

Thomas Dennis (- 23 Jul 1908)

Dennis. On Thursday, July 23, 1908 at 5:30 a.m., Thomas Dennis, beloved husband of Frances E. Dennis and father of Mrs. R.A. Bennett and George E. Dennis, aged 85 years and 9 months. Funeral from Lee's chapel, Saturday, July 25 at 2 p.m. Interment at Congressional cemetery. Relatives and friends are invited to attend.

The Evening Star, July 18, 1903, p. 23

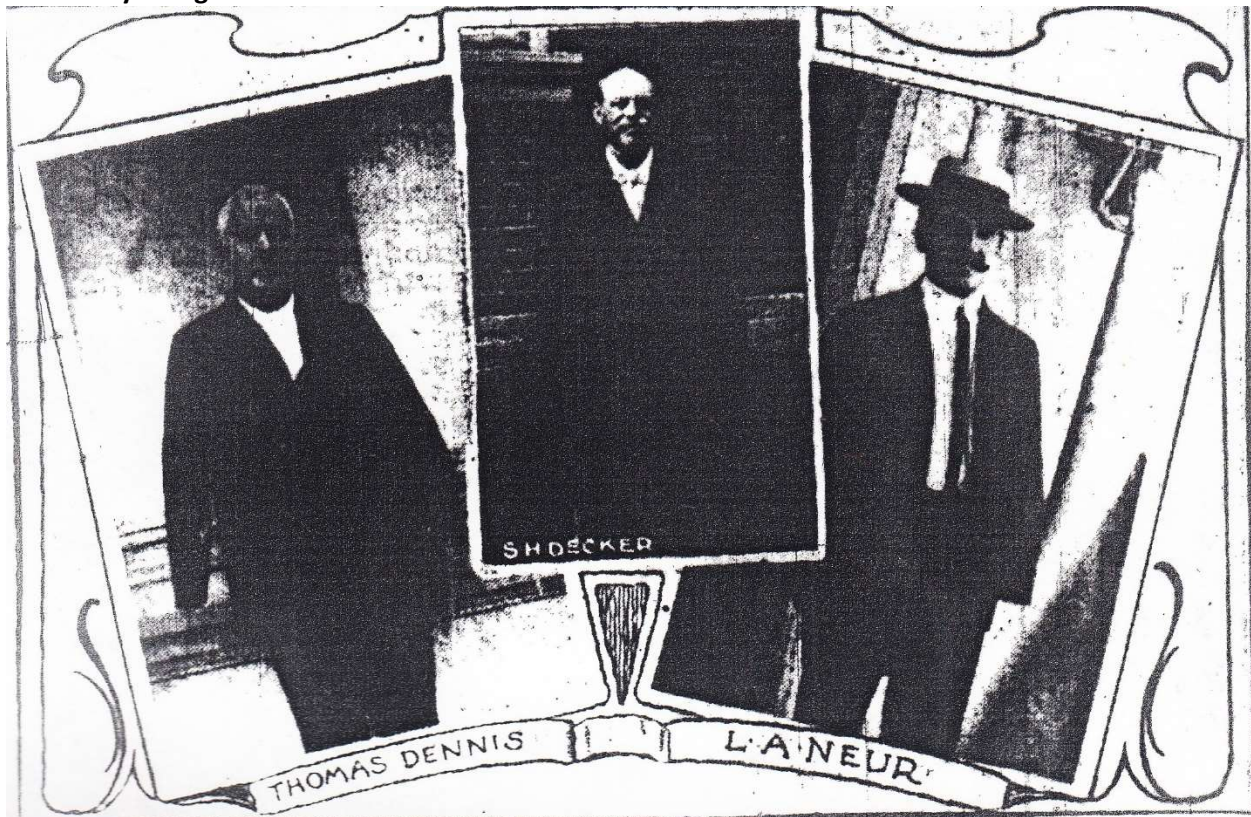
Armless, But Happy

Uncle Sam's Cheerful Quartet of Employees

Capable and Adroit

Interesting Stories of Their Lives and Likes

**Messrs. S.H. Decker, Thomas Dennis, W.B. Denny and L.A. Neur
Find Many Things To Do**



In the vast army of Uncle Sam's hired help in Washington no more interesting characters can be found than four armless men -- S.H. Decker, Thomas Dennis, W.B. Denny and L.A. Neur -- each one happy and prosperous, and who, even in their seemingly helpless condition, have successfully accomplished undertakings almost past belief.

...

Mr. Thomas Dennis

"I am in my eighty-first year and expect to live out the full century," said Mr. Thomas Dennis, "and the report that I gave up my place in the War Department on account of old age is untrue. I simply want to live quietly and enjoy myself the remainder of my life, and I am going to do it."

Mr. Dennis is the "dean" of the armless men employed by the government in Washington, and until a few months ago was a watchman in the War Department. If vigorous looks and actions go for anything, this gentleman will be on this earth many years yet, for he does not look a day over sixty, and there is not a crow's foot on his smooth and round face, and he is the picture of health. "Mrs. Dennis is the best cook in eighteen states," he declared, "and I have an eat-up-everything appetite. I am able to buy what we want to eat; I take just a little bitters occasionally, smoke one good cigar a day, take three chews of tobacco; have always had a clear head and conscience and that is all there is to it."

When Mr. Dennis was a young man he enlisted as a seaman in the United States navy, being assigned to the Princeton. While cruising in the Mediterranean along the coast of Africa the accident occurred which caused the loss of his arms. Prince Demidoff of Russia, who married Napoleon's sister, Princess Matilda, was at Gibraltar and paid a visit to the American vessel. The prince enjoyed his visit thoroughly, and as he was leaving a salute was fired in his honor. Mr. Dennis had fired the first gun, and was rammiking the second charge home when there was a premature discharge, completely tearing off both the young seaman's arms. Prince Demidoff was greatly shocked by the accident, and at once made the offer to have the sailor carried ashore and to provide liberally for him then and for all time. Of course this generous offer was declined by the officers, but Mr. Dennis was sent to one of the best hospitals, and as soon as the prince heard of this he had the most skilled surgeons and nurses employed and gave instructions that the young man was to receive the best attention.

Traveled With Demidoff

When Mr. Dennis was able to travel the prince carried him from city to city, furnishing him with the finest clothes and everything that money could buy, having false arms made for him at different times. After a time Mr. Dennis came back to the United States, but Prince Demidoff had a liberal allowance sent him regularly, and at his death it was found that an annuity of \$80 had been provided for him in the will of the young prince. This Mr. Dennis receives each year, and with the \$100 a month pension from the United States government and a snug sum saved from a liberal salary he has received for many years, he has plenty to live on the balance of his life.

Mr. Dennis has several grown sons and one daughter. One of the sons is in the real estate business in Chicago and another is in business in Philadelphia. Before coming to Washington, which was in 1893, Mr. Dennis had made his home in Chicago for a number of years, being in the customs house for nearly seven years and at the county building for four years. When President Cleveland took Judge Gresham into his official family Mr. Dennis came to Washington to pay his respects to the judge, as they had been life-long friends, and he was persuaded to remain here.

"I am out of the harness for good," said Mr. Dennis, "and I hope some deserving man will fill the place I could still keep. The government has been considerate and liberal with me, and as I have enough I thought I ought to get out. I shall not be entirely idle, for I have some interests to look after which will give me something to do. I can go about a good deal and do a great many things with the aid of the 'Decker tweezers,' which are worth a train load of all the false arms and hands ever made, and Prince Demidoff had the very best made for me. I only keep them around the house because the generous young fellow gave them to me. He was one of the best fellows in the world, and his unhappy marriage sent him to an early grave. I have a number of valuable presents and keepsakes he gave and sent me."