

## John A. Downs ( - 11 Jun 1901)

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*The Evening Star, June 8, 1901*

### **John A Downs Drowned**

#### **His Friends Believe He Committed Suicide From Grief at His Mother's Death**

John A. Downs, a bachelor fifty-eight years old, who lived at the home of his nephew, John Tindall, No. 914 I street southeast, went down the river on the steamer Charles Macalester last night and remained about the boat until the turn at Indian Head was made. When the steamer was opposite the White House landing a passenger found a coat, hat and cane on the lower deck. These articles of wearing apparel, as well as the cane, belonged to Downs. The next question to be solved was that had become of their owner. Capt. L.L. Blake, who had known Downs for more than twenty years, and who had conversed with him during the evening, instituted a search, but the passenger was not to be found. He then concluded that Downs had gone overboard, either accidentally or purposely. Capt. Blake realized that nothing could be accomplished last night in the way of searching the river for the body and beyond searching the boat and afterward reporting the affair to the police nothing was done. When the steamer reached the wharf at the foot of 7th street about 11 o'clock Policeman Auguste was given the coat, hat and cane and told of how they had been left on the steamer. Many of the passengers who had enjoyed the evening's outing were questioned, but none of them could throw any light on the question of the man's disappearance.

#### *Suicide Suspected*

It is generally believed that Downs committed suicide, because he had stated that he was tired of living and intended ending his earthly career last Thursday, so it is reported. His mother died about three months ago, leaving him the only member of the family living. During his mother's life the son saw that she never wanted for anything, and her death had a very depressing effect upon him. Since then he has been despondent, and friends say he made the remark: "I'm the only one left and I might as well kill myself."

The information concerning his disappearance from the Macalester was not a surprise to some of his friends who had heard of the threat he is reported to have made. He left his home Thursday and the fact that he did not return that night occasioned no alarm, for he had remained away from home over night many times before. For many years he was a drummer for a cigar firm, and he was also in the brokerage business. He was a Knight Templar, being a member of Washington Commandery, and was also a member of Harmony Lodge, No. 17, F.A.A.M. It is stated that he expressed a desire that the members of the lodge should take charge of his body.

#### *To Search for His Body*

Mr. Henry Littleton of 916 I street southeast has arranged to go down the river Monday morning and search for the body of his friend unless it is recovered in the meantime. Friends of the missing man were anxious to have the police boat go down the river this morning in order that the members of the crew might make a search, but the boat is disabled and has been out of service for several weeks. Passengers who went down on the river boat today were instructed to look out for the body.

#### *On Lookout for Body*

Capt. L.L. Blake said today that he had noticed all the fishermen about Holland Point to look out for the body and to notify Commodore Sutton, the harbormaster here, if it should be found. The trouble,

he said, would be to locate the point where Downs jumped overboard. It might have been at any place within a distance of five miles. Downs was said to be an expert swimmer, and there is a bare possibility that he may have swam ashore. The harbor boat being out of commission awaiting a new equipment, it is not possible to employ the District apparatus for dragging the river, unless a boat be obtained specially for the purpose.

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### **Body Recovered**

#### **Remains of John A. Downs Brought to Washington**

The body of John A. Downs, who jumped overboard from the steamer Charles Macalester last Friday night, was recovered near Indian Head at 7:55 o'clock this morning and brought here on the steam launch Lovie Randall. Undertakers Boteler and Scott took charge of the body and removed it to their place of business, on 8th street southeast, where it was prepared for burial later in the day. Capt. Barker of the steamer Harry Randall sighted the body floating in the river near Craney Island and so informed Harbormaster Sutton when his boat reached the river front. Last night the crew of the police boat went down the river on the Lovie Randall to search for the body. They were assisted by Manager Woollen of the steamer River Queen, who used his search light.

About midnight the search was abandoned, but at 4 o'clock this morning the men were again at work. Every inlet and the shores in the vicinity of Quantico, Craney Island and Indian Head were explored and about the hour stated the work of the searching party was rewarded. The body was badly decomposed, it was about 11 o'clock when the searching party returned here with the corpse.

The funeral of the deceased will take place at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Members of Washington Commandery, No. 1, K.T. and Harmony Lodge, No. 17, F.A.A.M. will have charge of the funeral arrangements. The interment will be at Congressional cemetery.

*The Evening Star, June 15, 1901*

### **Filed For Probate**

#### **Bequests Made in the Will of John Downs**

The will of John A. Downs who disappeared recently from the steamer Macalester and was drowned, was filed yesterday with the District register. It is written on a sheet of paper with the heading of a local hotel, is dated May 25 last, and was not witnessed. The will is as follows:

"In case of my death, after my funeral expenses are paid, I bequeath to my aunt, Sarah Jane Field, \$100; my cousins, William Field and Frank Field, \$50 each; my cousin, Ada Littleton, \$100, the balance of my estate to be divided between my nephews, Archie C. Tindall and James M. Tindall; my bed room furniture and everything else in my room to Ada Littleton; my clothing and personal property to Frank Field. I wish E. Hez Swem to be administrator. If there is any cash in my pocket book let Aunt Sarah Jane Field have it. Washington Commandery No. 1, Knights Templar, and Harmony Lodge, No. 17, F.A.A.M., to be notified if I should die."

The will was filed by Addie E. Littleton, who says she received it by mail the 8th instant, from the purser of the steamer Macalester. She explained that she is informed that another will was made by Downs while he was aboard the Macalester about two months ago.