

## More Franklin Park Stories

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### Crime Stories Part 2

[Information appearing in this article was obtained from published newspaper accounts. First names and last initials are used to identify perpetrators and victims. Please note that Franklin Township became Franklin Park Borough in 1961.]

#### Assault and Battery

*Pittsburgh Daily Gazette* January 5, 1858

*Philip S was indicted for assault and battery on oath of Thomas R. This was at a sour-kraut cutting in Franklin Township. It was in evidence that Mr. R threw a cabbage stalk and hit Mr. S. Mr. S struck at him with a mallet, the latter dodged, but took a part of the blow on the cheek, breaking the skin. The fun wound up by Mr. S putting Mr. R over the top of a porch onto the ground, and there choking him awhile. Mr. S was acquitted and Mr. R ordered to pay the costs.*

#### Arson

*Pittsburgh Daily Gazette* December 23, 1858

*The matter of the burning of a schoolhouse in Franklin Township, on the night of the 7th last, came up before the Mayor, yesterday. It will be remembered that, on last Tuesday morning, two young men, named respectively Daniel and George A, brothers, were arrested by the city police and brought hither, charged with having set a schoolhouse on fire. Danl. Thayer, teacher of the school, Messrs. Forsyth, Showers, Sarver, and other neighbors, living near where the fire occurred, and Miss M'Pherson, together with some other witnesses to certain facts or suspicious circumstances, were examined.*

*It appeared that all against these young men were certain suspicions. Miss M'Pherson testified that, on the Sunday night previous to the fire, George was walking home with her, and asked her if she was going to the "spelling school" which was to be held at the school house on the next Tuesday evening, to which she replied that she did not know. He, George, said he guessed there wouldn't be many more spelling schools in that house; George was very bitter against the school master, Mr. Thayer. Miss M'P asked him why he disliked the teacher so much, and he gave as a reason, among others, that Thayer was a Roman Catholic. From the fact that the schoolhouse was burned down so soon after this conversation, suspicion was directed to the young man who had made the remarks above recorded.*

*Mr. Thayer testified that on the evening of the night of the fire he had carefully closed the shutters of the school house together with the windows, after having extinguished the fire; that he felt sure the fire could not have originated from within the house.*

*George Showers, who lived near by the house, said that he ran to the spot when he saw the flames or light, and opening one of the shutters, found the sash inside raised near to where the fire at that moment appeared to have begun.*

*There were several other facts in the testimony of no great importance, none of which however were of sufficient importance to fasten so weighty a crime upon the young men who had been arrested. Numerous witnesses testified to the general good character of the accused to the neighborhood, and the Mayor, after taking all the facts under due advisement, discharged the young men.*

*A strange fact may be mentioned in this connection. The two young men were arrested very early on Tuesday morning last. The officers who took them, saw at some distance from their road as they went out, a light as of a burning building. It turns out that on last Monday night, immediately before the arrest, another school house was burned also in Franklin Township. The building was known, we believe, as Neely's school house. It would not have been possible, they say, owing to the distance, for either of these persons, even if they had been found guilty in the case before the Mayor to have committed the second offense mentioned, and it is quite probable that those who burned the one also burned the other. We advise the good people of Franklin Township to keep a sharp eye to all stragglers and suspicious characters in their midst, and lay up all facts bearing upon the matter which they can. The villains will be caught up when they least dream of it. [Occurred in Marshall Township, which in 1858 was still part of Franklin Township.]*

### **Almost Killed the Poet**

*Pittsburg Dispatch* October 18, 1891

*Frank S was arraigned charged by Charles V with surety of the peace. He said the defendant, S, amused himself by following the prosecutor from a Baptist church in Franklin Township and using obscene language in the presence of ladies, and this finally led to a breach of the peace. The defendant, according to his story, was in a poetical or rather rhyming frame of mind on the evening of the 27th of September, when the trouble occurred. S said that as he passed V and his female companions, he, S, said to another "Good night, Ike, sleep tight," and V took offense and knocked him down. S' hat was offered in evidence to show that prosecutor had kicked it almost to smithereens, and the result was a case of law at first sight. It was tolerably evident that someone had been gayed in the presence of his best girl, and that offense cannot be tolerated in the rural regions. A witness was finally put up by the prosecution who testified that he had heard S insult a lady, and in church, too, which D. K. McGunnege, an eminent criminal authority, says raises the grade to first degree. The verdict was a division of the costs and a recommendation to both parties to cultivate the olive hereafter. [The Baptist church is located on Nicholson Road.]*

### **Woman Shoots Up Towns and Farms**

*New York Times* October 6, 1911

*Pittsburgh, Penn., Oct. 5.- Maggie R, 45 year old, daughter of a wealthy farmer of McCandless Township, was imprisoned in the Allegheny County Jail tonight on the technical charge of disorderly conduct. At 5 o'clock this morning she armed herself with two automatic revolvers and left her home. Before she was tired she had shot up two hotels, one Post Office, one schoolhouse, chased a teacher and 100 pupils and the School Board President for a half mile, visited every farmhouse within a radius of ten miles, and at the point of her revolvers drove the farmers and their families to the hills.*

*It is believed she is insane. The woman first made her appearance before daylight this morning at the Five Mile Inn [West View]. She fired a round of shots into the ceiling of the place, and the guests rushed helter-skelter downstairs panic stricken. The woman then went to a country hotel at Pine Creek [Eleven Mile House], where she shot holes through the doors. Following this she visited the farmhouses, shattered their windows with bullets, and put their inmates to flight.*

*Around 10 o'clock she went to the Logan schoolhouse, at Pine Creek, whereupon Miss Gertrude Seibert, the teacher, and Thomas Sarver, the School Board President, barricaded the doors. When Miss Seibert refused to open them, the woman fired a fusillade. This terrified those in the schoolhouse, and they ran out of the building, not stopping until they had fled a half mile. By this time the Sheriff's office had been communicated with. The Sheriff sent Deputy Wright to arrest the woman, but before his arrival Miss R had made her way to the Post Office in the village of Keown a few miles away. She fired a round of shots into the building and threatened Postmaster John Sarver with death if he "butted in." [Occurred in the Pine Creek section of McCandless.]*

### **Neighborhood Watch**

Philip Brunn lived in Ingomar, where his parents owned and operated the general store and lumberyard. Philip Sr. was also the Harmony Line stationmaster. Told in Mr. Brunn's own words, this story appeared in **Franklin Park Stories** (2006).

*Mrs. Mason had a telephone switchboard in the front room of her house in Perrysville. She could alert anyone at any time. So if we had a fire, she plugged in all the telephone lines and cranked them, saying, "There's a fire at so and so's." She kept doing this and everyone would assemble. We had water tanks at the lumberyard for fires and would load them onto the lumber truck and drive to the fire. The same thing would happen if there was another problem.*

*A lady who lived on Ingomar Heights Road was robbed and I remember as a child [circa 1919] how he came to the ticket office. He used the pay station there to call downtown and [Mrs. Mason] intercepted the call. He said, "I have been there, but I think I'm surrounded." Within minutes, everyone was alerted. So, I sat in the store with a 22 rifle on the counter and my brother was sent to the station to protect the ticket office with a shotgun. My father went out to look for the burglar along with all the other people. Someone had a pitchfork and someone had an ax.*

*Dad started to walk toward Wexford on the Harmony Line and was walking through a cut when this fellow was walking on the high ground with Dad down on the tracks. He said to this fellow, "Where are you going?" or "Where do you live?" "Well, I live right down there. I just got a call and they said Mrs. Baker was robbed." Dad knew this wasn't true, so he pulled out his gun and said, "Put up your hands," but the fellow shot at him. He wasn't hit. He shot this fellow, but didn't kill him and he got away.*

*[When the utility poles for the Harmony line were later removed, the Brunns got the section of pole that had three bullet holes from when the burglar fired at Mr. Brunn.]*

*The guy crawled under an oil rig at the end of Brandt Avenue. Mr. Knobloch lived at the end of Brandt Avenue and was a big fellow, six foot six and very strong. He crawled under the rig and pulled the guy out who was shot in the arm. The police came out from Pittsburgh on the train and arrested him. He went to jail.*

### **Cow holds grudge against tail lights**

*Telegraph-Herald* April 14, 1921

Fred Holman of Ingomar, when arrested on a charge of driving without a rear light burning, told Magistrate B L Succup that after purchasing a cow he roped it to the back of a truck and started home. Soon afterward the animal kicked out the light, according to the buyer. Ten dollars was added to the cost of the cow when the magistrate imposed a fine.

### **Burglary**

*Pittsburgh Press* May 16, 1921

*Confronted by a burglar in her home yesterday, Mrs. Chester Walter of Ingomar snatched a revolver from a drawer and forced the man to take to his heels. Before he ran away, however, he struggled with the woman and finally gained possession of the weapon. A short time later he engaged in a gun battle with two pursuers, but escaped.*

*Mrs. Walter was awakened by the intruder. She looked down the stairway in her home and saw a man's hand on the banister. When she called to him to stand he did so and Mrs. Walter pointed the revolver at him. She compelled him to march to the door. She followed with the weapon aimed at his head. He turned, snatched the weapon and ran.*

### **Drank the Evidence**

*Eugene Register-Guard* April 4, 1950

Sewickley, PA Detectives, who raided a cockfight in a barn near here, say they will have to drop charges of illegal liquor sales because the 102 man audience drank up all the evidence. When the detectives appeared, the onlookers rushed to a makeshift bar and drank up all the whisky and beer before the officers could stop them. The men paid fines of \$5 each.

### **The Hideout**

Based on newspaper accounts dating from the summer of 1964 and information provided by Franklin Park residents Paul and Cindy Merriman and Martha McEvoy.

The late Margaret and Homer Zapf of Franklin Park often minded their next door neighbors' dog when the young couple would visit family in Ohio. Curiously, the couple failed to return home from one such visit early in June 1964 and the Zapfs found themselves to be the dog's new owners. What no one in the close knit Duncan Drive neighborhood yet knew was their neighbors had been arrested by FBI agents near Marietta, Ohio in connection with bank robberies in Ohio and Indiana.

By June 9, 1964, Ohio newspapers were reporting on the capture and arrest of Peter and Nancy T. along with Curtis A. for robberies that had occurred in Farmersville, Ohio and Clayton, Indiana earlier in the year. Mr. A was arrested three days after the May 22 Ohio robbery following a brief shoot out with FBI agents in a Dayton hotel room.

Two days after the same robbery, Mr. T purchased two horses in northern Ohio and arranged for them to be delivered to South Olive, a small town along the former Route 21 in the southern half of the state. As he flagged down the van carrying the horses on June 8, Mr. T and his wife had no way of knowing the driver was an FBI agent

and that others were hiding in the van as well as in three cars that were following close behind.

At the time of his arrest, Mr. T had \$5,500 stuffed into his pockets and \$6,000 hidden in his car. Newspapers broke the story of the couple's arrest the following day, he on suspicion of the \$52,000 Farmersville robbery and the \$30,000 Clayton robbery that occurred in January of the same year and she on charges of conspiracy in connection with the Farmersville robbery. The couple waived preliminary hearings.

After repeatedly searching the couple's Franklin Park home, FBI agents recovered over \$7,000 in cash hidden throughout the house. Money was taped inside mirrors, under drawers and behind cabinets, as well as being hidden throughout the attic. Paul and Cindy Merriman, the home's current owners, discovered a lone silver certificate dollar bill stuck to the side of a cabinet during a kitchen remodel.

Mr. T, who had a police record dating back to 1943, pleaded guilty to the Farmersville bank robbery and was still awaiting sentencing in the fall of 1964. He died at his Ohio home in 1975, age fifty. Mr. A, a Korean War veteran, admitted to both robberies and was sentenced to up to twenty-one years in prison. Mrs. T's fate is unknown.

### **Police Nab Underage Drinkers**

*North Hills News Record August 5, 1965*

*Nine North Hills youths were fined by Squire Wilker for a beer party at a deserted farm off Wexford-Bayne Road. All were 18 years old. Each was fined \$15 plus \$9 costs. 3 ½ kegs of beer were found. Police from Franklin Park, Ohio and McCandless raided a vacant barn on night of July 22 where dozens of boys and girls were having a party. Most fled, but 68 were arrested with 57 turned over to juvenile authorities in Pittsburgh. Raid was led by Chief Hotnich and Mayor Thoerner.*

### **Hare-y Situation**

*Pittsburgh Press October 4, 1970*

*Rural residents of Franklin Park were pulling rabbits from mailboxes recently, and it wasn't part of a magic act. Police said someone filched 20 New Zealand white rabbits from pens at the home of Albert B and stuffed them into his neighbors' mailboxes. Soon the bunnies started breaking out of the rural delivery boxes. Alarmed residents called the cops. "It was like 'Alice in Wonderland,' what with big white rabbits popping out of mailboxes all over the place," said one bewildered officer. A rabbit roundup left five missing.*