

# TERRIBLE MURDER COST LIVES OF FOUR NELSON COUNTY YOUNG PEOPLE

Three Women, All Sisters, and One Man Are Victims of Murderous Fiend, Last Thursday Afternoon—Life Sentence Given Murderer—Large Funeral Sunday.

Theodore Larson Friday afternoon pleaded guilty in district court at Grand Forks to four first degree murder charges following his slaying of his wife, her two sisters, and his brother-in-law near Klotten last Thursday. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in the state penitentiary at Bismarck by Judge C. M. Cooley.

Larson showed but slight signs of feeling when brought into court to receive his sentence. A short time before however he had broken down and wept while his photograph was being taken at a photo studio.

"It's too bad I dope it," was his expression of regret to the Nelson county sheriff who took him to Grand Forks.

The killings followed an attempt on the part of Larson to get possession of his child who had been taken by his wife to her sisters' home near Klotten when she left Larson's farm near Edinburg on account of brutal treatment.

The four victims of Larson's attack are:

Mrs. Nellie Larson, aged 33, wife of the slayer.

Two sisters, Helen Quanbeck, 36, and Emma Quanbeck, 27 years old.

Olaf Arneson, Larson's brother-in-law.

Following the killings Larson poured kerosene over the bodies and set fire to them. He then took the child, aged four, the quarrel over which caused the tragedy and fled on horseback. He rode to the home of his father, Finger Larson, three miles distant, where he calmly waited until a posse of 25 men arrived from McVillage. He was disarmed without a struggle, and taken to McVillage.

Mrs. Larson's two brothers were shot from the farm at the time the shooting took place. One, Albert, was in town, and the other, Jack, was out hunting.

Larson arrived at the Quanbeck farm between 3 and 4 o'clock Thursday afternoon. He went to the front door and gained admittance. His wife and two sisters were in the room and Thor Knutson, an aged relative of the Quanbeck family, was in his room on the second floor of the house.

According to Knutson, Larson immediately demanded that his child who had been taken to Klotten by his wife when she left his farm near Edinburg be either turned over to him or he be permitted to remain at the Quanbeck farm with his wife and child. The child was in the room at the time.

Mrs. Larson refused both demands. Larson then attempted to take the child by force whereupon the three

women threw themselves upon him. Larson drew a Luger pistol and opened fire, the first bullet apparently taking effect on Helen Quanbeck, one of the sisters who was instantly killed. Larson then turned the pistol on his wife and killed her, while the third sister, Emma, sprang to the telephone to send call for help to Olaf Arneson who lived nearby. She got her call through to Arneson, but her appeal for help was cut short by a pistol bullet which killed her.

**Shot Heard over Phone**  
Arneson heard the shot over the telephone, and jumping on a horse hastened to the Quanbeck farm. In the meantime Larson proceeded to heap the bodies together and pour kerosene over them.

Knutson got out of the second story window to the woodpile which was close to the house and as Arneson rode up he shouted to him to be careful.

Larson, however, met the would-be rescuer in the front yard, and opened fire on him, the first bullet striking him in the stomach. A second bullet struck him in the hip and a third in the head. The last bullet proved fatal.

**Bodies Fired**

Larson then set fire to the bodies and jumping on Arneson's horse with his little daughter rode to his father's farm, which was close by.

Roy Hagen, employed on the Quanbeck farm, and Albert Lee, a neighbor were attracted by the flames and hastened to the house. They extinguished the blaze, which had however charred the bodies to a considerable extent. They then sent word to McVillage of what had occurred.

In the meantime Larson had gone to his father's farm. He permitted himself to be disarmed, but for greater security was tied hand and foot. In a short time a posse of 25 men which had been hastily organized by the McVillage authorities arrived on the scene and Larson was taken to McVillage and placed in the town jail. Sheriff Louis Bakke at Lakota was immediately notified.

**Lynching Threatened**

The sheriff started for McVillage at once by auto and arrived there just in time probably to prevent a lynching as a large crowd had assembled around the jail making threats. The sheriff forced his way through the crowd however and after some difficulty succeeded in getting his prisoner into his automobile safely. He was rushed to Lakota where he was kept during the night.

Early Friday morning Larson was called for a preliminary examina-

tion. He waived this however, and expressed his willingness to go to Grand Forks and plead guilty at once.

Larson was 35 years old. He and his wife had been married about five years. Both formerly lived in the vicinity of Klotten.

**Ill Treated Wife**  
For the last three years Larson and his wife had lived near Edinburg, where Larson was engaged in farming. Several weeks ago Larson attacked his wife inflicting severe injuries upon her.

As a result of this treatment Mrs. Larson went to the state's attorney of Walsh county and entered a charge of assault and battery against Larson. He was convicted of the charge and released on payment of a fine. Mrs. Larson, however, refused to live with him any longer, and went to the home of her relatives near Klotten.

**Sought Reconciliation**  
Larson sold his property near Edinburg, but persisted, it appears in efforts to affect a reconciliation with his wife, and at his request, Ivar Dahl, the Walsh county state's attorney wrote a letter to Mrs. Larson asking her to come to Grafton last Wednesday for a conference with her husband. She declined to do this however, taking the ground that such a conference would do no good.

Larson himself failed to show up at Grafton at the time appointed and it was thought that he must have gone to Klotten about that time with a view of getting possession of the child.

Both the Walsh and Nelson county authorities express the view that Larson is entirely sane although he appears to feel no remorse for his acts.

Theodore Larson left for the penitentiary at Bismarck Saturday evening in custody of officers to start serving his life sentence which followed his confession to the murders.

More than 2,000 people gathered at the Norway Lutheran church on Sunday afternoon to pay their last respects to Mrs. Theodore Larson, Helen and Emma Quanbeck and Olaf Arneson, the four murder victims of Theodore Larson, and following impressive services at the church the four were borne to the grave by 24 lifelong friends of the Quanbeck family. The cemetery surrounds the church building and one large grave site the four caskets.

When the services began only one hour after noon, fully two thousand people coming from three counties had already gathered. The church was packed and the altar was lined with friends of the family. Hundreds who could not get into the building sat in the automobiles crowded close around the building in such a way that they could hear the services.

The four caskets almost buried with flowers, the gifts of hundreds of friends, stood before the altar. A choir from the Lutheran Free church at McVillage sang two hymns and Rev. O. P. Grambo of the same church assisted Rev. Harold Bach of the Norway church with the services. Mr. Grambo speaking in Norwegian and Mr. Bach speaking in both Norwegian and English. Ole Johnson of McVillage sang a solo in English and Thor Quanbeck, cousin to three of the murder victims, a student at Augsburg Theological seminary at Minneapolis, spoke briefly of his three cousins. The audience sang two English hymns. The interior of the church building was heavily draped in black.

Following the services the four caskets were borne from the church to the grave by the twenty-four pallbearers, all members of churches of which Mr. Bach is pastor and nearly all lifelong friends of the four murder victims. The regular funeral services were pronounced at the grave by Rev. Bach and the four bodies were lowered to their final resting place.



Courtesy of Fargo Tribune

Above are six of the principals in the quadruple killing near Klotten last Thursday afternoon. Mrs. Nellie Larson, 1, was shot by her husband, Theodore Larson, 2, whom she had left two weeks before, when she attempted to stop him from taking possession of their four-year-old daughter, Emma Quanbeck, 3, sister of Mrs. Larson, who was taken to Klotten for help. Mrs. Alma Arneson, 4, the only surviving member of the quartette of sisters, is the widow of Olaf Arneson, 5, who was shot dead on his horse at the Quanbeck farm, called by his sister-in-law, Emma. Helen Quanbeck, 6, was the first victim of the murderer.

