

HUNTING THE MURDERERS

Dubuque Herald

Saturday, 04/15/1893

NO EFFORT SPARED TO GET THE ASSASSINS OF OFFICERS FRITH AND TALCOTT.

The terrible double tragedy enacted early Friday morning in a coach in the Milwaukee yards at the foot of Nineteenth street, remains enshrouded in the deepest mystery. There are but slight clues as to who murdered the two railway policemen, Jake Frith and Henry Talcott.

Officer Frith died while vainly endeavoring to tell his story to the crew of the switch engine whose attention he attracted as the train moved past slowing in a southerly direction, while he stood near the track with his life blood ebbing away.

Gus Wieneke was the engineer of the switch train and Frank Zamanek the fireman. The latter saw a man waving his arms, holding his hat in one hand. Then he walked along a hundred feet or so, pointing to three coaches on an adjacent track. Fireman Zamanek jumped from the cab and hurried towards the man, who meanwhile had leaned up against a box car for support.

The fireman recognized him as Officer Frith and observed that his face was covered with blood. At first it was thought he had been struck by a car and the fireman said "for God's sake what's the matter." Blood gushed from Frith's mouth and, when Zamanek asked him if he had been shot, he pointed to his mouth and back and held up two fingers, indicating two wounds. Then, supported by Wieneke and Zamanek he walked toward the coaches, pointing to the open door on the north end of the most northerly one. He was asked if his family should be notified and nodded assent, but was unable to speak the words almost on his lips which would have cleared the mystery and in strong likelihood identified the murderers. His efforts to speak were pitiable in the extreme. He looked appealingly at those about him, and then sank to his knees, his head falling on his breast. Within a few moments he had breathed his last. He was stretched out on cushions taken from the car and left there to await the arrival of the coroner.

Meanwhile a number of other railway men had gathered on the scene and found Officer Talcott lying on the north platform of the car. He was on his back and was gasping for breath. He was placed in an upright position, but was unable to speak. He died within ten minutes, and before a physician, who had been summoned, arrived.

The three passenger coaches had been on the side-track for several days. They were in bad order and had been laid out here for repairs. The one in which the shooting occurred is old fashioned and is No. 117. There was a fire in the stove, and the occupants had arranged things to make themselves comfortable.

It is impossible to say just how the shooting occurred. Any number of theories are advanced. The clues are gleaned from a train of events preceding the tragedy.

About 10:30 o'clock Henry Geiger, the carpenter, and Dave McDonald, superintendent of the Union slaughter house, were held by highwaymen on Washington street between Sixteenth and Seventeenth. Geiger managed to get away, but McDonald at the point of a revolver was forced to give up about \$3 in change contained in a silver match box, the box being returned to him. The robbers went down the street and near the Sixteenth street corner met Mr. M. S. Hardie, who was on his way home. One of the men stepped in front of him and said, "Good evening, pardner." Then holding a revolver at his intended victim's head he ordered him to throw up his hands and give us his stuff. In throwing up his hand Mr. Hardie knocked the point of the gun away and jumped out into the street. The highwaymen then walked away unconcernedly, going in the direction of the railway tracks. These facts were subsequently reported at police headquarters. Several officers were detailed on the case, Mr. McDonald and others assisting. More than a dozen tramps were found in the Kansas City and Milwaukee yards, but none of them answered the descriptions given. Mr. McDonald says he could identify the men. Mr. Hardie says they are younger men than the others took them to be.

Capt. Raesli went to the Milwaukee shops about 1 o'clock and told Policeman Frith to be on the lookout for the men, being of the opinion that they were hiding in the yards. He felt convinced that one of the men was the person who had choked old Mrs. Everett at her house the night before.

Any number of theories are advanced as to how the shooting occurred. It seems likely that the officers anticipated no trouble, thinking the men were like the ordinary run of tramps and would leave the car as soon as ordered out. Supposing that the men concluded they were to be put under arrest for the robberies referred to above, or, perhaps, for a graver crime, it may be presumed that they fired on the officers before the latter had time to draw their revolvers. The effectiveness of each shot argues they were all fired at short range, except that which struck Frith in the back, probably as he was dragging himself from the car. While there was blood all over the car there was nothing to indicate a struggle.

Wm. Luther, an engineer, was on his way to the round house to take out his engine and passed near by the car at the time. He heard three shots fired in rapid succession and shortly afterward saw two men run across the tracks and disappear on the flats. They were in plain view as they crossed the track, being in the glare of the headlight of Luther's engine. He gave a description of them which agreed substantially with those of the highwaymen furnished by Messrs. McDonald and Hardie at police headquarters. This description was sent to all stations on the Milwaukee road in this section. The Central Burlington and Kansas City also bulletined the information at all stations. The authorities also took every possible step to capture the murderers. Captain Ryan kept the night policemen on duty until 7 o'clock and had all approaches to

the city patrolled. Marshal Rice sent a large number of men out into the country in buggies.

With the wires working in all directions suspects were arrested in many places. Supt. Cunningham of the Burlington telegraphed from La Crosse that the authorities at Prairie du Chien had a man under arrest who answered one of the descriptions. In his possession was found a revolver containing three old and two new shells.

Two young men, tramps, were arrested between Epworth and Farley. They had tramped overland from Dubuque to Epworth, being tracked by Frith's brother and a young man named Haggerty. Deputy Sheriff Pfiffner brought them in from Farley on last night's train. There was a big crowd at the depot to see them, but they had been taken from the train at the stock-yards, where the patrol wagon was in waiting. A crowd followed the patrol wagon to the jail, where the young men—neither of them was over 25—were examined by Martin White, chief of detectives for the Milwaukee, who with several assistants is at work on the case. The Central company has also put a detective at work. These tramps say they left town after hearing of the murder, fearing they would be arrested on suspicion and be compelled to lie in jail. They said they had seen other tramps on the way. They were held.

Other arrests are reported from Manchester, Marshalltown and other places. One of the railway detectives leaves for Cedar Rapids this morning, it being probably that the murderers may have gone south on Engineer Luther's train which left the shops shortly after the shooting.

No stone is being left unturned and it seems impossible for the murderers to escape. A very strong clue was reached yesterday when a revolver, freshly loaded and stained with blood, was found in a pile of old boiler flues near the Milwaukee shops yesterday. There are strong facts in connection with the revolver which the police deem it inexpedient to divulge just at present.

POST MORTEM AND INQUEST.

Drs. Fowler, Brownson, and Waples held post mortem examinations and found the wounds to be as herein described.

Coroner Hoffmann empanelled a jury consisting of Wm. Snouse, C. H. Gross and T. H. Reilly, but the inquest will not be held until Monday.

THE MURDERED MEN.

Officer Talcott was 37 years old and lived with his wife and four children on Garfield avenue. He had been a policeman for two years, was a car repairer in the shops for a year before that and previously drove team for Geo. Fengler. He was a member of the Northwestern Legion of Honor and of the Milwaukee shops society and was very well thought of.

Theo. Frith, better known as Jake Frith, was 36 years old and a son of Theodore T. Frith who lives on the corner of Washington street and Eagle Point avenue. He resided with his wife and four children at the corner of Jackson street and Eagle Point avenue. He was married to Miss Zeimelt, of Bellevue, about thirteen years ago, and leaves her with four children, the eldest 12 years old, a boy of 10 years and two girls, 7 and 3 years respectively. He had been in the employ of the Milwaukee road for the past twelve years as special night policeman about the Dubuque shops and yards. Some three weeks ago he went to Milwaukee to be examined for the position of fireman upon a switch engine. He was a man of fine appearance and of amiable disposition and had scores of friends. Among the men in the shops he was well liked. No one stood better with them than Officer Frith. He was a man of courage and not afraid to go anywhere at night. He was the brother of Officer Frith, of the city force, and brother-in-law of John Deggendorf.

All sorts of rumors were afloat yesterday. One was to the effect that three men, whose clothing was stained with blood, were arrested at Bellevue and would be brought to this city on the Milwaukee's 11 o'clock train. Five hundred people who crowded around the depot were disappointed.

A plaster cast of two footprints found in the sand and presumed to have been made by one of the murderers as he ran from the tracks to the flats was taken yesterday afternoon.

The funerals of Officers Talcott and Frith will be held Sunday afternoon.