

Fairfax, Atchison County, Missouri, Friday, August 4, 1905

Murder and Suicide in Dale Township

“Cap” LaRue Inflicts Mortal Wounds in Step Sister, Grace Miller, Then Turns Revolver on Himself with Deadly Effect.

The home of William H. LaRue one-half mile west of Dotham, in Dale township, was the scene of a shocking tragedy about noon on Tuesday, and as a result of the unfortunate occurrence two fresh mounds of earth in the Walkup’s Grove cemetery, mark the burial places of Miss Grace Miller and C. C. LaRue, the latter an insane murderer and suicide.

As is often the case in tragedies of this nature, the causes which led up to that were of infinitesimal character that it is hard for the mind to grasp a single motive for the deed.

C. C. LaRue, or “Cap,” as he was more familiarly known, was of a wandering, roving disposition. After an absence of seven years he arrived in Mound City Monday night. On Tuesday morning he hired Adolph Bertram, son of Wm. Bertram, the liveryman, to drive him to his father’s place. Arriving there “Cap” went immediately into the house. His step-mother was in the front room, and, according to her testimony, he shook her hand, smiled, and kissed her on the cheek. After a few natural remarks passing between them he asked: “Where’s pa?” “In the west room,” she replied. He opened the door and stepped in. The elder LaRue was sitting down and reading.

The incidents following can best be told in a reproduction of a part of the testimony which was adduced at the coroner’s inquest.

W. H. LaRue’s Testimony.

I was sitting in my room and heard some one ask “Where’s pa?” I knew it was my son. He came into the room and shook hands with me, placing one hand on my shoulder. From his actions I concluded something was wrong. He turned from me and began to cry. I told him it was no use to cry; that this ought to be a pleasant home-coming to him. Then he turned to me and stated that he had not come home for pleasure, but had come to kill the - - - that had induced Grace to say “no” to him. I said, “Cap, look here; I don’t think anybody influenced Grace; but they (meaning the girl and her mother) can speak for themselves.” He left the room and went into the kitchen where Grace was ironing. I heard him ask her who had used their influence to get her to say “no” to him, and then I closed the door and immediately afterward heard one shot. I jumped up and ran into the kitchen and saw Grace lying on the floor with blood streaming from a wound n her left breast. My son was standing with his back to me. I exclaimed “My God! Cap, what in the world have you done?” He had a revolver in his hand. I grabbed him with my left arm and the barrel of the pistol with my right hand. He wrested the revolver from me and with the partial assistance of my wife we forced him out the kitchen door. I scuffled with him into the front yard, where he broke away from me and turned the pistol on me and said: “You get back into the house; I haven’t done all the work here that I intend to do!” He followed me to the kitchen door and said he wanted to see Grace, and went past my wife into the kitchen and knelt down by the girl’s side

and said, "Grace I love you more than all the world." Then he looked up and saw me standing at the kitchen window and made me come into the house at the point of the gun. My wife implored me to get away and go after someone to help us, and get a doctor for Grace. I ran out and down the road to the store, and heard four more shots from the direction of the house. When I returned I found them both dead – Grace in the house and Cap in the yard. I had not been gone one-half hour.

Mrs. Elizabeth LaRue's Testimony.

C. C. La Rue came to our home about noon on August 1, 1905, and after shaking my hand and kissing me and making several remarks of a commonplace character, asked where his pa was. I directed him to his father's room. Directly he came out and asked where Grace (her daughter) was. I told him she was in the kitchen ironing. He went into the kitchen, adjoining the room in which I was. He spoke to her and shook her hand, after which he asked her who it was that had interfered between them. She replied that no one had. He said he knew some one had and that he was going to kill her and himself. She remonstrated with him, told him that they were friends, that she had always written nice letters to him, and that she was the best sister to him that he had whereupon he drew a revolver from his pocket and fired. I didn't think he had shot the girl, but had only fired to frighten us, but I saw her turn pale and clutch at the table, and then fall to the floor. I ran to her and asked her if she really was hurt, and she replied: "Yes I am shot – Cap has shot me." Then I saw blood streaming from her left breast. I looked up and thought he was preparing to shoot again when my husband grabbed him and forced him outside the house, Cap came back into the house shortly and looked at her. I said to him: "Oh, look what you have done, Cap: you've killed my baby." He replied "She isn't dead yet, ma." And placing the pistol to the girl's head he fired again. I asked him to help me get her to the bed, but he said he couldn't touch her. Then he knelt down by her side and kissed her and said to her that he loved her more than all the world. He then said: "I must finish up; I am going to kill myself." He went out into the yard. I was afraid to go out, but looked to see where my other children were. He went out a little south and east of the house, when I heard some shots – I don't know how many. Presently I looked out again and saw him raise his head as if struggling preparatory to shoot again. After that I heard no more shot.

I could smell liquor on his breath when he first came into the house, but from his looks and his actions I would judge that he was not in his right state of mind, as his talk and conduct indicated those of an insane man.

D. J. S Abbott's Testimony.

I was called to the home of W. H. LaRue at about noon on the 1st day of August 1905. While the report was that some one had been shot, I didn't know the nature of the shooting nor anything about the particulars until I got to Mr. LaRue's which is about one mile distant from my home. I found C. C. LaRue lying out south and east of the house, about fifteen feet in the yard, in a dying condition, and Grace Miller in the kitchen lying on the floor dead. After making some examination of her body I then went out to examine the body of C. C. LaRue, but before I had gotten to him at this time he was dead, having died while I was making an examination of the girl.

I found upon examination of Grace Miller that the first ball had entered the body on the left side about between the seventh and eighth rib, the other ball entering the temple on the left side. I did not ascertain whether either ball came out, but I consider that either shot would have proved fatal.

In the body of C. C. LaRue I found four bullet holes – three in the left breast, directly over the heart, and one in the right temple. The wound in the temple would necessarily have been fatal and I would consider that the wounds in the breast would have proved fatal, also.

Information regarding the affair soon spread throughout the neighborhood and quite a crowd had congregated in a very short space of time.

Dr. O. A. Hunter was the regularly elected coroner at the last election, but as he failed to qualify, and the county court having made no provision, Achison county is without such an officer. At the instance of W. H. LaRue the Fairfax authorities were notified and an inquest held under the direction of W. H. Hambaugh, assisted by Asa L. Schooler. As Fairfax is nearly nine miles from the scene of the tragedy, however, it was nearly 4 o'clock before the inquest was started. The bodies in the meantime were left in the position in which they were first found, being simply covered with a sheet to relieve the grewsome spectacle .

On arrival of the acting coroner a jury was hastily summoned, the bodies viewed and examined and the testimony of the witnesses as herein outlined was taken.

The weapon used was a 38-calibre, five-shot, self acting Ivers & Johnson make, and in its use upon himself LaRue certainly showed maniacal nerve and a wonderful vitality. The revolver was found about twenty feet from the body, and it is apparent that after firing the two shots into the girl he had gone out into the yard and sent three bullets into his own breast, then reloaded the weapon and fired another bullet into his head. He had then dropped the revolver and crawled twenty feet toward the kitchen door, supposedly making an effort to reach the girl's side again. Five empty shells and one loaded one were found near the pistol, which contained one empty cartridge and a loaded one.

The verdict of the coroner's jury was in accord with the evidence, and the work of this inquisitorial body was concluded at about half past six o'clock.

The funeral was held at 2 o'clock on Wednesday. The body of the girl was taken into the church at Walkup's Grove, where Elder W. W. Laughlin, the Baptist pastor, conducted a brief and simple burial service. In the mean time the body of LaRue was interred without ceremony. The latter was burial lot, which contains the body of his mother and other members of the LaRue family. Another lot was purchased in which to inter the girl's body.

LaRue was about 33 years of age. He had always been considered a wild and reckless character. Little was known of him during the past ten years however as he had been away from home. The last time he was here was about seven years ago, when he came home and remained two weeks. The greater part of these ten years he has spent in Texas, California and Old Mexico. From letters and other papers found on his person, he had evidently been engaged in mining work and in an effort at introducing a newly

patented drill for mining operations. It has been reported that he was married while in the west, but this report was never confirmed.

The girl was 15 years of age on the 15 day of last July. She was of a modest and retiring disposition and was regarded very highly by the people of Dotham neighborhood. She was a member of this year's graduating class of the Dale township rural schools. The mother acknowledged that LaRue had made a proposal of marriage by letter to the girl, but that on account of his dissipation and intemperate habits the proposal had been disapproved by the parents, and declined – in a respectful manner – by the girl. "When Grace was a little girl," the mother said, (And she was about 8 years of age when last he saw her,) Cap would take her on his knee and say she should be his wife "when she grew up."

Epitome.

That William H. LaRue is alive today he can accredit to the forethought and solicitude of his wife, who urged him to get away. There is no reason to doubt that Cap LaRue came to the old home for the express purpose of killing his aged, father. That the deed was premeditated is patent in the fact that he purchased the revolver at Mound City that morning. Adolph Bertram, the driver, said LaRue was very drunk the night before when he arrived in Mound City on the train, and that he was also intoxicated that morning – so much so, in fact, that he could not recollect where he had stopped the night before, and after getting in the buggy to start out on the drive, they had to go to several places before they found his valise. On the way he cursed and abused his father bitterly in a maudlin, incoherent manner, and drank several times, but never once made any reference to the girl. Young Bertram regarded the remarks only as those of a drunken man in a temporary rage, and thought by the time the farm was reached he would sober up and resume the actions of a man in normal condition.

Mr. and Mrs. LaRue have each been married three times. As a consequence there is a complex mixture of family relations. The present union has existed about thirteen years. The LaRue homestead contains 200 acres, but it was inherited by William H. LaRue, and the title is such that at his death the place will go to the children by his first marriage of whom there are but two living at the present time. Cap LaRue knew the conditions of this will and being a profligate in character and a degenerate, has doubtless felt aggrieved many times when he saw the large family of stepchildren living and enjoying the income from the estate which he would rightfully share in, if only the father was out of the way. Thus he doubtless brooded for years, until the subject became a mania with him.

It is the generally accepted theory that he had no intention of harming the girl when he first came to the place, but that he became suddenly incensed at her refusal to marry him, and concluded to end her existence also. As he expressed himself: "I'm nobody; nobody cares for me – and what do I care!" The reaction from his drunken carousal was then setting in, and in his madness he wanted to make sure the girl was dead. Thus, he shot her again, then went to looking for his father, whom he supposed to be out in the front of the house. Not finding the old gentleman, Cap LaRue doubtless thus soliloquized; "Pa has given the alarm; a citizens' posse will soon be after me, I will be overpowered, my weapon taken from me – then –" and he sent bullet after bullet speeding into his own body.

And perhaps it were best so.

Verdict of the Coroner's Jury.

We, the undersigned jurors, impaneled and sworn on the 1st day of August, 1905, at the township of Dale, in the county of Atchison, and state of Missouri, by W. H. Hambaugh acting as coroner, to diligently inquire and true presentment make how and by whom C. C. LaRue and Grace Miller, whose bodies were found at the home of Wm. H. LaRue in Dale township on the 1st day of August., 1905, came to their death, having viewed the bodies and heard the evidence, do find that the deceased came to their death in the following manner: That Grace Miller came to her death by gunshot wounds inflicted by a gun in the hands of C. C. LaRue, and that C. C. Larue came to his death by gunshot wounds inflicted by a gun in his own hands, and which the jury do find caused the immediate death of the two persons whose bodies were found as aforesaid.

Given under our hands this 1st day of August, 1905, - J. G. Carter, L. M. Armstrong, Walter Walkup, D. Thiesfield, A. N. Barker, Thos. A. Walkup.

Attest W. H. Hambaugh, Acting Coroner.

Obituary and Tribute of Respect.

Miss Grace Miller was born in South Dakota, July 10th, 1890. When she was young her mother married. W. H. LaRue, and she moved with her parents to their farm near Dotham, Mo., where she resided until her death. On May 29, 1905, she graduated from the Walkup's Grove rural school.

At the time of her death, which occurred August 1st, 1905, she was aged 15 years and twenty-one days. Being of a modest and pleasant disposition she had endeared herself to all who knew her, and besides the bereaved family, she lives a host of friends to mourn her untimely death.

The regard in which she was held by all who knew her, and especially by her companions in the Walkup's Grove Sunday school, is attested by the following

Resolutions of Respect.

Whereas. The supreme Ruler of the Universe has in His Infinite wisdom removed from us a beloved member of our organization, be it

Resolved. That the sudden removal from our midst of this young and innocent life leaves a sad vacancy that will long be felt by the members and friends in our Sunday school.

Resolved. That we extend our sympathy to the afflicted family and express our hope that even so great a loss to us all may be over-ruled for good by Him "who doeth all things well"

Resolved. That a copy of these resolutions be spread up on the records of the organization and that a copy be printed in the local papers and be sent to the bereaved family.

Miss Emma Walkup
Mrs Vebuia Little
Mrs. Fannie Crossman

Note: This is an unedited reproduction of the original. lmv: may 2008.