

Wren, Bettie Lee **(- 29 Mar 1900)**

Wren. On Thursday, March 29, 1900 at 2 o'clock p.m., Bettie Lee Wren, wife of the late John W. Wren and daughter of the late George W. and Catherine Wren. Relatives and friends are requested to attend the funeral from the chapel of J. Wm. Lee, undertaker, 332 Pennsylvania avenue northwest on Sunday, April 1 at 3 o'clock (Fairfax Court House please copy).

The Evening Star, March 29, 1900

Charged With Murder

James Lancton to be Tried For Serious Crime

Death of Mrs. Wren, Alleged Victim of Assault--

Autopsy to be Performed

The charge of assault recently preferred against James Lancton was changed to murder this afternoon. This was done when the police learned from Columbian University Hospital that his alleged victim, Mrs. Bettie Ann Wren, had passed away. She died about 2 o'clock this afternoon. When arrested Lancton was very much under the influence of liquor, and his condition was so serious that he was taken to the Emergency Hospital for treatment. He remained in the hospital just one week before he was able to be taken to the Police Court. This was only two days ago. A charge of simple assault was preferred against him, and he was committed to jail without bail to await the result of the woman's injuries.

The assault is charged to have occurred the 12th of this month, at the home of Mrs. Wren, No. 634 E street southwest. It was a week later when the police learned that the woman had been badly injured and was likely to die. Then she was removed to the hospital and Lancton was arrested by the officers of the sixth precinct.

Wanted Her to Marry Him

Mrs. Wren was employed by an F street pension attorney, with whom Lancton had business. It was during his visits to the attorney's office that he met Miss Wren.

Then he called at her house to see her and, it is charged, he wanted her to marry him. Because she refused to accept him it is alleged he called at her house and assaulted her. She was in a critical condition when the police removed her to the hospital. Symptoms of paralysis soon developed and later the patient's mind was affected.

The police received from the hospital, from time to time, an account of her condition, and this afternoon learned of her death.

While at the hospital the man stated that he was innocent of the charge. He admitted that he was very much in love with the woman, and claimed they were to be married in May.

Coroner Carr was notified of the death of Mrs. Wren this afternoon. He will probably hold an inquest tomorrow. The prisoner is about fifty-four years old, while Mrs. Wren was nineteen years younger.

The Evening Star, March 30, 1900

Committed to Jail

Lancton Held Responsible for Mrs. Wren's Death

Verdict of the Coroner's Jury
Evidence That Defendant Had Threatened Her With Death
Disclosures by Autopsy

James Lancton, who has been in custody several days on a charge of having inflicted fatal injuries on Mrs. Bettie Lee Wren, was held for the action of the grand jury today. He was present at the inquest held at the sixth precinct station this morning, having been brought up from jail. Lieut. Hollinberger of the fourth precinct and two of his officers who had made the investigation were also present. Several witnesses were examined, none of whom with possibly one exception, had witnessed the alleged assault, charged to have occurred the 12th of the month, at the home of the deceased, No. 634 E street southwest.

The prisoner was represented by Warder Voorhees and W.M. Offley. After the verdict was rendered the prisoner was returned to jail and the body of the deceased was removed from the morgue to Lee's undertaking establishment. The funeral will probably take place tomorrow.

Physician's Testimony

Dr. G.G. Morris, 815 14th street northwest, testified that he was called to see Mrs. Wren Saturday morning following the day she was injured. He found her in a serious condition showing evidences of brain trouble. There was also a man in the room, who was very much under the influence of liquor. Witness was told that Mrs. Wren's sister had complained that the intoxicated man had assaulted her. The man, whom the witness identified as Lancton, left the room and went into the kitchen. Mrs. Wren told him, he said, that the man had assaulted her. When witness ordered the intoxicated man from the house the latter refused to go, saying he was the injured woman's husband. Witness helped him on with his overcoat and saw that he left the house. Witness then informed the police. He got most of his information from a colored woman named King. She told him the assault was committed Monday afternoon, the 12th of the month. When he was called he found a bruise on the woman's head and there was paralysis of the left arm.

Afflicted Sister a Witness

Miss Ellen Wren, an invalid sister of the deceased, appeared before the coroner's jury. She had to be carried on a chair and was deaf and dumb. She motioned with her hand to show how her sister had been beaten about the face and body, and then pointed to the defendant who occupied a chair in the room.

John R. Wheatley, 907 6th street northwest, testified that when he heard about Mrs. Wren's injury he called at her house and found her in bed. She told him she had been beaten and kicked by Lancton. Witness said he had heard Lancton threaten the woman's life on several occasions.

"The night of February 20," said witness, "Lancton came into the house and said 'I'll cut your throat.' and 'I'll kill you, you ___ ___.'" Witness added that he also said "I'll murder you" and "I'll poison you."

Witness said he had boarded at Mrs. Wren's house for seven years. Lancton also lived there, and, said witness, he was a very jealous man. On one occasion, the witness said Lancton ordered him out of the house saying he had married Mrs. Wren, and he wanted to live there alone with her. The prisoner, he said, became acquainted with Mrs. Wren at the office of Mr. B. Stevens, where she was employed. He changed his boarding house after the prisoner told him he was married. Witness mentioned the dates on which the alleged threats were made. On one occasion he threatened to kill both Mrs. Wren and witness, and said: "If I kill both of you I'll get off, because they'll say I'm crazy."

Heard Lancton Make Threats

Ida King, colored, testified that she had lived in the Wren family nearly all her life and said she could understand the signs made by the invalid sister. Witness said she heard Lancton threaten to kill Mrs.

Wren the day of the alleged assault. He also said in her hearing he would kill Mr. Wheatley. The prisoner said he would commit a double murder if he (Lancton) caught the widow talking to Wheatley. The invalid sister told witness by signs of the alleged assault. Lancton entered the room while the sister was telling her of the affair, and she pointed to him as the man who had committed the assault.

Emily King, an elderly colored woman, testified that Saturday night previous to the alleged assault she went to see Mrs. Wren and Lancton put her out of the house. She thought he was sober at that time. When she heard that Mrs. Wren was ill, Wednesday, she called at the house and found her in bed. The floors were locked and witness crawled through a window. When she got into the house she was told the sick women had been without food for two days and she made some tea for them. Thursday night a man from the office where Mrs. Wren worked called at the house and found that she was sick. He sent the doctor to see her. Lancton had boarded at the house about four months.

Friends for Many Years

Mrs. S.F. Yates, who had been a friend of the Wren family for many years, was called to tell something about the invalid sister. She said she could understand everything the invalid says by signs.

"I have known Mrs. Wren for fully fifty years," she said.

"Was Mrs. Wren that old?" the coroner asked.

"Yes sir," she answered.

Mrs. Wren, she said, came of a good family and had lived here all her life.

Mrs. Hetty Hillings testified that she had been an intimate friend of the deceased for many years. She called on her Sunday, March 11, and Mrs. Wren told her that Lancton was jealous of her and was causing her a great deal of annoyance. She told witness that Lancton had threatened to kill her if she did not marry him, and said she felt as if she would like to go away.

Result of the Autopsy

Deputy Coroner Glazebrook testified that he performed an autopsy, on the body of Mrs. Wren at the Columbian University Hospital yesterday afternoon. Witness found no bruises or scars about the body. Upon removing the skull cap he found a tremendous hemorrhage on the left side of the head. The clot had pushed the brain to one side. He thought the hemorrhage had taken place more than a week before he performed the autopsy. The woman's skull was an unusually thick one and was not fractured. He said the woman's death was unquestionably due to the hemorrhage of the brain. There were no evidences of injury on the outside of the head. The vessel that had been ruptured is one that is usually affected in cases of violence. Injury may have been inflicted without making a bruise, or, if there had been a bruise, it had had time to disappear.

This closed the testimony and the case was submitted.

The Evening Star, April 2, 1900, p. 7

Mrs. Wren Buried

Funeral services over the remains of Mrs. Bettie Ann Wren, whose death is attributed to injuries said to have been inflicted by James Lancton, were held yesterday afternoon in the chapel of Lee's undertaking establishment. Rev. Richard P. Williams, rector of Trinity P.E. Church, officiated, assisted by Rev. Ernest Fisher of Hagerstown.

The remains were placed in a vault, and the interment is to be made in Congressional cemetery tomorrow evening.