

## Arthur Shaaff Johns, Jr. ( - 16 Apr 1903)

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*The Evening Star, April 16, 1903*

### **Horrible Accident**

### **Twelve-Year-Old Boy Killed By Streetcar**

### **Son of a Minister**

### **Body of Shaaff Johns Mangled Under Wheels**

### **Connecticut and L Street Scene of the Unfortunate Occurrence**

### **Statements of Witnesses**

A shocking street car accident, which resulted in the almost instant death of Shaaff Johns, the twelve-year-old son of Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Arthur S. Johns of 620 G street southeast, occurred about 10;50 o'clock this morning in the line of the Washington Traction Railway Company at the corner of Connecticut avenue and L street northwest. From the accounts of eye-witnesses to the affair, which vary slightly as to details, the boy was attempting to board a southbound street car while it was in motion and fell beneath the front wheels of the trailer. When he was extricated it was found that he had sustained a fracture of the skull and the bones of his neck and chest had been terribly crushed. He lived but a few moments after being removed from beneath the wheels.

The father of the boy, Rev. Dr. Johns, is rector of Christ Church, in Southeast Washington. It was stated that Shaaff had gone on an errand for Miss Bessie Baldwin, who was visiting with Mrs. Johns, to her sister, who resides at 1523 L street northwest. He was returning from his errand and had with him a bundle of clothing which Miss Baldwin had asked her sister to send to her. Car No. 157, in charge of Conductor E.D. Richter, with William P. Wise as motorman, was running south along Connecticut avenue. The car stopped on the north side of L street. Several persons who were near the scene of the accident stated that the boy was standing on the northwest corner of the street and did not attempt to board the car until after it had started. Others stated that Shaaff ran east along L street and endeavored to jump onto the front platform of the trailer from the west side. Whatever the details, he slipped beneath the front wheels, which passed over his body.

### *Witnessed by a Passenger*

A passenger on the front platform of the trailer noticed the boy fall and pulled the bell rope. The motorman immediately set the brakes and stopped the car about thirty feet from the south side of the crossing. Underneath the rear wheels of the trailer, mangled and torn, lay the almost lifeless form of the unfortunate boy. It was some time before he could be extricated, and the car had to be literally lifted off the boy. His mangled form was carried into a locomobile establishment on Connecticut avenue, and the ambulance from the Emergency Hospital was summoned. When the physicians arrived they stated that the boy was dead, having expired before they reached him.

As the boy was a stranger in that neighborhood considerable delay was experienced in identifying him. A letter addressed to "Miss Bessie Baldwin, kindness of Shaaff," was found in one of the pockets of his coat, and, with the aid of a directory, the address of the lady to whom the letter was sent was found. Upon inquiry at the Lenox, the address given in the directory, it was found that Miss Bessie Baldwin was visiting with Mrs. Johns, and that Shaaff had just left the place with a note and a bundle of clothing for Miss Baldwin.

### *The Mother Notified.*

Mr. H.J. Meader, a grocer near the residence of Dr. Johns, was telephone of the accident, and went to the minister's residence. Dr. Johns was absent at the time but Mr. Meader gently broke the news to Mrs. Johns, and, together with Rev. Dr. Meyer, assistant rector of Christ Church accompanied her to the scene of the said accident. The bereaved mother stood the trial bravely, restraining her emotions with womanly courage. Messengers sent to various parts of the city were unable to find Dr. Johns and with the assistant of Dr. Meyer, the mother arranged for the removal of the body. It was taken to Speare's undertaking establishment and prepared for burial, after which it was conveyed to the home. The coroner's inquest will be held tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock.

Shaaff Johns was the youngest son of Dr. and Mrs. Johns. He attended public school, and was crucifer in Christ Church, and among his many friends was regarded as a manly young fellow, with many splendid traits of character. His death is a crushing blow to his parents and relatives.

Mr. L. Fahnestock, jr., whose place of business is at 1124 Connecticut avenue, stated to a reporter for The Star that he saw the boy just as he went under the front wheels of the trailer. He stated that he thought the lad tried to board the car while it was in motion and lost his hold on the side grip.

Another witness of the accident, Mr. B.L. Porter, who is employed in the locomobile establishment, said it seemed to him as though the boy had attempted to board the car from the west side, but slipped and fell under the wheels. C.M. Robinson of 1125 4th street northwest said he saw young Johns standing on the northwest corner of Connecticut avenue and L just before the accident. A short time later, he said, he saw him under the wheels of the car. He assisted in extricating the body from under the wheels.

### *Statement of Company Officials*

The railway company officials gave out a statement of the accident to a reporter for The Star to the effect that neither the motorman nor conductor saw the boy until after the unfortunate occurrence; that the boy ran down from 18th street and attempted to board the trailer from the west side after it had reached the south side of the crossing.

After the accident Policeman Reilly accompanied the car to the barn and returned to the third precinct station with Motorman Wise and Conductor Richter. The company's agents became responsible for the appearance of its employees and the two men were released to appear at the inquest tomorrow.

Dr. Glassbrook, deputy coroner, reached the scene of the accident about twenty minutes after it occurred and Dr. Nevitt arrived a little later. They examined the body and then placed it in the hands of the undertaker at the request of the mother of the boy.

*The Evening Star, April 17, 1903, p. 7*

### **Caused By Accident**

### **Verdict in Case of Lad Killed by Electric Car**

### **Testimony Before Coroner to Effect That Unfortunate Boy**

### **Attempted to Board Moving Car**

The coroner's jury in the inquest held at the sixth precinct station at 11 o'clock this morning to inquire into the death of Shaaff Johns, the twelve-year-old boy who was killed by a street car at the corner of Connecticut avenue and L street northwest yesterday morning, rendered a verdict that the lad's death, was due to accident. The inquiry was conducted by Coroner Nevitt, and the jury was composed of the following persons: Messrs. Rudolph Eichhorn, Walter C. Butler, Charles H. Willson, G.T.B. Cooper, James WS. Johnson and T.S Donaldson.

A number of witnesses were examined by Coroner Nevitt, among whom were the conductor and motorman in charge of the street car and several passengers and others who were near the scene of the accident.

The first witness called was Conductor E.D. Richter, who stated that he was running south on car No. 157, which reached the corner of Connecticut avenue and L street about 10:40 o'clock yesterday morning. Witness stated that the car stopped on the north side of L street and took on several passengers. The car had proceeded but a short distance, he said, when he noticed the jolting of the trailer, in which he was standing at the time. A passenger pulled the bell rope three times, giving the danger signal. This was the first intimation he had of the accident. Richter testified that he did not see any one standing on the south corner of L street.

#### *Story of the Motorman*

Motorman Wm. P. Wise told the jury that the first intimation he had of the accident was when he heard the danger signal. He put on the brakes and stopped the car within a few feet after hearing the bell. Witness stated that he did not see any one standing on the south side of L street, nor did he see any one approaching the car at that point as though intending to board it. He said that the body of the boy was lying under the pilot board in the rear part of the trailer, near the west side of the track.

Mr. Maurice D. Lee of 1321 New Hampshire avenue, who gave the danger signal, testified that he was standing on the open side of the rear platform of the motor car, and he saw young Johns approach the car from the south side of L street. The car was in motion and had reached the middle of L street. The unfortunate lad attempted to get in the front of the trailer, and caught the post of the car, but slipped and fell underneath the trailer. He made no outcry while falling. Witness stated that he pulled the bell rope three times and then got off the car. The boy was lying under the rear axle of the car and was apparently dead when extricated.

Robert Gayle, a messenger boy, told the jury that he saw young Johns crossing the tracks at the corner of Connecticut avenue and L street, going toward the southeast corner of the street. The car, he stated, was on the north side of L street at that time. He did not witness the boy's attempt to get on the car, nor did he see him fall.

Bennett L. Porter, C.M. Robinson and George T. Cochran also testified before the jury. They saw the boy after he had fallen under the car.

#### *Result of Autopsy*

Dr. Glazebrook, who examined the body at the locomobile establishment on Connecticut avenue, stated that he found the neck broken and the ribs of the chest badly crushed. The left side of the head and face was also crushed. The right shoulder was broken at the shoulder joint, and there was a cut over the right hip, besides a fracture of the skull behind the right ear. Dr. Glazebrook said he thought the wheels had not passed over the body, but that it had been crushed between the axle guard and the pavement, or by some part of the car.

The jury was out but a few moments and returned the verdict previously mentioned.

The body of the boy is still at Speare's undertaking establishment. Definite arrangements for the funeral have not as yet been made, but the funeral will probably be held tomorrow afternoon from Christ Church in Southeast Washington. The pallbearers will likely be selected from among the choir boys of that church, where Shaaff was crucifer previous to his death.

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**Funeral of Shaaff Johns**

The funeral service over the remains of Shaaff Johns, the twelve-year-old son of Rev. Dr. Arthur S. Johns, rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Southeast Washington, who was killed in a street car accident last Thursday morning, took place late Saturday afternoon from Christ Church. The service consisted of the reading of the Episcopal burial rites. Bishop Henry Y. Satterlee conducted the service, assisted by the Revs. Waldon, Myer and McKee.

The pallbearers, selected from the choir boys, were as follows: Richard Hynson, Thornton Hynson, R.R. McCathran, F.M. Kerby, B.L. Grimes and D.S. Bright.

The remains were placed in a vault at the Congressional cemetery, and the interment will be made tomorrow.