

Francis S. Mead

(- 8 Jan 1904)

Mead. Suddenly, January 8, 1904 at 8 o'clock a.m. at Georgetown University Hospital, Frances S. Mead. Remains at residence of his sister, Mrs. George W. Perkins, 1600 New Jersey n.w.

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Suicide By Shooting

Francis S. Mead, Canal Employee Takes His Own Life

No One Able to Assign a Cause--Deceased Was a Bachelor and Lived Alone

Francis S. Mead, harbormaster of the Chesapeake and Ohio canal, committed suicide early this morning by shooting himself in the head. He had previously attempted self-destruction by inhaling illuminating gas.

The fatal shot was fired shortly before 7 o'clock and Mead died at the Georgetown University Hospital about two hours later. The dead was committed in a small room on the third floor of the Farmers and Mechanics Bank building at the corner of 31st and M streets northwest.

Mead was a morose temperament. His actions of late, while somewhat unusual, did not excite the suspicions of his friends. He was a bachelor, and practically lived the life of a recluse. For the past few days he spent but little time at his boarding house, 1219 32d street, and has not been regular in taking his meals at the place. He has also remained away from home several nights. He arose early yesterday morning and left his home without eating his breakfast or telling his landlady, Mrs. Henry, when he might be expected to return.

From what can be learned he attended to his duties as harbormaster yesterday. Nothing is known of his movements after he had completed his duties for the day. He did not, however, spend the night at his home, but this fact did not cause any uneasiness to Mrs. Henry, as he had remained away all night at intervals previously.

It was stated by Mrs. Henry that Mead had been drinking heavily recently, but no notice was taken of it, as he was a man who attended strictly to his own business. It is understood that he returned to the office of the canal company late last night and slept there. He was seen walking about the third floor of the building at 6:30 o'clock this morning by Mr. William M. Smith, an employee of the Georgetown post office, as the latter was going to his place of employment.

The Discovery Made

Within a half hour thereafter George Patterson, the janitor of the canal company's offices, arrived at the building. The outside door was locked and everything was in proper order. The odor of gas was detected in the hallway, however, and Patterson began an investigation. In the bookkeeping room the gas was discovered to be turned on full force in an unlighted stove, and the fumes were very strong.

After turning off the gas and opening the doors to air the room, Patterson went upstairs to the portion of the building over the bank. In an ante-room adjoining the office of several of the officials of the company the unconscious form of Mead was found. His body was lying on a lounge and his feet rested on the floor.

Upon seeing the revolver on the floor and the blood flowing from the back of Mead's head, Patterson ran into the street and summoned aid. Policemen J.G. Walsh and J.S. Custer of the seventh precinct station were nearby and quickly responded. The officers made an examination. They found a

hole almost three-quarters of an inch in diameter immediately back of Mead's right ear. The pistol lying on the floor was found to be of .44 caliber, and resembled the bulldog pattern.

Conveyed to Hospital

The patrol of the seventh precinct station was summoned and Mead was conveyed to the Georgetown University Hospital with all possible speed. He was immediately placed on the operating table and the physicians did what they could, though the unfortunate man died shortly after 8 o'clock without regaining consciousness.

Nothing that would throw light on the tragedy was found on Mead's body or in the room in which he fired the fatal shot. No one could be found that would advance a cause for the rash act. Mrs. Henry, his landlady, was at an utter loss to explain the suicide. She stated that Mead had boarded with her for fourteen years. The loss of his mother several years ago, it is thought, preyed on his mind.

Mead was a lifelong employee of the canal company. His father, John W. Mead, who was also employed by the canal company, was killed, May 30, 1877, at the outlet lock through an accident caused by a derangement of the machinery which was used in letting the boats from the canal into the Potomac river. Mead was fifty-four years of age, and is survived by a sister, Mrs. Perkins, and a brother, both of whom reside at 1600 New Jersey avenue northwest.