

John T. Burch (- 20 Nov 1908)

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Dead In Police Cell

Fate of J.T. Burch, 12 Years Magistrate at Berwyn

Locked Up As Intoxicated

Death Due to Heart Failure Hastened by Drink, Coroner Finds

Body Is Taken To Morgue

Recognized Authority on Government Land Affairs --

Prominent in County Politics

John T. Burch, for twelve years magistrate at Berwyn, Prince George county, Md., was found dead this morning in a cell in the sixth precinct station, where he had been locked up over night on a charge of intoxication. His body was removed to the morgue.

Death was due to heart failure, hastened by the use of alcoholic stimulants, according to the finding of the coroner, after an autopsy held at the morgue this morning.

Burch, who was sixty-six year of age, and lived a Berwyn, was locked up about 5:30 o'clock last evening. He was seen by police in charge of the station a number of times during the night.

At midnight he was told he might go home. He declined to go, saying the last car had probably gone and he would be unable to start for home before morning.

This morning shortly before 5 o'clock Desk Sergeant Harry Evans went to look after the man from Berwyn. The body was on the floor. Evans opened the door and touched the body to find it cold in death.

Coroner Nevitt was notified. He directed that the body be removed to the morgue. There he held an autopsy later in the morning.

Prominent in County

Judge Burch, as he was known because of his long service as a Berwyn magistrate, was a native of this city, born in the vicinity of 5th and E streets northwest. For years he lived near 5th and H streets northwest.

There his mother died only two or three years ago. She left a large estate which has not been settled.

A clerk in the general land office for years, Mr. Burch was regarded as one of the best government land authorities.

He severed his connection with the government to engage in practice as an expert in laws affecting government land and had an office in the Pacific building. There his son, John Earle Burch was in the blueprint business.

About twenty years ago he moved to Prince George county. There he became an active politician, establishing and editing a democratic paper at Berwyn several years ago.

Twelve years ago he was appointed a magistrate under the republican administration, although a democrat. During two recent sessions of the Maryland legislature he served as clerk in one of the legislative branches.

Taken to Police Cell

Yesterday Judge Burch remained at his office until after 4 o'clock and showed no signs of intoxication when he left the building. On his way out of the building he had a pleasant word to say to the colored boy in charge of the elevator. Little more than an hour later Policeman Humphries found him in the street and sent him to the police station. A charge of intoxication was preferred against him.

At the station Mr. Burch was able to give his name and address before being led back to a cell.

"He was visited every hour," Capt. Byrnes stated this morning. "At midnight he was practically discharged. He was told that he might go. He asked that he be permitted to remain until morning. "His request was granted. He was really not a prisoner at the time of his death."

Policeman Hanley visited the cell room several times after midnight and saw that Mr. Burch and others in the cells were all right.

Friends of the dead man say that Mr. Burch had suffered from heart trouble for years. He was not a steady drinker, they stated, but did indulge at long intervals.

The wife and three sons survive. The sons are John Earle, Philip Highland and Raymond Burch.

Mrs. Burch is a daughter of the late Gen. McEwen. Her mother is still living in this city.

Body To Be Taken Home

Berwyn, Md., November 20 -- His family has been notified of the death in a police cell this morning of Justice of the Peace John T. Burch a well-known and highly respected citizen of Maryland, who had resided at Berwyn, Prince George county, for the past twenty years. Undertaker Gasch, at Bladensburg, was sent for and the remains will be brought to the home.

Justice Burch was personally acquainted with all the leading democratic politicians of the state, and was particularly close to the late United States Senator, A.P. Gorman.

The members of the family are afraid to inform the widow of his death, fearing the shock will be too much for her. She is troubled with heart disease.