

Eleanor Everett Senter 1864-1904

Frank Gano Senter 1849-1904

Rocky Mountain Daily News [Denver, CO] Feb 19, 1904

DOUBLE MORNING TRAGEDY WHICH MARKED THE
END OF A MARRIED LIFE FILLED WITH DISCORD,
WITNESSED BY THE HELPLESS YOUNG SON OF THE
WIFE MURDERER AND SUICIDE

Frank G. Senter, Angered by the Refusal of His Wife to Become
Reconciled with Him, Kills Her and Ends His Own Existence.

Terrible Crime Was the Result of Domestic Quarrels Which Caused
Divorce Suit - Husband and Wife Differed Regarding Christian Science
- She Had Frequently Expressed Fear of Him.

Because his wife had decided that he was a domestic burden, that she no longer cared to live with him and that she had disposed of some property without seeking his consent, Frank G. Senter, a Rock Island brakeman, fired a bullet through her head at her home, 1322 West Eleventh Street, at 9:30 o'clock yesterday morning and then, turning the gun upon himself, blew out his own brains.

For about one year Senter and his family have been living apart, the wife having at that period applied for a divorce. She lived with her children in a pretty cottage at the number given, and to all appearances was in a prosperous condition.

At about 9 o'clock yesterday, Gano, a 13-year-old son of the couple, noticed his father coming up the street toward his house and notified his mother, who was cleaning the bath room. The youngster locked the front door of the house, but the father, coming to the rear, secured admission. He tried, so the children say, to get the boy to leave, but the youth was suspicious and, following his father to where the mother was working, overheard his plea for a reconciliation. Mrs. Senter declined to speak to him and referred him to her lawyer, Thomas Carlon. This angered him and in pulling a 38 caliber revolver from his pocket a cartridge exploded and buried a bullet in the floor near the bath tub.

Killed His Wife

Seizing the struggling woman by the right wrist at this point, he fired again, but the ball failed to strike, and going through the door, lodged in a window frame in the adjoining kitchen. His next effort was more successful, for, placing the muzzle of the gun close to the skin at the base of her skull, he fired and the woman fell dead at his

feet.

Gazing for a moment at the prostrate body Senter then turned the gun to his own head and in a moment was a corpse, falling on that of his wife. Young Gano, transfixed by the horrible tragedy for a moment, ran to the street to give the alarm, and in a few moments the police surgeon and a detail of police under Captain Connors rushed to the scene. Both were found to have died instantly. The bodies were sent to the morgue and the parents of Mrs. Senter, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Everett of Lyons, Neb., were notified by telegraph of the crime, and are expected to arrive in Denver this morning to take charge of the remains and the property of the woman.

Left Note In Pocket

When the body of Senter was searched, a note addressed to the police was found on his person. It read as follows:

To Whom It May Concern:

My wife, Ben Everett, her father, the devil, is the cause of all my trouble. Newspaper clippings will explain matters in part. I have no excuse to make. My friends do not need any; my enemies cut no figure. I could write volumes on this matter, but this is the purport of my troubles. Anyone ought to know when he has had enough

F. G. SENTER

Clippings referred to were from various local newspapers containing the account of the divorce proceedings instituted some months ago by Mrs. Senter, and in which the jury gave a verdict for the husband on some sensational grounds.

Testimony by witnesses for the husband during the suit was largely to the effect that Mrs. Senter, who was a Christian Scientist, had turned the Senter home into a private hospital, principally for infant children. A number of the babes died and, as the testimony reads, Mrs. Senter compelled her own children to take the bodies to the morgue in baby carriages. Senter also alleged that she had brought a negro baby to the house and compelled her own children to care for it, and, as his allegations at the time read, "It was the last straw and the real trouble started."

Another Suit Follows

The divorce case was but the beginning of the end, as another suit followed. Previous to coming to Denver, about six years ago, Senter owned some land in Nebraska. It was heavily encumbered and he made the proposition to his father-in-law, who is quite wealthy, that if he would lift the mortgage he would agree to deed the property to him. Everett did this, and later transferred the property to Mrs. Senter for the benefit of herself and her children. The woman sold the property and, on the family moving here, placed the proceeds in the property on West Eleventh Street, the scene of the tragedy.

A few months ago she mortgaged the home in order to purchase other real estate. She did not consult Senter in the matter, and recently he filed suit in the district court to

set the mortgage aside. The action is now pending.

Taught the Indians

Previous to her marriage to Senter in Bancroft, Neb., twenty-three years ago, Mrs. Senter was employed as a teacher in various government Indian schools, and until her death was in correspondence with many of her late pupils and had evidence of their friendship in the decoration of her house. She received some notoriety for her friendship for Chavarria, a Santa Clara Indian, who became enamored of a young lady who, at the time, was living at the Senter home.

As Mrs. A.D. Rogner of Seventh and Larimer streets, a close friend of the dead woman, relates, Mrs. Senter had long expected her tragic end, having told her that Senter would some day shoot her. She also, according to the same testimony, had told her children that if they found her dead by violent means that they at once could charge their father with the crime of uxoricide.

Mrs. Senter, who was 39 years of age, is spoken of in kindly terms by her neighbors, who are inclined to blame Senter for all the trouble preceding the double crime. The latter since the separation from his family is said to have lived at the Oxford Hotel, and had not visited either the woman or his children for more than a year. His excited condition when approaching the house this morning, and which his little son noticed, together with the letter found in his pocket and with the fact that he had resigned his position on the railroad and given his son an order for his January Salary, is accepted as true that Mrs. Senter's fears were true.

Another cause of the twin crime is given that the couple had been at variance concerning the beliefs and practices of Christian Science. Senter is said to have become a believer in the alleged art of healing by prayer some years ago in Nebraska, when he was said to have been cured of a disease. Lately, however, he had dropped away from the "science," and took violent exception to his wife posing as a "healer."

The couple are survived by five children. Frank, aged 21, owner of a milk route; Clyde [sic], now in San Francisco, Ben, 15, and Grace, aged 17. The latter is employed by the Daniels & Fisher Stores company.

Boy Witnessed Tragedy

For Gano Senter, 13 years old and the youngest child of the couple, the tragedy has double force. He heard his mother refuse a reconciliation with his father - heard the father plead and then, shrinking in terror, saw the death-dealing gun flash, heard the shots and saw the gun held close to his mother's head and heard the shot that will probably echo and re-echo in his memory for years to come. He saw her fall and then he turned and ran sobbing away, realizing his sorrow and horror that he, their son, could not lift a finger to stop the terrible doom of his parents. The boy and his older brother, Frank, were standing in the snow in front of the house when the police surgeon and policemen arrived. Forlorn figures they were. Both were crying bitterly and it was with reluctance that they entered again the house that had been home and told as best they could the details of the climax of the tragedy that had been marking the household a long time.

On Gano fell the task of telling what he had seen. He had been in the kitchen when his father came to the back door and though surprised to see him, for it was the first time he had been home in a month, greeted him and explained that the mother was in her own room. "Father asked for mother the first thing and said he wanted to see her. I thought he acted funny, for though I answered that I didn't think that mother was up yet, he said he would find her, and walked quickly into the dining room."

Following the Murderer

"He went on through the sitting room and I followed. He knocked at mother's door and when she asked who it was, he wouldn't answer. He just waited until she said, "Come in," and then he went in and I went in too - I just couldn't stay out."

The boy told his tale simply, choking frequently and evidently _____ as he told of the whole terrible scene over again.. He told how his father begged his mother to wipe out the old scores, asked her to begin over again with him and try to live out the rest of their days together, arguing that the trouble that was keeping them apart, was so useless and there was going to be so much humiliation for their children..

"But mother told him," related the child while Captain of Detectives O'Connor and policemen gathered about - "mother told him," - and sometimes it was difficult to make the words come - "that the time for reconciliation had passed and that she would not agree to anything of the kind now. She told him she would never live with him again no matter what happened and said for him to make all his propositions to the lawyers. Father tried a long time, to persuade her, and finally he jumped up and drew out the revolver and fired before I realized what he was doing.

Father Fired Twice

"He fired twice and mother ran for the door. But he grabbed her and just as she got to the door of the bathroom he put the pistol against the back of her head and fired again. She fell screaming and I ran outdoors and gave the alarm. As I went out of the house I heard another shot."

Neighbors and friends gathered in the house and did what they could to comfort the children. The coroner arrived and removed the bodies, while outside waited a crowd of curious people. From Daniels & Fisher, where she is employed in the alteration department, a daughter, Grace Senter, 17 years old, was summoned. As she hastened into the house, having already heard of her parents' death, she glanced at her grief-stricken brothers, realized the significance of the pitying glances of the neighbors, and burst into hysterical cries. This was succeeded by a fainting fit that required medical attention.

Sons Are Industrious

Two sons are Benjamin and Frank Senter, who though but 22 and 15 years old, have, with much of the energy that characterized their mother, being successfully the Bank farm dairy, and were busy delivering milk when they heard of the conclusion of the difficulties between their parents. Gano is a West Denver High School boy, and is considered an exceptionally bright student.

From one of the sons was elicited the information that Senter sometimes drank. The coroner found a bottle of whiskey in his pocket. With the letter to his wife was found also a time check order, directed to the Denver agency of the Rock Island. It was as follows:

Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Agent, Denver - Please pay
to F.G. Senter, Jr., or order, the amount due me for services
rendered for the month of January, as per check.
F.G. Senter

Mrs. Senter a Hard Worker.

Regarding the assertions of Senter, filed in his counter-charges to his wife's divorce complaint, that her Christian Science beliefs and the practicing of them had been the cause of disrupting the family, a friend of Mrs. Senter said last night were untrue..

"Mrs. Senter was a Christian Scientist and that fact seemed to disturb him somewhat, and that fact seemed to disturb him somewhat, but Mrs. Senter's chief grievance was that she could get from her husband , no support for herself or her children. She often would be taking boarders to pay expenses, and Senter would come and set at her table, but would not put up a cent to buy the food."

When the police reached the house a terrible sight was presented. Half kneeling and half lying on her face, Mrs. Senter lay with her head under the edge of the bath tub, while for a yard around her flowed a dark red pool in which her curls were dabbled. Across her knees lay Senter on his back, a terrible wound showing over his right ear, where he had placed the muzzle of the weapon before he pulled the trigger. Brain matter was oozing from the wound, and another pool of blood lay about him.

The funeral arrangements will not be made until the relatives of Mrs. Senter arrive.

Denver [CO] Post, Feb 18, 1904 p 1

FRANK G. SENTER, ESTRANGED HUSBAND, KILLS WIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF THEIR YOUNG SON, THEN ENDS HIS LIFE BY PUTTING A BULLET THROUGH HEAD

**Went to Wife's Home and Followed Her to Bathroom Where Tragedy Occurred, When
She Repulsed Offers of Reconciliation - Christian Science Led to Estrangement**

**Senter Left Letter to The Post With Clippings About Divorce Proceedings, Blaming
Her Father, 'a Devil,' for Trouble.**

Despairing of a reconciliation with his wife, from whom he had been estranged for more than a year, Frank G. Senter went to her home at 1322 West Eleventh avenue this morning: and, in the presence of Gano, their youngest son, shot her to death and then blew out his own brains. The tragedy, which leaves five children orphans, was the outcome of a quarrel between husband and wife over Christian Science, of which she was a devoted follower. Both were shot through the head and death was instantaneous in both cases.

Senter was a brakeman employed by the Rock Island railroad.

The murder and suicide are thus described by Gano Senter, their 13-year-old son, who was in the room. at the time:

"Mamma was in the bathroom washing off the marble wash stand and I was here in the dining room. I was almost ready to start to school. Papa came up to the front door, but it was locked. Then he came around to the side door, which was unfastened, and he walked right in. He hadn't been here for nearly a year, but he didn't knock at all - just walked in.

"I knew something was going to happen from the way he looked, and the quick determined way he moved around. He didn't think he would find any of us at home, I guess, for he said to me, 'Aren't you gone to school yet?'

"I said 'No.'

'Aren't you going today?' he asked.

"It was then nearly 9 o'clock, which was why he asked, I guess. I told him I was going pretty soon.

Then he asked where mamma was, and I told him he was in her bath room. He went right into mamma's bedroom, for he had to go through there to get to her bathroom. I went into her bedroom with him, for I was afraid he was going to do something. He said to her:

Referred Him to Lawyer

" 'Well, are you willing to see if we can't come to some agreement?'

" She said, 'No, sir, I don't want to have anything more to do with you.'

" 'Won't you even talk it over with me?'

" 'No, you can talk with my lawyer all you want to, or your lawyer can talk with my lawyer, but I won't talk with you.'

" 'You are still after a divorce, same you were a year or so ago, are you?'

" 'Yes, I am.'"

"Then he shot at her. I don't know whether he shot through his pocket. I was so scared I didn't notice that, but the detectives say he did. I don't think the first shot hit mamma, for she jumped over by the bath tub and screamed "Stop!" Then he shot again, and I don't know where he hit her, but she didn't fall.

"Then papa reached out and caught her wrist and twisted it so that she turned her back right to him and stooped over a little, and he pointed the gun right at the back of her neck and shot.

"I couldn't stay any longer, I was so frightened, and I ran out into the street and screamed, and I got a man to telephone the police to come."

Senter had gone to the house fully determined to do exactly what he did—give his wife one more chance for a reconciliation, which he was morally certain she would refuse, and then kill both her and himself. This is proven by the letter which was found in his pocket addressed to the Post. The letter was written on the back of some clippings from The Post, in which the divorce suit brought by Mrs. Senter a year or two ago was reported. The letter runs:

Letter to the Post

My wife, Ben Everett, her father, the devil, is the cause of all my trouble. Newspaper clippings will explain matters in part. I have no excuse to make. My friends do not need any; my enemies cut no figure. I could write volumes on this matter, but this is the purport of my troubles. Anyone ought to know when he has had enough

F. G. SENTER

In another part of the paper was written this request: "So the people may know: City Editor Denver Post - After you have got what facts you want, please forward to my brother, T.M. Senter, Hobart, Okla."

The clippings were chiefly those relating to the divorce case. Mrs. Senter brought the suit alleging that her husband had opposed her belief and practice of Christian Science, and that his opposition had not always been mild. She declared that he had been cruel to her, had used harsh language in opposing her religious doings, and had even threatened to kill her.

Senter had opposed this suit for divorce with some allegations of his own. He said that since his wife had become a devotee of her fad his home was little like a home should be. He said that she not only wanted to cure all the physical ills of members of her own family with her science, but that he was continually disgracing and inconveniencing him by seeking after others to cure. He said she made his home a regular orphan asylum by bringing in children from public institutions for the purpose of healing them, and allowed them to run at large in his home with his own children, to the latter's great danger.

Further, he declared that when her proteges died, she sent their bodies to the undertaker's in a push cart, sending their daughter Grace to convey the bodies.

Moreover, he alleged that his wife had even brought three negro children into the house to "cure" and had allowed them to associate with their children.

Also, he alleged that she made it a practice of trying to save souls by following on the street people whom she desired to save, and even followed them into saloons to prevent them from drinking.

So strong a case did Mr. Senter present to the court that a jury declined to grant the wife a divorce. A few months ago she again filed suit for divorce, and it was this last action which drove him to murder and suicide. He had lived apart from his wife for a year or more, coming at long intervals to see his children, but always when his wife was not in.

Mixed in Chavarria Affair

Another thing which evidently preyed on Senter's mind, because it was among the clippings he had carried in his pocket was the notoriety she achieved in the case of Miss Cora Arnold and Albina Chavarria, a Santa Clara Indian, who fell in love with the white girl. Mrs. Senter, when she was Miss Eleanor Everett, was for years a teacher in an Indian school in a Utah reservation, and always retained the friendship of a great number of the Indians. Whenever any of the tribe came to Denver they always hunted out Mrs. Senter.

One of these Indians, Chavarria, fell in love with Miss Arnold, who was then living at Mrs. Senter's house. The Indian used to visit the young woman there and finally grew deadly in earnest in his lovemaking. He told of his affection for the white girl and it became public, and Senter evidently resented the part his wife had taken in the matter.

When Gano Senter ran from the house and screamed that his papa was shooting his mamma, a neighbor hurried to the nearest telephone and notified the police. The ambulance, the patrol wagon and a buggy loaded with detectives were immediately ordered out. Because of the similarity in names of the streets, the patrol wagon was ordered to South Eleventh and West Seventh, instead of to West Eleventh and South Seventh.

Capt. Connor in his buggy and Police Surgeon Sharpley in the ambulance made a record run to the scene. Meanwhile, Patrolman Bills, on duty in that part of town, and Sergeant Baughman, who lives a few blocks away, heard the commotion and ran to the house.

But there was no need of public interference, nor yet of the police surgeon, so prompt to arrive. The only work was for the coroner. Both victims had died instantly. The shot which Gano Senter had seen fired at the back of his mother's head had killed her before her body touched the floor.

It was a pitiful scene which greeted the officers and surgeon when they rushed into the little bathroom in hope of saving at least one of the couple. Half kneeling and half lying on her face, Mrs. Senter lay with her head under the edge of the bath tub, while for a yard around her flowed a dark red pool in which her curls were dabbled. Across her knees lay Senter on his back, a terrible wound showing over his right ear, where he had placed the muzzle of the weapon before he pulled the trigger. Brain matter was oozing from the wound, and another pool of blood lay about him.

Muzzle Close to Head

"Look at this," said Surgeon Sharpley, stooping over the little woman's prostrate form. "He must have put the muzzle of the gun right against the back of her neck as she stooped over to get away from him. Look how her hair is singed."

It was true. The flash of the powder had burned the little curls at the back of her head, and the bullet had crashed through the base of the brain with terrific force.

While Gano was the only one of the children at home when the tragedy occurred, it happened by the merest chance that his brothers Frank, aged 21, and Ben, aged 15, were near the house and soon arrived. Frank runs a dairy near Arvada and Ben stays

with him and helps with the work. They do not come home once a week as a rule, but this morning they drove up a few minutes after the shooting and went in and took charge of the house.

Miss Grace, the only daughter, was at work in the alteration department of the Daniels & Fisher Store. A telephone message, sent by one of her brothers, told her that something terrible had happened, and that she must come home at once, but did not tell her the full truth. The ambulance and the coroner's wagon were standing at the front door when she arrived, breathless with misgiving and yet dreading nothing half so bad as the reality. The door to the bloody chamber was closed and guarded by a policeman, and gentle women from neighboring houses were there to attend the daughter in her hour of trial

Daughter's Premonition

She seemed to have a premonition of the nature of her bereavement, for as soon as she had bounded through the front door she glanced at her weeping brothers and asked, "What's the matter? Where's mamma?"

"It is terrible, dearie, but you must sit down and be quiet and we'll tell you." said one of the neighbors, leading her to a seat.

"But I want mamma. What is the matter?" demanded the girl.

"She is dead," whispered the neighbor.

A terrible scream was the girl's response. "Oh, no! no! no! She can't be dead. Let me go to her. She'll talk to me." The girl writhed and panted in agony. Then, with a sudden inspiration, she demanded: "Who did it? Where's papa?" but it was not until long after, when she had been benumbed by the first grief, that she was told the full truth - that her father's rage had bereft her of both mother and father in one moment. The Senter's were married in Lyons, Nebr. twenty-three years ago. He was a railroad man and at the time of his death was in the employ of the Rock Island road as a brakeman. He was large of figure, broad and jolly looking, and of a genial temperament before his domestic troubles came upon him. Mrs. Senter was slender and petite with dark eyes and dark, curly hair, and a face whose delicate lines bore little evidence of the forty years she had seen.

Mrs. Senter was a member of the First Church of Christ, the Christian Science Church at 1751 Logan avenue. Documents found by the officers show that she was a member in good standing. It was her devotion to her belief which led to estrangement from her husband and led directly to the tragedy.

The children they leave are Frank, aged 21, who with Ben, aged 15, conducts a dairy at Arvada; Clive, who is now in San Francisco at No. 54 Erie street; Miss Grace, aged 17, living at home and employed at Daniels & Fisher's, and Gano, aged 13, who was a witness to the shooting.

At the coroner's office it was found that neither of the first two shots fired by Senter had taken effect. The first one, evidently fired through his coat pocket, grazed the leg of his trousers and passed into the wall. The second shot, fired after he had drawn the weapon from his pocket, also went wild, probably by reason of Mrs. Senter's turning and stooping quickly away from him. It was only the third shot, when Senter siezed his wife's wrist and held her steady while he placed the muzzle of the weapon fairly against the back of her neck, which took effect. The one bullet which he devoted to his own destruction went straight to the mark.