

Tracing Train Wreckers

by Thomas Furlong

Oh no! My word processor mixed up pages 2 to 24 of this book. Can you put them in the right order and figure out what Ayn Rand did to the page numbers?

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Tracing Train Wreckers

bold attempt was made to wreck another train near Tampoo, a short distance north of where the first wreck had occurred. A couple of guards were on this train and these men and some of the crew, who saw the wreckers, gave chase and succeeded in arresting one of them. This man proved to be O. J. Lloyd, a member of the Executive Board of the Knights of Labor, in charge of the late strike. Prior to the strike he had been employed by the Missouri Pacific Company as a switchman and had been a very active member of the committee.

Tracing Train Wreckers

Locked up in a safe in my office was a ritual and by-laws of the Knights of Labor, and a book of instructions showing how to initiate new members, together with the annual and semi-annual pass words, and the "hailing" and "distress" signs and various signals used by the members of the order, so I decided to set up a little Knight of Labor factory of my own and make a member that I could trust with the work in hand. I had an operative in my employ at that time named George Fowle. He had for a long time been in the train service of different railroads of the country, and I selected him as the man to be trusted with securing the confession from Lloyd. I took Fowle into my private office, and after instructing him carefully as to how to carry out my plans, he was initiated into the mysteries of the order. We took our time and went through the initiatory work carefully, so that when Fowle left for Wyandotte the next day to play the part of Brother Alfred in the drama that I had staged for that town, he was as well posted on the secret work of the order as though he had just passed through the Grand Assembly, as the governing body of the order was called.

About this time my department was badly in need of a thoroughly trained criminal lawyer to prosecute the cases growing out of the big strike, and at my earnest solicitation, Marshall F. McDonald, former Circuit Attorney of St. Louis, one of the best criminal lawyers of his time, was retained by the company for the purposes named, and given authority by Vice-President Hoxie to employ all other counsel needed. Mr. McDonald accordingly employed Ex-Judge Laughlin and Judge R. S. McDonald to assist him. A few days later, these three lawyers and myself met the Hon. Bailie P. Waggoner, General Attorney for the State of Kansas for the company, by appointment at Kansas City. We visited the scene of the crime. As we were on the bank overlooking the place where the engine and cars had left the rails, I told the lawyers that I was satisfied that Lloyd, the man in jail for the Tampoo affair, was also implicated in the Wyandotte crime, and that I proposed to get a confession from him.

"How are you going to go about it, Tom?" asked Judge McDonald.

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At the time the wreck occurred, I was very busy in St. Louis looking after cases that had grown out of the great strike on the Gould System, of which I was Chief Special Agent. The strike, which had been over but about a month, was a long, bitter struggle, entailing much work on my department, and had resulted in a victory for the company. I could not get to Wyandotte to investigate the wreck until nearly a month had elapsed. In the meantime the railroad company had offered \$2,500 reward for the arrest and conviction of the guilty parties, and \$1,000 for any information which would lead up to such conviction. After looking the ground over, I became satisfied that this diabolical crime had been committed by some member, or members, of the Knights of Labor, either out of revenge or to harrass the company and divert traffic from the road. After satisfying myself on this point, I returned to St. Louis and requested Vice-President Hoxie to withdraw the offer of a reward for the conviction of the criminals, as I was then, and am now, opposed to offering rewards in such cases. Mr. Hoxie was in bed sick at the time, but he issued the order as requested, and I promised him that I would personally go to work on the case. A few days later, while I was engaged in laying plans for working out a solution of the case, a

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"I want you, officer."

"What for?" asked Hamilton.

"Murder," I replied.

Had Hamilton been cracked on the head with his own club he would not have been more surprised. Before he could recover the club was taken from his hand and his pistol from his pocket, and his big star from over his palpitating heart. He made a feeble attempt to get indignant, but failed lamentably and broke down completely, and wanted to confess. He was taken to jail and locked up.

We then got in the hack and were driven to Armourdale, where we arrested Robert Geers, after breaking through several doors. While arresting Geers we came near getting our heads blown off by an irate roomer, whose door we had broken open by mistake. After locking up Geers, we went across the river and stopped in front of a shack in the bottoms, and entering it arrested Fred Newport and took him to jail, leaving his wife and six children in tears.

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I and my men were only interested in this strike in so far as it was our duty to see that no acts of violence were committed; in short, to protect the company's property from vandals and thieves. The rank and file of the order were led to believe by their leaders, however, that we were a lot of crooks, who regarded a man's liberty and life lightly and would violate any of the laws on the statute books to secure a conviction in any case we were called into. And strange to say, there are some men who believe this to be true, even to this day.

I want to say right here, that this crime was one of the most diabolical and fiendish crimes of the century. Had it not been for a mere accident, a loaded passenger train would have been wrecked instead of the freight, but, luckily, the passenger was late, and the freight was given orders at Leavenworth to proceed into Wyandotte on the passenger train's time, with the disastrous results told in the preceding portions of this narrative. The officers of the Knights of Labor knew these men were guilty, for three of them had gone on the witness stand and testified to the facts, while Lloyd, one of the leaders, had furnished evidence to corroborate them.

L

What many of my friends, who are familiar with the case in all of its details, believe to have been my best piece of real detective work during my long career at the business, was done on what is known as "The Wyandotte Wrecking Case" in 1886. While much has been written about this case, yet all the real facts have never appeared in print. The crime, which was the aftermath of the Knights of Labor strike on the Gould Southwest System that spring, occurred on the early morning of April 26th. Freight train No. 38 on the Missouri Pacific was pulling slowly into Wyandotte, now Kansas City, Kansas, and on reaching a point near the north depot on the banks of the Kaw River, the engine and several cars suddenly left the track, rolling down the embankment and some of them into the river. The fireman, Benjamin F. Horton, and the head brakeman, George Carlisle, who were on the engine, were pinioned beneath the wreckage and were dead when taken out. The engineer, J. H. Fowler, was severely injured, dying within a few months from his injuries. The conductor, A. Spaulding, who was in the cupola of the caboose, was thrown from his seat to the floor and painfully bruised and badly shaken up. The rear brakeman, whose name I do not now remember, was the only one of the crew to escape either death or injury.

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"I am going to get it through a Knight of Labor," I replied, and gave the gentlemen a short outline of the plan I had evolved in my mind for getting the confession. After I had finished the lawyers all thought my scheme was a good one, but not one of them thought it could be carried out. I will admit that, because of the peculiar situation in Wyandotte County at that time, I knew I would have to be very careful or my scheme would not work. The mayor, sheriff, jailor and, in fact, all of the city and county officials, even policemen and constables, excepting Judge Hineman of the Circuit Court, were members of the Knights of Labor, and of the same local lodge as the prisoner, consequently were very friendly disposed towards him. As every one familiar with such organizations as the Knights of Labor knows, I would have had but little trouble to find a member among them who would betray the secrets of the order for a few paltry dollars and thus enable me to obtain the information I so much desired from Lloyd, but I decided on another plan, as I never considered a man who would violate his obligation to be upright and honorable. In a word, in trusting such men one is liable to receive what is known in slang parlance as "the double cross."

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The next morning, Lloyd, in charge of Operatives Bonnell, McCabe and two guards, and myself, boarded a special car at Union Station, and it was attached to west-bound passenger train No. 1. Of course, Lloyd did not know he was in charge of officers. At Independence the special car was placed on a siding and I went on to Kansas City. The next morning, which was Sunday, a conference was held at the St. James Hotel between the attorneys for the Pacific Company and myself. It was late in the evening when the conference ended, after which I decided to at once arrest the men named by Lloyd as his partners in the Wyandotte crime. I proceeded to Wyandotte and procured the warrants. As the arrests had to be made quickly, and all my experienced men in that vicinity were in Independence guarding the special car, I secured the services of Frank Tutt, who had been employed by me as a guard for the railroad during the strike, to go with the sheriff and myself to make the arrests.

The first man arrested was George Hamilton, chairman of the executive committee in charge of the strike. We found him in ViceRoy Park, Armourdale, where he was acting as a special policeman. When Hamilton was pointed out to me, I approached him saying:

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Brother Alfred also called on the sheriff, who was a Knight of Labor, and after giving him the grip, asked to be allowed to consult with Lloyd. The sheriff readily granted the request and Brother Alfred was ushered into the jail, where he was closeted with Lloyd for more than an hour and a half. After introducing himself to Lloyd, Brother Alfred dispensed with all formalities and at once began a discussion of the charge against the prisoner. "Of course, Mr. Powderly, Mr. Hayes and the other head officers of the order and myself, know that you are all right, Lloyd, and that you will not make a confession, but in cases of this kind, where there are so many on the job, some one will squeal when they are arrested, as they all will be, for the Goulds have a lot of detectives on the case, headed by Tom Furlong, and it is only a question of time until they are all run down. Furlong, as you know, is not only a great detective, but he is also very unscrupulous and will not stop at anything to secure a conviction in these cases. Now, the order at this time cannot afford to have this crime laid at its door. If one of the men implicated in it would confess, which some of them would be sure to do, as I stated before, it would be a great blow to the order and cast an odium over it that would take years to eradicate. Another thing, the men charged

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"You are all right, Furlong, and I am going to appoint you, as soon as this storm dies down a little," said the President. Of course, I was a little put out by the delay, and told the President that if I accepted the place my commission would have to be handed me not later than January 1st. After further assurance from the President that I would have my commission before the date mentioned, I returned home. A few days before January 1st I was again called to Washington by the President. I visited the White House in company with the Hon. Richard Kerens. After a short discussion of the matter, the President told me to go over to the treasury department and get my commission. On my arrival there, I did not find the Secretary, Mr. Windom, in, he being detained at home on account of sickness. My presence in Washington again revived the rumors that I was to be appointed, and these rumors also put the Knights of Labor to work again, with the result that the White House was again flooded with a lot of telegrams protesting against my appointment, and my commission was again held up. I then dropped the matter and returned to St. Louis.

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The discovery immediately after the wreck of unmistakable evidence that it had been caused by wreckers, and because of the prominence of the men who had lost their lives thereby, caused a great sensation and much indignation. The dead fireman was a member of the Brotherhood of Railway Firemen and the brakeman a member of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen. All of the newspapers, not only of Kansas City, but of the entire country, denounced the wreckers in no uncertain terms, as did all decent and law-abiding citizens. I will add right here that the facts brought to light at the trial of the men charged with this crime, more than to any other one thing, caused the disintegration or dissolution of the Knights of Labor. In other words, it was the beginning of the end of that once powerful organization. For the benefit of those readers who are not familiar with the history of this order, I will state that it had in 1886 something over a million members. It had a veritable mushroom growth. No class of people were ineligible to membership; all trades and professions, as well as races and tongues, provided they were males over 18 years of age, and had the price of the initiation fee, usually one dollar, could join. The color line was not even drawn, as it is in most secret societies. Of course, some good honest

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at the White House, told me of the protests. To offset these, I presented letters from Ex-Governor Johnson and Major William Warner, chief counsel for the men I had arrested for the Wyandotte crime, which stated in terms that could not be misconstrued, that I had done nothing but my duty in that case, and testifying further that I had been very respectful and magnanimous to the prisoners on trial--in short, that I had done nothing to secure a conviction that was not entirely honorable.

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with this crime could not get a fair trial here at this time, as the people here are very sore, as are the members of the Brotherhood of Firemen and Brotherhood of Trainmen, of which orders the two men killed in the wreck were members. I have, therefore, evolved a scheme to outwit these capitalistic bloodhounds, and thus save the order. I have a lawyer over in the city from headquarters, Brother Thomas, who will get you out of here on bond, and I will take you east and get you a job on a railroad where Furlong cannot find you, and will do the same thing with the other men who were with you."

"That is true about some of the gang squealing," replied Lloyd. "We have been afraid of at least two of them giving the snap away, and I know they will do it if they ever fall into the clutches of Furlong and his hirelings."

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In conclusion, I wish to state that I assumed at the time all the responsibility for the manner in which the evidence in this case had been secured. The plan for obtaining the confession from Lloyd, which, in reality, was the beginning of the case against the men, was worked out myself; Fowle, or Brother Alfred, as he was known, simply played, or acted the part assigned him. True, he played the part fairly well, and carried out my instructions to the letter. At the time of the arrests, and on several occasions thereafter, a certain strike guard employed by the company, succeeded in getting his name and picture into the papers of Kansas City as one of the chief unravelers of the mystery surrounding the crime, but he had absolutely nothing whatever to do with the capture of the criminals, beyond guarding them after the arrests had been made by Sheriff Ferguson and myself. The "dope" he handed the papers was mere rot. There was also considerable said in the papers about the part a wig would play in the case prior to the trial, but all who were present at the trial will remember that the wig was not introduced in evidence. This wig was a "pipe dream," to use a slang expression.

K

After the mistrial, the attorneys for the defense made application for a change of venue, and the cases were sent to Olathe. The officers of the Knights of Labor immediately sent a swarm of organizers into Olathe and Johnson County, and through coercion and other mysterious methods, succeeded in getting almost every male citizen of the county into the order. The second trial resulted in another farce, the jury again being packed with Knights of Labor.

About this time there was a change of management in the legal department of the road, and the cases were all nollied at the request of the company--even the three men who had made confessions were turned loose.

Peculiar conditions existed in the west at that time. The laboring men knew nothing about the real benefits of unionism. They had been herded into the Knights of Labor like sheep into a pen, and were educated by those who led them into believing that any kind of crime was all right when committed during a strike, or against a firm or company against which there was a grievance, and the latter were often, as in the case of the big strike on the Gould System, proved to be imaginary.

L

Because of my work in this case, I incurred the lasting enmity of all the heads of the Knights of Labor, from Terrance V. Powderly, the Grand Master, on down the line. This was evidenced several years later. In 1889, I was tendered the position as chief of the secret service bureau of the treasury department at Washington by President Harrison. I was not overly anxious to accept the job, as the pay at that time was only \$3,600 per year, and I had a good business in St. Louis, as head of the agency which bears my name, but at the solicitation of friends, I agreed to accept the position. Somehow, the fact that I was to be the new chief of the secret service had leaked out in Washington, and immediately the Knights of Labor "tipped their hand," to use a slang phrase. The President had gone to Deer Park, Maryland, to recover from the fatigue caused by his inauguration, and his few first months of service. Telegrams poured in on him from all points of the United States. They came from the east and the west, and from the north and the south, and from towns I had not known were on the map. Some of these telegrams were long and others short, but all showed the vindictiveness of the members of the order towards me. After the President returned from Washington he sent for me, and on my arrival

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men were on its roster rolls, but it was dominated by a brazen gang of mountebanks, agitators and crooked politicians and others seeking power and prominence. To gain a point the officers of the organization would stop at nothing. If coercion failed in its purpose, the boycott and more harsher methods were substituted. In short, a veritable reign of terror existed throughout the Middle West. To illustrate their methods better, I will state that if a merchant or other person in business, through a slip of the tongue or otherwise, made even the slightest remark reflecting on the order, or even one of its leaders, he was a marked man thereafter, his business ruined, and he, of course, driven from the country. Business men were often subjected to this treatment--and worse--for simply refusing to join the order. In many of the Western cities it was impossible for a man who did not "jine" the order to be elected to office, however deserving or competent he might be.

[Illustration: Scene at the Wyandotte wreck, a crime only paralleled by the Los Angeles dynamiters.]

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Lloyd further expressed himself as being delighted with the scheme, and within a few hours he was released from jail and taken by Brother Alfred in a circuitous route through Kansas City to Independence, Mo., where the two boarded a train for St. Louis. I had been informed of their movements by wire, and had one of my operatives meet them at the Union Station and escort them to the room of another operative in my employ at 17th and Pine Streets. That evening Marshall F. McDonald and myself and a stenographer called at the room, and I was introduced to Lloyd as the "headquarters' attorney," Brother Thomas. I corroborated all that Brother Alfred had told Lloyd, and O. K.'d the scheme to get all of these men in the job out of the country, and promised to do all I could to further the scheme. Lloyd then gave us the names of his partners in the crime. They were George H. Hamilton, Mike Leary, Robert Geers, Fred Newport and William Vassen, all prominent and active members of the local executive board of the Knights of Labor.

F

On arriving at Wyandotte, Brother Alfred proceeded at once to the headquarters of the organization, where he made himself known as a special envoy and minister plenipotentiary of the head assembly of the order at Scranton, Pa. His mission was to investigate the conditions as he found them in Wyandotte, so that the head officers at Scranton would know exactly what was going on in the west. He also hinted that the General Master Workman and Grand Treasurer Hayes had empowered him to use his own judgment about what was to be done in the case of Lloyd, who was in jail on the train wrecking charge.

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We then visited Kansas City and arrested Mike Leary. He was locked up about 4:30 A. M. There was one man yet missing, William Vassen. We experienced considerable trouble in locating him. He had left his home to go to work for Wood Bros., the Kansas City ice dealers, where he was employed as a driver to deliver ice. We obtained a list of his customers, and finally overtook him near the Kansas City Union Depot, at about seven o'clock. He broke down at once and wanted to confess. After a good breakfast I took him to the St. James Hotel in Kansas City and into the presence of the attorneys for the company. The prisoner broke into tears, as soon as we entered the room, and made a piteous appeal to the gentlemen to see that the wants of his sick wife and children were attended to. "I have never been arrested before, and I was led into this. I went into it at the point of a pistol," he said, crying bitterly. "Damn the Knights of Labor," he continued, and expressed the intention of making a clean breast of the whole affair. He was told by both the lawyers and myself that he did not have to talk if he did not want to. "I have been weighted down too long; I want to tell all about it. I will suffer, I guess, but I deserve it." Then he made a full confession, giving the most minute details of the terrible crime.

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The investigation, at the next grand assembly of the Knights of Labor, at the insistence of a few good men in the order as to how much money had been spent in defense of these men, revealed a big scandal within the order. While it was true that a great deal of money had been expended, yet it was learned that the sum was not more than one-fourth of the amount claimed by the officers in charge of this fund.

The amount of money expended by me for the company, in working up the case, was very small, as all of the men who did any work on the case were employed by the month on a regular salary and expenses. In fact, there were not cents expended in this case, when dollars were expended in running down the dynamiters who blew up the Los Angeles Times, the latter crime being the only one which has occurred within my time that could at all compare with the Wyandotte wrecking case for cold-blooded fiendishness. It is also the only case in which big rolls of money were expended by labor organizations, knowing that the men were guilty.

T