

Thornton Avery (- d. 3 Oct 1855)

The Evening Star, October 2, 1855

Fatal Shooting Affair

A place called Swampoodle, (in the Northern Liberties,) and a disreputable locality, was, late last night, the scene of a lamentable occurrence.

It appears from the reports which have reached us, that two young men, named, respectively, Robert Warren and Thornton Avery, and others entered a house of ill-fame, and, while there seated, W.W.B. Edwards came in and ordered them to leave the premises, which they declined doing, saying that they did not care to go out until so required by the landlady. Conversation ensued between the parties, when Edwards seized a double-barreled gun which happened to be near at hand, and first shot one, and then the other; killing Avery on the spot, and wounding Warren, it is supposed, fatally. Indeed, it was reported this morning that he has since died.

Edwards was arrested, and having been brought before Justice Birch, was by him sent to jail to await a further examination.

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Coroner's Inquest

We briefly referred, yesterday, to the fatal shooting case, which took place on Monday night, since which time we have on application to the Coroner, Thomas Woodward, Esq., been obligingly furnished with the verdict of the jury, which is as follows:

"An inquisition taken at a two story and basement house, fronting on North Capitol street, between Massachusetts avenue and G street, in the city of Washington, in the county aforesaid, on the second day of October, in the year 1855, before me, Thomas Woodward, Coroner for the said county, upon the view of the body of Thornton Avery, a white man, aged about twenty-eight years, then and there lying dead, upon the oaths of [the names of the jurors were not furnished to us] good and lawful men of the said county, who being sworn upon the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, and charged to inquire when, where, how, and after what manner the said Thornton Avery, a native of Alexandria, Va., since a resident of this city, about five years, came to his death, do say upon their oaths, that the said Avery was at the house of Josephine Garcia, in company with some twelve or fifteen persons, on the night of the 1st of October, 1855; and whilst there he was willfully and deliberately shot in the left breast by W.W.B. Edwards; and the jury believe, from the evidence, that the said Avery came to his death from a load of shot, accompanied by either a small mould shot or slug, deliberately and willfully fired from a gun, whilst in the hands of said Edwards, which shot penetrated the artery, causing almost instant death; and, further, the deceased was a poor man."

Warren, the other person shot by Edwards, is lying in such a dangerous condition that it is thought he cannot survive.

Note: First trial of W.W.B. Edwards in January 1856 ended in a hung jury (6 for murder, 6 for manslaughter). Second trial in March 1856 resulted in sentence of manslaughter.