

# The Centre Democrat

VOL. 11.

BELLEVILLE, PA., THURSDAY, NOV. 28, 1889.

NO. 47

## GUILTY!

### HOPKINS MUST HANG!

#### ACCOUNT OF THE TRIAL.

List of Jurymen—Who were Selected—Evidence of Witnesses—The Appearance of the Prisoner—Large Attendance—Strong Plea made by Col. Spangler.

At 10:25 p. m., on Thursday evening, after being out about two hours, the jury rendered the verdict of "Guilty of murder in the first degree."

The murder trial was called at 9:15 Tuesday morning. Sheriff Cooke brought the prisoner into court fifteen minutes later. He is a slim, tall young man. His face is thin and sharp with a prominent nose, receding chin and forehead, light sandy moustache and hair combed pempadour. He was looking well and smiled as his counsel spoke to him. He was slightly pale and limped somewhat, not having recovered evidently from the paralysis resulting from the shooting.

The prisoner is arraigned only for the murder of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Esther Wigaman, and Maggie, his wife, is not mentioned in the indictment. He could be tried in the future also for the murder of his wife.

The following statement of Seely Hopkins, made at the time of his arrest, gives a good account of the murder of his wife and mother-in-law. It was made to officer J. M. Click and we republish it to give our readers a clear idea of the affray:

#### HOPKINS' CONFESSION.

"I left Houtzdale on Saturday night (Sept. 21, '89) about 11 o'clock p. m., walked down the railroad until I came to R. B. Wigton's brick yard where I left the railroad and took the board walk to Phillipsburg. Went up Maple St. to Second, then down Second to Rose Prines and went into the alley and then into the back of the house. I broke in the window of the cellar and laid on the bank in the cellar all night. I could not sleep; heard them get up, (meaning Mrs. Wigaman and my wife); waited a while and then went up steps that lead from the cellar to the kitchen, but before going up took off my shoes so that they could not hear me. When I got in the kitchen my wife was washing the dishes. I walked up to her and put my arm around her and she said 'you s— of a b— get out.' I drew my revolver and she saw it and said 'Oh! Cele don't.' I fired at her head when she screamed; I fired another and she fell. I did not see whether she was dead or not. I then went up stairs and saw the old woman at the head of the stairs. I fired at her—she turned in the room. I followed her in, she was lying on the floor and begged of me not to shoot her. I turned around and shot her in the head again and then went down the stairs and out of the back door to Allports' livery stable. There I

#### TRIED TO KILL MYSELF.

I fired two shots, the first did not knock me down, but the second did. Thought I had one more shot, but had not, or I would have died with them. I gave my revolver to Mr. Eckridge of the Telephone Company, of Osceola, on Wednesday so that it would not be found on me if I was arrested. I did not see the revolver again until Friday. I sent Charles Humphery for it from Wm. Ferguson's livery stable. I staid at the stable until he came back. The revolver is a seven-shooter, but had only six shots in it. This morning I had two cartridges of my own and Charles Humphery gave me four and that made six. I got the revolver from a gun dealer opposite the Reynolds's arcade, Rochester N. Y., when I was home, the price was \$3.50, but it did not cost me anything. The party told me he would make me a present of the revolver. I am well acquainted with the party from whom I got the revolver. I also got nine cartridges with the revolver, I fired two of them and Wm. Ferguson fired seven which I got with the revolver, that caused me to get the other cartridges from Humphery. The revolver is a British bull dog.

I did not break the lock off the door yesterday after I shot Mrs. Wigaman on the stairs. I did that some time ago. Maggie went in there to sleep one night and I wanted her to sleep with me, which she did after I broke the lock off the door."

The indictment was then read by Prothonotary Schaeffer, to which the prisoner answered "not guilty," and wanted to be tried by "my God and my country."

#### ATTORNEYS IN THE CASE.

Seely Hopkins, the prisoner at the bar, has for his counsel W. F. Reeder, Esq., partner of Gen. D. H. Hastings. Mr. Reeder is one of the younger members of the Bellefonte bar, and among them he is a prominent figure. His firm is one of the leading and in the past few years has been under his direction, owing to the absence of Gen. Hastings at Harrisburg. Mr. Reeder was the principal attorney for Andrew Buranoski last spring and his masterly efforts for his client in that case were admired by all. Buranoski was considered guilty, but he went away a free man.

Mr. Reeder is assisted at the table by Mr. Quigley, his law student, who has assisted much in the preparation of the case.

For the Commonwealth, Col. J. L. Spangler is assisting District Attorney Meyer. Col. Spangler is one of the foremost attorneys of Bellefonte, and his legal training and years of experience in court render him capable for the prosecution of such a case. Col. Spangler has made a thorough preparation of the evidence and the legal points involved and nothing will be left undone. The District Attorney is likewise competent and efficient, always prosecutes the interests of the Com. with a vigor that deserves praise.

With such able men to try the case nothing will be left undone and if there is any plea for the man's life it will be strongly urged.

We have condensed all the testimony and give only the important facts in an abbreviated form.

#### CALLING THE JURY.

The first juror called was M. P. Holter, of Howard township, who was asked the usual questions and was not challenged.

George Eckle, of Ferguson township, was challenged by W. F. Reeder, the defendant's attorney.

J. J. Tobin, of Snow Shoe, had read the county papers, formed an opinion, but could render a verdict according to the facts. Challenged by the defendant.

Abednego Stine, Half Moon twp.; stood aside.

Henry Vaughn, Phillipsburg, hearing poor; stood aside.

Frank D. Stover, Bellefonte, no fixed opinion; challenged by defendant.

George Gentzel, not opposed to capital punishment, no fixed opinion, gets no newspaper; unchallenged.

James Turner, Mt. Eagle, formed no opinion, not opposed to c. p.

And. Glenn, college twp., no fixed opinion as to guilt, not opposed to c. p.; challenge.

Levi Stump, Potter twp., no fixed opinion, not opposed to c. p.; challenged.

W. C. Farner, Potter twp., no opinion of guilt; stood aside.

Cornelius Houtz, College twp., no opinion or prejudice; not challenged.

Mark Mooney, Millheim, no opinion, hard of hearing; stood aside.

John Gunsallus, Snow Shoe, no opinion or prejudice; not challenged.

Henry Ellenberger, Phillipsburg, no opinion or prejudice; stood aside.

Wm. Harter, Penn twp., no opinion or prejudice, not opposed to c. p.; challenged.

George Ocker, Centre Hall; challenged.

Simon Neyhart, Boggs twp., not opposed to capital punishment, no fixed opinion; stood aside.

Ed. Moore, Ferguson twp., no fixed opinion of guilt, not opposed to c. p.; stood aside.

S. E. Royer, Potter twp., no opinion prejudice or bias, not opposed to c. p.; unchallenged.

Balser Weber, Howard twp., had conscientious scruples against c. p.

Elmer Campbell, Harris twp., no fixed opinion or bias; challenged by defendant.

John G. Uzzle, Snow Shoe, not opposed to c. p., no fixed opinion; stood aside.

Joseph Apt, Spring twp., no opinion, not opposed to c. p.; not challenged.

M. D. Mooney, Snow Shoe, no opinion, not opposed to c. p.; stood aside.

John Meese, Bellefonte, no opinion or prejudice, not opposed to c. p.; challenged by defendant.

Jonathan Parker, Boggs twp., no

fixed opinion, not opposed to c. p.

R. O. Way, Half Moon, opposed to c. p.; challenged.

Frank Adams, Boggs twp., no opinion, or prejudice; challenged by defendant.

Wm. Hopkins, Howard boro., no prejudice, or scruples against c. p., not strong enough to be biased, not related, set aside.

J. M. Holt, Phillipsburg, an opinion formed, could not be changed, could render a verdict according to the evidence; challenged by defendants.

W. Y. Gray, Phillipsburg, formed an opinion but would be governed by facts, opposed to c. p., could render a verdict according to the law and facts; stood aside.

James Harris, Bellefonte, no fixed opinion, not opposed to c. p.; challenged.

Joseph Schenck, Howard boro., no opinion or bias, not opposed to c. p.; stood aside.

G. R. Quick, Boggs twp., no opinion or bias, not opposed to c. p.; unchallenged.

Henry Gentzel, Spring twp., challenged by defendant.

W. E. Irvin, Phillipsburg, fixed opinion of guilt, opposed to c. p. Challenged.

Silas Dixon, Burnside twp.; stood aside.

S. M. Crissman, had formed opinion of guilt. Challenged.

H. G. Norris, Patton twp., had formed an opinion. Challenged.

Geo. Welland, Patton twp., formed no opinion. Challenged.

John Confer, Snow Shoe, formed no opinion, not opposed to c. p. Not challenged.

James Houser, Benner twp., no fixed opinion, not opposed to c. p. Challenged by defendant.

Wm. Ellenberger, Ferguson twp., no fixed opinion. Challenged.

John McDermott, Bellefonte, hearing bad, opposed to c. p. Stood aside.

James Frank, Miles twp.; challenged.

Abednego Stine, challenged by defendant.

Henry Vaughn, challenged by commonwealth.

W. C. Farner, challenged by defendant.

Mark Mooney, not challenged.

H. Ellenberger, challenged by defendant.

Simon Neyhart, not challenged.

Ed. Moore, challenged.

John G. Uzzle, challenged.

M. D. Mooney, challenged.

Jonathan Parker, not challenged.

Tipstaves Morrison and Beck with were then sworn to take charge of the jury and instructions were given them by the Judge as to their duty. Apartments are provided for them at the Brokerhoff House.

The following is the jury as drawn:

M. P. Holter, George Gentzel, James Farner, Cornelius Houtz, John Gunsallus, S. E. Royer, Joseph Apt, G. R. Quick, John Confer, Mark Mooney, Simon Neyhart and Jonathan Parker.

All witnesses on all commonwealth cases were then discharged except those on the murder trial, and those in the case of the Penn'a. R. R. Co., prosecutor vs. T. McCafferty.

#### TUESDAY AFTERNOON.

The Trial Begun.—The Court Room Crowded From End to End.

When the bell from the court house called the afternoon session the room was packed from end to end. As number trials are unusual in our county there was a general desire to hear it.

Hopkins was escorted to the room by the Sheriff and bore a pleasant and cheerful expression on his face, which was not to be expected of one who was arranged before a tribunal of Justice, charged with the crime of murder, and whose verdict will, evidently, be guilty of murder, and the sentence, that of death.

Court was called to order at 2 p. m., after which the jury was sworn by Prothonotary Schaeffer, after which His Honor A. O. Furst addressed the jury in a brief manner, reminding them of their great obligations in this case. They also were reminded of their duties as jurors. The Judge then ordered that all persons under the age of 16 years to be taken from the room and be excluded therefrom until after the trial.

ADDRESS OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY.

The case was then practically begun when J. C. Meyer, the District Attorney, arose and addressed the jury. His opening remarks were made in a careful, clear and calm manner. He first specified the charges contained in the indictment and what their intent was in the eyes of the law. The difference between murder and manslaughter was carefully pointed out and especially the meaning of the charge of "premeditated

murder" for which the prisoner is arraigned. The incidents were then briefly related concerning the murder.

EXAMINATION OF COM. WITNESSES.

W. B. Williams, Phillipsburg, sworn and testified. Visited the scene of the murder and made a correct drawing of the Hopkins home and adjacent buildings—drawing was then explained to jury, showing the location of the house.

T. J. Meyers, of Phillipsburg, said this house was 18x18, with two rooms on 1st floor and two on 2nd floor. Building had a cellar which was connected with first floor by stairs and door; house and lot was owned by Mrs. Esther Wigaman about one year; is a sister of witness; the family living there were Mrs. Esther W. Wigaman, Robert, her son, Mrs. Maggie Hopkins, (her daughter) and W. Seely Hopkins, the son-in-law. The murder was committed Sunday, Sept. 22, 1889, at 10 a. m.; heard shots that morning and ran to Allport's livery stable 178 feet away; heard two distinct shots; ran from the stable to Wigaman's house and found Maggie H. on the floor with a bullet hole in her head; did not see Esther W.; heard Hopkins' say that he had shot these two women and that is the reason I went there.

Cross Examination: Saw Mrs. Hopkins on Saturday; Hopkins told him Sunday that he had shot the women; saw Maggie H. alive on Sunday morning; saw Mrs. Wigaman alive on Saturday evening at 10 p. m.; next saw her dead in the house; saw Hopkins at the livery stable on his knees; was bleeding from wounds in the head; had on no shoes, coat, vest or hat; saw Maggie H. on the floor bleeding; spoke to her but received no answer; she breathed once while I was there; had no conversation with Hopkins at the livery stable.

Re-direct-ex: saw Maggie H. Sunday morning in the yard and ten minutes later heard the pistol shots.

Robert Wigaman, Phillipsburg: am son of Esther Wigaman and both of Maggie H. and Seely H. also lived with us; lived there about a year; was at home Sat. night from 11 p. m., Charley Johnson of Harrisburg was with me; mother got breakfast; went to Clearfield that day; saw my sister Sunday morning at about 8 a. m.; when I came back on Sunday evening was told that mother and sister were dead.

Cross ex: sister and mother were up before I left home on Sunday at about 7 a. m.

Re-direct: mother went into the cellar that morning to get the bread and butter, Maggie staid in the kitchen.

Chas. Johnson, of Harrisburg: visited the Wigaman home, Sat. Sept. 20, '89; saw Mrs. Wigaman and Maggie H.; went with Maggie to an oyster saloon on Saturday evening; returned at about 10 p. m.; stayed with Robt. Wigaman that evening; Sunday morning I took breakfast at Wigaman's; Maggie went in the cellar with the butter at about 9 a. m.; I left soon after; in about a half hour heard they were shot; went in the house and saw both lying dead—about 10 a. m. Sunday; Mrs. Wig. was shot in the top of the head.

Cross ex: Mrs. Wigaman was in room over dining room, lying on the floor with her head resting on a pillow; a round hole was in her head from which the blood flowed; Maggie was lying on her side in the kitchen with a bullet hole alongside her ear; did not see Hopkins while in Phillipsburg.

Dr. McGirk, Phillipsburg: came up Second st. opposite Wigaman's house that Sunday morning; saw a man coming out partly dressed, he ran towards Allports livery stable; the man fired three shots and then fell; pistol dropped out of his hand; was wounded in the head; was taken to the livery stable, this occurred about 10:15 a. m. Sunday morning; that prisoner (pointing to Hopkins) I recognize as the man.

Cross ex: Hopkins held the pistol to the left side of head and tried to shoot himself; when the first shot was fired he dropped his hand; raised the revolver and fired the second time; the third shot he fell, dropping the revolver, but tried to get it when it was taken away; when Hopkins came out of the house he appeared to be frightened and in a hurry; when he snapped the revolver he dodged his head.

John R. Aikens, Phillipsburg: Plumber shop across from the livery stable; saw Hopkins on Sunday morning in front of my shop; Hopkins saw me and said: "John! John! I ended their career." Hopkins was about ten steps from the livery stable; I walked on and looked back; Hopkins had a revolver and tried to shoot himself, fired once; was frightened by Hopkins' appearance.

Dr. J. H. Pierce, Phillipsburg: Sunday morning stood in my door and saw a

man trying to shoot himself near Allport's livery; ran towards the man who was lying on the ground bleeding; had severe wounds; I stopped the bleeding; went immediately to Wigaman's, Maggie H. was lying on the kitchen floor; Mrs. Wigaman was in a room up stairs lying on her side at the bed; made an examination of Mrs. W., she was shot under the jaw which was broken; under the scalp a bullet hole was found above the left ear; the ball passed through the main portions of the brain, struck the vertebrae and went down the spinal column and produced instantaneous death; Dr. Buckingham assisted me in making the post mortem examination at about 2 p. m. Sunday morning; the first shot was fired from below, and the second shot, through the head, must have been when Mrs. W. was upon her knees.

Dr. H. W. Buckingham: Assisted me in the above post mortem examination upon Mrs. Wigaman. The testimony was similar to the above.

Mrs. Blanche Meyers: Am wife of Dorsey Meyers, the brother of Mrs. Wigaman; I found Mrs. Wigaman that Sunday morning lying in a room up stairs with a pillow in her hand; she had a wound in her head from which blood was oozing.

Mrs. Haines, Phillipsburg: Saw Mrs. Wigaman that Sunday lying dead in her room, this was about 10 a. m.; ran down to Wigamans and found the two women (same as described above), a dish pan filled with warm water was on table and dishes were alongside it; Maggie's hands were still quite warm; Mrs. Wigaman's body was cold.

Sheriff Cooke: was present at the coroners inquest; a seven chamber "bull dog" revolver was identified as the one he received at the inquest, in his possession since; there were six empty cartridges in it and one empty chamber.

J. C. Meyer, Dist. At: received the revolver from the sheriff one week ago; Sam Rhule produced it at the hearing.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

Fred Todd: was at Allports livery stable Sunday morning; saw a revolver aside of Hopkins; picked it up and gave it to Samuel Rhule; this revolver (in court) resembles the one I picked up.

Samuel Rhule, Phillipsburg: was at the stable after Hopkins shot himself; revolver was given me by Todd; this revolver is the one received from Todd, identified by No., make, and mark on the end of barrel; gave it to Mr. Meyer at the inquest.

J. J. Wigaman of near Houtzdale; brother-in-law of Mrs. Esther Wigaman; Hopkins and wife visited me Nov. 1888. Hopkins said in the presence of Maggie that he would kill Mrs. Wigaman; Maggie went home soon after; Hopkins went away; Hopkins and wife came to my house to relate their family troubles; Hopkins said he would kill T. J. Meyers, Esther Wigaman, Mrs. Clarkson or anybody that would interfere between him and his wife; Mrs. Hopkins said her husband abused her and Mrs. Wigaman; Hopkins grew angry, walked about the room; put his hand on his hip pocket and said, "I will kill Mrs. Wigaman, the d— black b—"

He looked especially angry when he spoke of Mrs. Wigaman. I advised them to move into a separate house, alone; Hopkins said he could not get a house.

Mrs. Jennie Wigaman, wife of the above witness: I visited the Wigaman home last May; Hopkins told me at that time that they were having trouble in the house, as Mrs. Wigaman was mean, stingy, etc.; was there in July; sent for me to hear their troubles; Hopkins, Maggie, Mrs. Wigaman and myself were there; Mrs. Wigaman said that Hopkins cursed about the house, ill-used his wife; Hopkins went out and came back and said: "You d— old b— I have you told your story;" Mrs. Wigaman said she told the truth; then Hopkins choked Mrs. Wigaman severely; Mrs. Hopkins told how he abused her; Hopkins went out, came back; grabbed the poker and ran after Mrs. Wigaman to strike her; Maggie run between them; Hopkins said he would blow her brains out, placing his hand on his hip pocket; Hopkins said Mrs. Wigaman was mean, stingy, dirty, and did not pay him what she owed him. I took Mrs. Wigaman along with me, as I was afraid he would injure her; I was very much afraid of him; Hopkins used a great deal of profane language; Hopkins once invited Ed. Hughes to his house and told his wife to ask him in; Hopkins was outside and looked in at the window, came in and he accused his wife before Hughes of being intimate with Hughes; Hopkins never spoke ill of his wife but of Mrs. Wigaman.

Mrs. Agnes McCulley, Spring twp.: visited Mrs. Wigaman in August; Hop-

kins, Esther Wigaman and Maggie were there; was at Dorsey Meyer's Thursday evening; the Wigaman family were there; Hopkins came after his wife; asked her where she had been all evening; Maggie said right before Hopkins said "like b—"

She returned home with him; they quarrelled in the house; Hopkins had heard remarks of his wife's conduct at the Parker house; heard Hopkins say he would shoot some one, heard frequent quarrels.

Mrs. Nettie Meyers, Phillipsburg: wife of T. J. Meyers, (live on the same lot) often visited Wigaman's; heard Hopkins make threats, from our door during the past summer; recognize Hopkins's voice; heard him say would "cut your hearts out;" often saw Mrs. Wigaman run out of house and heard him quarrel; Mrs. Wig. begged Hopkins not to kill Maggie; they were continually quarrelling; could distinguish their voices at that distance; almost every time he went into the house he would quarrel; repeated frequently expression "J— C— I will cut your hearts out;" I never believed Hopkins was wicked enough to commit such a deed; they quarrelled ever since their marriage.

Robert Wigaman, son of Esther Wigaman, recalled: Three weeks before the murder, on a Sunday morning, Hopkins swore on that morning that he would kill mother; he was arrested by Squire Gorton; Hopkins returned on Tuesday and beat my sister; did not abuse mother then; lived at home the past year; Hopkins always quarrelled, swore, threw furniture around, swore frequently that he would kill mother; Hopkins avoided me; cross ex.—Sister and Hopkins had a fuss because sister paid the milk bill and he wanted the money; I have seen him frequently choke mother in our house, because mother used her knife at the table in the butter.

Dorsey Meyers, Phillipsburg, brother of Esther Wigaman: Hopkins was arrested, on Tuesday; about three weeks before the murder heard them quarrel, and Hopkins ran out of the house; I caught him in the house and choked him; he got away and came back, and was arrested.

Mrs. Blanche Meyers re-called: three weeks before the murder on Tuesday; heard of the assault; went down and saw Maggie and Seely quarrel in their bed room; live on same lot; Seely made many threats against Esther Wig.; said "you d— old black b—, I'll cut your heart out, if it were not for the law I would kill you;" she said don't kill me, you'll hang; Hopkins wanted money, she said he ought not to ask for money when he lived there; Seely had a hatchet in hand and said "you d— black bitch, if it were not for the law I would kill you;" often choked Mrs. Wig.; once for using her knife in the butter; he abused Robert on Decoration day and said I would smash him over the head with a poker if he would not behave, Hopkins threatened to kill Mrs. Wigaman a year before the tragedy.

Dr. Pierce-recalled: Friday before the shooting, was called to Allports livery stable; Hopkins was there and said if Maggie and Esther and he would sign a paper it would be the same as a divorce; said they were trying to take his wife away from him.

Emeline Clarkson, Phillipsburg: Hopkins made many threats to kill Mrs. Wigaman, my sister, in the last year; always wanted money; called her a "miserly old b—"; said he would ruin the two women by lies and threatened to burn their houses down and kill other people.

J. M. Click, Phillipsburg: arrested him on Wed. evening and gave him over to officer Gorton.

A. J. Gorton, Phillipsburg: constable; took the prisoner to the justices office; put him in the lock-up; Mrs. Wigaman wanted him to be let free to hunt bail as he might leave town for good, I did so and he left.

Frank Humphery, Phillipsburg: saw Hopkins on Sat. before the shooting; asked me for 32 calibre cartridges; gave him four and he placed them in a revolver like one in court; said he was going away; pulled two more from his pocket and put them in his revolver also.

Blanche Miller: staid at Phillipsburg; saw prisoner at Osceola Sat. before the shooting; took him along to near Houtzdale at 2 p. m.; said I should not mention anything of him.

Ed. Perks, Jr., Phillipsburg: saw Seely at Houtzdale that Sat. at 4 p. m.

Wm. McCoy, Osceola: saw Seely there that Sat. at about 1 p. m.; gave him a lunch.

CONTINUED ON LOCAL PAGE.