, to the position.

The meeting was held at the residence of Mayo Mitchell, secretary of the association, 15 Grant place northwest, Capt. J.W. Mitchell, president of the association, presided.

A statement made at the meeting contained an absolute denial of the allegation that Dr. Nevitt is a republican. It was stated that he is a native of Rappahannock county, Va., and that all his relatives are democrats and warm personal friends of the two United States senators from that state.

The late L.G. Hine, father-in-law of Dr. Nevitt, was a democrat. He served as a District Commissioner, Dr. Nevitt, it was stated, came to this city when he was a boy, and has never taken any part in politics.

Dr. Nevitt, it was stated, has served as coroner for fourteen years without any complaint against his manner of conducting business, and the association voiced an objection to his removal for alleged political reasons.

Other civic bodies will be asked to take action. It is the intention of the association to send President Wilson a communication voicing the sentiments expressed at the meeting.

The Evening Star, October 21, 1931, p. 2

Asks Retirement

Coroner Nevitt Claims Physical Disability

Coroner J. Ramsay Nevitt has applied to the District Commissioners for retirement, it was learned today. The application was based on physical disability, since Dr. Nevitt has not yet reached the retirement age of 70.

The Commissioners have forwarded the application to the Civil Service Commission for action.

Dr. Nevitt has served as coroner here since August 16, 1900. He was born June 25, 1867, in Richmond County, Va., and as graduated from Columbia University in 1889, receiving his medical degee from that university in 1892.

He was an employe in the District engineer department from 1890 to 1891 and was in charge of the District Hospital for Contagious Diseases in 1892. He was appointed to the Board of Police Surgeons in 1894 and made president in 1895.

He is a member of the District Medical Society and of the American Medical Association. He lvies at 1820 Calvert street.

Nevitt, Dr. J. Ramsey. On Saturday, August 30, 1952, Dr. J. Ramsey Nevitt, husband of the late Mary Hine Nevitt, father of Miss Ramsay Nevitt and Leman H. Nevitt. Friends are invited to attend memorial services at the Lee Funeral Home, Fourth street and Massachusetts avenue northeast on Tuesday, September 2 at 4 p.m.

The Evening Star, September 1, 1952

Dr. J.R. Nevitt Dies; Was District Coroner From 1900 Till 1931

Dr. J. Ramsey Nevitt, 85, District coroner from 1900 to 1931 did Saturday at Cedarcroft Sanitarium, Silver Spring. He had been at the sanitarium for the last three years.

Dr. Nevitt began his coroner's job at $1,500 a year, plus 50-cents a day for horse and livery hire. The Morgue was then a little structure of second-hand brick beside a stable behind the sixth police precinct.

Later the morgue was moved to the waterfront and then to Gallinger Hospital grounds.

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During Dr. Nevitt's career, a police homicide squad was established to supplement the coroner's efforts to investigate murders.

Strange Cases Recalled

When Dr. Nevitt retired he recalled some of his strange death cases: The man who died of bed bug bites, the three Chinese members of a special mission to the United States who were murdered, the painter who killed himself while working in Dr. Nevitt's home and the son of an Ambassador who was found hanging in an embassy attic. The Ambassador demanded that Coroner Nevitt give no publicity to the case and with the help of the Commissioners and the Secretary of State a certificate of death was issued quietly and filed in the District Building.

Dr. Nevitt directed rescue of the injured after the Knickerbocker Theater disaster in 1922. The theater, at Eighteenth street and Columbia road N.W., was around the corner from his home at 1820 Calvert street N.W. He issued certificates for 101 dead after the disaster. He also was on the job at the Terra Cotta railroad wreck in which 48 persons died.

Born in Virginia

Dr. Nevitt was born in Naylors Hole, Richmond County, Va. He had lived in Washington since he was 2 years old.

He was graduated from Columbia University, now George Washington, and received his medical degree there in 1892. He was in the District Engineer Department from 1890 to 1891.

Dr. Nevitt gained fame combatting a smallpox epidemic in the Washington area when he was in charge of the District Hospital for Contagious Diseases from 1892 to 1894. He was appointed to the Board of Police Surgeons in 1894 and became president the following year.

After his retirement Dr. Nevitt lived on a farm near Potomac Beach, Va., in the summer and at 3639 Van Ness streets N.W. in the winter.

He married Mary Hine in 1894. She died in 1948.

Dr. Nevitt was a member of the Masons, Washington Heights Presbyterian Church, Washington Medical and Surgical Society and the American Medical Association.

Survivors are a son, Leman H. Nevitt, 3121 Patterson street N.W., an employee of the District Bridge Department, a daughter, Miss Ramsay Nevitt, 3639 Van Ness street, N.W., a teacher at Woodrow Wilson high school, and three granddaughters.

Memorial services will be held at 4 p.m. tomorrow at the Lee funeral home, Fourth street and Massachusetts avenue N.E.

The Washington Post, September 1, 1952, p. 10

Dr. J.R. Nevitt Dies; Former D.C. Coroner

Dr. J. Ramsay Nevitt, 85, of 3121 Patterson st. nw., former District Coroner for 31 years, died Saturday at Cedarcroft Sanitarium, Silver Spring.

Born in Naylors Hole, Va., Dr. Nevitt obtained his formal education in Washington public schools and was graduated from Columbia University, New York. He was resident physician at the Washington Asylum after his graduation.

In 1894 Dr. Nevitt gained fame combatting a smallpox epidemic that struck the Washington area. He was the head of the contagious hospital at that time and later became police surgeon.

From 1900 to 1931 Dr. Nevitt was the District Coroner. He was a member of the Mason, the Washington Medical and Surgical Society, the American Medical Association and the Washington Heights Presbyterian Church. His wife, Mary Hine Nevitt, died four years ago.

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A son, Lema Hine Nevitt of the above address, a daughter, Miss Ramsay Nevitt of Washington, and three granddaughters survive.

Memorial services will be held at 4 p.m. Tuesday at the Lee Funeral Home, 4th and Massachusetts ave. ne.