

William M. Owens

(- 25 Oct 1894)

The Evening Star, October 30, 1894

Death of William Owens

The Smallpox Claimed Its Third Victim This Morning

No New Cases Found Today and the Health

Authorities Pleased With the Situation

No new smallpox patients were reported to the health office up to 3 o'clock today, the new features since yesterday in the situation being the death of Wm. Owens this morning and the discovery of a case of the disease at Hyattsville, Md., in the person of Van Buren Norwood, an employee of the Interior Department. ...

Another Death

"William Owens died about 4 o'clock this morning. Others are doing well." This was the 9 o'clock bulletin posted in front of the health office this morning.

"The smallpox situation is encouraging," said Health Officer Woodward to a Star reporter soon after the bulletin was posted. The death of young Owens has caused no great amount of surprise, for his case has been regarded as the most serious case in the smallpox hospital. Being a mere boy, he did not seem to fully realize the danger of his disease, and Dr. Nevitt experienced considerable trouble in giving him proper treatment.

Yesterday he became much worse, as was shown in the bulletins received from the hospital, and his death was not unexpected.

Besides this one death, making the third fatal case, there was one new case reported yesterday. ...

A Sad Ending

Wm. M. Owens, the young man who died at the hospital this morning, was the youngest son of the late Colonel James E. Owens, a famous hotel proprietor, for many years at Atlanta, Ga. He was a rather delicate boy of seventeen years old last January, and was the support of his mother, and always a kind and loving son. When he was taken sick last Friday night he was most tenderly and carefully nursed by his mother and sister day and night until the following Wednesday, when the nature of his sickness was discovered for the first time, and he was then removed to the hospital, but against the desire or wish of his mother and sister. The shock of his death this morning was a terrible one to his mother and sister, as well as to his many friends in the city and among his associates in the Interior and Census Departments.

When the death of young Owens was made known at the health office the question of giving him a decent burial was discussed. It seems to be the general impression that all persons who die in the hospital must be buried in potter's field, but such is not the case. Physicians as a rule, think there is no special danger from the body after death and the health officer said that the wrapping of the body in a bichloride cloth would be sufficient. He would not permit a public funeral, nor would he give permission for the removal of the body from the city. The body of the deceased was taken to the dead house soon after he expired. Today arrangements were made for the interment, which will take place in Congressional cemetery about 5 o'clock this afternoon. The body will be removed from the dead house to the cemetery by the health employees at the quarantine station.