WILLIAMS, 'EX-CZAR' OF TENDERLOIN, DIES

Picturesque Former Inspector of Police Gave the District Its Sobriquet.

FIGURED IN LEXOW INQUIRY

Retired on Pension After That—Noted for His Love of a Fight—77 Years Old.

Former Police Inspector Alexander S. Williams, the man who named the Tenderloin, and who, with the exception of William Devery and Thomas Byrnes, received more public attention than any other man on the force, died yesterday at his home, 8 West Ninety-fifth Street. During his turbulent career he won the nickname of "Clubber." He was also called "the Czar of the Tenderloin."

"Alex" Williams, as he was called, was born July 9, 1839, in Nova Scotia. His father was a Nova Scotian and his mother Scotch. He came to New York as a boy, and learned the trade of ship carpenter in the employ of the shipbuilding firm of W. H. We[illegible] & Co. After several years' work he visited Mexico, Japan, and other countries, and he is said to have been the first white man to lay the keel of a ship in Japan. On returning from his travels he worked for a time for the Government, and was engaged in raising a sunken ship off the Florida coast.

On Aug. 3, 1866, he donned a policeman's uniform for the first time. According to the story told, when young Williams determined that he wanted to become a policeman he went to Metropolitan Police Headquarters to ask Commissioner John W. Bergen for a position. He did not know Bergen, and the latter, after listening to his request, asked him how he was to know "who Williams was." This was in the days before civil service.

"You may be a convict from Sing Sing, for all I know," said the Commissioner.

Williams, in anger, shook his fist at Bergen and told him that he could keep the job. Then he stalked from the office. The Commissioner sent a policeman to bring him back, and appointed him to the force.

He Never Shunned a Fight.

He was stationed at Broadway and Houston Street, a dangerous post in those days, in a district infested with crooks and thugs of all descriptions. Williams had the reputation of never walking away from a fight, and he had plenty to do, for several policemen had been carried from the beat in ambulances. He lost no time in finding the two toughest characters in the district, and he picked a fight with them. It ended when he picked up first one and then the other, and hurled them through a plate glass window. It was during the three years he walked this beat that he won the nickname of the "Clubber," and it is said that it was a dull day that did not find him with at least one row on his hands.

He was appointed a Sergeant and sent to the mounted squad, then just formed. In 1872 he was made a Captain and assigned to the East Thirty-fifth Street Station, then in the "Gas House District." There followed three years in which he was shifted about, always in districts where there were both poverty and crime—fields for his rough-and-ready methods. He did not lose his nickname.

In September, 1876, he was transferred to the West Thirtieth Street Station, which was to become the centre of the gay all-night life of the city. Gambling flourished, and so did disorderly houses. A friend met the new Captain walking up Broadway, and asked him how he liked the change from an obscure precinct to the most important command in the city.

"Well," said Williams, "I like it fine. I have had chuck for a long time, and now I am going to eat tenderloin."

After two years in the "Tenderloin" Williams was detailed as a Superintendent of Street Cleaning. He returned to the West Thirtieth Street Station in June, 1881, and remained there until he was made an Inspector in August, 1887.

While Williams was in command in the Tenderloin Max Schmittberger, now Chief Inspector, and James Price, later a Captain, were his wardmen. When the legislative investigation headed by Senator Charles S. Lexow began in 1894 the Williams régime was one of the things it looked into.

Appearance Before Lexow.

Information was obtained that involved Schmittberger, who went before Chairman Lexow and testified that he had not only obtained bribe money from the keepers of disorderly resorts and gamblers, but that he had paid it over to Williams. Other alleged "interests" of Williams were uncovered, and he was sent for to explain. He said that he had proceeded against some of the disorderly houses, but he could not remember names or numbers. His reason for not proceeding against some of them, he said, was because they were "fashionable."

Williams admitted that he owned a house at Cos Cob, a yacht, and had other property. He was asked how he got all these possessions and the Inspector said: "I bought real estate in Japan and it has increased in value."

As a consequence of the upheaval that followed the Lexow investigation a reform administration was elected, and there were reports that charges were going to be brought against the Inspector, but no charges were made. The three Police Commissioners, one of whom was Theodore Roosevelt, met on May 24, 1895, and retired him on a pension of $1,750 a year, after twenty-nine years' service.

The former Inspector did not relish the title of "Clubber," and in 1912, when Mayor Gaynor applied the name to him, he handed out a statement regarding his record. He said that if he had clubbed it was for the good of the city.

"Just ask the Mayor if he can point to a single person I ever clubbed that did not deserve it," he said. "He can't name one and he knows it."

The Fall following his retirement Williams ran for State Senator in the Twelfth District, in the east side, where he had resigned as Inspector. He was not elected. Afterward he entered the insurance business and was said to have made money.

He left a widow and two sons. Former Inspector Williams died at 12:45 o'clock yesterday afternoon. His family were with him. The funeral services will be held at his home on Tuesday night. The interment will be in Woodlawn Cemetery.

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