

Account from the Waukon. newspaper, Democrat - December, 1881

- Supposed Murdered By Poisoning -

The Alleged Murderer Escapes

On Tuesday evening of last week a messenger came to town post haste for a doctor to attend A. C. Johnson whom he reported as very sick. Dr. Nitterauer went to see the patient but when he arrived there Johnson was dead. He had suffered from spasms in his death sickness which indicated poisoning, and to confirm this indication he said in the presence of Mr. E. B. Jones for whom he sent when he realized his approaching end, that he was poisoned by Mrs. Garvey, or more properly now Mrs. Curtin. That she had given him poison in chicken broth. The doctor returned to town and gave information of the affair to the authorities who sent Sheriff Hewit and Coroner Bowen to the scene. The sheriff arrested Mrs. Garvey and the coroner held an inquest on the body of the deceased. Mr. E. B. Jones was the principal witness who testified about as follows:

I was sent for. When I got here one of them told me to hurry, that Johnson wanted to talk to me. I came in and went upstairs. He spoke and told me to raise him up. I put my arm under his head. He took a fit or spasm, commenced to shake and straightened back in bed, and lay still for a few minutes. When he came to he said he was going to die, and wanted me to write to his boys. He said he had his money in his pocket and wanted me to take it. I found \$300 in one pocket and \$40 in another. He showed me his overcoat and other coat and told me to take care of them. He said he was poisoned. I asked him how? He said in chicken soup. I asked him how long ago? He said about two hours. In the mean time he would have these jerking spells. In about half an hour after I got to him he took one of those fits and died. Mrs. Garvey's little boy were present and asked me what was the matter with Johnson. I told him he was sick, and Johnson spoke and said: "Your mother poisoned me". Had no conversation with Mrs. Garvey. Her last husband's name was Curtin.

The verdict of the coroner's jury was to the effect that Johnson had come to his death by poison administered by Mrs. Garvey. The lass was therefore brought to Waukon and as no jail was to be had, was watched by officers of the law, at the central House. During Wednesday and Thursday there was some delay in the holding a preliminary examination, but was fixed for Friday morning, when low, the dawn revealed hanging from the porch of the Central House-----Not the body of Mrs. Garvey, but the sheet by which she slipped down to terra firma, and that worthy dame was no where to be found. At the present writing, Friday morning, the officers are searching for the bird that has flown.

A short review of the careers of the two principal actors in this drama, Mr. A. C. Johnson, generally known as "Lying" Johnson, and Mrs. Garvey, may be of some interest at this time.-- The former had for many years been a widower and the later a widow, they being neighbors, and, it is reported, on very intimate terms. At one time, it is said, they made arrangements to get married, and Johnson drove his stock and removed his personal property to Mrs. Garvey's place. But she having more love for

the property than for him, backed down from the marriage arrangement, but managed to drive the stock off and fleece Johnson out of all the effects he had removed to her place. This is one of the many episodes of their late years. About a year ago, however Mr. Johnson picked up his traps and went out west somewhere, leaving several debts unpaid, the Democrat being one of his creditors, since which time nothing was heard of him until his recent return. Mrs. Garvey in the mean time, and all the time, being susceptible to Cupid's darts, and having an eye to business, managed, a few weeks ago, to captivate the heart of Mr. John T. Curtin, of this town. He became infatuated with her, and they were married. He decked her in gaudy colors, and on making her his bride, gave her \$100 in gold for safe keeping. She kept it safe from him, and in four or five days after the nuptials, skipped out and went to Fort Dodge on a pleasure tour. She returned about two weeks ago to her house and farm in Union Prairie township, and, as report has it, there was Mr. Johnson who had returned a few days previously from the west. They got along all right until Tuesday when Mrs. Garvey came to town and among her purchases brought a half drachma of strychnine at Kennedy's drug store, to poison the rats, she said. That evening when Dr. Nitterauer reached the house Johnson was dead in bed, up stairs, and she was drunk in bed down stairs. During the night when she awoke she asked where Johnson's money was, and on being told by Mr. Jones that he had it, she demanded \$100, saying that it was hers and that Johnson was simply keeping it for her. She afterwards demanded the whole of it saying that Johnson and she had agreed to get married, and that she had the best right to it.

It seems that Johnson had been sick some days previous to his death and that the chicken broth was given for nourishment. The evidence, as far is known, makes a strong circumstantial case against Mrs. Garvey, but circumstances often bring suspicion upon innocent persons, and it is always best to be slow in forming or expressing an opinion in such cases. She will no doubt be arrested and the law will take its course.

P.S. -- Up to the hour of going to press Mrs. Garvey has eluded the search of the sheriff, though her track has been found. Mr. Hanson, Mr. Brownell's clerk, learned that she slept Friday night at Mr. Andrew Jacobson's, at the Iowa river. She simply walked beyond the circuit where search was supposed to be and where she was supposed to be and where search was made for her. The Sheriff and deputy sheriff spent all day Friday searching for her in the vicinity where she lived, and on Friday night a number of men made a very thorough search, looking through every house in the section where she was supposed to be. Mrs. Garvey played her game well, however, and it is probable that she is now out of danger.

We should have mentioned above that Johnson's stomach, or at least its contents, were sent to Chicago for analysis, the results of which we have not yet learned.

Trial of Mrs. Curtin, Alias Garvey

To the district court of Allamakee Co., Iowa:

Received notice early on the morning of Dec. 7 A.D. 1881 that the body of one A.C. Johnson was lying dead at the residence of Mrs. Curtin, Union Prairie Township, Allamakee Co., Iowa and that his death occurred under suspicious circumstances. In

company with Geo. Hewitt, Sheriff I immediately proceeded to the residence of Mrs. Curtin, a jury was summoned... bringing in a verdict accusing Mrs. Curtin of administering deadly poison to Johnson with felonious intent. I ordered the sheriff to arrest Mrs. Curtin and issued a warrant to take her before a J. P for preliminary examination. There was found property belonging to the deceased of \$341.00 in money which after paying necessary funeral expenses and taking out coroners fees as required by law was paid over to the clerk of courts for said county. Total expenses \$43.55.

D. M. Bouer, coroner of Allamakee Co., Iowa

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State Of Iowa District Court of Allamakee County against
Hanora Curtin - alias - Hanora Garvey
Preliminary Information

The above named defendant Hanora Curtin is accused of the crime of Murder:

For that she the said defendant did on the 6th day of December AD 1881 at Union Prairie Township in the County of Allamakee, State of Iowa, feloniously, Willfully and of Malice aforethought, deliberately and premeditate – Kill and Murder one A. C. Johnson then and there beings – by administering to him, the said A. C. Johnson by the hand of one Goff, some chicken broth in which she the defendant had knowingly and willfully placed or caused to be placed a fatal dose of a deadly poison, believed by affidavit to have been Strychnine, with intent him the said A. C. Johnson to kill and murder, of which the said poison administered to him as aforesaid the said A. C. Johnson did partake and there fore presently did die. Which said acts of the defendant were to the contrary to the forms of the statute in such case made and provided and against the peace and the that the state will further introduce as a witness on said trial, N.M. Sangland who resides in Decorah, Winneshiek County Iowa and is by occupation the sheriff of said county and that I expect to prove in substance by said witness:

That on or about the 29th of December 1882 you were confined in the jail of Winnesheik County, Iowa under the charge set forth in the indictment in the above entitled case.

The grand jury in and for the county of Allamakee and the state of Iowa, in the name and by the authority of the state of Iowa, accuse Honora Curtin alis Honora Garvey of the crime of Murder committed as follows:

The said Honara Curtin alias Honara Garvey at the county of Allamakee and in the state of Iowa on about 6th day of December A.D. 1881 did willfully, feloniously, deliberately and of her malice, aforethought and premeditatedly administer and give to one A.C. Johnson a certain deadly poison to wit: five grains of a certain deadly poison called strychnine with the specific intent in so doing, feloniously, willfully, premeditatedly, deliberately and of her malice aforethought to kill and murder the said A.C. Johnson, that the said A.C. Johnson did then and there take and swallow the aforesaid deadly poison, so administered and given to him by defendant as aforesaid and with intent aforesaid and from the effect of said deadly poison so administered and taken became mortally sick and then and there did die.

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J. F. Kennedy being sworn says:

I reside in Waukon, am clerk in my brothers store. Sell several kinds of poison such as strychnine, opium etc. On December 6, 1881 I sold defendant about one half dram of strychnine, I wrapped it in a paper, she said she wanted it to poison a skunk. A piece of paper shown witness, I think I have seen the piece of paper before. I think it is the paper I wrapped up the poison in. J. F. Kennedy

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D. H. Bowen being sworn says:

I am practicing Physician & Surgeon, reside in Waukon, Iowa. Last year coroner of Allamakee Co., Iowa, as such coroner, was called to hold an inquest on the body of one A. C.. Johnson on the 6th day of Dec. 1881. Found the body of Johnson at the residence of the defendant in Union Prairie Township, Allamakee Co. The body was lying on a bed when I arrived there. The face presented a somewhat livid appearance. The fingers drawn in to some extent. I made a post-mortem examination, found the heart & lungs organically sound but the lungs were somewhat congested. I ligated the upper and lower openings of stomach then removed the stomach and placed it into a glass jar which I had carefully cleaned and sealed it up in the presence of the sheriff and since had it in my exclusive possession. D.H. Bowen

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E. B. Jones being sworn says:

My name is E. B. Jones, have resided in this Co. 25 years. Knew A. C. Johnson his life time, and know the defendant. [I] was called some time in the fore part of Dec. to the house of defendant, when I got there in company with my wife, found the defendant & A. C. Johnson, & some children at the house.

A. C. Johnson was upstairs on the bed, he asked me to raise him up & was taken with a spasm clinching his hands & throwing his head back & the whole body appeared to be stiff, said he was going to die & that he had been poisoned, that he had three hundred & forty dollars and also wanted me to take charge of it and wanted me to write to his children. Had been poisoned, he thought, about two hours before in chicken soup. He said to my wife that she (meaning defendant) did it. Said also after my wife went away that the defendant had poisoned him. He had several slight spasms and then one severe Spasm in which he died, about one half hour after I got there. He said "I am poisoned by strychnine, don't this look like it?"

He could hardly swallow anything. After death his head was bowed backwards relaxed. The expression of his face was frightful, his lips drawn apart so as to show his teeth and his face of a livid flush, eyes half open and bloodshot. E. B. Jones

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Mrs. Lucinda Jones being sworn says:

I am the wife of E. B. Jones. I went to the house of the defendant and there saw A. C. Johnson, he was in a spasm drawing his head back and clinching his hands, said he was going to die & had \$340.00 & wanted my husband to take care of it and write to his children about it. Said he had been poisoned in chicken soup given him by defendant. He said it was strychnine & the soup had a bad taste to it, wanted a doctor and started with a Goff boy to get one. Lucinda Jones

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William Garvey being sworn says:

I am a son of the defendant, 11 years old, I knew A. C. Johnson for 4 or 5 years. He died at my mothers house last winter. I got home about 6 o'clock from town, did not eat supper at home, but know they had chicken soup for supper, saw some of it in the kettle. Johnson was up stairs and mother was asleep on the bed when I got home. Johnson was sick and called me upstairs & sent me after Mr. Jones, George Goff went with me after Mr. Jones.

William Garvey

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George Goff being sworn says:

I am 13 years of age. I was at the defendants house from about 3 o'clock P. M. on the day Johnson died, ate supper there, had chicken & chicken soup for supper. Johnson did not eat supper at that time. It was about sundown at that time I brought some soup in a cup upstairs, but did not see Johnson eat it. Mrs. Garvey gave me the soup in the cup & went upstairs with me & I left her & Johnson there together. Johnson in about one & one half hour sent Wm. Garvey & me after Mr. Jones & said he was sick. Mrs. Garvey at this time was lying asleep on the bed. I came back to the house with Mr. & Mrs. Jones and afterwards went with Mrs. Jones for the doctor.

George Goff

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J. C. Beedy being sworn says:

I was at the Garvey's house shortly after Mr. Johnson's death and saw the body of Johnson lying in the bed. The head was drawn back, the arms were drawn up and across the bosom, the hands were partially clinched & drawn out of shape. Countenance was very livid dark brown flush upon it. I straightened out the arms, straightened up the head & the legs were drawn up so I straightened them up. Mrs. Garvey was lying on the bed and did not get up until 4 or 5 hours after I got there. She went to the cupboard her back was toward me & it is my impression that she put something into her bosom. She went up-stairs & was gone from 3 to 5 minutes. Then came down and followed Mr. Jones & Mr. Steele out of the house. She & Mr. Jones came back, she asked for the money, said Mr. Beedy is here you can count it out and give it to me. Said she was going to be married to Mr. Johnson and had the best right to it. Said several times she knew how much money he had that he had \$300. in one pocket and had some in the other pocket but don't recollect the amount. John C. Beedy

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Verdict:

We the jury find the defendant guilty - of murder in the first degree and say that her punishment shall be imprisonment for life at hard labor in the state Penitentiary

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Pardon; May 24, 1890
State of Iowa executive Department
To Marquis Barr – Warden, Penitentiary at Anamosa
Whereas:

Hanora Curtin

Now imprisoned in the Penitentiary at Anamosa by virtue
of a sentence of the district court of the county of Allamakee
for the offense of Murder in the first degree
was pardoned in due form of law on the
23rd day of May A.D. 1890.

The same takes effect on the 24th day of May.

Now therefore I, Horace Boies, Governor of the state of Iowa,
by virtue of authority in me vested, do require you at the time designated
to discharge from further custody or imprisonment for said
offense the said Hanora Curtin and immediately thereafter to
return this warrant with your doings thereon,
to the secretary of State, at Des Moines.

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Waukon Democrat - May 28, 1890

A petition was approved by the committee on the pardons of the recent legislature for the release from the Anamosa penitentiary of Mrs. Garvey, who was given a life sentence from this county several years ago for murder. The pardoning is strongly urged by the penitentiary officials who claim that Mrs. Garvey is consumptive and will live but a short time. It is thought that Gov. Boies will sign the release papers in a few days. Since writing the foregoing the news has come that the governor pardoned Mrs. Garvey on Saturday. It is with the condition that she forever abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors. She has been in the penitentiary seven years.

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Death of Elam B. Jones

Faithful Friend & Neighbor of Aaron C. Johnson

Elam B. Jones was born in Darke Co., Ohio, April 7, 1826 and died at Waukon Co., Iowa, July 27th, 1916, aged 90 years, 1 month and 20 days.

At the age of 12 he went to Logansport, Indiana, where he remained for several years and in April 1856 he drove an ox-team to Waukon. He lived in the town for several years and removed to Union Prairie township on the farm which has since been his home. His education placed him in the position to do many things for his neighborhood. He taught school, held office on the school board and also in the township, but his chief business was farming. For years he raised many bees, but though was very successful with them, he never tried to profit further than to supply his children, his neighbors or his own table with honey.

On Christmas day 1849 he was united in marriage with Miss Lucinda Neff, born in Cass Co., Indiana, December 6, 1832. For a little over 58 years this worthy couple enjoyed life together, or bore its burdens and sorrows, then the wife was called into the beyond and the aged husband was left to walk alone. The children were able to care for him, but he often spoke of waiting for the reunion with the loved one gone.

There were 14 children whom God gave them to rear and train for usefulness. Two of these have passed to the beyond. [One, Mrs. Arabella Hill d. in 1905] Those living are [Cora?] John H., Mary E. Marsden and William K. of Waukon. Mrs. Lewis [Sarah A.] Forkey of Great Falls, Montana; Lewis of Waukon; Mrs. Oscar [Ida] Arnold of Kuroki, Canada; Scott of Waukon; Mrs. Leonard [Amanda] McConaty of Decorah, Iowa; Lucy and Charley of Waukon. Joseph Coin, a half brother of Logansport, Indiana was here during his illness and death....