

Charles Mead

(9 Jan 1841 – 10 Sep 1897)

The Evening Star, September 11, 1897

Died By His Own Hand

**Sick and Despondent, Charles Mead, Veteran Fireman,
Commits Suicide**

Mind Probably Unbalanced by Suffering--

Member of the Force for Quarter of a Century

Charles Mead, whose long service in the fire department had impaired his health, and whose mind was probably affected, ended his life last night at his home, No. 447 I street northwest, by cutting his throat with a razor.

The unfortunate man, who was about 55 years old, had served on engines and trucks for nearly thirty years, and in all the department there was not a more trusted or a braver fireman. He had done service at almost every big fire in this city for a quarter of a century, but during recent months his health declined, and he had been confined to his room some little time, an almost helpless invalid. To increase both his mental and physical suffering, he was fast losing his hearing and he seemed to fully realize that in a short time he would become entirely helpless. Death was to him preferable to this condition of affairs. While it is stated he had expressed such preference, he never hinted an intention to take his own life.

Because of his long and faithful service, Chief Parris had put him on the watch roll of his company, track D, and this really amounted to pensioning him. While on this roll he really had no work to do, and was able to remain at home each night. Even this easy position did not have the effect of restoring his health, and recently he has been attended by Dr. Mayfield, one of the surgeons of the police and fire departments.

Could Not Respond

A friend of the fireman's called last night and spent some time with the despondent patient. Mead conversed but little and his illness seemed to be preying upon his mind very much.

When the visitor got ready to leave Mrs. Mead accompanied him to the front door. Just about this time an alarm of fire was sounded, and the ringing of the bells of the fire engines, as they went along Massachusetts avenue, were heard by the sick man. But he was unable to leave his home and respond to the alarm. The noise of the engines called to his mind more clearly the fact that he had answered his last alarm, and getting out of bed he went to the bureau and took his razor from the drawer. Standing there, perhaps looking in the glass, he used the sharp weapon and made an ugly wound, which extended almost from ear to ear. His wife, standing near the front door at the time, did not hear the noise caused by the falling of her husband, probably because of the noise made by the moving engines. When Mead had used the weapon he fell to the floor, his head striking on a stool, and then he rolled to the corner. It was in this position that Mrs. Mead found him when she returned to the sick room. There was a pool of blood on the floor, and the long, gaping wound satisfied her that there was not the slightest hope that he would live, if he were not already dead.

Shock to the Wife

Mrs. Mead had never before experienced so severe a nervous shock, but she managed to call a neighbor and tell him what had happened. The neighbor responded without delay and found that life

was extinct. Chief Parris was sent for, and visited the house as soon as he returned from a fire. Policeman Wannell was also summoned, and made a report of the sad affair to the coroner.

Coroner Carr called at the house and made an investigation. From the circumstances he concluded that an inquest was not necessary, and gave a death certificate.

It is the opinion of friends of the dead man that his mind had become impaired by reason of sickness, and that he did not realize what he was doing.

Funeral Arrangements

The funeral of the dead fireman will take place tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock. A detail of thirty-two firemen, under Assistant Chief Belt, will escort the body to Congressional Cemetery. The services will be conducted by the Rev. Chapman.

The Evening Star, September 13, 1897

Fireman Mead's Funeral

The funeral services over the body of Fireman Charles Mead, who committed suicide, as told in The Star, were held at his late home, No. 447 I street northwest, yesterday afternoon. The Rev. Chapman officiated, and a number of firemen and members of the Knights of the Golden Eagle, of which deceased was a member, were in attendance.

On the way to Congressional cemetery three engine houses were passed, and at each one the firemen were lined up on the pavement as a mark of respect to their dead comrade. At the cemetery the body was placed in the receiving vault, and was interred this afternoon.