

James A. Shoemaker

(1888 – 29 Jun 1898)

Shoemaker. On Wednesday, June 29, 1896 at 5:20 o'clock p.m. at the residence of his parents, 120 Taylor street, Anacostia, James Ambrose, youngest son of George W. and Corlanthia Shoemaker aged 10 years 4 months 22 days. Funeral service will be held at the Anacostia M.E. Church on Friday, July 1 at 3 o'clock p.m. Relatives and friends respectfully invited to attend.

The Evening Star, June 30, 1898

Results in Death

James Shoemaker Dies of Injuries Received May 30

Wm. Webster Charged With Assault

Alleged to Have Kicked the Boy in the Side

The Coroner's Verdict

Coroner Carr held an inquest this afternoon, beginning at 1 o'clock, at the undertaking establishment of J.W. Lee, in the case of the small boy, James Shoemaker, who, it is alleged, was kicked in the stomach by William Webster at a garden party held in Anacostia the 30th of May. Yesterday afternoon about 5:30 o'clock the boy died. The police learned of the death soon after it occurred, and Coroner Carr arranged for the inquest. Those who were on the jury were George O. Miller, James Holmes, Otto Holtnorth, John Garner, William Wolf and Albert Schlotterback.

William Webster, who has been in custody for some time, was present at the inquest, as were his relatives, and also several relatives of the dead boy.

Deputy Coroner Glazebrook made the autopsy, and he told the jury that death was due to rupture of the intestines, followed by peritonitis and prostration. Such an injury would likely have followed a kick in the abdomen. The boy was greatly emaciated and the condition of his body showed that he had been sick for several weeks.

Testimony of Witnesses

Asbury Butler testified that the Methodist Church of Anacostia gave a garden party at Mr. Linger's and witness was there. Mr. Webster was there as watchman, and witness saw him kick Shoemaker.

"Where did he kick him?" asked the coroner.

"In the side," answered witness.

"Did he kick him hard?"

"No, sir."

Witness explained that a crowd of boys were playing in a summer house when Webster came in and proceeded to put them out. In putting Shoemaker out he kicked him.

Edward Johnson, another boy, who was in the party, gave similar testimony. He witnessed the entire affair, and it was his opinion that Mr. Webster kicked the Shoemaker boy as hard as he could.

Shriver King, who was also in the party of boys, told the jury that Mr. Webster "chucked" him (witness) out of the door, and he afterward saw the Shoemaker boy kicked out.

Mr. Webster, in his own behalf, told the jury that the boys annoyed him. He said he took hold of the Shoemaker boy by the arm and said: "Brother, I want you to get out of here."

The boy went out crying and his father came and asked why he had kicked him. He denied that he had kicked the boy and said that whatever happened to him was an accident.

"Had you been drinking?" he was asked.

"I had been drinking some during the day," he answered "but I hadn't taken anything since supper."
"I can say with a clear conscience," said Webster "that I did not intentionally injure the boy."

The Boy's Accusation

George W. Shoemaker, brother of the deceased, testified that while at the garden party his little brother came over to his father and complained of being hurt.

"That Webster fellow kicked me," he said.

Witness and his father saw Webster, and he characterized the boy's complaint as a " _____ lie."

"Was your brother taken sick immediately?" the coroner asked.

"Yes, sir," was his response; "he was sick all night, but he went to school afterward. On Sunday he went to church, and his teacher advised him to go home, as he was sick. When he came home he dropped in a faint."

Dr. Harrison of Anacostia testified that he was called to attend the boy several days after he was injured. He told of the progress of the illness. His death, the doctor thought, was due to peritonitis following an injury.

The jury returned a verdict holding Webster responsible for the boy's death, and he was returned to jail to await the action of the grand jury.

The Alleged Assault

The lawn party at which the assault is alleged to have occurred was given under the auspices of the choir of the Anacostia M.E. Church, on the grounds of the Linger place, 512 Harrison street, Anacostia. Webster was, it is said, hired to watch that night over the grounds, as the party was to be continued through the next night. He entered the grounds early, and it is charged he was under the influence of liquor. Some young children who were playing about on the music pavilion began to tease the watchman, it is said, and he pursued them. It is charged he seized young Shoemaker and kicked him twice in the left side near the stomach. For this act he was discharged on the spot.

The boy was compelled to take his bed five days afterward, and was since under the constant care of physicians. During the earlier states of the illness it looked as though he had some chance of recovery, but blood poisoning set in, it is stated, and medical skill was unavailing. His sufferings are described to have been intense. He was a delicate appearing, quiet child, and was a general favorite with all who knew him. He had not missed a day this year from the public school, where he was in the third grade, up to the time of his illness, and the interest he had in his studies was the one thing that made him hold out so long before going to bed. He would go to his class and answer to his name, but would be unable to continue there for the remainder of the session.

The Man Accused

Webster, the man accused of kicking the lad, is known to everybody in Anacostia. He is a good-natured, hard-working fellow, when not drinking. Ever since he lost an arm in the machinery of a bakery, about ten years ago, he has been a hard drinker. He is thirty-seven years old, and is married, being the father of two children, one having been born since Webster was imprisoned.

The Shoemaker family bear no ill-feeling toward Webster, and if the matter rested with them, it is said, he would not be prosecuted. Both Mr. and Mrs. Shoemaker are worn out to the point of illness with the strain of mind and the duties imposed on them by their child's illness.

The Evening Star, July 4, 1898

James Shoemaker Buried

It became necessary Saturday evening to send young Geoerge Shoemaker, brother of the little boy whose death resulted from a kick in the groin, to Providence Hospital for treatment. Mr. George W.S. Shoemaker, father of the boy, is still confined to his bed, having been unable to attend his son's funeral. The funeral services over the deceased child were held from the Anacostia M.E. Church. The building was filled to its utmost capacity, particularly with little ones of the Sunday school, of which the lad had been a devoted member. There were many beautiful floral pieces covering the white coffin. The pallbearers had been chosen by the lad himself before his death, and were the following young people; Watson Isaac, Sewall Fort, Lester Pitcher and Carl Tilghman, Rev. C.O. Isaac, pastor of the Anacostia M.E. Church, officiated.

The superintendent of the Sunday school, Mr. J.E. Powell, also spoke, bearing to the Sunday school a message of love from the child, who had asked shortly before his death to see the superintendent for this purpose.