

William F. Berry (- 30 Oct 1905)

The Evening Star, October 31, 1905, p. 3

Accidental Death

Inquest Over Remains of Infant Child

William F. Berry, a child fifteen months old, whose parents live at 1643 Half street southeast, was run over by a dirt wagon and instantly killed at a point almost in front of his parents' home shortly before 6 o'clock last night. The child's skull was crushed.

Mrs. Berry, the infant's mother, left the house a few minutes before the accident occurred to go to a store. The child, it is believed, started to follow her, and had just passed out of the narrow path through the weeds when the wagon came along. The team was driven by Isaiah Johnson.

The police of the fourth and fifth precincts were notified of the accident, and about 10 o'clock last night Policemen Shelby and Green of the fourth precinct arrested Johnson. In a wagon behind that of Johnson's rode three colored men--Felix Brown, Calvin Hyder and Archibald Baltimore. They were held as witnesses.

Johnson admitted that he had been told of the accident, and said he did not return there because he feared his presence might cause trouble.

Witnesses were heard by the coroner's jury this morning, and a verdict of unavoidable accident was returned.

Testimony of Witnesses

Felix Brown, one of the three colored men in the second wagon, was the first witness examined. He testified that he is in the employ of Sullivan Bros., on the dump, and said he was riding on Archibald Baltimore's wagon yesterday shortly before 6 o'clock when he saw a little child come down the grade in the direction of the road. The wagon, he explained, was going in the direction of South Capitol street. The child was near the front team when he saw him and he could not tell whether the horse or wagon struck him.

"Was it dark when the accident happened?" the coroner asked.

"It was a little dark," he replied, "but I could see."

His wagon, he stated, was about five feet behind the other team.

Policeman Cullinane explained to the jury that there is a roadway across the commons and that it is only wide enough for one wagon. Weeds about two feet high, he said are on each side of the road.

Resuming his testimony, Brown said the horses were trotting at the time the accident occurred. When they reached South Capitol street witness told Johnson that his wagon had run over a child and the latter said he would go back and see about it.

"Did he go back?"

"I don't know," said witness, "I went on home."

Witness said that both teams passed over the same track, but he could not say that the second wagon passed over the child.

Philip Heffron's Statement

Philip J. Heffron, 323 6th street southwest, was at the establishment of the Washington Asphalt Block and Tile Company yesterday about the time the accident occurred. He saw the two teams and said they were going at an unusual rate of speed. Witness said he saw the wagons when they returned

and the animals were going about as fast as when he had first seen them. So far as he could recollect, he said, there was but one man in each wagon.

In His Own Defense

Isaiah Johnson, driver of the team that inflicted the fatal injuries, testified that he knew nothing of the accident until he was told of it by one of the other colored men.

"What did you do when he told you?" asked the coroner.

"I didn't believe it," he responded. "I started back, but a man told me not to go there, and I went home after I took my team to the stable."

Johnson said he did not see the child.

Archibald Baltimore, driver of the second team, testified that the first he knew of the accident, was when Brown told him of it. His horses were going in a slow trot, he stated, and he was trying to kill a little time because it was too early to go to the stable. Witness thought his team was the regulation distance, fifteen feet, behind the other vehicle.

Calvin Hyder, another of the three men who were in the second vehicle, testified that he would not let Johnson go back because a crowd of people had gathered there and he feared something might happen to Johnson. Witness said he went back and saw a man have the child in his arms.

Policeman Testifies

Policeman Cullinane testified to the investigation he made and explained that the accident occurred on the roadway leading from Half to South Capitol Street. Witness said he and Policeman Springman made an investigation and located Johnson in South Washington. Witness thought a careful driver could have seen the child without any difficulty. There is a footpath leading through the weeds to the road, said witness, and the child probably passed over it in order to reach the road.

Deputy Coroner Glazebrook testified that the child's skull was crushed almost flat and there were marks of mud from the wheel upon the neck of the child.