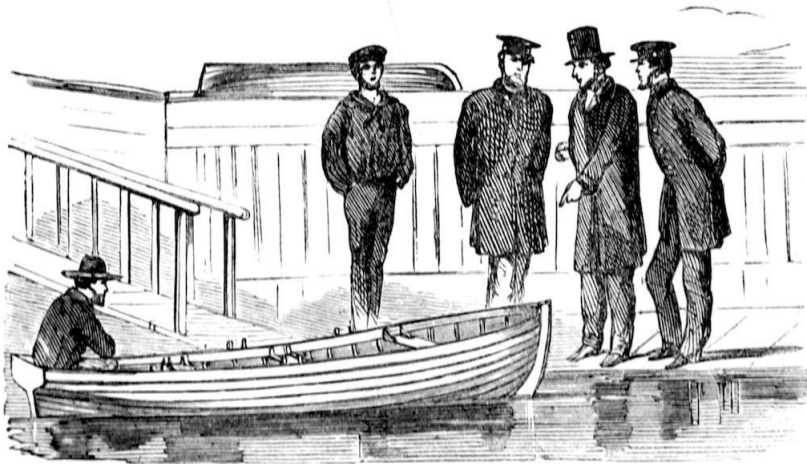


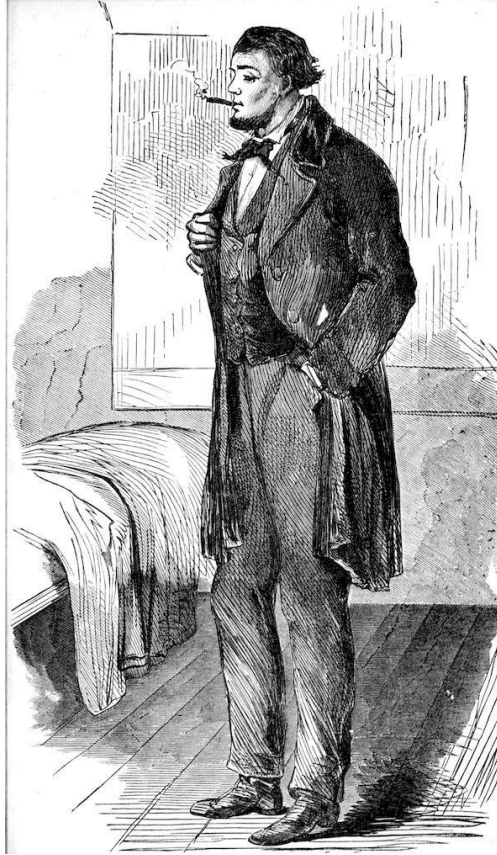
**The Life, Trial, Confession
and Execution of Albert W.
Hicks**



PORTRAIT OF THE WIFE OF HICKS.



THE BOAT IN WHICH HICKS ESCAPED FROM THE OYSTER SLOOP.



PORTRAIT OF ALBERT W. HICKS, THE PIRATE.

HISTORY OF THE CASE.

On Thursday, March 16th, the sloop "E. A. Johnson," sailed from the foot of Spring street, New York, for Deep Creek, Va., for a cargo of oysters.

The same sloop was ashore near Tottenville, S. I. on Friday, getting scrubbed, and having some carpenter work done. There she laid till Sunday morning, when she floated off, and proceeded down the Bay.

Again, she arrived in Gravesend Bay on Sunday afternoon, and remained there waiting for a fair wind until Tuesday at sunset, when she set out to sea, Captain Burr, a man by the name of Wm. Johnson, and two boys, named Smith and Oliver Watts, being on board.

The next morning, Wednesday the 22d of March, the sloop was picked up by the schooner "Telegraph" of New London, in the lower bay, between the West Bank and the Romer Shoals. On being boarded, she was found to have been abandoned, as also to bear the most unmistakable evidences of foul play having taken place at some time, not remote. It was also evident that a collision had taken place with some other vessel, as her bowsprit had been carried away, and was then floating alongside, attached to her by the stays. Upon further examination, her deck appeared to have been washed with human blood, and her cabin bore dire marks of a desperate struggle for life. The Telegraph made fast to her, and started for the city, but was failing in the effort (as both vessels were fast drifting ashore), when the towboat Ceres, Captain Stevens, being in the neighborhood, took them in tow, and brought

them both up to the city, when they were moored in the Fulton Market slip.

The story of bloody traces was at once communicated to the Police Authorities, and soon it spread throughout the city that a terrible massacre had taken place. Speculation accused river pirates of the crime, but there was a doubt on the public mind. Throughout Wednesday, the circumstances connected with the case were canvassed thoroughly, but no new light could be obtained as to the mystery. The daily press served up the story to the public on Thursday morning. Scarcely had the papers been issued when two men, named John Burke and Andrew Kelly, residents of a low tenement house, No. 129 Cedar street, called at second ward station-house, and gave such information as led the officers to the conclusion that one of the hands who had sailed on board the sloop "Johnson" from the foot of Spring street, was implicated in the mysterious transaction. They said that a man, named Johnson, who had lived in the same house with them, had come home suddenly and unexpectedly the previous day, having with him an unusual amount of money, which he said he had received as prize money for picking up a sloop in the lower bay. They gave the man's description, told which way he had gone with his wife and child. Immediately Officer Nevins and Captain Smith started on their way toward Providence, to which city they had reason to believe Johnson had gone.

Meantime, other facts came to light in connection with the mystery. The ill-fated sloop had run into the schooner "John B. Mathew," Captain Nickerson, early on Wednesday morning, at which time only one man was seen on board, and this man was subsequently observed to lower the boat from the stern, and leave the sloop. This collision took place just off Staten Island, and was so severe as to

render the "John B. Mathew" unfit for sea. Hence, she returned to the city for repairs.

On the same afternoon that the officers started after Johnson, officers Burdett and James, accompanied by our reporter, set out in search of the yawl belonging to the sloop, which was said to be adrift off Staten Island. This they succeeded in finding, and bringing to the city, after a tedious passage on a rough sea with a cold wind. The boat contained two oars, a right boot, a tiller, and part of an old broom. George Neidlinger, the hostler at Fort Richmond, south of which the boat was found, said that shortly before six o'clock the previous morning, he had seen a man land from the boat, whom he described in such a manner as to show that Johnson might be the individual.

It was next ascertained that a man answering the same description had made himself conspicuous at the Vanderbilt landing, where he had indulged freely in oysters, hot gins, and eggs. He was seen on the seven o'clock boat coming up to New York, by a deck hand, who had, by his own solicitation, counted a portion of his money, which he carried in two small bags, like shot-bags. Here the matter rested for a short time, while the people were waiting for news from the officers at Providence. It was during this interval that our artist succeeded in procuring the sketches herewith presented.

Meantime the sloop lying at the Fulton Market Slip was attended, day after day, by multitudes of the curious and the excited. The story of blood was the topic of conversation, and the spirit of revenge found a limited relief in verbal expressions of bitter desire for the punishment of the perpetrator, if he should be arrested.

Mr. Selah Howell, of Islip, L. I., part owner of the sloop, was on hand. He suspected William Johnson, the man who took supper with Captain Burr and himself in the cabin, on the evening before the sloop left the city. The theory that the murder had been committed by one of the crew favored this suspicion, and the idea floated from ear to ear until it became a settled conclusion in every mind. Mr. Howell viewed the boat, and identified it as belonging to the sloop.

The carman, who conveyed Johnson's baggage to the Fall River steamboat, also described the man who had employed him, and the woman who was with him.

During Friday, Captain Weed and Mr. Howell searched the cabin of the sloop, and found in the captain's berth a clean linen coat and a clean shirt, both neatly folded up, and each of them cut through the folds as if with a sharp knife. The coat had a sharp, clean cut, about seven inches long, through every fold; the shirt had some shorter cuts in it. They ascertained that an auger, which lay on the cabin floor, had been used to bore two holes immediately behind the stove, for the purpose of letting off the blood, which constituted a little sea. Instead of running off, it collected in the run beneath, where it remains. In brief, the cabin, the deck, and the starboard side of the vessel bore the most unmistakable evidences of a tremendous crime having been committed on board, and committed with the utmost regard to a previously arranged plan in the mind of the murderer, for three persons had been dispatched, two on deck and one in the cabin.

Public excitement continued on the increase; the public were waiting with all anxiety for a report from the pursuing officers, when, on Friday night, at a late hour, a dispatch was received from

Providence, intimating that the murderer had been tracked to a private house, where he had taken lodgings, and would be arrested during the night. On Saturday, this news having been ventilated, the public excitement became greatly intensified, and it was anticipated that an effort would be made to lynch the prisoner on his arrival in the city. Crowds repaired to the railway depot, at Twenty-seventh street and Fourth avenue, also at Forty-second street, at the upper end of the Harlem Railroad. At 5 o'clock, P.M., the train arrived, containing the officers and their prisoner. But the multitudes who waited and looked for the prisoner were doomed to disappointment, for the officers had prepared themselves before reaching the city for avoiding any attack from infuriated mobs, by taking their places in the first or baggage car, thus avoiding suspicion. In this way they came down to the lower depot, and were transferred to an express wagon, and rolled down to the Second Ward station-house.

THE ARREST AND HOW IT WAS EFFECTED.

We give the account of the arrest in the words of Officer Nevins:

Captain Smith and myself left the city on Thursday, in the twelve o'clock train of the Long Shore Railroad, for Stonington and Providence. The same afternoon we arrived at Stonington, and went on board the Stonington boat Commonwealth, to make inquiries for a sailor man, his wife, and child. The boat arrived that morning about two o'clock, and of course our only chance of getting trace of the murderer was from the officers of the boat. We heard of several women and children, but they did not answer the description; so we waited until nine o'clock that night, when Mr. Howard, the baggage-master, arrived in the Boston night train. He gave us information of two or three different women who stopped on the route between Stonington and Boston. The description of one man, woman, and child, who stopped at Canton, Massachusetts, was so near, that on the arrival of the boat from New York, at two o'clock on Friday morning, we left in the train which carried forward her passengers. On arriving at Canton, however, we found that the woman was not the one we were in search of, so we immediately returned to Providence, being satisfied that the murderer could not have taken the Stonington route. In Providence we called upon Mr. George Billings, detective officer, who, with several other officers, cheerfully rendered us every assistance. We drove around the city to all the sailor boarding-houses, and to all the railroad depots, questioning baggage-masters and every one likely to give us information, but

could get no satisfactory clew, so we concluded they had probably come by the Fall River route, and Captain Smith went down to the steamboat Bradford Durfee, to make inquiry there. The deck hand remembered that on the previous morning a sailor and a little sore-eyed woman and child came up with them, and asked him if he knew any quiet boarding-house, in a retired part of the city, where he could go for a few weeks. He told him he did not, but referred him to a hackman, who took him off to a distant part of the city. The hackman was soon found, and at once recollected the circumstances, and where he had taken the party. It was then arranged, to guard against accidents, that the hackman should go into the house, and inquire of the landlady if this man was in, pretending that two of the three quarter dollars which he had given him were counterfeit. He went there, and the landlady told him that the man was not in, but would be in that night. Arrangements were then made for a descent upon the house at two o'clock on Saturday morning. At this hour I knocked at the door, and at first the landlady did not seem inclined to let me in. I told her I was an officer who had arrested the hackman for passing counterfeit quarters, and as he had stated that he got them from the sailor, I had come to satisfy myself of the truth of the story. She opened the door, and we went up to this man's room, some seven or eight of us, and found him in bed, apparently asleep. I woke him up, and he immediately began to sweat—God, *how he did sweat!* I charged him with passing counterfeit money, because I did not want his wife to know what the real charge was. We got his baggage together, and took him with it to the watch-house. I searched him, and found in his pocket the silver watch, since identified as Capt. Burr's, also, his knife, pipe, and among the rest, two small canvas bags, which have since been identified as those used by the captain to carry his silver. In his pocket-book was \$121, mostly in five and

ten dollar bills of the Farmers' and Citizens' Bank of Brooklyn. There was no gold in his possession. I didn't take his wife's baggage, and I felt so bad for her that I gave her \$10 of the money. Poor woman! as it was she cried bitterly, but if she had known what her husband was really charged with, it would have been awful. I took the \$6 from the landlady that he had paid in advance, because I didn't know but the money might be identified. When we got him to the watch-house, I told him to let me see his hands, for if he was a counterfeiter, and not a sailor, as he represented, I could tell. He turned up his palms, and said, "Those are sailor's hands." I said yes, and they are big ones, too; and then I told him I did not want him for counterfeiting, and he replied, "I thought as much." So I up and told him what he was charged with, and he declared upon his soul that he was innocent, and knew nothing of the matter, and was never on the sloop. I don't think his wife knew anything about it. Some time before he had picked up a yacht, and was to get \$300 salvage, and when he came home so flush with money he told his wife he had got the prize money. I asked him if he would go on to New York quietly with us, or stay in jail ten or fifteen days for a requisition. He said he would go with us, and we started at 7 o'clock in the morning. He behaved so coolly and indifferently that I at one time almost concluded we had mistaken our man. At the New London depot there was an immense crowd of people waiting to see the prisoner, and, when we went through the crowd, they cried out, "There's the murderer; lynch him—lynch him!" I told him that I would shoot the first man who touched him. At every station after that, as we came through there were large crowds curious to see the prisoner.

THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE PRISONER.

Soon after the arrival of the prisoner, the man John Burke, with whom he had lived in Cedar street, was confronted with the prisoner, whom he identified at once as William Johnson, the man who, with his wife and child, had left No. 129 Cedar street on Wednesday afternoon, and went on the Fall River boat. Mr. Simmons also stepped forward, and recognized the prisoner as one of the hands who sailed from this port with Captain Burr on board the sloop E. A. Johnson. Upon being asked if he knew Captain Burr, he said he did not, he never saw him, and never sailed in the vessel commanded by him.

On Sunday afternoon, an old man, named Charles La Coste, who keeps a coffee and cake stand near the East Broadway stage terminus at the South Ferry, identified Johnson as the man who, on Wednesday morning last, at about eight o'clock, stopped opposite to his stand, apparently looking to see what he sold thereat, when he asked him if he wanted some coffee. He afterward went into the booth and sat down, leaving what appeared to be his clothes-bag outside against the railings. He had coffee and cakes which amounted to the sum of six cents. When about to leave, he handed him a ten dollar gold piece in payment, when he asked him if he had no less change. He said he had, and pulled from his pocket a handful of gold, silver, and some cents, and, abstracting half a dime and a cent paid his bill. About this time some boot-blacks came round, and wanted to black his boots. He looked down at his feet, and said his boots were not worth the trouble. He then asked if he could get a carriage, when La Coste told him it was too early; he ought to get into an East Broadway stage, and ride up to

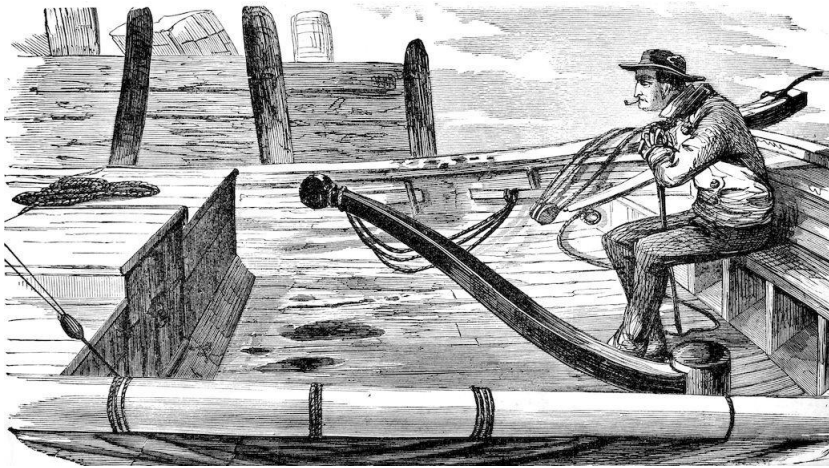
French's Hotel, as he had asked for the whereabouts of a respectable place to put up at. To this suggestion he demurred, when a newsboy came up to him, took hold of his bag, and implored him for the privilege of conveying his bag to any given point of the metropolis. The boy took the bag and followed the man.

At a later hour the prisoner was brought from his cell and taken into the officers' room in the back part of the station-house, where a promiscuous assemblage of men had gathered in. The prisoner took his place among them. The boy, Wm. Drum, was then brought into the room, and in a moment rested his finger upon the man whose clothes-bag he had carried from La Coste's stand to the house No. 129 Cedar street, one morning last week, about eight o'clock; he did not recollect which morning. The man thus pointed out was the prisoner. The same boy immediately afterward saw the bag, and identified it as the one which he had carried from the South Ferry to Cedar street. He asked Johnson fifty cents for the job, but, on his refusal, he compromised, and took three shillings.

Abram Egbert was introduced in the same manner as the boy, and selected Johnson as the man who spoke to him on the bridge of the Vanderbilt landing, on Staten Island, last Wednesday morning, between six and seven o'clock. He was not certain, but he thought he was the man.

Augustus Gisler, the boy who sold Johnson the oyster stew, the eggs, and the numerous hot gins, was also introduced in the same manner. He at once pointed out Johnson, and said, "That is the man."

Another little boy, who had asked to black Johnson's boots, at the South Ferry, was introduced. He looked carefully through the crowd, repeatedly fastening his eyes upon Johnson. The boy at last stopped opposite Johnson again; the prisoner noticed this, made a contortion, and turned away his face, when the boy said he could not see the man. The prisoner was then taken back to his cell, and his baggage underwent an examination in one of the rooms of the station-house.





THE BLOOD-STAINED CABIN OF THE OYSTER SLOOP "E. A. JOHNSON"

The first article identified was Capt. Burr's watch, which was found in the prisoner's possession by the detectives who arrested him. This watch the prisoner said he had had in his possession for 3 years. It was handed to Mr. Henry Seaman, an old friend of Captain Burr's, who after looking at it for about half a minute, pronounced it to be Captain Burr's watch; but to be certain, he would not open it until he had procured the necessary testimony to prove it. After a short absence he returned with a slip of paper from Mr. Seth P. Squire, watchmaker and jeweller, No. 182 Bowery, to whom it appears he had taken it to be cleaned nearly a year ago, at the request of Captain Burr. The following was the memorandum contained on the slip:

MR. BURR,
D B Silver Lever Watch,
J. Johnson, Liverpool, No. 21,310.

Cleaned April 5, 1859
by S. P. Squire.

The watch was then opened, and the name of the maker and the number of the watch found to correspond exactly with the name and number on the slip. By this means the watch was fully identified. Two small bags, which Johnson said he had made himself, were also identified by Mr. Seaman, and Mr. Simmons, of Barnes & Simmons, as having been the property of Captain Burr.

Mr. Edward Watts, brother of Smith Watts, identified the daguerreotype found in the pocket of a coat belonging to Oliver Watts, which was found in Johnson's clothes-bag, after his arrest, as that of a young lady friend of his brother, living in Islip, L. I.

Captain Baker, engaged in the oyster business in the Spring street market, recognized the prisoner as a man whom he had seen on board the sloop E. A. Johnson. He was certain of the man, as he had frequently seen him.

Mr. Selah Howell, taking a position right in front of the prisoner, as he stood in his cell, at once identified him as the man who took supper with Captain Burr and himself, on board the sloop, the night before she sailed.

Mr. George Neidlinger, the hostler who saw the man leave the yawl boat on the Staten Island beach, just south of Fort Richmond, identified the prisoner as that man. He also identified a glazed cap found in Hick's baggage as the cap he had on that morning.

Mr. Michael Dunnan also identified Hicks as the man whom he had met on the road between Fort Richmond and the Vanderbilt landing, last Wednesday, about six o'clock.

HIS INTERVIEW WITH HIS WIFE.

The wife of Hicks arrived in this city from Providence, on Sunday morning, and in company with John Burk visited her husband at the station house. She stated that on Friday evening last she got a New York paper, and seeing in it the story of the "sloop murder," proceeded to read it to her husband in their room, but before finishing it he said he was sleepy and wanted to go to bed, and she had better stop reading.

When taken down to the cell in which her husband was locked up, she broke out upon him in the most vituperative language, charging him with being a bloody villain. She held her child up in front of the cell door, and exclaimed, "Look at your offspring, you rascal, and think what you have brought on us. If I could get in at you I would pull your bloody heart out." The prisoner looked at her very coolly, and quietly replied, "Why, my dear wife, I've done nothing—it will be all out in a day or two." The poor woman was so overcome that she had to be taken away. She subsequently returned to her old quarters, No. 129 Cedar street.

On Monday, the prisoner Hicks, alias Johnson, was transferred to the custody of the U. S. Marshal Rynders, and upon the filing of several affidavits, he was committed for examination.

Such is a brief account of this horrible tragedy, than which nothing more calculated to excite public wrath has occurred in the neighborhood of this city for a number of years. That Hicks is the man who committed the triple murder on board the sloop E. A. Johnson, no doubt is entertained, and no one will regret his speedy satisfaction to the claims of public justice.

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