

## A POLICEMAN MURDERED

OFFICER FOWLER SHOT DEAD BY A NEGRO  
ROUGH IN DISCHARGING HIS DUTY.

Fatal Attempt to Re-Arrest an Escaping  
Member of the Chain Gang Yesterday  
—How the Crime was Committed—The  
Murderer a Man of Bad Character.

John Langster, alias "Guinea," a negro member of the chain gang, sat yesterday morning on the curbstone of First street, near D northwest. Apparently he was pulling grass out of the gutter; in reality he was working at his leg irons with a little piece of wire he had picked up in the street. His efforts were at last successful, and quietly ridding himself of his shackles, he stood up. Nobody was noticing him, and he moved slowly up First street and stood for a moment under the awning of Holmes' grocery store, at the corner of First and E streets, as if undecided what to do next. Then he spied the alley running from First to Second streets, between D and E, and hastily retraced his steps to it. As he disappeared in the alley Officer Fowler, in charge of the gang, caught sight of him and started in pursuit. When about half way up the alley the man stood at bay.

"Will you come back to work?" said the officer.

"No," was the dogged reply.

The policeman advanced a step further, pistol in hand, and the negro made a movement as if he would assault him. Quick as thought, knowing the desperate character of the man with whom he had to deal, the officer fired a shot into the air, hoping to intimidate him. The action had the opposite effect. Langster, enraged and furious, sprang upon the officer, who attempted to handcuff him. "Help me," shouted the officer to two colored men standing near by, but they refused their aid. In the struggle which followed and which only lasted a few moments, Langster wrenched the pistol from the officer's hand and pointed it at him with an oath. Twice he fired without effect, and then placing the muzzle of the revolver so close to the policeman's side that the powder burnt the vest, he fired the third time. The ball sped on its fatal errand. The wounded man walked a few steps, the blood gushing from the gaping hole in his side, while his murderer ran up the alley into Second street. Sergeant Boyle, who lives near by, and who had been roused out of bed by his wife and had run half dressed into the street, came upon the scene a moment later and found Fowler standing up, supported by a gentleman named Henry Houck.

"I am done for, Sergeant, I am dying," was the remark of the wounded man.

"Who did it?" said the Sergeant.

"Guinea," was the reply.

The sergeant made a cheering remark, but the officer shook his head.

Officer Coghill, arriving at this juncture, was sent to arouse the reserve at the station-house. "Come," said the sergeant, then, "we can't let this man die in the streets; let us take him to the station and send for a doctor. Here, Will Atkinson, help us," said he, speaking to a man standing near by. The man addressed picked up the wounded officer as if he were a baby and the party moved slowly to the station, carrying him as tenderly as possible. "Oh, put me down and let me die here," he groaned, ere a hundred yards had been passed. He was taken into the station house, laid on a mattress and Drs. Bayne and Magruder, police surgeons, summoned. When they arrived, ten minutes later, Fowler was dead.

In the meantime the vicinity of the sad affair had become wild with excitement and officers and citizens were searching yards and dwelling houses for the murderer. Lieut. Kelly, who was at police headquarters, was immediately notified and with Officer Slack hurried over to the scene. He found the square, bounded by D and E and Third and Fourth streets, surrounded by officers and was told that Langster had been followed to that square and that he was now hiding somewhere within it. The lieutenant climbed a fence near Ward's dairy, being joined almost immediately by Sergt. Boyle, and both looked into the adjoining yards.

In a few moments Officer Boland appeared at the door of the rear basement of No. 311 D street and beckoned to the officers on the fence: "I have got him," he said, as they approached; "he is here under a bed." The officers entered, and there, on the floor under the bed, crouched Langster with Fowler's pistol still in his hand. He had stripped himself of all of his clothes except his undershirt, and was wrapped in a quilt. His striped pants and shirt were on the floor near the foot of the bed.

He made no resistance when ordered to come out, and obeyed Lieut. Kelly's command to put up his hands. While doing this, Sergt. Boyle picked up the pistol and remarked, as he examined it, that another load remained. Langster turned to Boland, and with a savage grin, exclaimed: "If I had known that I would have put you in hell, too!" While being taken to the station house the officers were informed that Fowler was dead. At this Langster burst out in a loud laugh. Afterwards, when the widow of the murdered man arrived at the station, Langster brutally mocked her grief.

When first locked up in his cell Langster was seen by a Post reporter. He maintained an obstinate, sullen silence, but the gift of a cigarette induced him to speak.

"Had you any intention of killing Fowler when you left the workhouse this morning?" queried the reporter.

"No," was the reply, "but I had made up my mind to escape, no matter what stood in my way."

"Why?"

"I wanted to pay my fine."

"How did you get possession of the pistol?"

"Well, the officer was going to shoot me, and I caught hold of the pistol and turned it towards him and fired. I then wrenched the pistol away and fired again. Then I ran away."

Later in the day, however, Langster began to sham insanity, looked in a dazed way at his questioners, and, if he replied at all, made an incoherent remark. Towards night he abandoned this shamming and said he was sorry for what he had done. When first locked up he expressed a wish to be hung at once, so as to show how game he would die, but his spirit of bravado did not last long.

During the afternoon there was an immense throng of excited persons around the station house. A man asked Lieut. Kelly if a crowd would be fired upon should the station be attacked. He was assured it would, but Lieut. Kelly having heard other significant rumors thought an ounce of prevention worth a pound of cure. He waited upon Maj. Dye about 4 o'clock and asked for an extra detail of four or five men at his station. The result of the conference was an order for the removal of Langster to the Fifth precinct station. When the officers went to unlock his cell at 7:30 o'clock they found that he had stuffed the key hole of the lock with chewed meat, paper, etc., rammed in with a match. Afraid that he might be taken by force, he had done this in the hope that it would prevent entrance to his cell. After half an hour's work the keyhole was cleared, Langster brought out, handcuffed, placed in a cab with Sergt. Boyle and Privates Boland and Karcher and hurriedly driven away.

The autopsy at 3 o'clock revealed the fact that the ball had entered the body between the tenth and eleventh ribs, passed through the liver, severed the vena cava, one of the principal veins in the body, and then lodged in the spine, from which it was chiselled out. The body was then turned over to the family of the deceased.

An inquest will be held this morning at 10 o'clock, the jury summoned being Daniel Sheehan, J. Fred Kelly, Henry H. Hoff, C. P. Shettle, W. O. Patton and Charles Speht. The witnesses summoned are John G. Crogan, Thornton Chesley, A. Hamilton, W. D. Atkinson, Joseph S. Parson, W. W. Clark, Alfred S. Wilson, W. S. Chesley, Ed. Holmes, Robert Jackson, John Miller, Henry T. Houck and Thomas Smith.

Officer John H. Fowler was born in this District on October 22, 1842. He was appointed a station-keeper in the Police Department May 17, 1879, and two days afterwards was appointed on the police

force as a private of class one. He was promoted to the second class in the summer of 1883, and in October was detailed to take charge of the workhouse gang, which was put to work cleaning out gutters, alleys, etc. He took great interest in the work. He leaves a wife and four children.

Langster is a vicious looking mulatto, twenty-one years of age and unmarried. He was committed to the Reform School some three years ago and during his stay attacked Mr. Newman, foreman of the chair shop, for some fancied wrong. He also assaulted several of his teachers. Some time since he was fined \$50 for cutting a man with a razor. He was arrested last July for assault and battery with intent to kill his father by shooting at him. The charge could not be sustained and he was sentenced to three months for carrying concealed weapons. He escaped July 28, but was captured and recommitted on August 11 for ninety days. He bears a bad character. He was secured behind a double row of doors at the Fifth Precinct last night and an extra detail was on hand to preserve peace.

Robert Jackson and John Miller, the two colored men who are alleged to have refused to assist Officer Fowler, were arrested. They protest that they are not the men.

The portion of the chain gang with which Langster was working did not attempt to escape during the excitement and shortly afterwards, Officer Barnes, who had charge of them in company with Officer Fowler, conveyed the gang back to the workhouse.