

Estelle E. Yates **(- 7 Feb 1905)**

The Evening Star, February 7, 1905, p. 8

Murder and Suicide

Probable Solution of Mystery Developed This Morning

Man and Woman Dead

The Former a Bartender and Unmarried

Deceased Woman's Rooms the Scene of Tragedy--

She Had Separated From Her Husband

Theodore Fisher, thirty-five years old, and Mrs. Estella E. Yates, ten years younger, were found dead in the house of the woman, 1018 12th street southeast, this morning. The man's death was due to a bullet wound of the brain, and Mrs. Yates had a similar wound almost directly over the heart. The double tragedy was enacted some time since Friday night at 8 o'clock, as Fisher left Reagan's saloon at 10th and B streets, where he was employed as bartender, about that time. The bodies were found by Miss Blanche Jackson, a sister of the dead woman. She had not heard from Estelin since last week and went to her house this morning, with her mother, to see her.

Fisher was unmarried and lived at the home of his sister, No. 605 6th street southwest. It is said that he spent most of his time at the home of the Yates woman, who has been separated from her husband more than two years. Her husband is Robert Yates, who conducts a blacksmith shop in Georgetown. A small .22-caliber revolver was found on the floor near the two bodies with three empty shells in the chambers. From the examination made of the bodies at the house, the coroner was able to find only the two wounds stated, but may possibly find a third when the bodies have been stripped at the morgue.

Indications of Struggle

The condition of the furniture in the room indicated that there had possibly been a struggle. A broken glass stand on the sideboard had been smashed. It is thought, by one of the bullets. On the floor there was also a broken lamp, while a lamp, in which there was oil, was on the table. Three goblets on the table, in two of which there was a small quantity of beer, showed that more than one person had probably indulged in beer shortly before the double crime was committed. In the yard in the rear of the premises were empty bottles enough to lead to the supposition that a "speak easy" had been conducted upon the premises.

While the condition of the lamps made it appear that the double crime was committed in the daytime, it is possible it occurred Friday night after Fisher returned to the house from his place of employment. It is believed by some of the policemen that when he reached the house he found some other person there with Mrs. Yates, and his jealousy was aroused. He may have threatened to leave her, they say, by way of speculation, and while pleading with him to remain the shooting occurred.

The revolver was found on the floor back of the woman. How either of the two could have thrown it there the police are unable to explain. It was there, however, and there is no one left to tell about it. The woman, it is stated, was desperately in love with Fisher. She had a crayon of him hanging on the wall and letters she had received from him were on the bureau in the rear sleeping apartment on the second floor. When Fisher found that he was going to be detailed at his place of employment he always sent Mrs. Yates a special delivery letter. She had demanded it of him, friends say, and when he would reach the house he made explanations. It is known that the couple frequently engaged in quarrels, and that their troubles had attracted the attention of neighbors. The house in which the deed was

committed is elegantly furnished and gave every evidence that the dead woman had been an excellent housekeeper.

Identified as Fisher's Revolver

The small revolver with which the two lives were taken was owned by Fisher, the police were told, and was usually kept on a bureau in the room where the woman slept. It was there a few days ago when a sister of Mrs. Yates called and picked it up. She started to examine it, but her sister became frightened and made her let it alone. The window shutters of the house were all open and there was nothing unusual about exterior appearances. In the yard a number of chickens were scratching in the snow for food. They had been resting on the sills of the windows.

After Coroner Nevitt had made an investigation he had the bodies removed to the morgue. Detective Baur was sent to the house of Captain Boardman to make an investigation. He found Acting Sergeant Wall and Policemen Price and Hayes of the fifth precinct upon the premises, assisting the coroner in the investigation. Before leaving the premises the coroner said he would await the result of the police investigation before giving certificates showing the primary cause of the shooting.

Unless a third wound be found the police may never be able to explain the double crime, nor determine which died first. Coroner Nevitt was inclined to give the woman the benefit of the doubt and decide that Fisher killed her and she committed suicide. There were some circumstances about the case, however, which indicated that Mrs. Yates had done the shooting. Fisher was fully dressed, even to his overcoat and muffler, and the woman had on her ordinary house clothes. Their bodies were found in the dining room near the door leading to the parlor. On the floor near the bodies was a napkin that was saturated with blood. It was apparent that the napkin had been used by somebody for the purpose of wiping away blood. There had been a hemorrhage from the wound in Fisher's head, but scarcely any blood had been shed by the woman. This condition of affairs gave some of the police the impression that the latter had done the shooting. After Fisher had been shot, either in the act of suicide or by Mrs. Yates, they suggested, the woman wiped the blood from his wound and receiving no response from her cries for recognition, had shot herself. This theory, it was pointed out, is more plausible than any other, for the reason that the woman's feet rested across Fisher's legs.

Door Fastened Inside

When Mrs. Jackson and her daughter reached the house this morning they found the doors securely fastened from the inside. Repeated knocks on the door brought no response and Miss Jackson managed to reach the back yard. When she received no response to her knocks on the door she broke it open and entered. The room was well-lighted by the sun's rays as the back window blinds were open. As soon as she looked in the dining room she saw the two bodies. She screamed and it was but a short time before there was a large crowd of curious people about the house. Mrs. Jackson and two daughters were admitted to the front room and remained there for some time. When the bodies had been removed to the morgue the police took charge of the premises and will remain in possession until the court takes charge.

Theodore Fisher, or "Ted" Fisher, as he was called, has been employed in a number of saloons about the city. He was a member of the bartenders union. It is said he lived in South Washington most of his life. His sister, at whose house he lived, was notified of his death. She will have an undertaker take charge of the body as soon as the police investigation is finished. The dead woman will probably be buried by her mother.

Third Bullet Hole Not Found

When the bodies had been washed at the morgue and examined there was nothing to show that the third bullet had taken effect in either body. Coroner Nevitt decided that the large area of powder

marks on the man's face indicates that the weapon had been held two feet or more from him, when the shot was fired. Had he committed suicide he would probably have held the weapon nearer his face.

He said the blood on the napkin had surely come from Fisher, as the bullet that ended his life had penetrated and passed almost entirely through the brain. The weapon had undoubtedly been held against the woman's breast when she received her wound.

The coroner said he was inclined to believe the shooting was done by Mrs. Yates, but as already stated, he will not give certificates in the case until the police make a further investigation.

The Evening Star, February 8, 1905, p. 8

Mystery in Tragedy

Inquest Into Double Crime of Yesterday

Coroner Is In Doubt

Not Willing to Issue Certificate Without Inquiry

Third Person Implicated in the Affair Scouted by Police

Pistol Shot Heard Before

As there is still some mystery surrounding the double tragedy of yesterday in southeast Washington, which resulted in the deaths of Theodore Fisher and Mrs. Estella E. Yates, as told in *The Star*, the decision was reached by Coroner J. Ramsey Nevitt this forenoon to hold an inquest at the morgue at 11 o'clock tomorrow. This conclusion was arrived at by the coroner after a long conference at police headquarters, in which Dr. Nevitt, Captain Boardman and Detective Sergeant Frank Bauer took part.

"I will not arbitrarily brand either the man or the woman, one as a murderer and the other as a suicide," said Coroner Nevitt, "and for that reason, as some doubt exists in the matter, I have decided to hold an inquest and let a jury pass upon the case."

The theory advanced by some persons that there was a third party implicated in the double shooting case is scouted by the police as untenable. Captain Boardman, chief of detectives, who is noted for his cool and clear diagnoses of such matters, said to a *Star* reporter today that in his opinion there was no third party implicated in the tragedy.

The third shot theory is not considered of any importance as tending to prove anything unusual. The third empty shell may have represented a shot that was fired on another occasion. In fact, it was said today that one night about a week ago a pistol shot was heard in the vicinity of the woman's home, and it is believed Fisher may have fired at a cat, as there are many strange felines in that vicinity with high falsetto voices, which they indulge in midnight concerts, to the great annoyance of the neighborhood.

Investigated the Shooting

The police have, it is said, investigated the shooting case from every possible point of view, and as a result they are strongly of the opinion that the shot that killed Fisher was fired by the woman after a serious quarrel between the two. Their theory concerning the position the man and woman were found in is that after she had fired the fatal shot and Fisher had fallen to the floor, Mrs. Yates placed her arm under his head in an effort to raise him to his feet. Finding that the man was dead, and still holding the revolver in her right hand she placed the muzzle in her breast and fired the shot which resulted in her death.

As to the location of the pistol, after the act had been committed Coroner Nevitt stated that after a person has received a fatal wound the arms are sometimes contracted and at other times are violently outstretched, and, therefore, the revolver might have been found in almost any part of the room. The police believe the woman was of an exceedingly jealous disposition and fired the first shot in the heat of

passion. Then realizing what she had done, she turned the pistol on herself. It is believed evidence to substantiate these beliefs will be presented tomorrow at the coroner's inquest.

The theory that Mrs. Yates fired the first shot, killing Fisher, was given strength today by the statement of a life-long friend of Fisher, who stated that he was a good-natured fellow, of kindly disposition and not given to quarrels or brawls.

"Why," said a friend, "Theodore would not have killed a fly."

Tried to Break Relations

Miss Blanche Jackson, a sister of Mrs. Estelle Yates, said to a Star reporter this morning that her sister had met Fisher about two years ago and that they had been close friends since that time, and at various times during the past two months Mrs. Yates has tried every way possible to break the relations that have been existing between them. But each time after she had asked Fisher to leave he always returned and would invariably beat her. Fisher was subject to epileptic fits, she said, and would sometimes declare after he had beaten her that he did not remember touching her at any time.

One time during the month of December, she said, after they had boarded a car on 7th street within several squares of her mother's home, and because she had noticed a male friend, he assaulted her, and when she ran screaming back to the house she was without hat and cloak and was about to go into hysterics.

Several times of late Mrs. Yates, she said, had announced the intention of going back to her husband, but to this Fisher always objected strenuously and would threaten to do her bodily harm.

In regard to the statement that Mrs. Yates was running a "speak easy" at the house and the large number of empty bottles that were found in the backyard, that is not correct, she said, as a brother who is employed in a brewery had the beer at the house so as to treat his friends when they called and her sister rarely ever drank at all.

Enacted Friday Night

It is pretty well settled now that the double tragedy was enacted last Friday night after Fisher had left his place of business. The fact that Fisher was fully dressed, as if ready to leave the house, seems to indicate that the woman was endeavoring to restrain him from going out. That he had threatened to break up the relations which had existed between them and was about to put his threat into execution when in desperation she shot him.

It was after a realization of the awful act she had committed that Mrs. Yates killed herself rather than face her relatives and the law. This is the accepted theory of the police.

The funeral of Theodore Fisher will be held at 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon from the home of his sister, Mrs. Burnside, at 605 6th street southwest, interment to be at Prospect Hill cemetery.

The remains of Mrs. Yates have been turned over to John H. Bradley, undertaker, at 443 7th street southwest. They will be removed to the family residence, 348 McLean avenue southwest, whence the funeral will take place.

The police are busy this afternoon notifying witnesses who reside near the scene of the double shooting, 1018 12th street southeast, to be present at the coroner's inquest tomorrow.

The Evening Star, February 9, 1905, p. 10

Murdered By Woman

Verdict Regarding the Death of "Ted" Fisher

Coroner's Inquest

Testimony Give at Investigation of Double Tragedy

Drs. Glazebrook and Carr Describe Nature of

Wounds Inflicted Upon Both Victims

It required six men but a short time to reach a conclusion this morning after they had listened to the testimony of a number of witnesses respecting the double tragedy which was enacted in house 1018 12th street southeast Saturday morning, presumably a short time after midnight. The inquest was held over the body of Theodore, or "Ted" Fisher, and the verdict was that he was shot and killed by the woman. It, therefore, follows that the woman took her own life. Fisher, as published in Tuesday's Star, was employed as bartender in Reagan's saloon at 10th and B streets. He lived at the house of his sister on 6th street, but spent much of his time at the house where he was murdered.

There was a large attendance of friends of the dead man at the inquest this morning. Attorney James F. Scaggs was present on behalf of the relatives of Fisher.

The funerals of the victims took place this afternoon. Mrs. Yates was buried at Congressional cemetery, after services had been held at the home of her sister on McLean avenue. Services over the remains of Fisher were conducted at the home of his sister on 6th street southwest. His body was interred at Prospect Hill.

Dr. Carr's Testimony

The first witness examined was Dr. William P. Carr, who testified to the nature of the wound received by Fisher. It was such a wound, he said, as was likely to produce unconsciousness instantly. Witness explained that the powder marks about his left eye indicated that the weapon was held one foot or eighteen inches from the victim's head at the time the shot was fired.

"Then, too," said the doctor, "the man had his eye opened when the wound was received.

The witness stated that Fisher would have had to hold the weapon at arm's length and such a manner of inflicting a wound, he said, would seem rather unusual. Dr. Carr said the blood in the room had come from the man's head, as there was practically no external hemorrhage from the wound in the woman's breast.

"When the woman received her wound," said the witness, "the pistol was held directly against her breast."

Witness was shown the clothing of the woman and showed the jury a pad she had worn. The bullet had gone through the pad. Witness also explained that blood on the woman's shoes showed that she had walked in blood before she fell upon the floor in the room where both bodies were found. Only a few drops of blood came from the wound in Mrs. Yates' body and it was not enough to soak through the pad.

Coroner Nevitt exhibited a piece of brown paper showing the result of shots he had fired from the revolver used in the killing of Fisher and Mrs. Yates. The power stains were explained, showing the result of the shots fired into the two victims.

Deputy Coroner Glazebrook described the wounds received by the victims. The wound in the man's head had gone straight through the brain. Fisher was a tall man, and for a woman of ordinary height to have fired the shot it was necessary for him to have been seated on a chair, engaged in a scuffle or on the floor. Dr. Glazebrook said he had given the question of shooting some consideration and was certain the weapon was at least fourteen inches from Fisher's head when the fatal shot was fired. He was certain the man could not have shot himself. It was also unlikely that the man could have shot himself and kept his eye open. The wound was necessarily fatal and the bullet passed through the most important structures of the brain. Witness thought the man could hardly have given more than one or two gasps after he was shot. In conclusion he repeated that the man could hardly have shot himself.

Condition of the Room

Coroner Nevitt explained the condition of the room and the positions of the bodies when he reached the house. There was but a small area of blood in the room, and most of this was about the

man. The clothing of the woman showed blood stains. This blood came from the man as she had not had any external hemorrhage. The coroner told of the positions of the bodies, as stated in *The Star* the day the bodies were found. Her left arm was under his head and the left side of her face was against the floor. He told of the three empty shells found in the small weapon, and said he could only account for two of them. He told of the shattered glass stand on the sideboard and suggested that the third bullet may have done this damage.

Policeman Hayes Called

Policeman Hayes of the fifth precinct, who was called to the 12th street house, testified that he was called to the house about 11:15 o'clock Tuesday morning. He first learned that something unusual had occurred when he met a brother officer. The latter told him there had been a murder and suicide committed there. He hurried to the house and found several persons there. Another officer turned the weapon over to him. He told of the positions in which he found the bodies.

"Who was in the house when you reached there?" the witness was asked.

"There were two ladies and two men," he responded.

"Who were they?"

"One lady was Mamie Jackson, a sister of Mrs. Yates, and the other I didn't know. The men were named Higgs and Stone."

Acting Sergeant Wall of the fifth precinct testified that he went to the house in response to a telephone message giving the information that somebody had committed suicide. It was about 11 o'clock when the message was received from Earnshaw's store, he stated. Mrs. Yates' mother and others were in the house. The mother was hysterical at times and it was necessary to use force to get her out of the house.

Witness stated that the pistol had been disturbed before he reached the house. Mrs. Jackson, mother of the dead woman, had the pistol in her hand and witness took it from her.

"Why did you take the pistol?" the witness was asked.

"I took it," he answered, "to keep her from doing any harm with it."

He did not ask her where she found the weapon. She was so hysterical and excited that witness had to take her out of the house. Witness told the jury that he saw one hand of the woman on the neck of the dead man when he reached the house.

Detective Frank Baur testified that he was sent to the house to make an investigation. His object was to discover whether the affair had been between the two persons who were dead or if a third party had been there. He found that the house had been securely fastened from the inside. Witness told of the broken glass stand on the sideboard and of the bloodstained napkin.

The napkin, he stated, had not been unfolded, but had been used by some person to wipe blood from Fisher. He also told of seeing three goblets on the dining room table in the room. Two of them contained small quantities of beer, while the third one contained water. There was blood on the one which contained water, and witness expressed the belief that an effort had been made to give water to one of the wounded persons. Witness said he had known of the woman for ten years. She was the wife of a blacksmith and they had separated after one of them had been interested in a Police Court case. He said he had been unable to trace the ownership of the weapon, but had learned that it had been in the house for several years. In the woman's trunk, he stated, there was a box of cartridges found yesterday. Seven of the cartridges had been taken out.

Exhibited the Cartridges

Coroner Nevitt exhibited the cartridges.

"There are forty-three of them in the box," he stated. "It seems to be a new box of 22-caliber cartridges and the weapon is of the same caliber."

Mr. Scaggs suggested that he would like to have the witness asked if he knew anything of a prior occasion upon which the woman assaulted the man.

Detective Baur said he had summoned witnesses to tell of that.

"The cut on the neck and vitriol, do you mean?" the detective said.

"Yes," replied Mr. Scaggs.

Witness said he learned of an arrangement that had been made between Mrs. Yates and a neighbor, whereby the latter was to take the milk left at her door if she happened to be away. This neighbor, he stated, had first taken the milk Saturday morning. Fisher had not been at his place of employment, Reagan's saloon, since Friday night.

Was at Work Friday

Maggie Prue, colored, who did washing for Mrs. Yates, testified that she ironed clothing at Mrs. Yates' house Friday. She went and got beer in a bucket twice that afternoon. Mrs. Yates and a woman friend had dinner together.

"I don't know what time it was when Mr. Ted came," the witness stated.

"Who is Mr. Ted?" she was asked.

"Mr. Fisher," was her response.

Witness said she took a note to a drug store for Mrs. Yates. It was for a telephone message to be sent to Mr. Fisher, and when an answer had not been received at 9 o'clock she returned to the house. Mr. Fisher entered the house just behind her and Mrs. Yates asked him where he had been. He told her he had been standing at the corner talking, and she accused him of having been with a red-haired girl. The quarreled and witness threatened to leave there. Mr. Fisher told her that Maggie was fussing all the time.

"Mr. Fisher was standing in the corner near the closet all the time they were fussing," the witness said.

Witness said she heard Mr. Fisher say: "Stella, you don't love me any more," and she responded. "No, I don't."

Maggie said she urged them to kiss and make up, but her advice was not heeded. The woman was doing most of the talking, the witness said, and Fisher would merely say, "Is that so?" or make some similar remark.

About 10 o'clock, the witness stated, she was asked by Mrs. Yates to go down town and get her a bucket of yet quo mein (yockamee), and she did as requested. She got lost on the cars and it was after 11 o'clock when she returned to the house.

Quarrel Accompanied by Profanity.

There was some swearing indulged in before she went from the house, and Mrs. Yates asked Fisher if he thought more of the red-haired girl than he did of her. He said he did not know, and she told him he ought to know. The woman gave her the bucket and the man handed her a quarter to give to the Chinaman at the "yockamee" joint.

When she returned with the food from the Chinese restaurant the quarrel had not ended. Fisher went out to get a bucket of beer, and said the saloon had closed when he returned. This was doubted by the woman, and she told him so.

Mrs. Yates started up the steps with a lamp in her hand, and Fisher asked her if she were going to bed. Her response was: "The ... I am."

Maggie said she again begged them to kiss and make up. They finally did so, and each declared love for the other. Witness said that Fisher took off his coat, but put it on again when he threatened to leave her.

"Did Fisher seem as if he had been drinking?" Maggie was asked.

"He was sober," she answered.

Witness said the woman had consumed several glasses of beer and a milk punch, but she could not say she was intoxicated, as she had a headache. Witness told of being unable to get in the house when she returned there Monday. She told of a conversation she had with a neighbor of Mrs. Yates.

A small colored girl named Pearl Green, who had worked in Mrs. Yates' house, was sworn. She said she had never heard Estella and Mr. Fisher quarrel, and was excused.

Robert Yates Testifies

Robert Yates, husband of the woman victim of the tragedy, testified that he and his wife separated after they had been married four years.

"Why did you separate?" he was asked.

"Indeed, I can't tell," was his answer.

He said they separated three years ago and that he last saw her in April of last year. He then went to see her because he heard she was sick.

Miss Blanche Jackson, sister of Mrs. Yates, testified to the finding of the bodies in the house Tuesday. Witness went there because she had not seen her sister since Tuesday of last week. She broke open the back door, she said, and entered the house.

"It was dark in the room," she continued, "and I only saw a broken glass. The next thing I knew I stumbled over his foot."

Witness said she did not see any weapon, as she hurried out for assistance.

Moses Sexton, a druggist, was next examined. He had sent the telephone message for Mrs. Yates to Mr. Fisher. Witness told of an incident at the house last summer in which it was said Mrs. Yates had thrown carbolic acid on Fisher's face. She told him that Fisher had a spasm and she threw the acid on him because she thought it was water.

James F. Filgate, manager of Regan's saloon, testified that Fisher had worked for him and had several times received injuries at the hands of the woman. His first injury consisted of scratches on his fingers.

"They had hardly healed," said witness, "before he came with his face scratched." Afterward, he said, he had come to work with a broken nose, then a cut in the throat and cut in his head, and the last time he noticed any injury, she had bit his hand.

Fisher, he said, was a quiet and peaceable man, and had often told him he was going to leave the woman. She came to the vicinity of the saloon a number of times, said witness, and he had to call on the police to take her away.

On one occasion, witness stated, she was taken sick, but he could not say that she took carbolic acid. She had some of the acid and a knife in her satchel, the witness stated, and was taken to the hospital. The woman was very annoying, he said, and he tried to have a stop put to her sending telephone messages to the saloon. This closed the testimony and the case was submitted.