

John William Edwards (- 15 Dec 1903)

The Evening Star, April 13, 1904

Was Not a Deserter

Marine Corps Mystery Cleared By Ghastly Discovery

Body of Missing Member Found in Shallow Grave Near Railway Tracks in Maryland

A recent discovery has caused the recall by the naval authorities of a recent circular offering the usual reward for the capture of John E. Edwards who was marked as a deserter from the marine barracks in this city, and the reward papers now bear the superscription "Found." Edwards, who was a private in the U.S. Marine Corps disappeared from the barracks on 8th street southeast, December 1, 1903, and after the time limit of "absence without leave" had expired the reward circular was issued and the police notified to look out for the man.

April 5 the body of Private Edwards, attired in a blue overcoat and full uniform was found buried in a shallow grave near the Pennsylvania railroad tracks at Patuxent Station, about twenty-one miles from this city. The gruesome discovery was made by some workmen who were excavating near the tracks, and the military authorities notified. After the remains had been identified as those of Edwards, Mr. S.R. Mundell and his son Harry K. Mundell, proceeded to Patuxent, and brought the body to Washington, and it was buried April 4 at the Congressional Cemetery.

Investigation has shown that Edwards was probably struck by a train and instantly killed. On the morning of December 2 last some colored men found the body lying beside the track. The man's face on the right side was torn away and his skull crushed, and his right leg had been badly injured.

It is stated that the colored men, without notifying the Washington authorities, placed the body in a wheel barrow, conveyed it to a place near the railroad tool house and buried it. Had it not been for the work of excavating of April 5, Edwards disappearance would have probably remained a mystery and he would have been carried on the naval rolls as a deserter.

A marine who knew the dead man intimately, said today that Edwards met a young woman who lived in the vicinity of the Pennsylvania railroad at a dance in this city last winter and became much attracted to her. It is his opinion that Edwards met his death while trying to find her home.

Deceased was a young man, a native of Ohio, heavily built and about five feet ten inches in height. It is said he was in line for a promotion to a lieutenancy.