

## Alvina Cheek ( - 14 Dec 1889)

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**Cheek.** On Saturday, December 14, 1889, at 3 o'clock p.m., Mrs. Alvena Cheek, beloved wife of Thomas Cheek, aged 24 years.

Day by day we saw her fade  
And slowly sink away  
Yet in our hearts we prayed  
That she might longer stay.

I was weeping around her pillow  
For I knew that she must die;  
It was night within my bosom,  
It was night within the sky.

I have given love's last token,  
I have parted back her hair  
From off the marble forehead  
And left the last kiss there.

By Her Husband

Funeral will take place from her late residence, 1018 South Carolina avenue southeast, on Tuesday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock. Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend. (Baltimore papers please copy).

*The Evening Star, December 21, 1889*

### **Dead Bodies in a Buggy**

#### **Resurrectionists Surprised by a Policeman Last Night**

#### **They Run Off, Leaving Their Ghastly Plunder, The Dead Bodies of Two Women--**

#### **The Owner of the Abandoned Buggy May be Able to Throw Some Light on the Transaction**

The prisoners in the District jail last night heard, or might have heard, the wheels of a vehicle rattling over the gravel road near that prison. The vehicle was a buggy. There was a guard in advance of it and one in the rear. The driver was a rather good-looking man with whiskers. There was something in the buggy besides the driver, but whatever it was it was concealed from the gaze of the curious by a covering. The buggy and its guards came over the hills from the direction of the poor house. It was then after 9 o'clock, and the driver and guards hardly expected to meet anybody on the lonesome commons such a dark night, but in order to be on the safe side they kept a sharp lookout.

#### *The Surprise*

The buggy had not gone far over the hill before it was heard by Policeman Clinton, who was aware that cadavers were often removed from that desolate place known as potters' field and suspected that the vehicle contained a dead body. The officer quietly stepped to the side of the road where he could not easily be seen to await the approach of the buggy. The officer saw the two guards in the positions mentioned above and the driver, looking, he said, like a physician and became satisfied that they were lawbreakers. When the buggy reached a position directly opposite the officer he made a rush for the

vehicle. The driver used his whip and the animal started to gallop off. The officer grabbed for and caught hold of one of the reins. The animal became frightened and nearly upset the buggy. While the officer was struggling with the horse the driver jumped from the buggy and escaped. In the meantime the two guards had run off. When the officer examined the buggy he discovered.

*The Dead Bodies of Two Women,*

one white and the other colored. The bodies were in a kneeling position, and the driver must have sat-in the buggy with a leg on either side of the corpses to keep them from tumbling out. The officer drove the buggy to the morgue and there placed the remains upon cooling boards. The colored body is supposed to be that of Mary E. Hawkins, who was buried in potter's field yesterday. The remains of the white woman had not been identified this morning. She had a very pleasant face and was evidently a refined woman at some time.

The buggy looks like it may be the property of a physician. The horse is about seven years old. It is a bay, with white spots on its body.

This is the third time within a year that grave robbers have made their escape from within a few feet of the police.

The horse and buggy and the spoke used in opening the grave had not been called for this afternoon.

The horse was seen this morning by a colored man who claimed that he knew the owner of it. He said that it belonged to an East Washington physician.

There were no marks on the bodies to show that hooks had been used in raising them from their graves and for that reason the officers thought that the bodies were obtained in potter's field. They will be reinterred there.

*The Evening Star, December 23, 1889*

**The Body of Mrs. Cheek**

**Dr. A.C. Adams Charged with Taking It From Congressional Cemetery**

**The Remains Fully Identified--The Husband Appeals to the Law**

**Form of the Warrant Issued For the Arrest**

**The Jewelry Buried With the Body Missing**

The law against the desecration of graves by body snatchers is openly violated in this District night after night, but prosecutions for the ghastly work are few. Potter's field is generally chosen as their scene of operations because they can go there at any time after dark and drive off with their plunder undisturbed. A carriage resembling that abandoned Friday night with two dead bodies in it, as related in Saturday's Star, has stopped at or near the jail many nights and been left there, it is thought, until its occupant or occupants could go down to the burial place of the poor and carry off a ghastly burden. Friday night when the buggy drove near the jail it was seen by the prisoners and by the guards on duty. The guards were satisfied that there were cadavers in the vehicle, but they did not imagine that any other burial place than potter's field had been visited.

*The Bodies of the Two Women*

who had been taken from their graves were kept at the morgue Saturday afternoon. The officers there had been informed that both of them had been taken from potter's field, and for that reason no effort was made to have them identified. During the afternoon a young man called at the morgue and asked permission to see the body of the white woman, saying that his sister had been buried in the Congressional cemetery a few days ago. He saw the body and thought it was that of his sister, but when Station Clerk Tayman telephoned to the East Washington station he was informed that the bodies had

been removed from potter's field. He told this to the young man, but the latter left the station in an uncertain frame of mind.

#### *Mrs. Cheek's Remains Stolen From Congressional Cemetery*

Policeman Oliver, who had seen the white woman's body, thought that there was a look of refinement about her that is not often seen about persons who occupy graves in the pauper cemetery, and he was not satisfied with the investigation that had been made. He examined the body and found on an undergarment that was wrapped about it the name "B. Cheek."

The health office records were searched and it was found that Mrs. Alvina Cheek of No. 1015 South Carolina avenue southeast had died on the 14th instant of phthisis pulmonalis and was buried in the Congressional Cemetery last Tuesday.

The piece of clothing bearing the name was taken to the house and there it was learned that the name had been written on Mrs. Cheek's undergarment. This left no doubt but that Congressional cemetery had been robbed, although Mr. Cross., the superintendent, said that the graves were all right and had not been disturbed. The identification was complete when

#### *The Heart-Broken Husband*

reached the morgue and there saw the remains of his wife lying on the board ready to be placed in the ice box. Mrs. Cheek had been sick for some time and had gradually wasted away until there was hardly any flesh left on her form. Her remains with the body of her infant, which was only a few days old, were interred on a knoll overlooking the Anacostia river and not far from a gate which opens into the rear end of the work house grounds. The graves in the cemetery are not rammed, and for that reason the task of opening the grave was an easy one. The grave had been refilled and the flowers on it placed where they had been left by the bereaved husband. The body was no doubt taken through the gate or over the fence and stripped of clothing. Then it was carried through to potter's field and there kept until the body of Mary E. Hawkins was "lifted."

#### *The Dead Babe*

The grave was reopened yesterday and in the broken coffin was found the body of the child that had been buried in the grave with its mother.

Policeman Oliver made a thorough investigation of the buggy and in it were found the grave clothes that had been taken from the body of Mrs. Cheek and a heavy iron hook attached to a long rope which had been used in lifting the body from the grave.

#### *Dr. A.C. Adams Claims The Buggy*

No one came to claim the team until about noon, when Dr. A.C. Adams put in a claim. He appeared before Chief Clerk Sylvester of the police department and made affidavit in the usual form, as follows:

"Hdqrs. Of The Metropolitan Police,  
Clerk's Office

Washington, D.C., Dec. 22, 1889

Personally appeared before me, Richard Sylvester, property clerk of the metropolitan police district, A.C. Adams, of Washington, D.C., who, upon his oath, says that he is the owner of one bay horse with white spots on its sides and a top buggy; that the same was estrayed from him on or about the 19th day of December, 1889; and that the same is now in the custody of the property clerk of the police department. Sworn to before me this 22d day of December, 1889.

Richard Sylvester,  
Chief, also Prop. clk. M.P., D.C."

The receipt for the property was signed A.C. Adams, M.D.

When the doctor went to the sixth precinct station to get the horse and buggy he met Mr. Thos. B. Cheek, the husband of the dead woman. Mr. Cheek, was greatly incensed at what had taken place. He questioned the doctor sharply, but the latter said he did not own the team. The police lieutenant told them not to have any trouble there, and the doctor drove off with the buggy.

Later in the day Mr. Cheek called twice to see the doctor, but did not succeed.

#### *Mrs. Cheek's Jewelry Missing*

Before Mrs. Cheek died she requested that her jewelry be buried with her. Her request was complied with, but the jewelry, valued at about \$30, cannot now be found.

Mrs. Cheek's remains were placed in a casket yesterday afternoon and again her bereaved friends followed the body to the cemetery. The remains were placed in the receiving vault where they will remain for some days.

#### *A Warrant For Dr. Adams*

This morning Mr. Cheek was at the Police Court and swore to a warrant against Dr. Arthur C. Adams unlawfully and wickedly did break and enter a grave, then and there being in Congressional cemetery, in which grave one Venie Cheek, deceased, had lately before there been interred, and then and there with force and arms unlawfully, willfully and indecently did open the said grave and take away the body of the said Venie Cheek, to the evil example of all others to the like offending and against the form of the statute," etc.

*The Evening Star, December 24, 1889*

#### **Who Are the Grave Robbers?**

#### **Dr. A.C. Adams Establishes an Alibi and Says the Team Was Not His**

#### **A Reward Offered for the Resurrectionists**

#### **Dr. Adams Says Dr. Beall Owned The Buggy**

#### **A Statement From Property Clerk Sylvester**

The trustees of Congressional Cemetery have offered a liberal reward for the apprehension of the person or persons who desecrated the grave of Mrs. Thomas B. Cheek last Friday night. Although Mr. Cheek swore out a warrant against Dr. Arthur C. Adams, it is evident that that physician took no part in robbing the grave. The warrant was sworn out, it is said, in order that there might be a legal investigation that would lead to the detection of the grave robbers. Dr. Adams denies that he is or was the owner of the buggy in which the two dead bodies were found, and mentions the name of Dr. Beall as its owner.

#### *Dr. Adams' Whereabouts Friday Night*

Dr. Adams states that he was at the medical college Friday night at the time the body was stolen and is corroborated by the following paper:

"We, the undersigned, most positively assert that Dr. A.C. Adams was at the National medical college on the night of December 20, 1889, between the hours of 8 and 12 p.m., and that we were in his presence, and know that he could not have had anything whatever to do with the outrageous proceedings charged against him in connection with the Congressional cemetery transaction.

Charles St. V. Zimmerman

S.L. Johnson

J.C. Parsons

Henry Liddell  
J.N. Oliver, Jr.  
G. Burton Heinecke  
Daniel Conner.

Washington, D.C., December 23, 1889"

Daniel Conner, whose signature is attached to the paper, is the janitor at the college and the other signers are students.

#### *Dr. Adams Explains*

When seen by a Star reporter this morning Dr. Adams said that the horse and buggy did not belong to him; that he dropped in at police headquarters Sunday morning to see if the owner had recovered his team and learning that he had not, he (Adams) saw Chief Clerk Sylvester. That official, he said, told him that would transfer the property to him if he (Adams) would sign for it, and he was also given to understand that the matter of his signing for it would not be made public. With that understanding he signed for the horse and buggy and the next day he turned it over to Dr. Beall and obtained his receipt, therefore Doctor Adams explained that he only did this as an act of kindness for Dr. Beall. "If I had known that there was going to be so much to do about it," said the doctor, "I would never have troubled myself about the case."

#### *Chief Clerk Sylvester Denies*

that he promised to withhold the information from the public. He says that Dr. Adams called at his house Saturday evening, and that Sunday morning he called at headquarters by engagement and made oath that the horse and buggy were his property and for that reason he turned over the team to him. The affidavit referred to was printed in yesterday's Star. Mr. Sylvester said that if the property did not belong to Dr. Adams at the time stated in the affidavit he did not intend to let the matter drop.

#### *There is a Law Here to Punish Grave Robbers*

It has been stated that there is no law in the District under which resurrectionists can be punished, but such statements are not corroborated by the facts in cases of that kind brought before the courts in recent years. Vigo Janson Ross, or Jansen, the noted resurrectionist spent months in jail for grave robbing. Wm. Bowie, Henry Stephenson and others also served time for a similar offense. In every case of grave robbing brought before the courts, the offenders have been given something like one year in jail. The prosecutions were on informations, and, therefore, not examined by the grand jury.

#### *A Warrant for Dr. Beall*

Policeman Charles W. O'Neill, who is also a member of the board of trustees of Congressional cemetery, swore out a warrant at the Police Court this morning against Dr. W.W. Beall, charging him with desecrating Mrs. Cheek's grave. He is the person who, Dr. Adams says, owns the horse and buggy. Dr. Beall formerly kept a barber shop in East Washington, where he also extracted teeth. He afterward received a diploma to practice medicine. He had an office at No. 114 6th street southeast, but when the police inquired for him they learned that he moved from there about two months ago.

#### *Statement of Superintendent Cross*

Superintendent Cross of the Congressional cemetery said to a Star reporter that he had frequently seen a horse and buggy similar to the one recovered passing the cemetery going in the direction of potter's field. His daughter has also seen the vehicle. Friday night, when the alleged resurrectionist escaped from the buggy. Policeman Clinton blew his whistle several times hoping to attract the attention of an officer who would capture the escaping lawbreaker. Soon after the whistle blowing was

heard a colored man met two of the precinct officers and told them that he saw a man answering Beall's description on Pennsylvania avenue with a carriage whip in his hand.

#### *Uneasiness Among Mourners*

The occurrence has caused many persons to suspect that their dead relatives have been removed, and many inquiries to that effect have been made at the cemeteries. One grave in Congressional cemetery was reopened yesterday and the body was found all right.

It was learned that a body was recently taken from another cemetery and traced to a medical college. The work of the resurrectionists was discovered and the body was returned to its grave before the dissecting knife had been used upon it.

#### *Dr. Beall's Arrest Ordered*

The police in the various precincts have been notified to arrest Dr. Beall.

The warrant sworn out against Dr. Adams yesterday has not been served. The doctor will not be arrested, but this evening an officer will notify him to appear in the Police Court day after tomorrow.

Mr. Cheek was at police headquarters again today making further inquiries concerning the robbery of his wife's grave. He is very anxious to recover the jewelry that was taken from the body so that he can place it upon the body in accordance with her last wishes.

*The Evening Star, January 3, 1890*

#### **The Grave Robbing Case**

##### **Dr. A.C. Adams Acquitted in the Police Court Today**

##### **No Testimony to Connect Him With The Desecration of the Grave of Mrs. Cheek--**

##### **The Policeman Testifies Positively That It Was Not Dr. A. Who Jumped From The Buggy**

The charge of grave robbing against Dr. A.C. Adams was taken up this afternoon in the Police Court. Dr. Adams was represented by Henry Wise Garnett and W.A. Cook. The first witness was Thos. B. Cheek, who testified to the grave of Mrs. Cheek having been broken into.

#### *Property Clerk Sylvester's Story*

Property Clerk Sylvester was next called and asked about the buggy which had been claimed. He testified that Dr. Adams called on him at his house during the evening of the finding of the buggy and asked in reference to the buggy. Mr. Sylvester asked him if he was willing to take the usual oath about the ownership of the property. The doctor hesitated about the matter and Mr. Sylvester told Dr. Adams to call at the office in the morning. In the morning of December 22 Dr. Adams came to police headquarters and made the usual affidavit as to ownership. "I gave Dr. Adams an order and he gave me a receipt for the property."

#### *Clerk Sylvester Cross-Examined*

Henry Wise Garnett cross-examined the witness and brought out the fact that when Dr. Adams called at Mr. Sylvester's house the witness informed the doctor of the obligations which he incurred by making the affidavit after which Dr. Adams refused to make the affidavit; and also that at the first visit Dr. Adams did not claim the ownership of the buggy, but simply that he had come after the property.

The receipt from Dr. Adams for the buggy given on the 22d was read.

#### *The Policeman's Testimony*

Officer Clinton of the fifth precinct testified to capturing the buggy at 17th and A streets southeast. There was one man in the buggy at the time whose suspicious actions attracted his attention. The man jumped out of the buggy. In the vehicle were two dead bodies.

The witness was asked if Dr. Adams looked like the man who jumped out, and the officer said no.

The prosecution rested their case here and Mr. Garnett asked that the case against Dr. Adams be dismissed. In summing up he said nothing has been shown but that Dr. Adams called on Mr. Sylvester one night and refused to say the buggy belonged to him, and came the next day and made affidavit that now it did; and further, that the man who jumped from the buggy bore no resemblance to Dr. Adams.

#### *Dr. Adams Discharged*

Judge Miller said that Dr. Adams was charged with the desecration of a grave, and certainly the prosecution was called upon to show what connection the defendant had with the case. Judge Miller said he was unable to hold the defendant on the testimony and therefore discharged Dr. Adams.

*The Evening Star, January 6, 1890*

#### **The Double Grave Robbery**

##### **Testimony Against Dr. W.W. Beall in The Police Court Saturday**

The chain of evidence against W.W. Beall in the grave-robbery case was closed by the government before the Police Court adjourned Saturday. The defense will be heard on Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. After the recess Saturday there was considerable sparring between the opposing counsel as to whether the two cases for desecration of graves against Dr. Beall should be tied together or separately. Mr. Armes wishes the cases separated, while Mr. W.A. Cook was for consolidation. At length it was decided to try the two desecration cases together.

#### *The Testimony*

John M. Mitchell, the undertaker, testified to the two informants of the remains of Mrs. Cheek.

Mr. Cheek, husband of the deceased was called as a witness. He was greatly affected and nearly broke down as he piteously told of opening the grave and finding the little baby thrown back into the grave on its head.

Henry Wallingsford, the driver of the work house ambulance, testified to the identity and burial of the body of Mary Hawkins, the colored woman, in potters field.

#### *Thinks It Was Dr. Beall In The Buggy*

Officer Clinton told the story so often repeated in The Star of the capture of the buggy with the bodies of the two women in it. Considerable of a sensation followed when the officer said he recognized the voice of the man in the buggy as that of Dr. Beall; that he saw his side face, and to the best of his knowledge and belief the man driving the vehicle containing two bodies was the defendant now present in the court and whom he had known for many years.

Mr. Cook cross-examined the officer at great length, but was unable to shake the testimony.

#### *The Steel Hook*

Officer Oliver testified to the finding of the iron hook in the buggy the next morning. Station Keeper Garner of the sixth precinct station told of the delivery of the buggy at the morgue, and Station Keeper Tayman related how it was turned over to Dr. A.C. Adams.

The steel hook was brought closer to Dr. Beall by the testimony of A.B. Anderson, a blacksmith, who testified to making such a hook for Dr. Beall, and who thought, although he could not be sure, that the one found in the buggy was the same.

W.H. Gargus testified to selling Dr. Beall the steel for the hook.

#### *Dr. Adams on the Stand*

Then Dr. A.C. Adams was called to the stand. He said he was the demonstrator in anatomy at the national medical school. He testified to recovering Dr. Beall's horse and buggy at his request. When the defendant asked him to get his property he asked no questions but agreed to do it. The witness did not know where the college obtained their subjects.

Mr. Cook objected to this line of questions and switched off by asking the witness point blank if he paid any money, directly or indirectly to the defendant, to which Dr. Adams answered promptly, "No, sire; I never did."

#### *Dr. Beall Seen in the Neighborhood*

Charles Johnson testified to seeing a man resembling Dr. Beall walking in front of the jail on the night of the robbery.

Charles White testified to seeing a man, who he thinks was Dr. Beall, on 6th and Pennsylvania avenue walking away from the scene of the capture of the buggy by the officers.

W.H. Berguson positively identified the horse and buggy as being the property of the defendant.

Detective Raff told of the chase and escape of Dr. Beall at Washington Grove.

#### *Said He Assisted Dr. Beall in Getting Bodies*

"Brocky" White was the last witness called. He testified to having worked for Dr. Beall and having assisted him in getting bodies from potter's field. He said the doctor was a hard worker at his trade, making on an average of three trips a week to the grave yard after subjects. This closed the government's case and the court adjourned.

*The Evening Star, January 9, 1890*

#### **Dr. Beall's Sentence**

##### **Six Months in Jail and \$400 Fine for Two Grave Robberies**

The Beall grave-robbery case was terminated in the Police Court last night. It is something of an unusual thing for the court to hold an evening session and quite a crowd of people, attracted by this fact and by interest in the case itself, gathered by gas light in the court room last evening.

#### *Trying To Prove An Alibi*

The young man who has already been referred to in the Star as interesting himself in behalf of Dr. Beall, whose name turns out to be R.J. Ewing of 459 I street, was the first witness for the defense. He said he was a tailor and lived with Dr. Beall and slept in the same room. Dr. Beall, according to the young man, was called out by a patient at about 9:40 the night of the grave robbery and was gone until 10 o'clock, and on his return the doctor talked with witness about "the weather" for several hours.

#### *Mr. Armes' Belief*

Mr. Armes remarked that he believed the witness was one of the men walking with the buggy on the commons when it was captured, and young Ewig or Ewing stepped down.

Mr. and Mrs. Marlow (colored) testified to calling of Dr. Beall at their house on the night of the 20th.

This was all the testimony the defense had, and Prosecutor Armes wanted to put Detective Raff on the stand again in rebuttal. Judge Miller did not admit the testimony.

### *The Sentence*

Mr. W.A. Cock and Mr. Armes made closing speeches and Judge Miller summed up the evidence in a clear and concise manner. He characterized the offense as a misdemeanor and said it was strange Dr. Beall did not take the stand. He also commented on the round about way the doctor went about recovering his buggy. The judge in closing imposed a fine of \$200 and imprisonment for ninety days in each case--desecrating the grave of Mrs. Cheeks and that of the colored woman--making a total fine of \$400 and imprisonment for six months.

*The Evening Star, February 12, 1890*

### **The Case of Dr. Beall**

The case of Dr. Beall under sentence for removing the bodies of Mrs. Cheek and Mary Hawkins from the Congressional and Poor House Cemeteries was called in the police court this afternoon on a motion for a new trial. Messrs. Cook and Sutherland appeared for Dr. Beall and Mr. Armes represented the government.