

[Waters, Mary Griswold & Agatha]

HAD INSANE IMPULSE TO KILL

MRS. J. W. WATERS WAS VICTIM OF NEURASTHENIA

Long Under Treatment for Nervousness—Late Night Telephone Call Unbalanced  
Her Mind—Girl Killed in Her Sleep—Mother a Suicide in Sight of Husband

Mrs. John W. Waters of 144 West Seventy-sixth street, who killed her daughter Agatha and herself early yesterday morning, was suffering from an attack of temporary insanity following a long period of neurasthenia.

Mrs. Waters had been under treatment by specialists for this disease for several months. Dr. Francis E. Doughty of 903 Madison avenue and Dr. Edward D. Fisher of 10 West Fifty-second street were the physicians who had been treating her. While she was very nervous and at times despondent there was nothing in Mrs. Waters's condition, according to the family and physicians, to give rise to any fears that she would take her life or any one else's. It was noticed that her nervousness increased very much if anything out of the ordinary occurred. It is the idea of Coroner Acritelli that a telephone call rather late on Sunday night, just as the family were retiring, may have suddenly unbalanced her.

The Waters family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Waters and four daughters, of whom Agatha was the third. The eldest is the wife of Richard H. Gatling of 318 West Eighty-fourth street, a grandson of the gun inventor. Next to her came Ruth, the Agatha, who was 22 years old, and then Grace, who is 20. Agatha was a splendid horsewoman, and athletic, but recently she, too, had developed a nervous complaint, for which the physicians advised a trip abroad. She was to have sailed Saturday with friends. It is believed that her mother was brooding over her daughter's afflictions as well as her own.

Mr. Waters recently bought a new touring car, and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons he and his wife and the three girls made trips in it. On Sunday afternoon they went to far Rockaway, and got back in time for dinner.

Mrs. Waters retired earlier than the rest of the family. It was about 9:30 when she went to bed, and before she fell asleep the telephone rang sharply. It was answered by the youngest daughter. The call proved to be a mistake, but it seemed to excite Mrs. Waters, and several times she asked about it.

It would appear as though late Mrs. Waters got out of bed, when the entire household was asleep, went to her husband's room on the next floor and got his revolver lying on his bureau, and then made her way to the front room on the third floor where her two daughters, Ruth and Agatha, were asleep.

As she went in through the door, the nearest bed was that on which Agatha was asleep, and it may have been this fact that led the mother to

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select her as the victim. Ruth Waters told the coroner that she woke up when her mother entered the room and when she asked her what the matter was, Mrs. Winters said:

“What was that telephone message last night?”

Ruth replied that it was a mistake and had hardly got the words out of her mouth before there was the sound of a shot and her mother ran out of the room and started downstairs. She reached the top of the stairs just as Mr. Waters reached the foot of the stairs. As Mrs. Waters saw her husband she pointed the revolver at her own head and killed herself, falling down the stairs to her husband's feet.

Mrs. Waters was 56 years old. She was a Miss Griswold of this city. She and her husband had been married nearly thirty years and were a very devoted couple. Mr. Waters was so broken up over the tragedy himself yesterday that a doctor had to be called in to care for him.

Mrs. Waters was very much interested in church work and was a prominent member of the Church of the Divine Paternity [Fourth Universalist], on Central Park West. She attended services there on Sunday.

The police at first got a story that Agatha had gone out automobiling by herself and had not returned until late Sunday evening. This was emphatically denied by the family to the Coroner. Mr. Waters said that they had all gone automobiling together.

The bodies of Mrs. Waters and her daughter will be cremated probably. No date had been set for the funeral yesterday.

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Transcribed on 10 Sep 2013 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY