

The Life and Suicide of Thomas Trumpy

As I've read and indexed the Monroe newspapers from the 1860s to 1919, I've noticed how many people committed suicide. It's not surprising when we think about what life was like then and how many medical advancements have been made since then. The suicide that I am sharing this week (and next) is one of the most horrific events that I've read about. One has to wonder what had transpired in Thomas Trumpy's life for him to want to be so violent.

According to Glarus Family Tree, a website operated by Patrick Wild of Switzerland, Johann "Thomas" Trumpy was born in Ennetbuhls, Glarus, Switzerland in December 1847. He became a shoemaker and married Barbara Trumpy on March 31, 1870 in Ennenda, Glarus, where she was born. They started their family immediately with a daughter, Maria, being born a year later and a son, Fred, born in June 1872. Unfortunately, Maria would pass away before Fred was four months old. Before they immigrated in 1884 Barbara had given birth to seven children; Emil passed away in 1881 at the age of 14 days. Only four sons, Fred, 12, Rudolf, 10, Thomas, Jr., 7, and Jacob, 1, were living to make the trip with them to the United States.

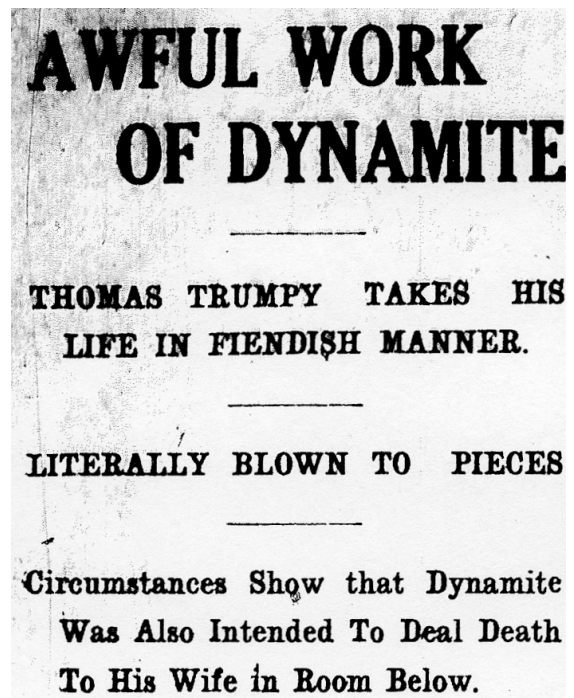
The 1885 city directory shows the family living on the southwest corner of what is now 12th Street and 21st Avenue; Thomas was working as a laborer. Daughter Mary was born on April 2 that year. Unfortunately, the family lost another child, 12-year-old Rudolf, on September 17, 1886 from pneumonia; he was buried in Greenwood Cemetery. The family was still living in the same location in 1889 where Thomas was listed as a farmer; daughter Barbara was then born on October 14. By 1891 Thomas was working as a shoemaker, the trade he had learned in Switzerland. The couple's last child, Frieda, was born on April 10, 1892. By 1895 the family had moved two blocks south to the northwest corner of 21st Avenue and 14th Street. At this time, Jacob, Thomas Jr., and the three girls were still listed in the home.

The 1900 census showed that the father was working as a day laborer, but had been out of work for four months. It also said that he owned their home with a mortgage. The census showed that son Jacob and the three daughters were living with them, but the city directory said that all six children were living there. This home was located at 2214 23rd Street. The city directory stated that he was working for the Condensing Factory. Five years later the census showed that he was a day laborer, unemployed for 10 months, and owned their home free of a mortgage.

His obituary said that he had worked for the city for years; his work in the stone quarry made him familiar with dynamite. He did much work during the summer, blasting out stumps for farmers and cisterns for cement contractors and was well versed in the use of the explosives. A few weeks earlier, after he had displayed some dynamite that he had worked into a ball with a fuse attached and made threats to dynamite the family, it was taken from him.

Mrs. Trumpy, while having some means of her own, did outside work to help support the family. The daughters also worked, helping to maintain a comfortable home. At the time of the suicide, Mrs. Mary Boergi, Juda, her young son, and an infant were staying with the family so Mrs. Trumpy could care for them after Mrs. Boergi had spent a long time at the Loofbourow hospital.

Trumpy, for a year or more, had become strongly addicted to alcohol. He had come home many times and drove his family out of the house. It was not uncommon for the officers to be called to assist the family. Frequently, Trumpy had been taken to jail. He was always on hand to work for the city when he



I found this headline, from the January 10, 1910 issue of the Monroe Evening Times, very intriguing when I was asked by a man several years ago to find out information about his great-grandfather Trumpy's death.

was needed and was engaged with the street commissioner's force; he had spent the week shoveling snow from the walks and crossings. He was a good man on the street force; the elements of his character that made trouble for him at home never came to the notice of the men who worked with him.

The family said that Trumpy, 62, came home sometime after 2 o'clock on that Sunday morning, January 9, 1910 and was "ugly and quarrelsome." Nobody paid attention to him so he went up to his room saying that "he would give them something to think about over Sunday." His wife, their three daughters (ages 18 to 25), and the Boergis were home at the time.

Twenty minutes after he went upstairs, the house was shaken by an explosion. The explosion occurred in the east room upstairs, which was Mr. Trumpy's sleeping room. His wife, Mrs. Boergi, and her two children were sleeping in the large bedroom immediately under his. His daughters were also sleeping upstairs.

The daughters rushed through the darkness, with the plaster and splinters littering the hall and stairs, to the rooms below where the women and children were sleeping. Everyone else survived the explosion, but were greatly excited and frightened. The explosion was terrific and damaged the house to the extent of several hundred dollars. Many of the neighbors, and people living several blocks away, heard the explosion and were reminded of the heavy blasting that was formerly carried on in the stone quarry near the Trumpy home.

The bed that Mrs. Trumpy and the baby occupied was piled with plaster and other wreckage, which had been blown from the ceiling. The baby, only six months old, received a black eye and several cuts on the face; Mrs. Trumpy was uninjured. She owes her escape to the heavy bed clothing that protected her. The child's injuries did not appear to disturb it in the least.

The horrific details of what was found in Trumpy's bedroom will be shared next week.