

Joseph Thomas Hollinberger

(1859 – 4 Apr 1914)

The Washington Post, March 16, 1909, p. 14

Hollinberger Now Captain

Takes First Precinct, While Capt. Williams Goes to Fifth

The changes in the Metropolitan police department as a result of the death of Capt. William



Matthews, commanding the Fifth precinct, went into effect yesterday. Capt. J. Thomas Hollinberger, who has been lieutenant of the First precinct, took command of that precinct, while Capt. George H. Williams, who was in charge of the First, was transferred to the Fifth.

Lieut. C.E. Flather, who was promoted from acting lieutenant, was sent to the Fourth last night, and Lieut. Joshua L. Sprinkle, formerly of the Fifth, was sent to the First. Sergt. J.A. Duvall went on duty at the Fifth precinct, having been promoted from night inspector of bicycle force.

The Evening Star, October 25, 1911

Capt. Hollinberger Sues

Seeks \$25,000 Damages From Dr. Stone and Mrs. Schley

J. Thomas Hollinberger, captain of the first police precinct station, has filed suit to recover \$25,000 damages for alleged libel against Dr. James H. Stone of 1100 Irving street northwest and Mrs. Sallie A. Schley, who, it is alleged, joined with Dr. Stone in filing affidavit in the divorce proceedings of Mrs. Ella M. Stone against her husband, in which Capt. Hollinberger's name was joined with Mrs. Stone's in a manner which the police officer asserts reflected upon him.

The Washington Evening Star, Sunday, April 5, 1914, p. 1

Capt. Hollinberger Ends His Own Life

Head of First Police Precinct Was Worried by Finances and in Ill Health

Leaves No Message To Explain His Act

Sends Bullet Crashing Through Head in "Den" of His Home in Northeast

While seated in a rocking Chair in the "den" he had fitted up in the basement at his home, 654 Massachusetts avenue northeast, at 5:20 o'clock yesterday afternoon, Police Capt. J. Thomas Hollinberger of the first precinct sent a bullet from a heavy Colt automatic department pistol crashing through his head. Capt. Hollinberger died at Casualty Hospital, where he was taken at 6:20 o'clock, exactly an hour after the shot was fired, never having regained consciousness.

At home with Capt. Hollinberger at the time of his death was Mrs. Hollinberger, his wife, and two of his daughters, Mrs. Mabel Delaney, ??? northwest and Miss Juliet Hollinberger. Continued ill health, resulting from injuries received several years ago, and financial worries are said to have been the impelling causes. Capt. Hollinberger left no message or word of any kind to explain his contemplated

act, though members of his family said last night, that he had been much depressed, and in a highly nervous condition for the past few days.

Capt. Hollinberger went to his "den" yesterday afternoon just before the tragedy, his wife and daughter being on an upper floor of the house.

Found Him Unconscious

Hearing the sound of a shot, Mrs. Hollinberger ran to her husband's room. She found him clad only in his night clothes and slippers, seated in a big rocker. In his right hand was grasped the heavy department pistol with which the deed had been committed. The bullet had entered the right side of his head just above the ear, and blood was pouring from the wound. He was unconscious and gasping for breath.

Mrs. Delaney, the daughter, ran to Casualty Hospital, a short distance from the residence. To Harry Fleischmann, ambulance driver, she exclaimed: "Something awful has happened at home. Come over quickly."

The ambulance with Drs. J.W. Bannon and Francis X. Field responded to the call, and the wounded man was rushed to the hospital and placed on the operating table. Dr. W.C. Borden, dean of George Washington College of Medicine, assisted by the two ambulance surgeons and by Dr. C.P. King, resident physician, and Dr. Noble P. Barnes, of the hospital's visiting staff, at once operated.

Bones of Skull Shattered

It was found that the heavy bullet from the police department pistol had crushed its way completely through the skull, entering at a point on the right side just above the ear and lodging just under the scalp on the left side of the head. The bones of the skull, the surgeons found, had been shattered by the bullet until the entire upper part of the skull was simply a mass of broken and splintered bone.

As soon as the extent and nature of the wound had been determined, the surgeons recognized the fact that death was merely a matter of moments and Capt. Hollinberger expired one hour to the minute after the shot was fired.

The tragedy was reported to the ninth precinct police station and Acting Capt. Bremmerman of that precinct went at once to Casualty Hospital. There he was joined by Inspector Boardman, Chief Clark, ??? Hesse of the police department. ?? Lee and Lohman of the first precinct Detectives Burlingame and Graft of headquarters and other members of the police force. Other officials ??? members of the force. Other

In Poor Health

Capt. Hollinberger had been in poor health for some time, and last Sunday, was granted leave of absence. A few years ago he sustained serious injuries to his right leg, the hurts being aggravated later by a fall from a street car. Since being granted the requested leave he had not been at the first precinct, but it is understood that he visited a daughter and son-in-law in Annapolis early last week, the visit being for business reasons, it is said.

To Chief Clerk Hesse at the hospital last evening, Mrs. Hollinberger said that her husband had been ill and apparently greatly depressed for the last few days. She said she had remained with him as constantly as possible, during this time, and that she had left him only a few minutes before the fatal shot was fired. To Clerk Hesse she said:

"We have been together for thirty four years and I cannot bear the thought of being separated from him now. He needs me, and I am going to him."

Members of the family and friends were in constant attendance on the grief-stricken woman during the night.

Among Capt. Hollinberger's friends it has been known for some time that financial troubles were causing him serious worry, and to this fact, and his impaired health, due to the injuries referred to, is attributed the mental depression which led to the taking of his life. A search of his desk and trunk at his home failed to reveal any message or other clues to the causes behind the deed.

Elevated to a captaincy in the police department by a tragedy, Capt. Hollinberger's connection with the department he had served for so many years was terminated by another and equally tragic event. He was serving as a lieutenant at the fourth precinct at the time Capt. Matthews of the fifth precinct was shot and killed in his office, and succeeded Capt. Matthews to the vacant captaincy.

Capt. Hollinberger was born in Charles county, Md., October 1, 1858. He was the son of the late L.H. Hollinberger, who retired a number of years ago while a lieutenant of police in command of the fourth precinct.

He entered the metropolitan police force July 1, 1880, having previously been in business in this city. His first assignment was as clerk of the old fifth precinct, then located on 10th street northwest between D and E streets. Later in the year he was transferred to the old sixth precinct as clerk and in 1883 he was again transferred, in the same capacity, to the first precinct.

He was appointed a private on the force July 11, 1884, being assigned to the first precinct, remaining there until in May 1901, when he was transferred to the third precinct being sent back to the first in 1905. In May 1906, he was promoted to acting sergeant, stationed at the third precinct, and July 1, 1906 he was made full sergeant and sent to the first precinct.

He was promoted to a lieutenantcy March 17, 1907, and assigned to the fourth precinct, where he remained until the murder of Capt. Matthews of the fifth precinct gave him his final promotion, being transferred to the first precinct shortly afterward.

Served at White House

During his service as a private on the force he acted as special clerk at headquarters and on one occasion was assigned to the White House squad, the most desirable assignment in the force. Besides his wife and the two daughters living in Washington, Capt. Hollinberger is survived by another daughter, Mrs. Shirley Williams, whose husband is employed at the Naval Academy at Annapolis.

Maj. Sylvester, superintendent of police, is in Atlantic City. He was advised by long-distance telephone of the tragic death of Capt. Hollinberger late last evening. Inspector Boardman, acting superintendent in the absence of Maj. Sylvester, last night designated Lieut. Harrison of the first precinct, as acting captain. No designation as acting lieutenant has as yet been made.

The death of Capt. Hollinberger, it was stated last night, will open the way for a number of promotions in the police department, and much speculation was indulged in last night as to the men who will probably receive advancement as a result of the tragedy.

To Capt. Hollinberger's close friends, the news of his suicide came as no surprise. Those fairly well acquainted with his private affairs were aware of the difficulties which for some time had beset him, and a personal friend remarked a few days ago to Coroner Nevitt that he, the coroner, might expect a case before long in the police department. The remark referred to Capt. Hollinberger. Arrangements for the funeral, it was stated, will be made today.

Mrs. Hollinberger before her marriage was Miss Capitolia Filius. Her brother, George Filius, was a wagon driver in the police department. The tragic death of her husband is the second which has occurred in her family, her brother having ended his own life several years ago.

No Inkling to Associates

Capt. Hollinberger had not mentioned anything to his fellow officers to suggest to them that he contemplated taking his life, it was stated at the first precinct police station last night, although some of his closest friends in the precinct had expressed the fear that the commanding officer would some day end his life.

It was recalled by members of his command last night that several police friends of Capt. Hollinberger had ended their lives in past years. Michael Breen and J.D. Sutton, who did duty with Hollinberger when he was a private, ended their lives by shooting. Breen was a mounted policeman about the market district and he killed himself in the Mall. Sutton shot himself at his home on Capitol Hill.

The latest friend of the captain to commit suicide was George W. Dawson, who was detailed as hack inspector. He was at his home several months ago when he ended his life with a bullet. Policeman Michael Flynn, another acquaintance of Capt. Hollinberger, shot himself. He was detailed at Police Court several years.

Policemen last night recalled several other cases of policemen taking their lives. They recalled that Policemen Corby and Berryman, the former a member of the sixth precinct command and the latter connected with the eighth precinct, were among others who committed suicide.

Joseph Birkenmyer, who was in the second precinct, it is stated, lost his position on the force after he had attempted suicide, and, later, it is stated, he shot and killed himself. Edward Hunt of the second precinct killed himself in the dormitory of the station, while a policeman named Gebicke, who was in the fifth precinct, ended his life with a pistol on the Conduit road.

The Evening Star, Monday, April 6, 1914, p. 12

Final Rites Tomorrow For J.T. Hollinberger

Police Department Announces Death in General Order--Expresses Deep Regret

Funeral services for Police Capt. Joseph Thomas Hollinberger of the first precinct, who committed suicide Saturday afternoon, will be held at his late home, 654 Massachusetts avenue northeast, at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Rev. C. R. Stetson, rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, will officiate, and the interment will be in Congressional cemetery.

Seven members of the command of the first precinct, who were intimate friends of Capt. Hollinberger, will serve as pallbearers. They are Detectives M.L. Howes and J.R. Simpson, and Privates Leo Murray, J.O.B. Gray, J.W. McDaniels, C.C. Grimsley and J.R. Emmert. Private J.W. Kenney of the fifth precinct, a nephew of Mrs. Hollinberger, will also be a pallbearer.

Maj. Sylvester, chief of police, who went to Atlantic City last week on account of illness, is expected to return home this afternoon. It is probable that the chief and Commissioner Siddons will attend the funeral.

Issue of General Order

Inspector Robert Boardman, acting chief of police, today sent out a general order to the department telling of the death and funeral of Capt. Hollinberger, as follows:

"It is with great sorrow and deep regret, that the acting major and superintendent is called upon to announce to the officers and members of the police force the tragic death of Capt. Joseph T. Hollinberger, which occurred at Casualty Hospital Saturday, April 4, 1914, at 6:20 o'clock p.m.

"His death, occurring as it did, makes the shock greater and our sorrow deeper. The department extends to the bereaved family its deepest sympathy.

"Capt. Hollinberger was appointed in the department July 11, 1884, and his earnest attention to duty, his intelligence and trustworthiness brought him steady promotion until he advanced to the rank of captain March 16, 1909.

An Efficient Officer

"He was a most efficient officer, and his untimely death is a loss to the service. He gave his full time and attention to the welfare of the department, observing details and successfully following its progressive policy in all matters relating to the enforcement of the laws and regulations and the requirements of the manual.

"He was kind-hearted, generous, obliging, firm but just, an affectionate husband and father; a man always ready to help the unfortunate, and his sudden demise will be widely mourned.

"The funeral will be held Tuesday, April 7, 1914 at 2 p.m. from the late residence of Capt. Hollinberger at No. 654 Massachusetts avenue northeast.

"In compliance with the wishes of the family, the usual escort will be omitted. Pallbearers, however, will be selected from among his late associates in the service."

Lieutenants in Line of Promotion.

Thirteen lieutenants and one acting lieutenant are in line for promotion to the vacancy caused by the tragic death of Capt. Hollinberger. Many of them, it is stated, had already sent friends in political and official line to lay their claims before the Commissioners because they had been led to believe that Capt.'s. Michael Byrnes and John C. Daley soon would be retired. Lieut. Anthony Shilling of the seventh precinct is the senior lieutenant.

The Washington Evening Star, Tuesday, April 7, 1914, p. 12

Capt. Hollinberger Buried

Funeral Services for Suicide Police Officer Conducted Today

Funeral services for Police Capt. Joseph Thomas Hollinberger, who Saturday afternoon shot and killed himself, were conducted at the home, 654 Massachusetts avenue northeast at 2 o'clock this afternoon. Floral tributes were sent by the police of several precincts and numerous friends.

Rev. C.R. Stetson, rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, officiated. Eight members of the police force, men who were closely identified with Capt. Hollinberger in his work, served as pallbearers. Interment was in Congressional Cemetery.