

Sarah Jane Shipley **(- 26 Dec 1880)**

The Evening Star, December 27, 1880

A Terrible Christmas Tragedy **A Woman Fatally Shot by Some One Unknown** **Before Her Death She Gives Birth to a Child**

About 1 o'clock Christmas day, as Mrs. Jane Shipley, living at No. 222 4 1/2 street southwest, was in the act of going out of a backdoor of her house into the yard she was shot by some unknown person from the direction of Willow Tree alley, the ball, a large size one, entering the abdomen and passing nearly through her body. Drs. Hammett and Fenwick were called in and succeeded in extracting the ball, but the injury proved fatal. The unexpected shot was of course a great shock to Mrs. Shipley, and she was delivered of a son--her third child--five hours after the shooting. Inflammation then set in from the wound and she lingered in great distress until last night when death relieved her of her sufferings. She was the wife of Mr. Thomas Shipley, a blacksmith, doing business on C between 4 ½ and 6th streets northwest, and was 26 years old. The oldest child is five years of age. No clue has been discovered as to who fired the fatal shot, but Lieut. Gessford's officers think they will discover who it was. The occurrence has caused considerable excitement in that neighborhood, the belief being that it was the careless use of fire arms by some of the colored people in a rear alley.

An Arrest

Edward Lucas, a colored man, was arrested this morning by Officer McGreeay, of the first precinct, charged with the shooting. His friends claim that he was shooting, with a revolver, at some sparrows on a shed, and that the shooting of the woman was entirely accidental. They will have a chance to explain the firing of such a strange missile at birds before the coroner's jury. The inquest will be held tomorrow.

Lucas had a fight that morning with a colored man next door to his house, named Smith, in which Smith got the best of it, and Lucas went and got a pistol and shot once into his yard and after a while shot again, when Mr. Shipley ran around the corner and said, "O, my God; who killed my wife?" Lucas, who was then looking out the window replied, "I don't know; there has been shooting going on all the morning about here."

The Evening Star, December 28, 1880

Shooting of Mrs. Shipley **Coroner's Inquest Today**

Coroner Patterson held an inquest, at twelve o'clock today on the body of Mrs. S. Jane Shipley, who died yesterday morning about 6 o'clock from the effects of a pistol shot in the abdomen, received on Christmas day while in the act of stepping out of the rear door of her house, No. 222 4 1/2 street southwest.

Lieutenant Gessford this morning summoned the jurymen, who just before 12 o'clock repaired to the house and viewed the remains, after which they went to the first precinct station house on B street near 4 1/2 street, and listened to the testimony.

The jurymen were as follows: Jos. A. Burch, George W. Smithson, F.D. Dowling, W.A. Barnes, John Morse, John Imrie, J.E.F. Carlin, James F. Dawson, Wm. N. Croggon, Wm. C. Harvey, J.N. Rudd and John Wise, with Mr. Carlin as foreman.

The Bereaved Husband's Testimony

The first witness called was Mr. Theodore Shipley, husband of the deceased. He testified that at the time of the accident he was dressing himself for dinner his wife being engaged in cooking the Christmas turkey and remarked that she would go out and get some wood to increase the fire, so that the turkey would get done. Just as she went out of the door she screamed out "O, my God, I am shot," at the same time holding her hands on her stomach. She fell into his arms (Here the witness broke down and could hardly proceed for the choking in his throat.) He laid his wife down and ran out in the direction the report came from and inquired who it was that shot. There had been considerable firing that day of fire-crackers. Every one denied having seen any one shoot.; This colored man was the first one he saw looking out of the window, and witness asked him who had shot into his house. He replied that he did not know, but the shooting had been done on the other side. His next door neighbor's house had been shot into that day from the same direction.

A Witness Who Made A Narrow Escape

Mr. Phillip Colbath testified that he lived at 220 4 ½ street, next house north of Mr. Shipley's. He testified that he got up about 9 o'clock, and went into his yard, when he heard a pistol shot, and a ball struck his kitchen door close by him. At 12 o'clock going out to get a bucket of water he heard another shot and a scream in Mr. Shipley's yard. Mr. Shipley at once called out to witness "Somebody has shot my wife," and at the same time he heard some one say "there has been shooting about here all day." Mr. Shipley at once ran to the rear of his lot, and witness saw the man in the window put his hand behind him as if putting away something.

A Colored Witness

Robert James, a colored man testified that he lives in Willow Tree alley. He and Ed. Lucas had had some words in the morning in his alley, and afterward he (witness) went to his home. He afterwards met Lucas at the corner of C street and Willow Tree alley, and they had some more words together, Lucas asking witness what he had hit him for. Witness replied, "Because you hit me with a stool on Friday night." He then warned witness to watch him (Lucas); afterwards witness then went up the alley again Lucas preceding him. Lucas stopped at the pump and said he had to go down to the Island and went out at C street while witness went into Mrs. Coaths house back of Mr. Shipley's. Witness sat down about half an hour there and on opening the door he saw Lucas coming to the alley and he stood in the alley about fifteen minutes, while witness remained in the house. Witness noticed that Lucas either moved out of the alley or went into the backyard. Witness then went to his own house, next door to Mrs. Coats. After he had been in his room about 15 minutes he heard the report of a pistol sounding at the next door. Witness started to look out of his window, when Emma Smith, who was in the room, warned him that it was a sham of Lucas' to get him out so that he could shoot him (Witness). He then sat down. He then heard someone else shooting in the alley and soon another shot was heard when Mr. Shipley came into the alley and charged Lucas with shooting his wife. Lucas denied it, Mr. Shipley insisting that he did it. Witness heard the shot and saw the smoke pass by the window. At this time quite an alarm was raised and a man named Scott said, "Don't give it away." Witness gave the names of several colored men who were in the alley at the time.

Dr. Hammett Describes the Wound

Dr. Hammett testified that he was summoned about 1 o'clock. When he arrived he found Mrs. Shipley in the dining room lying in great pain on the floor near the door where she was shot. On examination, found a wound in the right side. Dr. Fenwick soon arrived and they found that the ball had lodged in the left side near the hip near the skin; the entrance of the ball was above its exit some two inches. The wound was the cause of her death.

Dr. G.P. Fenwick corroborated the statement of Dr. Hammett. He was present at the delivery of the child, about six hours after she was shot.

Charles Jackson and Emma Smith, both colored, testified but threw no new light on the shooting.

Getting To It

Wm. Lucas, a small boy, the twelve year old son of the arrested man, said all he knew was that his mother said that his father had shot a woman. She told him that when he came home from play.

Julia Lucas, wife of defendant, testified that all she knew was that she was in the street when she heard a loud report, and starting home she heard someone say that a white woman was shot. Witness found this pistol Christmas near Shea's. She didn't know what thus she found it, as she was drunk.

Mrs. Ella Whitlow, who lives at 342 B street southwest, corroborated the former witness.

Lucas Says He Is Innocent

The defendant Lucas here asked to be heard, and said there had been shooting all the morning, and it was actually dangerous to be out on the street. He denied firing the shot or of having a pistol in his possession. He was innocent of the charge.

Lucas is about 35 years old, quite black, and has a sullen, bad look.

The Verdict

The jury gave a verdict that they believe that death was caused by a pistol shot from a pistol in the hands of Ed. Lucas. Lucas was committed by the coroner for the action of the grand jury.