

The Aftermath of Thomas Trumpy's Suicide

Sheriff H. L. Ball and Coroner Frank A. Shrinier were called to the Thomas Trumpy home at 2214 13th Street on Sunday morning, January 9, 1910 and were the first to enter his bedroom after he committed suicide with dynamite. At that time, the supposition was that Trumpy had undertaken to blow up the house instead of destroying himself. The officers, carrying a dim kerosene lamp, surveyed the room. It was thoroughly wrecked but Trumpy was not to be seen. His bed, in the northeast corner of the room, had not been occupied. The explosion had lifted it and let the springs and bedding down on the floor. In the southeast corner, there was a pile of screens. Sheriff Ball lifted these and here a most revolting sight met the gaze of those officers.

The following gruesome details were printed in the Sentinel on January 10. "What was left of the man, a leg, parts of the arms, part of the head, and a mass of fibre and clothing was matted into the depression in the floor. Closer investigation showed that the room was spattered with small particles of flesh. Little blood was to be seen outside of the mopboard, which had been dashed with blood. The glass in the large windows in the room had been blown out as clean as if there had never been any glass in them. The roof was raised four inches, drawing the nails from the plate. Plaster and lath covered the floor. Clothing in the closet off from the opposite side of the room and the top bed covering were thick with the fragments that stuck to the walls. The cold coming through the open windows froze everything tight.

"It was evident that the man had designed the destruction of his wife as well as himself by reason of the spot selected by him to explode the dynamite. He had moved the screens so that he might lay on the floor directly over the head of his wife's bed. The conditions found after the explosion indicated that the man had placed the dynamite on his body and set off the fuse. Three floor joists, 2 x 10, were broken through by the explosion, leaving a hole in the floor as big as a tub. The walls of the room below were bulged out by the concussion and a piece of the body with a few sections of vertebra was found wadded up on the bed. The lower room was damaged almost as bad as the one in which the explosion took place.

"Trumpy had his door closed, while the door of the room across the hall occupied by the girls stood ajar. His door was taken off as completely as if it had been lifted from its hinges and was hurled across the hall through the open door and fell into splinters on one of the beds in the girls' room. A small dresser standing against the west wall in Trumpy's room had a door shoved in and the back was broken out. A silver dollar that Trumpy must have had in his pocket and which was picked out of the plaster, was bent out of shape. The panel in the head of his own bed was split and a bedstead that had been taken down, was shattered into kindling wood, posts and all. Thus the character of the explosion was told and



This photo of the Thomas Trumpy family, taken about 1902, came from the collection of Peter Jenny. The two daughters shown between the parents, Thomas and Barbara, are Frieda and Barbara. The three sons (Fred, Thomas, and Jacob) have not been identified, but Mary is on the right.

leads to the belief that the escape of the other members of the household was nothing short of miraculous. It is believed that he used at least a stick of dynamite.”

Before 6 o'clock that morning neighbors were at work in the room where the dynamite did its deadly work. All the plaster from the walls and ceiling, which had been loosened, was torn off. All the clothing and what was left of the furniture was taken out in the yard and burned; this removed every trace of the gruesome sight that the room first presented. What was left of the body was taken to Shriner Bros. undertaking. Damage to the home must not have been terrible as the funeral was held from the home at 2:00 p.m. Monday afternoon with burial at Greenwood Cemetery. He carried a \$2,000 insurance policy through G U G G with a condition that in case of suicide only 20 per cent would be paid.

According to his obituary in 1910, Mrs. Trumpy was “a refined, intelligent woman, as are her daughters and they have patiently carried their burden of trouble. It is the general sentiment that the man's troubles were of his own making and his tragic ending and the horrible means employed together with the annihilation of the family and destruction of their property which the circumstances clearly show he intended, makes the case one that calls for deepest sympathy for the family and charity for the unfortunate mortal responsible for the deed.”

Barbara and her daughters were shown in the 1910 men census with a Swiss immigrant (Mary Burke) and her two young children living with her. Her daughters Mary and Barbara were clerks in stores, Mary in a dry goods store and Barbara in a grocery. Mrs. Trumpy sold the house on December 2, 1914 for \$2,300. By 1917 she was living alone in the 1500-block of 16th Street. The 1920 census showed that she was 68 years old and living in Clarno Township as a servant (nurse) to an older couple, Hiram and Julia Stair. In 1922 she was living with her daughter and son-in-law, Frieda and Fred Jenny, on the corner of 16th Avenue and 14th Street in Monroe. She was no longer living in Monroe by 1927. The 1930 census shows that she was living with her son Thomas, 53, at 2136 Indiana Avenue in Chicago. Thomas owned a cigar factory; her son Fred, 58, a finisher in a trunk factory, was also living with them as were two other roomers who had been born in Mexico. Barbara died in 1935 and is buried next to her husband in Greenwood Cemetery.