

Frank P. Tucker (- 18 Sep 1898)

The Evening Star, September 23, 1898

It Was Frank Tucker

Drowned Man Identified as Congressional Cemetery Employee

Mystery Surrounding His Death

Coroner Making an Investigation of the Circumstances

Mrs. Schamel's Mistake

The body buried in potter's field yesterday, after having been identified by Mrs. Charles Schamel of No. 603 A street southeast, as that of her husband, who has been missing six years, was disinterred this morning by request of Supt. Vandiver of the Congressional cemetery, who very positively declared it was the remains of Frank T. Tucker, a cemetery employee, missing since Thursday before last.

It is barely possible that Tucker was murdered and thrown into the canal, where the body was found, and the coroner's office is at work solving the mystery. The likelihood is, however, that Tucker accidentally fell in while intoxicated and was drowned.

Mrs. Schamel's hope of securing a pension for herself and her three little children, who are in straightened circumstances, her husband having been discharged from the United States army on account of disability incurred in service, is, by this later development dissipated. Charles Schamel fled from his home by climbing out of a back window at night while his little family slept, and since has not been heard from.

The body, now identified as that of Tucker, was discovered in the canal between 33rd and 34th streets last Sunday morning. It had evidently been in the water several days. It was removed to the sixth precinct morgue. No autopsy was performed, because Coroner Carr expected that speedy identification would discover the events preceding the death going to show whether or not it was suicide, accidental or criminal. The police reported that a receipt signed by Crump Lee and \$1.15 in cash were in the pockets of the clothing, but they had received no complaint of missing men resembling the deceased. It was learned, however, that a man of the same description had been seen Friday last in an intoxicated condition near the Aqueduct bridge, and it was believed that the unknown fell into the canal and drowned that night.

Body Unclaimed

No one came forward to claim the body until yesterday, as already stated in The Star, when Mrs. Schmael declared her conviction that the dead man had been her husband. Accordingly, a certificate of death was issued and the remains reinterred. Then the supposed widow set to work, assisted by sympathetic police officers at headquarters, to prepare pension papers for presentation today, but her present developments have completely stopped her plans.

Frank T. Tucker was about 45 years old and was a widower, having two children, who were placed in the care of his two married sisters in this city. For nine years past he worked as gravedigger and laborer in Congressional cemetery, but lived with one of his sisters in Georgetown. He has a brother, Henry M. Tucker, a well-known resident of that locality.

Supt. Vandiver speaks very highly of the industrious and sober character of his employee, and says he was the last man to be suspected of committing suicide, of becoming intoxicated or of gambling. Other acquaintances, on the contrary, say that Tucker, was an "occasional drinker."

Mr. Vandiver last saw Tucker Thursday of last week, since which time the latter failed to report for work. He had not been despondent or drinking up to that time, and had not received any large sum of

money from any source known to his employer. Learning of the finding of the body at Georgetown, Mr. Vandiver today secured its disinterment. His identification of it is almost perfect. The necktie, shoes, shirt, coat and trousers given by him to Tucker were on the body, but it was so far gone in decay that he could not extend his identification. He says, however, that the dead man was of the same height and build as Tucker.

Arranged for Reinterment

Satisfied that he had found the missing employee, Mr. Vandiver sent word to the brothers and sisters and made arrangements to have the body decently interred in Congressional cemetery. Dr. Glazebrook, deputy coroner, when the facts were laid before him by *The Star*, acting for Coroner Carr, ordered the body removed to the morgue, in order to determine by autopsy the cause of death. He stated that it is not too late for a complete investigation to be made, and the cause of death will be officially settled.

The brother and two sisters of Tucker visited potter's field today and completed the identification. A scar on the chin convinced them. Examination of the trousers pocket brought out the receipt reported by the police, and already mentioned. It was found that the receipt was headed "Washington cemetery," and in reality was an order to Tucker to dig a grave for the body of a man named Crump, to be delivered by Undertaker Lee.

Mr. Vandiver said that it had issued from his cemetery. The key of the cemetery gate was found also on the body. Superintendent Vandiver is inclined to think that no very great effort was officially made to learn the dead man's identity. The body is now at the morgue for examination by Dr. Glazebrook. Tucker has insurance on his life, and the remains will be cared for by the relatives.