

James B. Peake

(1840 – 31 Oct 1890)

The Evening Star, October 31, 1890

A Clerk's Suicide

**Mr. James B. Peake Takes a Double Dose of Poison
A Tragedy That Caused a Sensation in Northeast
Washington This Morning -- After Taking Carbolic Acid
And Laudanum The Suicide Informs His Family Of It.**

A sad suicide occurred today on 7th street northeast. At 10:45 this morning shrieks and cries were heard coming from house No. 222 7th street northeast, occupied by Mr. James B. Peake and his family. A policeman who was passing ran to the house and found that Mr. Peake had attempted to commit suicide by taking a large dose of carbolic acid and laudanum.

Physicians Could Not Keep Him

The policeman hastened for a physician and in the meantime Special Agent Key of the Humane Society, who happened to be in the neighborhood, arrived at the house. He also notified a physician and obtained a supply of sweet oil at a pharmacy, which was given in large quantities to the already dying man. The first physician to arrive was Dr. Marion Curtis, who was joined shortly by Drs. Strickler and Hazen. Every means known to the combined skill of the assembled physicians were used, but all failed to revive to any extent the dying man, and at 12 o'clock he expired.

Mr. Peake was a clerk in the third auditor's office, Treasury Department. He was about 40 or 45 years old and lived with his wife and four children in a comfortably furnished two-story brick house.

Told The Children

He did not go to the office this morning. He was about the house some time and about ten minutes before 11 o'clock he called one of his daughters and told what he had done.

His statement was so startling that the daughter could hardly believe it, but it took but a few seconds to discover that there was too much truth in his assertion. He became deathly sick and was apparently nearing his death when the alarm was given and the physicians were summoned.

The deceased was born in this city and was appointed to office several years ago as a Washingtonian. He held a \$1,400 clerkship.

Trying Electricity

When it became known that Mr. Peake had taken the deadly drug the neighbors flocked to the house and crowded the room on which lay the unconscious man.

The doctors applied an electric battery after the neighbors had left the room, but the suicide did not regain consciousness before he died.

The bottle from which the fluid had been drunk still contained a little of the mixture, which the doctors concluded was commercial carbolic acid and laudanum.

Mr. Peake, it appeared, did not tell what he had done until the poison had taken effect, and he was unconscious in a few minutes.

Coroner Patterson was notified of the suicide and he will probably inquire into the case later in the day.

The wife and children are almost prostrate with grief.

A Native of East Washington

The deceased was a native of East Washington, a son of the late John H. Peake. He was raised on 7th street east near the navy yard gate, and up to the commencement of the war he was a writer or clerk in the navy yard. He served as a member of the Washington Light Guard in the early days of the war. For many years after he was a writer in the navy yard and subsequently he was for some time out of steady employment. When the civil service law went into effect he took the first examination and passed so high up on the list that he was one of the first appointed to a vacancy in the Treasury Department.

What Is Said In The Office

There was no knowledge whatever in the third auditor's office today of the suicide of Mr. Peake, or even of his death. From statements made there it would seem that Mr. Peake has suffered for some time under severe domestic troubles, and that his financial condition is poor. He had, it would appear, a mania for investing in patent rights, and had a large number of small creditors, who besieged him every pay day.

The Evening Star, November 3, 1890

Funeral of James B. Peake

The body of Mr. James B. Peake, who committed suicide Friday, was buried with military honors yesterday afternoon. The religious services took place at the family residence, 222 7th street northeast, and the interment was in a vault at Congressional cemetery. The services were conducted by Rev. W.M. Furguson of the Fourth Street M.E. Church. A large number of friends were present, as were also members of Farragut Post, No. 16, and Union Lodge, No. 11, I.O.O.F. At the cemetery the ritual of the G.A.R. was read by Chaplain J.H. Bradford. The pallbearers for Farragut Post were Comrades Marbury Harris and Fred. Bibbins, and the representatives from Union Lodge were Messrs. John Hutchinson and L.S. Brooford.

Department Commander Urell of the G.A.R. was present with his staff, which consisted of Senior Vice Department Commander D.C. Faunce, Junior Vice Department Commander Farnsworth, Assistant Adjut. Gen. Keoh and Medical Director Howard. Post Commander George R. Cook was also present with his staff, Senior Vice Commander Capt. Riley, Junior Vice Commander H.H. Moler, Post Surgeon McKim, Adjutant Chris. Storm and Quartermaster W.F. Dove.

Peake. The remains of the late James B. Peake were removed from the vault at Congressional Cemetery and quietly laid to rest in the family lot November 27, 1890 at 12 o'clock.

The Evening Star, November 14, 1890, p. 10

A Month of Suicides

Seven Cases of Self-Destruction Here in October

... Eleven days later, on the last day of the month James B. Peake, a department clerk, drank about an ounce of a mixture of carbolic acid and laudanum. Peake had a good, comfortable home and a family, but he took the fatal dose and ended his life without giving any reason therefore.