

John Hofman (- 5 Sep 1898)

The Evening Star, September 6, 1898

A Shocking Crime

John Hofman and Son Edward Shot to Death

Murderer Killed By Sheriff's Posse

The Messrs. Hofman Were Residents of South Washington

Bodies to be Sent Home

John Hofman and his son Edward of this city were murdered at their lumber camp, near Scotland, Surry county, Va., early yesterday morning. They were shot by a man named John Schmidt, who was under the influence of liquor when he committed the crime. A telegram received here last night by Mrs. Hofman, who lives at 217 9th street southeast, gave the information that the murderer was shot to death by the sheriff's posse. Mr. J.W. Kinlock, who was foreman of Hofman's lumber works, sent the telegram conveying the sad news to Mrs. Hofman and her daughter. He gave no particulars of the affair. Today another telegram saying the bodies were on their way home was received from Mr. Kinlock.

Mr. Hofman's home was in South Washington at the address mentioned, his family consisting of his wife, son, daughter and himself. While he and his son spent most of their time in the lumber camp, they made occasional visits home. Only a few days ago Mrs. Hofman received a letter from her husband and son, and this sad intelligence following so closely upon the receipt of the bright and cheerful letter, proved a severe shock to both Mrs. Hofman and the daughter.

The Murderer

John Schmidt, who committed the double murder, was a dissipated man, and when he made trips to Wakefield and Surry he frequently returned under the influence of liquor. Early yesterday morning he went to Surry, the county seat of Surry county, and bought a gallon of "fire water." In addition to the demijohn of the liquid he drank about as much as he could hold. When he reached Scotland his conduct was that of a wild man, and during his carouse he met and killed both men. According to the information received from Mr. Kinlock, the sheriff started in pursuit with a posse, and Schmidt was soon given a dose of the treatment he had administered to his victims. Then a coroner's inquest was of little importance, and the bodies of Mr. Hofman and son were prepared for shipment. It is expected that they will reach here on a late train this afternoon.

It is thought that Schmidt became offended at something said to him about his work. The Hofman's were cutting and sawing wood for McLean, the lumber merchant in Baltimore. Mr. Hofman was an elder in St. Mark's Lutheran Church, in South Washington.

The Evening Star, September 7, 1898

Brought Home For Burial

Bodies of John and Edward V. Hofman Returned Here

Further Particulars of the Crime of Which There

Were the Innocent Victims

The bodies of John Hofman and his son, Edward V. Hofman, who were murdered near Scotland, Surry county, Va., Monday, as published in yesterday's Star, reached this city on the 3:45 o'clock train yesterday afternoon. Mr. John W. Kinlock, who was Mr. Hofman's foreman, accompanied the bodies here and had them removed to J.W. Lee's undertaking establishment. This afternoon at 3 o'clock the

bodies were taken to Congressional cemetery, where relatives and friends had gathered to pay a last tribute to the dead. The Rev. John C. Bowers, pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, for which Mr. Hofman, sr., was an elder, conducted the services.

Additional particulars of the triple homicide were related last night by Mr. Kinlock. John Schmidt, the slayer of the Hofmans, was a land owner in the vicinity of the lumber mill of Mr. Hofman and recently he sold the latter a strip of timber land. As had been his custom when he participated in a business transaction, he regretted that he had made the sale and imagined he had been swindled. This feeling was intensified Monday when Schmidt went to Surry and got drunk. Then, as stated yesterday, he bought an extra gallon to carry home with him. He had a Winchester rifle hanging over his shoulder when he returned to the camp, but nothing was thought of it, as it is not an unusual thing to meet the natives on the road armed in this way.

When he reached the camp he brought up the subject of the recent transaction. Young Mr. Hofman, who was anxious to avoid trouble made a remark about the protection of the law. Then the intoxicated man, who evidently realized that he could not cause a fight, fired upon the younger Hofman. The latter fell, mortally wounded. His father hastened to the side of his dying son, and while there on his knees he remarked: "My God, you have killed my son."

Schmidt, who had fired three shots, then raised his rifle again, and this time the elder Hofman received a fatal wound.

Mr. E.C. Collins, lumber inspector for Robert McLean & Co. of Baltimore, witnessed the shooting. He would probably have been the third victim had not he escaped by entering the mill and riding away on a mule. Schmidt then went in search of Mr. Kinlock, but the latter happened to be at the spring, a safe distance from the murderer.

When the sheriff learned of the affair he summoned several men and went in search of Schmidt, who had declared he would not be taken alive. He was found at his house, and when he reached for his rifle to greet his visitors the latter riddled him with bullets.

Schmidt's relatives, it is said, may cause trouble in the county, as some of them have declared their intention to avenge his death.

Mr. Hofman, who was sixty years old, was very much loved by the people in Surry, and when news of his murder was received several lynching parties were started. Had Schmidt not been killed as he was he would undoubtedly have been lynched.