

CAMDEN'S STRANGE MYSTERY

A Grave Yard's Uncanny Secret Unearthed by Accident

Murder Darkly Hinted at by County Officials.

The Nude Body of a Colored Man Found in a Pine Box, 'Neath a Shallow Grave, With a Rope Around the Neck.

Camden has another mystery, and, like all the strange crimes which have been the county's portion in the past two years, it bears the evidence of a murder.

While searching in a graveyard for the body of a recently buried colored girl the naked corpse of a man was unearthed. The features were horribly distorted and a rope was tightly fastened around his neck. The grave was but a few inches over a foot in depth, and none of the cemetery authorities have the remotest idea how the mysterious corpse came into the cemetery. There is not a ray of light upon the subject and circumstances point to another dark crime. Murder is mentioned and all sorts of vague rumors are agitating the people of the county.

AN UNCANNY DISCOVERY.

The manner in which the corpse was discovered is a most singular one. One week ago a resident of New England wrote to Camden seeking information about the body of Maggie Ash, a colored girl who had been buried in Johnson's Cemetery, a colored burying ground near Merchantville. Every day for the past week Sexton Nathaniel Johnson has made an effort to locate the body of the missing Maggie Ash.

It was while in the pursuit of his work that he yesterday discovered a pine box buried less than thirteen inches below the surface. The earth in the vicinity of the grave was disturbed and the grave digger thought he had found the coffin which contained the corpse of the missing girl. Upon opening the box he was horrified to find no coffin, but the remains of a nude colored man lying face downward in the box, the limbs twisted and the whole appearance of the body suggesting sudden death and violence.

THE NEWS SPREADING.

News of the startling discovery soon noised around the country about Merchantville and Stockton townships. It was not long before the county officials began to be flooded with all kind of rumors.

One of them was in effect that a negro had confessed the murder of Mrs. Annie Miller at Merchantville, and had been lynched by the citizens. Shortly before 2 o'clock County Physician Izard and Coroner Edward E. Jefferies, Assistant Prosecutor Ridgway and Morgue Keeper Powell started for the scene. Upon reaching Johnson Cemetery they began an investigation of the remains. The body was that of a man apparently 28 years of age. He was laying face downward. Beneath and above the corpse was a quantity of salt hay. Some old clothing lay under the head of the dead man.

While removing the hay the officials made the most startling discovery of their investigation. Tied tightly around the neck was a piece of three-quarter inch rope, two feet long. This disclosure mystified the officials, and they decided to send the corpse to the Camden Morgue until a thorough investigation could be made.

WAS HE STRANGLLED?

It was the general impression that the negro had been strangled. This can only be decided by experts, owing to the fact that the flesh around the neck and face had almost rotted away. An INQUIRER reporter tried to discover who the dead man was, but there are no records kept of burials in the cemetery. Inquiry about Merchantville and in the lower section of Camden, which is thickly populated by negroes, failed to disclose whether any of their race had mysteriously disappeared or not.

A county official, in speaking of the discovery, said last night that he believed the man was murdered in one of tough settlements on the outskirts of the city, his body taken to the graveyard and secretly buried. This is a plausible theory, owing to the manner in which the box containing the body was found.

Coroner Jefferies last night instructed Constable Beckett to summon a jury for an inquest. To-morrow they will visit the Johnson Cemetery and an inquest will be held on Monday. Morgue keeper Powell said that the most suspicious part of the affair in his mind was that the lid was tightly nailed, instead of being screwed. Detectives Gallagher and Warner have been detailed on the case.