

## William W. McCauley

( - 6 Nov 1903)

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*The Evening Star, November 9, 1903, p. 12*

### **Death Investigated**

### **Jury's Verdict in the Case of William McCauley Conclusion Reached That the Workhouse Guards Exercised Unwarranted Responsibility**

Six men composing the coroner's jury in the case of William W. McCauley, the workhouse prisoner who died at the Washington Asylum Hospital Friday morning, as stated in Friday's Star, heard the testimony of a number of witnesses today and reached the conclusion that the victim was not given proper treatment at the workhouse. It was in evidence that the fracture and depression of the skull caused injuries which were necessarily fatal. It was also in evidence that he had the first fit at 6 o'clock in the evening, and was permitted to remain on his cot in the cell until 7 o'clock the next morning before he was removed to the hospital. It was some time after he reached the hospital that the operation was performed, and his death occurred on the operating table.

The inquest was held by direction of Commissioner West, who has immediate charge of the workhouse and Washington Asylum Hospital. His attention had been called to the death of McCauley, and the circumstances, he thought, were such that an investigation should be held in order to determine if there had been any negligence on the part of those in charge of the prisoner, and the coroner accordingly took up the case. It is likely, however, that another investigation will follow. This will probably be conducted by the board of charities.

As heretofore stated, McCauley was arrested in South Washington last Wednesday, and was committed to the workhouse the next day. He was a victim of intemperance, and was under the influence of liquor when Policeman Leach arrested him just after he had frightened his wife by threatening to use a pair of scissors upon her. Sometime during Thursday afternoon he reached the workhouse and was assigned to cell 2 with two other prisoners. He had a fit about 6 o'clock in the evening in the presence of two of the workhouse employees. One of them, Overseer Brown, gave him some salt and an application of cold water.

### *The Overseer's Instructions*

According to the testimony given by witnesses, the overseer told the prisoners to repeat the treatment in the event that McCauley had another fit. The patient did not regain consciousness, the witnesses stated, but no doctor was called. He suffered three more fits during the night, and the prisoners in the cell with him treated him as they had been told. When he had the first fit he fell heavily to the floor and received the injuries which caused his death.

The inquest was held at the sixth precinct police station. In reporting upon the case the jurors recited the circumstances attending the man's death, and concluded: "We further believe that the guard in charge of the prisoners at the time exercised unwarranted responsibility in not notifying the physicians immediately."

### *Overseer Brown's Statement*

An important witness in the investigation was M.J. Brown, an overseer at the workhouse. He testified that he first saw McCauley about 6 o'clock Thursday evening, when he was lying on the floor of his cell in a fit. Witness put a pillow under the prisoner's head. He got some salt and assisted in bathing the sick man's head.

"When he got out of the fit I put him on the cot," said witness.

"What do you mean by getting out of it?" the coroner asked.

"When he stopped working and twitching."

"Did the man open his eyes?"

"A little."

The overseer said he treated McCauley the same as he treated others who have fits. The next morning, he said, he thought the sick man needed hospital treatment, and Mr. Stoutenburgh called at the cell with the doctor. Witness said he sends for the physician in serious cases, but in ordinary drunken fits he treats them as he did McCauley. When the doctors are called, he stated, they usually make prompt responses.

#### *Screamed and Fell to the Floor*

Thomas Henderson and Thomas Hart, prisoners confined in the cell with McCauley, were also examined. They said that McCauley was rolling a cigarette when he suddenly lifted his hands, screamed and fell heavily to the floor. Henderson said he told Overseer Brown of the man's condition, and emphasized the statement that his fall had been a heavy one.

The sick man's treatment, one witness said, consisted of his being given salt and his temples bathed with cold water.

"Did he come to after he had been treated?"

"No, sir," Henderson replied.

"Did he open his eyes?"

"Only once."

During the night, he said, McCauley had three fits, and he followed the overseer's directions concerning the treatment. He said it was impossible to arouse McCauley.

Witness Hart gave similar testimony,

#### *Policeman's Story of Arrest*

Policeman Leach and ex-Policeman Posey told of the circumstances attending McCauley's arrest. They said that the man was intoxicated, and complaint was made that he had driven his wife from home with a pair of scissors. It was stated that McCauley did not appear to know what he was doing.

Two brothers of the deceased said they knew the latter had had one fit before the time of his last arrest.

Thomas J. Learch, a watchman at the workhouse, told of his connection with the affair. When he was called to the cell, he said, he reported the man's illness to his superior officer, Brown, and went away.

Dr. D. Percy Hickling, visiting physician to the Washington Asylum, testified that the injury received by McCauley was necessarily fatal.

Deputy Coroner Glazebrook informed the jury that McCauley's death was due to a fracture of the skull and hemorrhage.