

Sarah H. Allen (- 17 May 1889)

Allen. Friday, May 17, 1889, Sarah H., eldest daughter of Robert and Annie Johnson. Funeral Monday at 2 o'clock from parents' residence, 405 G street n.w.

The Evening Star, May 17, 1889

A Frightful Tragedy

A Man Kills His Wife and Himself in a School Building

A Panic in the Jefferson Building This Afternoon--

A Man Enters, Shoots His Wife Dead, and Then

Kills Himself

Mrs. Allen, a school teacher in the Jefferson School Building, in South Washington was shot and killed by her husband about 3 o'clock this afternoon.

Allen then turned his pistol and killed himself.

There has been some difficulty between the pair, and they have not lived together for some time.

The tragedy occurred in the school building.

Allen entered the building, and proceeding to where he wife was engaged, fired the fatal shots.

School was just then closing, and the tragedy created a panic among the children.

The Evening Star, May 17, 1889

EXTRA!

The Terrible Tragedy

More Particulars About the Double Murder

An Unhappy Marriage

A Worthless Husband and His Awful Crime

The tragedy at the Jefferson school building at 3 o'clock this afternoon, reported in the regular edition of The Star, created the most intense excitement in that section of the city. The man who killed his wife and himself was Oswald C. Allen. Allen is said to have been a worthless fellow, much dissipated. He lived at 6th and G streets, next to the Hebrew synagogue. His wife and victim was a well-known school teacher named Sarah E. Allen, who lived in South Washington. She was about 42 years old and had been a teacher for many years. She was in charge of a third-grade school, composed of little girls.

Allen's Visit to the Building

Allen, it is said, hired a cab on Pennsylvania avenue and told the driver to take him to the Jefferson building. Upon arriving there he alighted and told the driver to wait until he wanted him. Then he walked up the stone steps and passed through the hall into the cloak-room adjoining the room where his wife was engaged as a teacher. He showed himself to her and beckoned her to the door. She came toward him and reached the threshold of the cloak-room.

The Fatal Shots Followed by a Panic

He then drew a pistol and shot her in the left temple. Turning the pistol then upon himself, he shot himself through the right temple. Both fell to the floor in the cloak-room. The children in the school room who had witnessed the frightful scene, rushed from the room in a panic, and spread the alarm, causing the utmost excitement. Lieutenant Vernon and two policemen soon arrived on the scene. The

woman was found to be still alive. She was removed to the school room, and Drs. Bowman, Cook, Thompson, and Leach called and made an examination and dressed the wound, which, however, was regarded as fatal.

The Frightened School Children

The stairway was thronged with the frightened teachers and children, who looked on the scene with awe, while outside an immense throng blocked the sidewalk.

Particulars of the Tragedy

Allen entered the school-room just at 3 o'clock, as the children were being dismissed.

He advanced to the desk where his wife was sitting and said: "Now I've got you; you can't escape me."

She jumped to her feet and exclaimed, "Oh!" running toward the ante-room to the west. He followed her, drawing his pistol as he advanced, and fired just as she was on the threshold.

She fell forward without a cry, over into the next room. The murderer then placed the pistol to his temple and fired the second shot, falling dead immediately.

The children were greatly frightened and some little excitement ensued, but others ran into the room and their panic was soon quieted. They were quickly sent out of the building.

Drs. Leach, Crook, Boorman, Thompson and Staffer were summoned. They found that the bullet had passed into Mrs. Allen's left ear, came out of the right side of her head, and that there was no hope for her recovery.

Allen's life was extinct. The ball entered the temple and went upward to the top of the brain.

Barely Alive

At four o'clock Mrs. Allen was still alive, but unconscious. The physicians then said that she could not possibly live.

Former Trouble

One of the teachers of the building stated to a Star reporter that Allen once thrashed his wife in her school room in the Potomac building. He had frequently made threats against her life and she had determined to sue for a divorce.

Allen's body was soon taken to the fourth precinct station house and thence to the morgue, where it now lies.

A large crowd of children and grown people gathered at the doors of the school building, and several policemen were called to keep them from pressing through the doors.

A Distressing Scene

The teachers of the building stopped at the door of the room where the tragedy occurred and listened with frightened faces to the words of eye-witnesses. There were great blood stains on the floor, and the dying murdered woman lay on the floor in the southwest corner, with the physicians grouped around her.

Her head was bandaged and kind hands occasionally bathed it with dampened cloths. She uttered slight moans at intervals and her breath came faintly. Her eyes were barely opened and her face showed no evidence of pain.

The Number of Shots Fired

There are different opinions as to the number of shots fired. Most of those who heard them say that there were but two, both of which took effect, but others declared that three were heard. The third shot could not be found.

After The Tragedy

The scene about the school building was a singular one. Crowds of children gathered in awe-struck silence about the building. The police soon had all the approaches cleared and the building was emptied of all except the teachers.

Supt. Powell and Supervising Principal Fairbrother, who were at the Franklin building engaged in a teachers' examination, were at once notified and arrived at the building within a few minutes after the tragedy occurred.

The Remains of Allen

Were taken to the morgue, but Mrs. Allen, who was still living was lying on a couch temporarily prepared in one corner of the school room in which a short time before she had been cheerily talking to the pupils. About her desk were gathered a group of teachers, all of them with blanched faces. They spoke in whispers.

Lieut. Vernon's Story

Lieut. Vernon, upon arriving at the school building, took immediate steps to secure all information concerning the tragedy. When he arrived Allen was still living, but he died three minutes afterward.

Lieut. Vernon stated to a Star reporter that Allen got into a herdic cab driven by Wm. H. Robertson, at Pennsylvania avenue and 12th street at 2:55 o'clock according to the cabman's watch. He drove first to Poulton's restaurant on 7th street southwest, and getting out stayed there two minutes.

Then he directed the cab driver to go on to the Jefferson school building, which is located at 6th street and Virginia avenue. Then Allen alighted and entered the building, telling the driver to wait. The driver stated that he had not waited two minutes before he heard the report of the pistol.

When The Shots Were Heard

When the pistol shots were heard an alarm was given and a boy ran around to the police station and notified Lieut. Vernon, who went to the scene of the tragedy with Sergt. Smith and Officer Henry.

As stated, when Lieut. Vernon arrived, both Allen and his wife were living, but Allen died within three minutes. Lieut. Vernon said that Allen entered by the cloak-room door from the hall, and appeared at the door opening into the room at the right hand of the desk where she sat.

The Shooting

He beckoned here and she came forward. When the shots were fired they both fell together.

Lieut. Vernon thinks, from the way they fell, that he put his left arm around her neck and pressed the pistol close to her head, and then turned the pistol upon himself. They fell with his arm still about her neck and the pistol lying on her cheek.

The Pistol Used

Was a small size British bull-dog 32 calibre. There were three chambers found empty, two of the empty chambers being together and the third separated from these two by a cartridge that had not been discharged.

Some thought three shots were fired. This agreed with the reports spread by the children.

The Wounds of Both

The wound in Mrs. Allen's head was near the right ear. The ball appears to have passed clear through the head and to have passed out of the skull on the other side. In Allen's case the ball lodged in the brain.

Some of the police thought that the two bullet holes in Mrs. Allen's head were made by two separate bullets; that Allen fired twice, that one cartridge missed fire and then he fired again.

What Principal Fairbrother Says

Mr. Fairbrother, the supervising principal, stated to a Star reporter that Mrs. Allen was just dismissing her school when the tragedy occurred. He said that Allen had threatened her and she had had trouble with him, but he did not know the particulars.

What a Pupil Says

Mary Henry, a little girl, a pupil in Mrs. Allen's school, said the pupils were standing in line in the aisles when Allen appeared at the door. She says the children saw him first, and he called to them, "Don't haloo or I'll shoot." Then, turning to Mrs. Allen, he said, "Now, I've got you where I want you," and then he fired the shots.

Mrs. Allen Still Living at Five O'Clock

Mrs. Allen was still living at five o'clock, but life was ebbing fast away. The doctors thought she could not possibly live more than two hours.

Another Account of the Tragedy

Is as follows: Allen entered the dressing room and passed behind the desk where his wife was sitting. The partition wall was all that separated him. His wife, attracted by his footsteps, arose and started toward the dressing room door. Her husband arrived there before her and the children startled at the appearance of the man, left their seats and were getting ready to run from the room when he said: "Don't make any noise or I'll shoot."

The Badly Frightened Children

Did not know what to do. Some of them started out the door on the opposite side of the room, while others, being afraid he would carry his threat into execution, resumed their seats.

An Unhappy Marriage

Mrs. Allen was married to her husband about thirteen years ago, in opposition to the members of her family and interested friends. He was known as a worthless indolent man, and it was feared that a marriage with him could not be a happy one. Their warnings were disregarded, however, for she seemed infatuated with the man. The school trustees had the highest opinion of her as a teacher and retained her in her position notwithstanding her marriage and the conduct of her husband. E was supported by her, but nevertheless heaped indignities upon her and has been sent to the workhouse often for abusing her. His name has figured prominently in the Police Court records for vagrancy. He had been arrested five times this year. They had no children, and this fact was the only blessing resulting from the unhappy marriage.

Mrs. Allen was formerly a teacher in the Potomac building. While there her husband frequently annoyed and threatened her a number of times, and she had to call in the police several times.

The Murdered Woman

Mrs. Allen was the daughter of R.W. Johnson, an old and well-known citizen of Washington. Her parents reside on G street, opposite the Pension building. Allen never had any trade, but his father, Oswell S. Allen, is a well-known printer in this city. His family came from Charlottesville, Va., about fourteen years ago.

A Disgraceful Career

Allen has been living with his father since his wife was compelled to leave him. He recently received several hundred dollars from the sale of some property, since which time he has been in the hands of the police nearly half a dozen times.

Some months ago he came near losing his life in the workhouse while being washed in coal oil to rid him of vermin.

Mrs. Allen has been living with her mother and father at No. 405 G street, opposite the Pension office. She taught school for some time in the Potomac building on 12th street, near the river.

Her brother, Robert Johnson, a fruit dealer in the Center market, visited the school building this afternoon and saw his dying sister, and when told that she could not live he gave orders for the removal of her remains in case of her death to his mother's house.

He told a Star reporter that he had some trouble with Allen last week, and he warned his sister to lookout for him, telling her that her husband was at large.

The Evening Star, May 20, 1889

Mrs. Allen's Funeral

A Large Attendance at the Funeral of The Murdered School Teacher

In a casket almost hidden by the flowers placed about it lay the body of Mrs. Sarah H. Allen, the murdered school teacher, at her father's home, 405 G street, where the funeral services took place at 2 o'clock this afternoon.

Clusters of red roses were placed on the casket, according to the request made by Mrs. Allen herself. The exercises were conducted according to the directions she had written to her friends.

The house was thronged with her friends. Superintendent Powell, ex-Superintendent Wilson, Supervising Principal Fairbrother, of the fourth school division, Trustee Geo. B. White and ex-Trustees Ross A. Fish and Ben. F. Lloyd, of that division, and many others interested in the schools were present.

The teachers of the fourth division all attended and came to the house from the Jefferson building in carriages.

The teachers, and the children of Mrs. Allen's school, sent a profusion of flowers. One pillow, formed of fragrant flowers, bore the letters, "Our dear teacher."

The casket was then conveyed to the grave in the Congressional cemetery, where a simple service closed the solemn exercises.

The funeral services were conducted by Rev. Mr. Phillips, who read the Episcopal service, and Rev. Dr. Meader, who offered prayer. A quartette sang during the service the hymns, "Rock of Ages" and "Asleep in Jesus."

The pall-bearers were Messrs. Geo. B. White, W.H. Walker, P.B. Wilber, W.H. Church, J.C. Roland, and C.S. Walker.

The line of carriages that followed the hearse to the grave was a long one.

Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Allen's mother, who has been quite ill, attended the services, but was so feeble that she had to be supported to and from the house.

During the services, not only the members of the family but many of those present seemed deeply affected by the tragic and sorrowful memories of the hour.

The Action of the Teachers

The schools of the fourth or South Washington division were closed today, as a mark of respect to the dead teacher. The teachers of the division held a meeting Saturday afternoon at half past 3 o'clock at the Jefferson building. Mr. Fairbrother, the supervising principal, who presided, paid a tribute to Mrs. Allen's memory. He said that she received her appointment as a teacher in November 1870.

The following committees were appointed: On resolutions of condolence, Misses H.M. Tunnell, E.E. Halliday, Clara Wilson and Mrs. S.E. Wise. Miss V.V. Troom was appointed to select the floral offerings.

All of the teachers of the fourth division met today at 1 o'clock at the Jefferson building and proceeded from there to the funeral.

Allen's Remains Buried

The remains of Oswald C. Allen, the murderer and suicide, were taken yesterday morning from the morgue and sent to Charlottesville, Va. for burial.