

Hickman, Colonel Robert (Beau) S.	b. 1813 - d. 1 Sep 1873	60 yrs.	R88/125
--	-------------------------	---------	----------------

The Evening Star, September 1, 1873

The Last of Beau Hickman

An Original Character Gone

Some Incidents of his Strange Career

He is Attacked with Paralysis

His Death at Providence Hospital, and Interment in Potter's Field

Mr. Robert L. Hickman, familiarly known as "Beau" Hickman, died at Providence Hospital at about 4 o'clock this morning, after an illness of about two weeks. On Saturday last he was taken from his lodgings at the house of Mr. E.J. Barrick (who formerly kept the Franklin, now the Irving House, corner of 8th and D streets,) at 605 Maryland avenue, to the hospital, and since that time rapidly failed until his death, which was occasioned by paralysis.

"Poor Beau!"

The death of so eccentric a character, and one who was so widely known on account of the peculiar manner in which he obtained a livelihood, is worthy of more than a passing notice, and hundreds of persons residing in different parts of the Union, who made the acquaintance of the deceased while on visits to the capital, and who have doubtless often good-naturedly responded to his dignified appeals for contributions, on reading this announcement, will exclaim, "Poor Beau!" for, truth to tell, if Beau left no warm friends he leaves no enemies.

His Early History

Of his early history but little can be gathered. It is generally stated, however, that he came of a good family, and that he was born in King William county, Va. It is also said that he was one of a family of six children--three boys and three girls--two of the latter having married Gen. Eaton, of N.C. It is further said that upon the death of his father, Beau, who had always been a gay boy, took his share of the paternal inheritance in cash, but exactly what his portion amounted to no one seems able to tell. It is thought, however, to have been about \$10,000, although many assert that it was much more. Whatever it might have been, Beau managed to dispose of most of it in less than a year; like the prodigal son, wasting his substance in riotous living.



His Reticence in Regard to His Family

No one was ever known to find out from Beau himself just how much money he had squandered, or to elicit from him any information as to the circumstances of his leaving home. On this point he allowed no one to question him. On one occasion during the rebellion an old acquaintance and patron of his said to him with the friendliest intentions, "Beau, why don't you write down to your old home and find out something about your family. The armies have ravaged that part of the country, and I should think you would feel anxious to know whether your old mother is alive." "Sir," said the offended Beau, drawing himself up, "please to mind your own business and let mine alone." So deeply did he resent this imaginary insult that he never again spoke to the interrogator. "He seemed to feel," said the latter, relating the incident, "that I was acquainted with the circumstances of his leaving home; but I was not, and meant nothing but kindness."

His First Appearance In Washington

was in 1833 or 1834, some forty years ago, when he was a young man of twenty-two or three. Old residents who are familiar with his career in Washington assert that he was "on the beat" when he first came here, although for about a year he appeared to have considerable money. He dressed elegantly, sported a gold watch and fob, carried a cane, wore a faultless beaver, and, in short, "was got up regardless." He announced himself as a sporting man and an expert in determining the speed of horses. He patronized the races, and on the ground was the observed of all observers, on account of his elegant attire and the positive manner in which he "talked horse." An old sporting man in this city, however, says he never knew Beau to bet a cent in his life, although he was willing to impart the name of the winning nag to any person who in return would give him five or ten dollars.

How Beau Beat the Tailors

For ten or fifteen years after his arrival in Washington, Beau managed to keep himself faultlessly attired. He would go to a tailor and selecting materials of the most elegant and costly patterns would order a suit. When the bill was presented, Beau would express great regret at his impecuniosity; "his friend, President Jackson, who was a d---d good fellow, no matter what some folks might say, had borrowed a thousand dollars of him last night, and it was really impossible just then," etc. The tailor, overawed at the knowledge that his debtor moved in Presidential circles, was only too glad to wait. He generally did wait--in vain, however, for Beau seemed to believe implicitly in the Shakspearian adage, "Base is the slave that pays." When he found his

excuses exhausted, Beau would argue with his tailor, representing that he would tell all his friends who made the suit, which would be a splendid thing for the tailor; and it is related that several tailors fitted the Beau out at different times with the most fashionable suits on the same condition.

Blase at Twenty-Five

Beau was blase at twenty-five. In his younger days he drank wine, but, it is said, was seldom intoxicated. The first hotel in Washington which he honored with his patronage was Brown's, now the Metropolitan. He boarded there for a number of weeks, and evaded the payment of his bills under various pretexts for some time. Finally, after Marshall Brown had got a pretty good insight into the character of his guest, he said to him one day: "Beau, you have honored me with your company now for several weeks, suppose you just go across the way and patronize my friend, the proprietor of the National Hotel?" "All right, Mr. Brown," cheerfully responded Beau, and he proceeded to the National, where he ordered the best room in the house, and remained for a couple of months before his bill was presented. It seems that some visitor mistook the Beau for Gen. Hickman, of Kentucky, and the proprietor consequently thought, as Gen. H. had the reputation of being very wealthy, he would not be in a hurry about presenting his bill, which, it is needless to say was never paid.

How He Raised The Wind

Soon after he became pretty well acquainted with Washington he became the guide of such visitors to the capital as desired to patronize houses of ill-fame and gambling houses, and in this way, it is said, sometimes made from five to twenty-five dollars a day. When in gambling houses he never played, but sometimes some one would give him a "chip," which he would at once get the banker to cash. He was early addicted to telling stories, for which he always demanded a red, white or blue chip, (named after the checks used in the game of faro) according to the character of his story, or the apparent financial status of his listener. An old sporting man says of Beau:--"he always despised a liar. I have often seen him tell stories to a person and end up, as usual, by asking for chips, and sometimes the person would say he had no money. Subsequently, however, he would take out ten or twenty-five cents and offer it to Beau, but do you think Beau would take it? Not he! He would decline it with offended dignity, just because he had lied to him." Many of his stories were amusing and frequently contained references to President Jackson, Clay, Benton, Webster, and others who had honored him with chips during their Congressional career. Possessed of some education, and a good conversationalist, always of an equable temper, and never inclined to be pugnacious and talk fight,

He Was Tolerated by Statesmen

In his younger days he frequently went to New York with an acquaintance, an old sporting man, and both put up at the first hotel in the city. Beau was as usual splendidly gotten up, and nine days elapsed before his bill was presented. When it was Beau took it to his friend and said "What am I to do? I haven't got a red." "Take this \$1,000 bill said his acquaintance and offer to pay your bill." Beau did so and the clerk seeing him in possession of so large a sum said "We can't change that; never mind, Mr. Hickman we can wait until you get the change just as well as not." It is almost unnecessary to say that while the clerk was waiting for the change Beau beat his way back to his old stamping ground in this city.

On the Down Hill of Life

About ten years since Beau began to go to the "demnition bow wows," as Mr. Masstillini would say, very rapidly. His dress became seedy, although he managed to maintain an appearance of shabby gentility at all times, and occasionally looked quite spruce. He also became quite lame, and always walked slowly and with a shuffling hitch, which gave him the appearance of being rheumatic. He always denied, however, that he had the rheumatism, and said it was his feet, which were covered with corns and bunions, the result of wearing tight boots. "The fact that my feet are crippled up so," he would say, "shows me to be a blood; no common man could have such feet as I have got."

Once several years ago some one procured for Beau an entire suit of velvet attached to which were minute bells. He doated on that suit for about a year, and when he entered a hotel would shake his coat which would set all the little bells jingling, and say, "I'm a bell team, I am!" His face resembled parchment, and his eyes looked red and inflamed. He was, in fact, for several years before his death an object of pity, and although he still continued to retail his yarns, especially on inauguration and other gala days, to crowds of strangers who generally compensated him petty liberally, they had become stale to most of the habitués of the capital who finally tired of their repetition.

His Favorite Stamping Ground

of late years was in front of the National and Metropolitan hotels. Occasionally he would hobble up the avenue to Willard's, but he could generally be found around the hotels first named, leaning on his cane or sitting on a dry goods box, puffing a cigar, and gazing listlessly at the passers-by. He often bewailed the good old times before the war, when public men, he said, were more liberal than now. "The old set," he said, "were liberal, whole-souled fellows, and I never wanted for chips. The new set are good enough in their way; but they are too d--d economical."

Beau Never Drank

latterly, but when solicited would say, "I'll take a cigar;" or if he did not want to smoke, he would say, "I don't drink, but I'll take the price of a drink, if you have no objection." For two or three years past he took his meals at Leonard & Russell's marble saloon, and the proprietors bear testimony that he always paid for everything he got. He was very regular, eating three times daily, and was very moderate generally making his meal come to about 25 cents. Sometimes his bill would be 40 or 50 cents, when he would tender a quarter as usual, which would be accepted without any comment. He was very miserly in his habits, never being known to treat any one in his life, and it is reported had quite a handsome sum on deposit at Riggs & Co.'s bank. He was arrested a few years since as a vagrant, but convinced the court that he had money on deposit at the Bank of Washington, and was released. He subsequently, it is said, transferred his account to the bank first named.

How a Woman Slapped His Face

It is said that several years ago Beau lived on improper intimacy with a colored woman. Be this as it may, he was standing in front of the Kirkwood House one day a few years before the war, when two colored girls, one a mulatto, came down the Avenue. The bright one, on nearing the place where Beau was standing, made a dash at him, and knocking his hat off slapped his face. Beau made no attempt at resistance, but, hobbling after his hat, which was lying in the gutter, he shook his cane at the colored girl, exclaiming, "Never mind! I'll give you h--l when I get you home tonight!" This scene was witnessed by a large number of persons, who were much amused at the incident.

Steady Contributors

It is said that for several years past Beau has been the monthly recipient of certain sums from several wealthy gentlemen, among them being Mr. W.W. Corcoran. Beau was recently heard to inquire when Mr. Corcoran would return from the springs, remarking that "he hadn't paid up now for two months." He was never married, and up to the time of his death was probably about 62 or 63 years of age.

After his death this morning the Sisters at the hospital called on Mr. Bugdorf, the undertaker, to make the interment, and he promptly furnished a plain neat coffin, in which the remains were placed, and they were taken to the burial ground attached to the almshouse, and interred about 11 o'clock. This morning a party called at the hospital, and asked to see Col. "Beau" Hickman, and receiving answer that he had died a few hours before turned on his heel and left, apparently fearful of being asked to contribute towards giving him a respectable funeral. With this exception no one called at the hospital to see him or was present at the interment except the undertaker's assistants.

"Never Right In His Head."

An old acquaintance of Beau's said last night, "I never believed that Beau was right in his head. At any rate there was nothing positively bad in his character. He would beat, but still in many respects he was honest. He never borrowed money; he received it as a gratuity and not as a loan. There are many men in the world who have done more harm than poor Beau Hickman."

"No further seek his merits to disclose, Nor draw his frailties from their dread abode."

The New York Times, September 3, 1873

Robert L. Hickman, "Beau" Hickman

A dispatch from Washington announces the demise of this once noted character. After dissipating a competency he became an adventurer of the "Dazzle" order, modified by aspirations to be considered a kind of Brummel. His history is given in a Washington journal briefly thus:

Robert L. Hickman was born in King William County, Va., according to best data, over sixty years ago. He was one of a family of six children, three boys and three girls, two of the latter having married Gen. Eaton of North Carolina. It is said that on the death of his father he was the possessor of about \$40,000 in cash. At that time a young man of good appearance, tasteful in dress, extravagant in habits, and fond of life, he made up his mind to see a good time, and he saw it so well that within a couple of years he was a bankrupt. The story further goes that in his distress he applied for aid to his brother-in-law, and that gentleman, disgusted with the actions of his relative, sternly refused all aid, but finally concluded to give him a check for \$10,000, on condition that he would leave and never return to his house again. Beau accepted the proposition, took the money, returned to his old haunts, and, casting aside his valuable but bitter experience, was soon again reduced to want; a condition, it is said, which was hastened by the elopement of a colored mistress, who took with her considerable of his funds. Then Beau concluded that the world owed him a living. Too proud to work, too honest to steal, he adopted a vagabond, Bohemian life, and, levying a tax on all who came in contact with him, made it pay.

Among the anecdotes related of him are the following, as to how he rode free on a railroad: He took a common card, stuck it in the band of his high hat, and getting an inside seat, stuck his head out of the window. Along comes the conductor for his tickets, and noticing the gentleman seated apparently in a deep study, he tapped him on the shoulder. Beau started up suddenly, and off went his hat. Then he became indignant, wanted the train stopped whether or no, and insisted so vehemently in his rights that the poor conductor was scared, and rather than lose time he agreed to pay for the hat and pass the gentleman over, both of which he did. The story soon got out, and Beau was a dead-head with that conductor as long as he remained on the line.

His advice to strangers about going into gambling houses was also good. "You want to tackle 'faro!'" he would say; "well, now let me give you a little advice, and I know all about it. You go in, and if there are many players, and any big ones, you get in and play light. The dealer will be mad as 000 when he sees it, but you need not mind. He's bound to let you win and go for the big ones. Then, when you get a stake don't be too greedy, but leave." For this good advice he would always add: "You owe me about a 'red chip,'" In asking for money he would always call for chips, designated as follows: A white chip, \$1; a red chip, \$5; and a blue chip, \$20—the several amounts being levied according to his estimate of the ability of the giver. When he "struck" a man for a blue, if he didn't respond, Beau would not consider it beneath his dignity to fall even to the white, when he then accepted with thanks.

The Evening Star, September 4, 1873

Shameless Desecration

Beau Hickman's Body Dragged From the Grave and Hacked to Pieces

Since the burial of "Beau" Hickman, on Tuesday morning last, in the Potters' field, a number of persons who had known him in life have expressed surprise that someone had not arranged to give him a respectable funeral. None, however, acted in the matter until yesterday, when Messrs. Dorsey Clagget and John Langley started a subscription for the purpose, and in the course of the morning the requisite amount was raised. Mr. Anthony Buchly, the well-known undertaker, was employed, and securing the necessary permit he, with an assistant, called about 2 1/2 o'clock on Intendant Hodgson at the Washington Asylum, and showing his authority, was directed to the grave. Two of the workhouse hands were detailed to assist in exhuming the body, but had not removed much of the earth before they discovered evidence that the grave had been desecrated. The grave clothes were thrown up with the dirt before the coffin was reached, and that had been broken into and nothing left of

THE BODY OF "POOR BEAU"

except the trunk. The arms had been cut out at the sockets and legs cut at the kneews and the flesh laid over the bones unjointed at the hips, and the head severed from the body. The flesh of the face, with the ears and scalp had been left in the coffin with the trunk. The chest had also been opened and the heart taken out. While the exhumation was being made, about fifteen or twenty men (workmen on the new jail), who had gathered around, were loud in their denunciation of the perpetrators of this disgraceful outrage on the dead. Mr. Buchly immediately went to the almshouse, where he reported the facts to Mr. Hodgson and the commissioners (Messrs. Bailey and Cross), and they at once, by letter, informed Major Richards of the facts, requesting him to use his endeavors to ascertain

WHO WERE THE GUILTY PARTIES.

While Mr. Buchly was reporting the facts the heart was found twenty feet from the grave wrapped in a newspaper. The inner side of the coffin was charred slightly, apparently by a burning candle, and near the grave was found a brown handled dissecting knife (small) the blade loose in the handle. A sealed empty envelope marked Sherman House, Chicago, was also found nearby.

REINTERMENT

The body could not be removed in the coffin in which it was interred, so badly had it been broken, and Mr. Buchly obtained a plain box from Mr. Hodgson in which the remains were placed and taken to the public vault in the Congressional Cemetery, where they will be kept for a few days.

THE LAW ON THE SUBJECT

It is generally supposed that such an act of desecration is not an offence against the law, but the supposition is erroneous, as the common law covers such offenses, (1st Bishop, 950,) the punishment being left to the discretion of the court. Lork Coke, in regard to tombs, sepulchres, etc. says it is lawful to erect them, "for it is the last work of charity that can be done for the deceased, who, while he lived, was a living temple of the Holy Ghost, with a reverend regard and Christian hope of a joyful resurrection, and the defacing of them is punishable by common law?"

It is hoped that our officers will be successful in finding the perpetrators of this gross outrage and securing their conviction and punishment.

The Evening Star, June 20, 1873

Locals

Beau Hickman says you should always "Pay as you go," even if you have to borrow the money to do it.

The Evening Star, October 3, 1867

Beau Hickman Arrested

Beau Hickman, a well-known individual of this city was arrested yesterday by officer Markwood for indecent exposure. He was taken before Justice Chapin who required him to pay a fine of \$5. Beau remonstrated but it was no use, and he had to for over the cash.

The Evening Star, December 11, 1866

Beau Hickman

Col. Hickman authorizes us to deny that he is a native of North Carolina. Like Henry Clay and Patrick Henry, he was born at the Slashes of Hanover. The Colonel says that it is preposterous for a State that produces nothing but tar and turpentine, to claim the parentage of the greatest financier of the age. North Carolina can turn out Badgers, Grahams, and Clingmans, but never a Hickman.

The Evening Star, February 21, 1862

Beau Hickman The Victim of a Misapprehension

Last night, a gentleman from St. Louis met with the Beau at Brown's Hotel, and being inclined to chat about matters and things in Washington, entered into conversation, in which he became very much interested, Col. Hickman being, as is well known, thoroughly posted in the "varieties of the Metropolitan," and especially upon the value of "white and red chips," so popular with the enemies of the "tiger." The stranger left the fascinating Beau after a protracted conversation and walked into the bar, and upon looking for his watch to compare with the clock missed both watch and chain. He at once summoned a patrolman, who proceeded directly to "hitch on" to the Beau, and carried him to the Fourth Ward station. As soon as the charge was made, Sergeant Cronin told the stranger that he had doubtless made a mistake, for though he had known the Colonel fifteen years he never knew him to be guilty of anything like larceny, in order to fully satisfy the gentleman, Colonel Hickman was searched thoroughly, and no watch found. The parties sat in the guardroom talking, and Col. Hickman, who bears the ups and downs of life with true philosophy, to relieve the mind of the stranger discoursed in his most genial style, till good humor being restored, the Colonel bid the sergeant and the stranger good night, and left with his friends.

The stranger then began to explain to the sergeant how he missed his watch. It was a large gold hunting-case watch, that cost over two hundred dollars, and he always carried it in his fob, the chain hooked to his lower vest buttonhole. Upon turning the corner of the vest to show how it was fastened, the quick eye of the sergeant saw a glitter, and turning up the vest, there was the chain, not hooked to the vest, but to an upper buttonhole of his pants, and the watch in the fob. The gentleman was not a little mortified at his mistake, and hardly knew what to do. The sergeant suggested that a little "testimonial" to the colonel would be the correct thing, under the circumstances; and the gentleman immediately started in pursuit and made an apology to Col. H., which was accepted instantly by the latter, it being expressed in a manner that made it a "legal tender."

The Evening Star, October 23, 1860

Arrest of Beau Hickman in New York

The New York Express of yesterday evening says: "The once gay and gallant 'Beau Hickman,' who figured so conspicuously in Washington City for many years, noted particularly for his politeness to members of Congress and others who would pay handsomely of being shown the elephant of Washington and various other cities to which he might be invited to accompany political celebrities, was arrested this (Monday) morning by detective Wilson charged with having perpetrated some confidence swindle on a gentleman living about Abingdon Square. The particulars of the transaction were not ascertained by our reporter up to 12 o'clock, the officers up to that time being absent in search of the complainant. Beau was taken to Police Headquarters and detained to await further progress in the case. During the absence of the officer arresting him, Beau was very anxious to go to the Metropolitan Hotel to call on some gentleman from Washington, whom he wished to aid in extricating him from his present difficulties, but he was not allowed to depart. Hickman, evidently, is now on the wane, as his personal appearance fails to indicate him to be in the full side of success."

The Evening Star, Sept. 1, 1854

Beau Hickman in Baltimore

The Baltimore Argus thus chronicles the advent of Beau Hickman in Baltimore. That paper (through Ned) says:

Arrival of "Beau Hickman." This illustrious personage, and professor of the art of "ringing in," arrived in our city from Washington a few days since and has taken up his quarters in and around the portico of Barnum's Hotel. The lines of disappointment appear to be deeply marked upon the Beau's countenance, in consequence, probably, of the failure of his favorite measure in the late Congress, which was a "Bill for giving Every Body Every Thing."

The Beau's fashionable tailor appears to have continued confidence in the ultimate nay ability of human nature, judging from the excruciating achievements in broadcloth and Marseilles, which covers the back, propellers, and dinner depot, of our inimitable specimen of humanity and assurance. The Beau is anxiously awaiting, we learn, the forthcoming session of Congress, when the light of his countenance will once more be visible to confiding Congressmen, and illuminate again the sitting rooms and dinner tables of the Hotels on Pennsylvania avenue. In a word, the Beau is bound to wave again in Washington.

John C. Proctor, Washington and Its Environs, p. 444

And here, too, buried with the high and the low, the rich and the poor, is whatever is left of the body of Col. Beau Hickman, one of the oddest characters who ever stepped his foot into the City of Washington.

Robert S. Hickman, which, by the way, was his right name, was born in Virginia in 1813, of respectable parentage--so it is said. Hickman was a gentleman loafer, who was never known to work, but who lived by his wits. He first came to Washington about 1833, when close to 20 years of age. He had some money when he first came here, but it took him but two years to spend it all. This he had little trouble in doing, since he loved to follow the races, where he could always be seen dressed in the most approved style, sporting a diamond pin, a gold watch and massive fob, a cane and a beaver, which afterward became so characteristic of the individual.

"As a gentleman of elegant leisure and fashion," it is said, "his tout ensemble was proverbial for neatness, elegance and simplicity."

He could relate a story with fine effect and became the life and entertainer of any company in which he might be thrown. He assumed the air of a polished Virginia gentleman, and was rated as a fine conversationalist--but he would not work. While in his prime he mingled with many of the best people of the day, usually making his headquarters at the National or the Metropolitan Hotel.

Many good stories can be told about "Beau," but this must be left to some other time. One of the strangest things about his life is that he never was a drunkard, as one might assume, but during the last years of his life, when invited by friends to drink, would step up to the bar and claim either a cigar or 10 cents--and most usually the latter.

Beau's end came at Providence Hospital on September 1, 1873. First his body was interred in Potter's field. On the following day after his burial in a pauper's grave several of his admirers and friends, who had not before learned of his death, contributed a sum sufficient to give his remains a respectable burial place. The removal of his body to Congressional Cemetery must have been an interesting event, judging by the following account written about the time of the occurrence:

"Hacks and carriages were furnished at the various hotels for the accommodation of all who wished to attend the second funeral, and thus give expression to their kindly remembrance of the famous celebrity who had so long contributed to their social enjoyment. Arrangements had been made for the disinterment of the remains, and when the grave had been opened the coffin was found broken open and the body most shamefully mutilated. The scalp had been removed from the cranium and the brains taken out, the heart removed, and other disgraceful mutilations to the body.

"The grave had evidently been robbed by some 'body-snatchers' and being frightened from their inhuman purpose, fled and abandoned the remains. The sight was sickening as it was revolting to decency, and the last rites were hastily performed and the new grave closed up forever over the mortal remains of a most remarkable man, possessed in life of a character strangely compounded of all the contre temps of an erratic genius. Notorious in life, he left behind a name and character that will live for years as the most eccentric Bohemian of his age, and prince of American bummers; and the sad catastrophe of his life will serve as a lesson of warning to the rising generations, that a life without some definite aim and worthy object must prove a sad and deplorable failure."

Ghosts, Washington's Most Famous Ghost Stories, John Alexander, The Washington Book Trading Company, 1988

During the middle part of the last century, one of Washington's legendary gamblers was Colonel Beau Hickman. Local lore has it that he was easily recognized by his beaver hat, cane, and penchant for diamond pins. One article said that Beau was about twenty when he left his Virginia home in 1833 to come to Washington, seeking fame and fortune in the big city./ His good looks and his gift for handling a deck of cards convinced him that he would succeed.

For some forty years, Hickman lived in Washington--spending most of his time in the old hotel that was located at 6th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest. The Colonel provided many men of the city with pleasurable times--or in quite a few instances--unpleasurable times. It all depended on which way the cards fell. Even when the cards didn't fall just right for his friends, the Colonel seemed most adroit at soothing their losses with good liquor and beautiful women. Gamblers seldom have friends, but Colonel Beau proved to be the exception, and nothing more illustrated this fact than his own death.

Newspapers tell us that in 1873 some of his card-playing friends were startled to learn of the Colonel's sudden death through a small obituary in the newspaper, and even more shocked to read that burial was in the pauper's graveyard. Never in their wildest dreams had his friends imagined the Colonel penniless. After the initial shock passed, the group gathered in the saloon of the hotel where the Colonel had lived. They reminisced about the many hours of pleasure the Colonel had provided them. None expressed any bitterness toward the old gambler, which may explain why he died broke. The Colonel never fleeced his friends.

With moist eyes and spirits warmed with alcohol, the gentlemen decided that their long-time host deserved a more prominent resting place. It just wouldn't be right for such a fine fellow to spend eternity in a pauper's grave. Such a noble person should be buried in Congressional Cemetery, they reasoned. So, after one last drink for the road, the men set out for the pauper's field. Dusk was settling as they arrived at the deserted cemetery on the outskirts of Washington, but there was enough light for them to see that body snatchers had been at work.

It wasn't a particularly reputable occupation--as a matter of fact it was illegal--but a good living could be made selling cadavers to "no-questions-asked" medical schools. Shuddering with fear, the men saw the Colonel's body lying half in and half out of the freshly reopened grave. Someone had frightened off the body snatchers. The Colonel's friends went quickly to work. Turning their faces into the wind, taking a deep breath, and closing their eyes, the men grabbed up the body in its shroud and tossed it into the back of their wagon. With the crack of a whip, and an obscene shout, they were off to a greener and more respectable gravesite in Congressional Cemetery. The Colonel's body bounced around in the buckboard as it flew along G Street. It looked as though the old wagon was being chased by the devil himself. The wagon nearly tipped over as the horses galloped through the gates of Congressional Cemetery and around the curve to where the Colonel would be reburied. The grave was dug, the Colonel was lowered into it, prayed over, and covered up in less than an hour. One chronicler of the tale says that one of the men even produced a thin marble tombstone with no markings on it. With a piece of burned wood, he scribbled the Colonel's name and the date of his death. Tipping their hats in one final gesture of respect, the men jumped onto the wagon and in a cloud of dust headed back for the old hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Reportedly, the Colonel never forgave his friends for their cowardice and their mockery of such a solemn occasion. That is said to be part of the reason why he visits the area of 6th and Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest. Not long after the Colonel's death, people began to tell tales of wild things happening in some of the card games at the old hotel--particularly card games involving the Colonel's old friends.

The Colonel's spirit liked a joke as well as the Colonel had. He even got to one of his friends at a most tender moment during his courtship of a beautiful young woman. Yes, the Colonel was dead, but his spirit was dedicated to making sure that his friends wouldn't forget him.

The Colonel's old hotel was torn down in 1892 to make way for the new Atlantic Coastline Railroad Headquarters, but that apparently had little effect on the Colonel's spirit. Once a gambler, always a gambler, and the Colonel has been seen standing on his corner just after dark, wearing a rather lonely expression as he searches for his friends and just one more game.

Those claiming to have spotted Colonel Beau say you can't mistake him. He's still wearing his beaver hat, his cane, and a diamond stickpin.