

# Distraught husband kills wife, relative, self in 1917

"Down in what is known as the 'flat woods' district four miles west of Ellettsville just over the line in Owen County, Sunday at noon, a triple tragedy was enacted when Albert Walden, 29, a prominent farmer, killed his wife, Mrs. Maymie Walden, 26, and also slew her brother, John Hawkins, 32."

*Bloomington Evening World, Oct. 29, 1917.*

There were no witnesses to the deaths of three people in a house on the "Ellettsville and Spencer pike" on Oct. 28, 1917. Perhaps the tragedy was predictable, but that is only hindsight. Actually, the unhappy situation could have gone either way.

To begin with, Maymie Walden had left her husband, Albert, claiming in a divorce suit that he had not supported her and had been guilty of cruelty. Since then, he had lived alone, brooding about the separation.

Since she had left Walden, she had been living with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Emmett Hawkins in Ellettsville. According to the *Evening World*, Maymie's brother,



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

John, had gotten John S. Brown to drive them (Maymie and John) to Walden's house to pick up some of her possessions.

Upon their arrival, Walden and a Frank Myers were at the gate. What happened next was described in the *Evening World*. "Walden seemed overjoyed at seeing his wife. He got in the auto and embraced her and rode from the gate to the house with his arms around her."

Maymie must have told him she was not coming back to him, because by the time they had reached the house, Walden was crying and begging his wife not to leave him again.

Continued the newspaper, "She went into

the house and remained there with her husband while Hawkins was busy carrying articles out to the auto. When the latter returned to the house for the third load he found the front door barred and locked. He called to Walden to open it and receiving no response, he threw his weight against it and it gave in."

No one seems to know what was said between the two men. It is also not clear where Brown and Myers were during that time.

The body of Hawkins was found in the doorway. Walden had apparently shot his wife, blowing the top of her head off, and, with his arm around her, shot himself. As the *Evening World* put it, "Walden used the ramrod of the gun to discharge the weapon and sent the full load into his head." The two were lying next to the stove.

When he was told about the deaths, Walden's father did not seem particularly surprised. He had told others that his son was very much in love with Maymie and said he

could not get along without her.

The Owen County coroner held a brief inquest at the farmhouse, and the bodies were taken to the morgue in Spencer. Later that evening, the bodies of Maymie Walden and John Hawkins were moved to Ellettsville. Their funeral was in the Chambersville Church.

As in stories of this kind, there are several postscripts. After several days had passed, Walden's body had not been claimed by his family. Finally, a neighbor of the Waldens (Lewis Walden and his son, Albert, lived side-by-side) went to the morgue to notify the undertaker that he would take care of the funeral arrangements.

Walden, his wife, and Hawkins were members of the Newlite Church at Chambersville.

In a double murder and suicide, the victims are not the only victims of the tragedy. Maymie and Albert Walden left behind three children, one of whom was only six months old.

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