

Way We Were  
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A Damn Bad Family Mess  
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The mysterious shooting of Wyatt Kennedy was the talk of the town during the winter of 1894. Was it an accident, attempted suicide, or a murder plot? An investigative journalist was determined to find out. Over the course of several weeks, the story unravels in a series of sensationalized articles in the Park Record. Combining fact and fiction, rumors and assumptions, testimonies and confessions, the author's findings reveal a strange and unsettling family affair.

It all started on the morning of February 15, 1894. The Kennedy family had just finished breakfast at their home near the Ontario No. 3 dump when a shot rang out. Moments later, Wyatt Kennedy staggered out of the house, blood pouring from his nose and mouth. He desperately called for help, terrified he might die.

When Dr. LeCompte arrived, Kennedy was raving, claiming that his wife had shot him. The doctor examined the wound, determining that the bullet had entered the head in front of the right ear, and lodged in the face just to the left of the nose. When Dr. LeCompte asked the patient how far away his wife had been when she fired the shot, Kennedy claimed it was about ten feet. Dr. LeCompte was quite skeptical, however. The skin surrounding the wound was badly powder marked, which would indicate that the shot was fired in close proximity. Later, in the company of Sheriff Haring, Kennedy swore he did not shoot himself, nor was it his wife. No, it was a plot to murder him!

Rumors of Wyatt Kennedy's reputation began to circulate, with much speculation about his character. He often took to the drink, becoming violent and dangerous, they said. Talk spread that he had threatened to cut off the ears of his daughter, and had even shot at his wife several times. When filled with the demon drink, it seemed, he was a wicked and cruel man.

After his claim of a murder plot, Kennedy refused to say anything more, except that it was a "damn bad family mess." An official investigation was soon launched, followed by the arrests of Kennedy's wife Annie, and his son Frank. Annie was charged with aiding and abetting, and Frank was charged with shooting his father. On the witness stand, Kennedy swore that he did not see who shot him, but heard his son Frank say, "Shall I give him another one, mama?" Annie was also questioned. She said that during the scuffle, Frank had told her to run, as his father was going to murder her, and if he did, Frank would kill him. Various other people were questioned, and eventually the case against Mrs. Kennedy was dropped. Frank was held to await the action of the grand jury.

Strangely, nothing more was said about the case in the Park Record. The following year, a Frank Kennedy was arrested as an accomplice to the infamous Patsy Coughlin, but got off with only a \$20 fine. Could it have been the same boy, turned into a "hard citizen" by his difficult family life? Despite failed murder plots, the dysfunctional family stayed together. They all moved to Ogden by 1900, where Wyatt became the

manager of the Union Central Life Insurance Company. He died in 1910; Annie outlived him by three years.



Image#: 1999.17.210

Caption: Wyatt Kennedy was shot in his home near the Ontario #3 dump.

Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum, Fraser Buck Collection

**Sources:**

Park Record, 02- 17- 1894 – Attempted Suicide

Park Record 02- 24- 1894 – The Kennedy Shooting

Park Record 03- 31- 1894 – The Kennedy Case

Park Record 07- 13- 1895 – A Twenty Five Thousand Dollar Job

Ogden, Utah City Directory – 1902