

Mary Griffin

(- 17 Mar 1912)

The Evening Star, March 18, 1912, p. 4

Shoots Wife Dead

Man Then Turns Revolver on Self, Ending Life

Marriage Was Unhappy

Mrs. John Griffin Had Gone to Houseboat to Effect Reconciliation

Quarrel Follows Attempt

Passerby, Who Tries to Grasp Pistol From Husband, Has a Close Call

Mrs. John Griffin, who had four little children, went to a houseboat lying in the river at Half and V streets southwest yesterday afternoon confident that she could patch up the trouble which had separated her from her husband. All she got for her optimism was two bullets and the husband then turned the revolver toward his own head and sent a bullet crashing into his brain. John Draper of 619 11th street southeast came within a few inches of sudden death also when he stepped between Mrs. Griffin and her husband's smoking revolver. As it was, the bullet tore through his coat directly over the heart, but did not touch his body.

The shooting, it is declared, was the culmination of the old story of a husband's brutality to a wife, aggravated by constant habits of drink. Mrs. Griffin lived at Beltsville, Md, in her childhood days and was so bright as a girl that she was adopted by a family who lived in Anacostia. Later she met John Griffin and married him. That was nine years ago, and in that time they have had four children.

Children Sent to Asylum

For a year or two the husband was all that he should have been. However, the drink habit appeared early in their married life. The neighbors say he abused the woman especially when getting over a spree. In spite of this, Mrs. Griffin, hoping for the best at all times, stuck to him. It became necessary not long ago to have the children placed in an orphan asylum, as the father did nothing for their support, it is said.

John Griffin wandered away from his wife and spent much of his time on or near the river. He had a habit of living on an old houseboat owned by Arthur Crouch, and it was there that his wife called to see him yesterday.

With the faith of a wife, Mrs. Griffin told her friends yesterday she expected to bring her husband back to her that day. She had been working in a hotel, had a steady job and a dollar or two besides. She had made up her own mind that it was time she helped her husband out of the rut.

So she put on what finery she had including a bit of green for St. Patrick, and started for Arthur Crouch's houseboat. She was confident that her steady position would help a long way toward settling the differences. Probably no one knows what the conversation between the two on the houseboat was, for the next seen of Mrs. Griffin she was walking away from the boat. John Draper, who had so close a call with Griffin's bullet, saw her walking up the street, with her husband a short distance behind her. It was evident they had not left the boat together.

Draper saw the man had a pistol and started for him. Mrs. Griffin heard an angry word behind her, and was surprised, on turning around, to see her husband armed. Draper was struggling with Griffin, who broke away and shouted at his wife:

"I'll fix you."

Woman Falls Dead

Then he fired and the woman who had come to bring her husband home again fell dead.

"And I'll shoot you," he shouted at Draper. A second shot, intended for Draper, cut through his coat, and then Griffin ran forward to where his dead wife lay and shot her again in the head. Then he raised the weapon to his temple and shot himself. He appeared to be trying to shoot himself in the head again, but the last bullet entered his chest.

Draper did not know he had come so close to death until a friend, George Adams, pointed out the bullet hole in his coat.

Both the bodies were sent to the morgue. They will be buried together.