

[Nicholas, Frederick]

JEALOUS MAN KILLS WOMAN AND SHOOTS SELF THROUGH HEAD
Woman of 37 Sent to Her Death in Her Flat in Plymouth
Avenue South by Man 62 Years Old
PLANS FOR SHOOTING CHANGED

Jealousy brought about murder and suicide yesterday afternoon in the little flat at No. 707 Plymouth avenue south. Mrs. Helen Wilson, divorced wife of a Rochester attorney, also known as Mrs. Nellie Ridley, was shot in the head and instantly killed by Frederick Nicholas, a one-time prosperous produce dealer at Holcomb, Ontario county.

After the woman fell, Nicholas walked a few steps to a corner of the kitchen where a mirror hung. Taking deliberate aim as he faced the mirror, he pulled the trigger of the revolver and sent a bullet through his brain. He died at St. Mary's Hospital last night at 11:40 o'clock.

Nicholas had planned to kill the man who, he charged, had come between him and Mrs. Wilson.

Twenty years ago the dead woman was Miss Helen Brett, of Niagara Falls, when she was 17 she was married to one Edward Wilson. According to information obtained after the tragedy, three children were born to the couple. Two boys, now 19 and 14, live in the city, and a girl, Rita Wilson, who is about 11 years old, lived with her mother.

In course of time the Wilsons parted, and in 1909 Mrs. Wilson was married by [to] Luther C. Benedict, an attorney, who boards at 116 Main street west. Last year Mrs. Benedict sued her husband for a divorce and on September 28th, obtained a decree before Justice Benton in equity term.

Nicholas Man of 62

Just when Nicholas and Mrs. Wilson, as she usually calls herself, met, neither Captain Whaley, of the Detective Bureau, nor Assistant District Attorney James C. Mann knows. For several years past Nicholas conducted a produce business in East Bloomfield. His office and depot were in Holcomb, a hamlet on the New York Central railroad. There the man transacted much business and accumulated considerable money. He owned a house there, and after his wife died four or five years ago he endeavored to keep up his establishment. It was after the death of his wife that Nicholas came into contact with Mrs. Wilson.

Although 62 years old, Nicholas became strongly attached to the woman. She was employed as his housekeeper and went to live at Holcomb. Her little daughter, Rita, accompanied her. Nicholas was very fond of the child, whom he often addressed as "little daughter" and "girlie." How long Mrs. Wilson remained at Holcomb has not been learned, but she probably did not continue there as Nicholas's housekeeper for more than a year at the most.

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She eventually found her way back to the city, and she lived at different periods at No. 330 Jefferson avenue, No. 56 Elba street and at No. 707 Plymouth avenue south.

Used Different Names

The house in which the tragedy occurred is a two-story Boston flat. A year ago the woman lived in the upper flat, which consists of four small rooms, a bath and a kitchen. After leaving the flat last year Mrs. Wilson went to Elba street. She was known at the Jefferson avenue house as Mrs. Wilson, while at the Elba street house she went under the name of Mrs. Fred Nicholas. It is believed that Nicholas intended to move to Rochester and marry or board with the woman.

One of Nicholas's letters, found among the woman's effects, was written from Holcomb. In it he spoke of having disposed of his business and said parties were about to take his house and lot. His letters were dignified, but plainly void of his affection for the woman. Not a word of suspicion or complaint was contained in any of his communications.

Among Mrs. Wilson's acquaintances was Martin H. Ridley, about 40 years old, an employee in a furniture store. For four years or more, at divers times, Ridley boarded with Mrs. Wilson.

Words Between the Two Men

Nicholas, it appears, did not approve of Ridley's presence in the Wilson domicile, although none of his letters to the woman mentioned the man's name. He had intended to remove to the city last July and begin housekeeping with the woman, but for some reason he did not do so. Ridley told Captain Whaley, when summoned to police headquarters, that he had met Nicholas. He said the man wanted to buy the furniture he had bought and given Mrs. Wilson, but they could not agree on the price. He admitted that they had had some words at one time at her flat regarding his presence, and that he had told Nicholas "a few things."

For some time of late Nicholas had been living at No. 152 South Main street in Canandaigua. He wished to become a secret-service agent, and the late Frank Rice, of Canandaigua, made efforts to obtain an appointment for him. Only recently Nicholas received the appointment.

It is known that for two months past Nicholas had planned to kill the Rochester man. On February 27th he obtained from a Canandaigua magistrate a permit to carry a revolver. He bought a Colt 38-caliber revolver. He bought [?].

Intended to Kill Ridley

With this gun Nicholas intended to [?] addressed to the public, he wrote that he had tried to "get" Ridley, but the latter bore a charmed life or kept out of his path purposely.

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In a letter to Mrs. Wilson, written several days ago, Nicholas told of his love for her and little Rita and said he wanted to buy a piano for the child. On Thursday he called at the woman's flat and told her he had bought the piano for Rita and that the instrument was on its way to Rochester. He said it had been shipped to himself at the Plymouth avenue house, and that he would pay for the "hoisting" of it into the flat. He gave Mrs. Wilson (\$6?) to pay the men for the "hoisting," as he termed it.

Nicholas took an affectionate leave of Mrs. Wilson that afternoon. He did not call again until yesterday afternoon. It is not known at what time the man went to the flat. Mrs. Mary Bates, who lives in the lower flat with her husband, did not see any person enter or leave the upper flat during the day. She did not hear the quarrel or the two shots fired. She was in the yard most of the afternoon, she said.

Shooting Not Seen or Heard

It will never be known what took place before the shooting. The little girl was not present when the final scene was enacted. She was some distance away, playing with some school friends.

Mrs. Wilson had occupied the flat only five weeks. Ridley was a boarder. Early in the afternoon she went to the store of William Scheiber and No. 4__?) Plymouth avenue south, and ordered some groceries. Shortly after 3 o'clock Fred Payne, a delivery boy employed by Scheiber, was sent to the flat. Young Payne rapped at the door downstairs. Receiving no reply, he opened the door and entered the hall. He climbed the stairs, intending to leave the groceries on the floor or a table. Peering into the little kitchen at his left, Payne was astounded to see two bodies lying on the floor. Blood was from bullet holes in their heads.

Police Informed of Tragedy

Payne ran out of the house and did not stop until he reached the Scheiber grocery. There he told of what he had seen, and telephoned to the Bronson avenue station. Patrolman John Dwyer was the first officer to reach the flat. He was followed by Captain Ryan, Inspector Ryan, Detective-Sergeant John McDonald and acting Detective Daniel J. Murphy. Inasmuch as the woman lay dead, Coroner Kleindienst was notified and he went to the house at once. The ambulance of St. Mary's Hospital was summoned, and Nicholas, unconscious, was removed to the hospital.

The woman evidently had been shot in the right temple as she was putting a shovelful of coal into the kitchen range. One lid was off the front part of the stove. Her body lay outstretched on the floor.

The body of Nicholas lay beside the kitchen sink, above which was the mirror. The revolver was on the floor near the man's body, two chambers

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empty. The bullet entering Nicholas's head passed through the brain and must have lodged in a wall of the kitchen.

Many Letters Found

For the time being the police were at sea as to the identity of the man and the woman, and the rooms were searched for letters and papers. It was seen at once that the woman was in possession of the premises. Her rent book was made out to "Mrs. M. Ridley." Many letters found were addressed to the dead woman by friends, including Ridley, Nicholas and her sisters, Edith and Renée Brett. A faded portrait of Horace Grafton Wilson, one of her sons, was found in her dresser. Insurance policies were found, showing that she kept up insurance on her children and former husband, Luther Benedict. A pile of post cards were unopened.

A couple of letters written by Ridley at a time when evidently, he was not boarding with her were of interest to the police. In one Ridley warned Mrs. Wilson of evil intrigues and told her he was her "true friend." A photograph of Nicholas was found in Mrs. Wilson's bedroom. Patrolman McCarthy, of Central station, who knew Nicholas, identified the picture. Later he went to the hospital and identified the dying man.

Son of Woman Notified

News of the shooting reached Fred Wilson, the older son, who lives in Mitchell street, an hour or so after it happened. He telephoned to Ridley, who later went to headquarters with Detective-Sergeant McDonald, and talked with Captain Whaley and Assistant District Attorney Mann.

Ridley said he knew Nicholas but little, but he had known the woman for some time and had boarded with her on and off for four years. He is married, but separated from his wife, several years ago. Mrs. Ridley lived in the city, he said. He once lived at No. 73 [Main?] street.

Ridley said he had boarded with Mrs. Wilson for a year or so of late. He had heard that Nicholas was a [?] although he had never seen him in liquor. He said last summer Nicholas talked pretty strongly to Mrs. Wilson, and he cautioned him not to go too far. He [?] that his relations with Mrs. Wilson were of the most correct sort.

Before leaving Canandaigua Nicholas wrote four letters on Webster Head stationery. One was addressed to Mrs. L. L. Pierce of Ioina, Ontario county, who is his daughter; another to Ridley, a third to the "public," and the fourth to Fred Chapman, of Canandaigua, probably a friend.

"Mock Marriage" to Nicholas?

Captain Whaley sorted out of the mass of papers Mrs. Wilson's decree of divorce from Benedict. Ridley said he understood that Mrs. Wilson and Nicholas had been married, but was told that they had gone through a

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"mock marriage." Ridley had not lived with his own wife, he said, in nine years.

In his letter to Ridley, Nicholas flayed the man without mercy. He scored him for coming between himself and Mrs. Wilson and applied all manner of names to him. It was a scorching letter throughout. In another letter Nicholas told of having made plans to shoot Ridley, but said they had miscarried. He had decided, he wrote, that the only way to adjust matters was to kill the woman he loved and himself.

"You're pretty lucky," observed Whaley to Ridley.

Fred Wilson took his little sister to his home last night. The young man maintained a solid front, although it was evident that he suffered keenly. The little daughter was hysterical at the time.

Democrat & Chronicle, Rochester NY, Sun. 21 Mar 1915

[from a rather poor-quality OCR copy]

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Victor, N. Y.—The funeral of Frederick Nicholas was held at the Universalist church on Tuesday afternoon. Mr. Nicholas, with his [late] wife and daughter, were for many years residents of the town of Bristol, at first working S. H. Wheeler's farm and later acting as agent for the McCormick machinery. He was a member of the old E. K. O. R. organization and for a long time was its president. For years he was treasurer of the Universalist church society and a regular attendant at the church and it was with regret that his neighbors saw him move to Holcomb some years ago. While there he was a successful business man. His wife, Phoebe Wheaton Nicholas, died some two years ago and he leaves a daughter, Mrs. L. L. Pierce, of Ionia, and one granddaughter. Burial was beside his wife in the Evergreen cemetery. The daughter has the sincerest sympathy of her many Bristol friends. Mr. Nicholas was 62 years old and died at Rochester by his own hand, after taking the life of another.

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