

Richard Fryer Home/Presbyterian Church
10 North Ash Creek Drive

TERRITORIAL DISPATCHES

(Special To The Beaver Enterprise)

Shocking Affair - Tokerville, March, 16, 1875

Richard Fryer shot his wife, baby and Thomas Batty, about seven o'clock this morning. His wife is dead; the others are dangerously wounded. The sherrif killed Fryer in taking him. He was well armed and would not surrender; he was in a rock house and threatened death if he was molested.

S. Bringhurst.

We understand that Fryer has been subject to spells of mental derangement for several months past, and it was during one of these spells that he perpetrated the awful deed.

LATER

Tokerville, 1775

Batty died to day at half past 1 o'clock p.m. Baby cannot live.

THE DESERT NEWS

DETAILS OF THE FRYER TRAGEDY

TOQUERVILLE KANE CO. March 16th, 1875

EDITOR DESERT NEWS

We would respectfully request the use of a portion of your valuable paper to chronicle the following horrid tragedy, that has been enacted in our midst this day, and that has cast a most melancholy gloom over us all.

Richard Fryer has been at times for a year or two, laboring under fits of temporary insanity, but of late has acted in so rational a manner as not to be considered dangerous, and but yesterday did a faithful day's work at plastering. He sometime ago ordered his wife, Teresa Fryer, to leave his house and take her infant son, which she did, and has since lived most of the time with Thomas Batty and family, whose residence is but a short distance from her former home.

Fryer went this morning, about 7 o'clock, and knocked at the door of Thomas Batty's house, and upon being asked, went in, and asked if his wife was there. Being answered in the affirmative, he asked her if she had not brought disgrace and shame enough upon him? Fryer then drew a loaded revolver and fired a shot at Thomas Batty, the ball entering below the left eye and coming out at the back of the head. Batty then fell into the shoulder of Henry Willis, who was present, when Fryer fired a second shot the ball entering the back part of the head and coming out through the right eye. Fryer then turned and fired at his wife, who was yet in bed, the ball entering below the left ear and lodging in the head, near the right eye, which shot produced instand death. Fryer then shot his infant son, who was in bed with its deceased mother, the ball entering the child's forehead and coming out the back of the head.

Dr. Higgins, of St. George, who is now attending Thomas Batty and the

child, does not expect the former to survive until morning, as he is sinking fast. There is a possibility of the child recovering, but with a very faint hope.

After completing the tragedy, Fryer went to his home, a portion of which has been lately built of rock, unfinished, being without doors and windows. After getting into the house, he reloaded his revolver with cartridges, a number of which were found upon him by the Sheriff. The sheriff of Kane County, as soon as he was notified of the facts, went as near the house of Fryer as was deemed safe and called from the bystanders a posse, instructing them to arm themselves, which they did. The sheriff and posse then approached the house as near as was wisdom, when the sheriff called and asked Fryer if he would surrender. The first time he answered, "I will not, if you want me, come and take me." The second time his answer was, "I will not; I have had enough of you and Bishop Bringhamst."

The position occupied by Fryer preclude the possibility of taking him without a farther sacrifice of life. After viewing the position and believing that unless immediate action was taken more innocent blood would be shed, the sheriff ordered his posse to fire, which they did, killing Fryer instantly. Besides a revolver, Fryer was armed with a sharp butcher knife and a heavy loaded whip.

The coroner of Kane Co. being notified of the afore-mentioned facts repaired at once to the places occupied by the dead bodies, and held inquests upon the same, copies of which are herewith enclosed.

Respectfully,
William W. Hammond

INQUEST ON THE BODY OF TERESA FRYER

Territory of Utah, County of Kane,
Precinct of Toquerville

An inquisition held in Toquerville, Precinct, Kane County, Utah Territory, on the 16th day of March, A.D. 1875, before James Jepson, coroner of said county upon the body of Teresa Fryer, there lying dead, by the jurors whose names are hereto subscribed. The said jurors upon their oaths do say that the deceased came to her death by a pistol shot wound in her head, the same pistol shot being fired by the hand of her husband, Richard Fryer (since deceased), the same being done in the residence of Thomas Batty (of Toquerville), at or about 7 o'clock this a.m.

In testimony whereof the said jurors have hereunto set their hands the day and year aforesaid.

John Parker)
LeRoy W. Bebee,) Jurors
John O. Naile,)
Attest. _____ James Jepson)

May 1874, Richard wrote the following letter to Jane Fryer:

Utah

Toquerville, Kane Co.

May 10, 1874:

Dear Sister:

I thought I would sit down and write a few lines to you that you may know that we are alive yet and, like other people, looking for a bright future. This reminds me of the old saying. "There's a good time coming boys, wait a little longer." I have been bothered some with the rheumatism for the last fortnight but I am getting better of it now and busy fixing up around home. We have the prospects of an abundance of fruit this season. I understand from Brother Forsyth that you intend going to Conference and coming this way home. I hope you will do so, if you possibly can, sell my vinegar at any price you can and bring me in some flour with you, for it would be an accommodation in paying out for building. I am run to the last notch. But I intend to stick to it until I get a roof on my house. We are having quite a late spring here and very changeable weather for Dixie. But everything is prosperous never the less. Our kind love to all.

From your curious brother,
Richard Fryer

The following October 15, 1874, Richard's last and youngest child. Moses Fryer, was born in Toquerville.

Richard's granddaughter, Lucy Fryer Vance, says the following of him after they came to Toquerville.

quote---

"The years to follow were more years of hardship. Children were born and death brought sorrow. The little wilderness to which they had been assigned gave little hope for adequate sustenance and "the blossoming as a rose." To feed and clothe his family was a constant battle with the elements and with hard work. Their daughter Annie used to relate how she and her mother hauled water in buckets from the ditch a block east while her father mixed mortar and laid the rocks in place to build their two story home.

According to the "old timers" from Toquerville who knew Richard, his special mission must have been to promote and build up the cultural beauty of God's Vineyard in this area. He was an artist, sculpture, and musician. He played for dances, led the choirs, painted the curtains and scenes for the local "plays" and gave music lessons. He was a violinist in his own right - a man of culture and refinement.

The Fryer and Geary families had a better education than the average person at that period in history. John Geary's would be classed superior even today. They felt that the town of Toquer-

ville thought that they considered themselves better than the rest of the community and resented it.

The following are stories told to me by the family and neighbors. One night Richard was coming down the street after dark, and two young "Upstarts", wearing masks, jumped out from behind a tree and beat him over the head with a pistol until he was unconscious. Then they dragged him down to Aunt Sophia Geary's house, opened the door, threw him in on her floor, and ran.

Another day some fellows (likely first cousins or brothers of the above mentioned "Upstarts" if not the same ones) caught him, tied his feet to a single tree that was fastened to a harnessed work horse, and raced through the streets of Toquerville dragging him behind them. These cruel incidents might have injured him and been the cause of mental breakdown.

In addition Richard became upset and worried because he thought his wife was carrying on a love affair with their next door neighbor Thomas Batty. He finally ordered her to leave his house and take her infant son which she did. After that she lived most of the time with the Thomas Batty family.

He began to have temporary spells of insanity and had them for a year or two when the undreamed of tragedy took place.

Edwin Slack says that J. Thomas Willis, son of Bishop Willis told him that he was the one who shot Richard Fryer and was still bragging about it when he lay on his death bed.

Quote from Lucy Fryer Vance:

"Thus ended the life of a noble pioneer, together with the faithful ones whose lives he had taken. How the heavens must have wept over Toquerville that day. Consolation came only in the knowledge that they had "fought a good fight, finished the work and kept the faith."

At his death Richard left three children: Eliza age 13, Annie 11, and 3 year old George. A Brother and Sister Lang raised George and took him to Mesa, Arizona. The girls must have stayed in Toquerville because Eliza married David Baxter the next year, and they lived in the rock house Richard had built. She was fourteen and David was 53. Annie likely lived with them. She married Charles Clawson and they moved to Colorado. Later Eliza and David sold the house to the Presbyterian Church and they used it for a school house. They moved to Silver Reef a mining town close by. From there they moved to St. George. David was "leaded" from working in the mines and was not well. He died at his Mother's home in Spanish Fork 1891 and was buried in Goshen.

Reference: A book, "The Fate of the Fryers" compiled by Bessie Snow, a granddaughter of Jane Fryer, 1973.

This house, used as the Presbyterian Mission, is architecturally significant as one of five well preserved exposed stone buildings in Toquerville. It is an excellent example of a 1 1/2 story stone hall and

parlor house whose projecting gable on the facade reflects Gothic Revival influences.

As an aftermath of the Fryer murders, a folktale is told by older residents of Toquerville. When Tom Willis shot Richard Fryer, blood was spattered on the window frame and around the upstairs room where Richard had been holding out against the Sheriff's posse.

It was decided to have the room painted immediately to erase the memory of the unfortunate event. A young man was hired to do the paint job and he went at it with a will, the room completely redone with white calcimine.

Low and behold, when the room was inspected the next day a large spot of blood had leached through on the window frame. The painter was asked to repaint the frame and it was done, but, to the amazement of all, the next day the blood spot had returned. He painted it again and the towns people were on the verge of hysteria when the blood returned the following day. Surely the devil was at work. At last the spot disappeared.

Years later, the painter confessed that each evening before he left, he put a daub of red paint on the window frame.

Because he was a murderer, Richard Fryer was buried outside of the Toquerville cemetery. Such cemetery growth has taken place that his grave is now just inside of the fence.