

Thomas S. Donaldson

(- 2 Jun 1907)

Donaldson. Suddenly on Sunday, June 2, 1907, Thomas S. Donaldson, beloved husband of Mary V. Donaldson, aged 59 years. Funeral private.

The Evening Star, June 3, 1907, p. 16

Certifies to Suicide

Coroner's Decision in Case of Thomas Donaldson

Leaving no note or other message to let his relatives know why he was tired of life, Thomas S. Donaldson, fifty-two years of age, turned on the gas yesterday morning in his room, at 926 E street northwest, and accomplished self-destruction. It was not until sometime after the body was found that any one discovered his identity. Several persons who had known Donaldson called at the house, some of them participating in the investigation, but the face of the dead man was buried in the pillow, and the identification was thereby delayed. There was nothing of value found in the room, and the landlady suggested that it was a case of "down and out." Other lodgers had committed suicide in her house before she moved to E street, and she said to the police that the incident was not a new one to her.

"But," she said, "there was no way that I could have prevented it. When a man wants to take his life he is bound to succeed."

She had no idea who the unfortunate man was. She said he had called at her house and said he had been sent there by Mr. Sweet, a plumber, and the landlady gave him a small room on the top floor of the house. He was seen when he returned to the house late Saturday night and went to his room. Nothing more was seen of him until his body was found about 10 o'clock yesterday morning.

The odor of gas was detected when the landlady went about the building to do her routine work. She went to the room occupied by Donaldson and found that the gas was escaping from there. The door was forced open and Donaldson's body was found upon the bed.

Had Served at Morgue

Donaldson had been employed as assistant superintendent of the morgue a few years ago and had become familiar with the cases of unfortunates who had committed suicide by inhaling gas. He prepared for suicide by securely fastening the door and window and filling the crevices with pieces of paper to prevent the escape of the gas from the room. After arranging the door and window the tip was removed from the gas fixture and Donaldson went to bed to die. The effect of the poisonous gas, it is believed, caused him to turn upon his stomach and bury his face in his pillow.

Coroner Nevitt reached the E street house a short while after the finding of the body and was greatly shocked upon recognizing the face of his former employe. The deceased was a native of Virginia, having been born a few miles below Alexandria. He was a plumber, but had not worked at his trade for several years. He had been employed in the District fire department and had also worked as starter at the 4 1/2 street car barn.

Since he gave up his position at the morgue about two years ago he spent his time with relatives in this city and Virginia.

A son of the dead man called at the E street house yesterday and identified the body. The son was surprised to know that his father had been in the city, as he had been in the habit of staying at the latter's house upon the occasion of his visits here.

It is stated that Donaldson had been addicted to the use of intoxicants and that his mind had probably become affected. Coroner Nevitt gave a certificate showing that Donaldson had committed suicide, and the son of the deceased had an undertaker take charge of the body.