

## George E. Wertenbaker ( - 5 Jul 1887)

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**Wertenbaker.** On the evening of July 5, 1887 at 7:10 p.m., George J.E. Wertenbaker, in the 19th year of his age. Friends and relatives are cordially invited to attend the funeral from his late residence, No. 14, I street northeast at 4 p.m., Friday, July 8, 1887 (Md. And Va. Papers please copy).

*The Evening Star, July 6, 1887*

### **A Brakeman Killed**

#### **Tragical Ending of An Encounter Between Trainmen and Roughs**

Five men--Wesley Kidwell, Douglas Kidwell, Alfred Kidwell, Wm. Kidwell, and Albert Barrett--at work at Waterloo as employees of the National Press Brick Company, went to Alexandria yesterday and got on a spree. By 7 o'clock they were all intoxicated, and when they boarded the evening train for this city they were noisy and quarrelsome. The conductor, Harry Myers, did not want them to get on the train, but the men promised to be orderly, and they were allowed to enter the cars. They, however, became so noisy that the conductor had the train stopped, and with the assistance of the brakeman, George Wertenbaker, the baggage-master, Samuel Garnett, and the engineer, James Davis, the men were put off. They, however, attempted to prevent the trainmen from returning to the car, and in the struggle Davis was struck in the face with a brick, and Wertenbaker in the abdomen just below the sternum with a heavy stone, which, it is said, was thrown by William Kidwell. Wertenbaker sank to the ground with a groan, and the five men, frightened at what they had done, ran away. Wertenbaker was placed on the cars, but by the time the train reached the Long Bridge he was dead. The cause of death was internal hemorrhage. The struggle with the gang took place at St. Asaph's station, and from there the police authorities in Alexandria and this city were notified. By the prompt action of the police all the men were soon afterward arrested along the railroad, and were taken to Alexandria, where they were locked up. They are all young men. The three Kidwells are brothers.

The dead man, Wertenbaker, was but 22 years of age, and resided at 16 I street northeast with his parents. When his father was informed last evening of the death of his son, he fell to the floor in an unconscious condition, and the physician thought that he was in a precarious state from the shock to his nervous system.

The passengers on the train did not interfere in the affair, and it is stated offered no assistance to the trainmen.

### *The Death Occurred in Virginia*

Coroner Patterson, of the District, was notified of the case and the following jury of inquest was summoned: Edward Burke, John Crogan, Patrick Cusick, Geo. H. Gill, Chas. Dietz, and R.E. Davis. It was stated that Wertenbaker had died in Virginia, and in order to establish that fact and settle the question of jurisdiction the coroner heard the evidence of two witnesses, as follows:

Robt. H. Kemp, a passenger, testified that Wertenbaker died on the train just south of the Long Bridge. Witness felt his heart and pulse and there was no respiration. His face had begun to discolor.

Harry J. Meyers, the conductor on the train, was of the opinion that Wertenbaker died in Virginia. His face had turned purple and he had ceased to breathe. Witness remarked that he was dead before the train arrived at the bridge.

The coroner decided that the Virginia authorities had jurisdiction in the case, and gave a certificate of death from a wound in the stomach. A number of witnesses had been summoned from Alexandria.

The witnesses accompanied the remains on the 12 o'clock train to Alexandria, where the coroner's jury had been notified to assemble at 12:30.

#### *The Inquest to be Held in Alexandria*

The body of Wertenbaker arrived in Alexandria on the 12:04 train, on which he would have been on duty had he not been killed. Persons about the station in Alexandria said that the crew on the train are so overworked that toward the afternoon they are completely tired out and in no condition to defend themselves against ruffians who may attack them. They start in the morning at 6:05 o'clock and make eighteen single trips between Alexandria and Washington, the last trip ending about 10:30 o'clock, making a day's work of more than sixteen hours. The question arose whether Dr. Powell, the Alexandria city coroner, could hold an inquest or not. It was claimed that as the blow was inflicted and the death occurred in Alexandria county the inquest would have to be held by the county coroner, Dr. Birch, who lives near Arlington. It was finally decided by Mr. Marbury, the corporation attorney, that the inquest would have to be held by Coroner Birch, and a messenger was sent to Arlington after that official. Coroner Powell was found by a Star reporter after considerable delay, and he decided to hold the inquest in the city of Alexandria this afternoon. The body was taken to Wheatley's undertaking establishment.

#### The Prisoners Committed

The mayor of Alexandria this afternoon, without hearing the full case against the Kidwells and Barry, for the murder of the brakeman, Geo. Wertenbaker, committed them for a further hearing.

*The Evening Star, July 7, 1887*

#### **The Killing of Young Wertenbaker**

#### **Verdict of the Coroner's Jury in Alexandria--**

#### **The Accused Men Committed to Jail**

The Kidwells and Barrett, who assaulted the railroad men and killed George Wertenbaker at St. Asaph Junction on Tuesday night, are now in jail in Alexandria, Va., and the body of Wertenbaker, taken there from this city yesterday for the inquest, has been returned her to the residence of his father. Yesterday afternoon the coroner's jury, summoned by Coroner Powell, in Alexandria, and made up of J.H.D. Lunt, foreman; W.T. Herrick, Edgar Padgett, Frank L. Entwisle, Chas. Marshall, and Chas. Howell, met around the body, and in the presence of the Kidwells and Barrett, at Wheatley's morgue, on King, near Columbus street. The city coroner finding the body in his territory took jurisdiction, and after a post mortem had been made by Dr. O'Brien, the doctor testified to the jury that the death was caused by "shock," the force of the stone having demoralized the heart. S.J. Myer, the conductor, testified that one of the Kidwells was behaving badly, and he ordered Brakesman Garnett to put him off, and when Garnett did so at St. Asaph Junction the other four men got off and began stoning the car. He saw Douglass Kidwell approach Geo. Wertenbaker, who was on the car step, and throw a large stone at him. The stone struck him near the heart, and he bent forward, then stepped back and fell in the door of the car. James Davis, the engineer, identified Douglas Kidwell as the man who threw the stone that struck Wertenbaker; and Samuel Garnett and John Werl testified that they saw the assault on the deceased, and that Douglas Kidwell was the man who threw the stone. They also testified that the men were in liquor, and had been disorderly on the train. R.H. Kemp testified to seeing the fight, and that Wertenbaker died before the train got out of Virginia. Messrs. Perry, Sullivan, Fisher, Allen, and Cheshire testified as to general circumstances connected with the assault. The jurors then returned a verdict that Wertenbaker came to his death from the effects of a blow from a brick or stone thrown by

Douglas Kidwell, and that William, Alfred, and Wesley Kidwell and Albert Barrett were accessories to the crime.

The five men were then committed to jail. They will be tried for murder, Douglas Kidwell as principal and the others as accessories, at one of the terms of the court for the county at the old county court-house sometime within the next few months. Commonwealth's Attorney James E. Clements will appear for the prosecution.

*The Trial to Take Place in Alexandria*

States Attorney Clement and States Attorney Marbury held a conference this morning as to the trial of the Kidwells and Barrett for the murder of Geo. Wertenbaker, and it was agreed that as the assault took place within the 1 mile around town, within which the city police authorities have jurisdiction, the case should be tried in the Corporation Court, Judge Meade. The indictment will probably be found next week.