

MOST NEWS.....
LEAST MONEY

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THE TRAGEDY AT WOODWARD

How Wm. R. Etlinger Kills Constable John Barner, and Wounds Several Others.

HE DEFIANTLY COMMITS SUICIDE

Turned his house into a barricaded arsenal—Plenty of dynamite and Ammunition—Hobbled his wife—Intended to poison the entire Town with strychnine and arsenic—A diabolical plot averted—The story told by the wife—He loved his children and kissed them good bye—A correct account of the tragedy briefly told.



WM. R. ETLINGER, The Murderer.

Last Thursday afternoon, March 5th, after our regular weekly edition was printed and mailed, a telegram was received at Belleville, from Coburn, stating that a terrible tragedy had been committed at Woodward, Pa., a small village in Haines township at the extreme eastern end of this county. It stated that Wm. Etlinger a noted dangerous character in that section had shot and killed constable John Barner, and wounded two other men and defied arrest. It also contained an appeal for Sheriff Condo and armed deputies to hasten to the scene in order to capture the desperado.

This telegram caused the intensest excitement in Belleville, and the news was soon spread in every section of the county of the terrible affair at Woodward. From that time on until Friday at 1 p.m., the scenes enacted at Woodward were the most thrilling that are known in the annals of history for daring and cruel butchery. The entire county was terrorized by this man whom that neighborhood for years had feared as a demon and treacherous devil, and who had now turned his residence into a barricaded arsenal, well supplied with rifles ammunition and large quantities of ingeniously constructed dynamite bombs. Thus he successfully held the sheriff and armed deputies, and hundreds of armed men at bay and defied arrest for almost 24 hours. It was only until driven from his lair like a tiger by fire, that he tragically took his own life in the presence of several thousand spectators, who had been trying all this time by firing thousands of rifle shots into his retreat to either kill him or force a surrender. Such a scene, transpiring in a peaceable and highly civilized community, is so startling and tragic, that the people of that community are still in a highly excited condition. It has been the topic of conversation everywhere—in all public places and in every house in Centre county, while all the great daily papers from one end of the country to the other contain extended illustrated accounts of this thrilling tragedy. Almost every reader of this paper in Centre county is conversant with the facts by this time. Yet it seems necessary, and will be expected to give a brief account of what occurred and the incidents that led to this shocking affair.

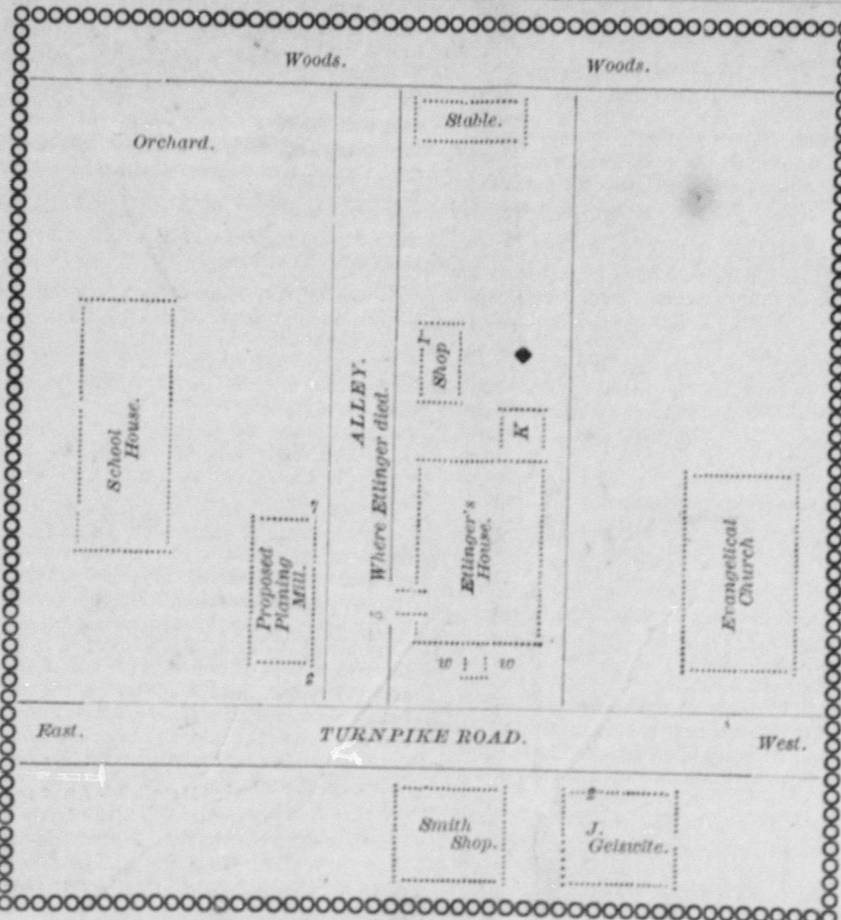
to his father's bedside before he died, by Deputy Dukeman. Wm. Etlinger was a tall, finely developed specimen of manhood, of dark complexion, black hair, small black sharp eyes, prominent aquiline nose, and dark mustache. His expression denoted strong determination and daring, and in general appearance would be considered a handsome man. He was about 36 years of age and spent most of his life at Woodward. Although he was in the West for a time.

For many years Wm. Etlinger was known in that community as a desperate character, and the citizens generally feared him. Many incidents of his devilishness, prior to this event, have been related. Morally his instincts were low. His abuse of his former wife and child, who is still living in College township, was outrageous, and she fearing that her life might be taken by him, deserted the home and never cared to return. It is known that he compelled his present wife to assist him in dirty plots to blackmail citizens in that community, to extort money from them. He often clubbed and beat her, when in any way she would displease him. For one of these contemptible acts her father, Benj. Benner, of Woodward, went to Etlinger and remonstrated with him about the cruel treatment of his wife. Etlinger flew into a violent rage, accused him of



MRS. ETLINGER. A photo taken immediately after she escaped.

interfering with their domestic affairs and causing all the trouble between himself and wife. He followed this by giving the old gentleman a severe beating in the blacksmith shop near his house, and in the presence of several men and a constable, who then had a warrant in his pocket for Etlinger's arrest for a former crime. Etlinger, at this time, struck his father-in-law on the head with a club that laid the scalp open and rendered the old gentleman unconscious. Knowing of Etlinger's violent temper, and that he always carried weapons,



The above is almost a perfect diagram of the property occupied by Wm. R. Etlinger, and adjoining points of interest. At figure No. 1 the fire was started by Cornely. No. 2 is window where Mr. Geiswite was shot. No. 3 is where the children ran to, from the cellar way. No. 4, where Mrs. Etlinger ran and dropped and was carried away. No. 5 is where Etlinger came up out of the cellar way and shot himself in the alley. The (w's) in front of the residence show the small cellar windows from which Etlinger frequently shot during Friday morning.

the constable wisely concluded not to attempt to enforce any official duties with this man at this time.

A warrant was issued for this offence, and in an unguarded moment he was arrested and bound over for appearance at November term of court. His bondsmen were Isaac Orndorf and Daniel Engle, in amount of \$250. Etlinger failed to put in an appearance at court and a bench warrant was issued, and placed in constable Mingle's hands, of Aaronsburg, for service.

From that time on Etlinger became desperate and began to terrorize the community by threats. He declared, in a letter of Dec. 30, '95, written to a party in Belleville, that certain parties about Woodward were bragging about bringing him "dead or alive" to Belleville and that if any of them attempted to draw on him they would have to be very quick, and in that event, there would be "some unexpected funerals in this community." He wrote similar threatening letters to other citizens of the community. After that he was seldom seen on the streets of Woodward, unless wearing a large leather belt containing many rounds of cartridges, a large nickel-plated, self-acting 30 calibre revolver and a large double-edged knife in the same. He spent much of his time in the mountains hunting, and it is said he lived in a cave. He made frequent trips to his home of late, but usually came and went by night, and carried his Winchester rifle with him. The neighborhood feared his approach and looked for the shedding of blood almost any day, by this man who defied arrest in this manner. He was known to be an expert in handling dynamite and on several occasions caused terror in that place by throwing pieces out on the street to explode, and at one time knocked a horse down at the blacksmith shop in this manner.

This is a brief description of Wm. Etlinger and his vicious disposition, and why that community especially feared him at this time. Wm. Etlinger was married to his second wife and their family consisted of two small children, a girl aged 5 and a boy about 2.

CONSTABLE JOHN BARNER.

At the recent February election John Barner, of near Woodward, was a candidate for constable. He asked to be elected on the ground that he would serve the bench warrant on Etlinger and would capture him or "die in the attempt." On this issue he was elected. Last Monday 2nd he came to Belleville and lifted his commission. He also made sure to ascertain the limit of his authority with this warrant. Knowing that he could make a forcible entry, if necessary, he stated his determination of keeping his campaign pledge and went home, to arrest a desperate man, between whom for some time there had been the bitterest feelings. He kept his pledge to the letter, and the bloody tragedy followed in which both lives were lost.

THE TRAGEDY.

On Thursday, at about 2 p. m., constable John Barner accompanied by C. G. Motz and John Hosterman went to Etlinger's house, it being known that he was home. They found the front door locked. This was broken open by several blows with a sledge hammer. The doors on the inside room were bolted, and the panel of the door, leading to the hallway and stairs, was next broken open. They heard the family up stairs. Con-

stable Barner boldly crawled through the panel and the next instant, while facing the stairway, received two shots and he sank down. Mr. Motz saw what occurred and reached through the opening and attempted to pull his unfortunate companion back, but could not. The smoke from the gun blinded him and upon second thought concluded he had better leave Etlinger's house as soon as possible.

AN EXCITED TOWN

The report of the shots in the house were sufficient to arouse the people. When the two deputies told what had occurred the community was stricken with consternation and terror. The long-expected tragedy had come; no one could predict what would be the termination.

A short time after this Frank E. Geiswhite, a neighbor across the street who was ill and upstairs, looked out the window and saw Etlinger aiming his gun at him. He jumped back but not quick enough. He was struck on the skull by a buckshot that glanced off and was also wounded in the shoulder by another, neither of which are serious. Soon after this, as Orndorf and Engle the bondsmen came up the street, Etlinger appeared at the second story window and asked if they wanted to be shot down like dogs. Then he fired two loads at them, but neither was injured. They did not tarry long in that section of the town. Later Etlinger shot into Geo. Miller's house near by, and the ball came very close to the head of the mother-in-law of merchant Robert Wolf. Etlinger warned other citizens to get a move on. He also fired several loads into the school house close by, while



ETLINGER'S CHILDREN. As they came from the burning house.

in session, but no one was injured.

By this time the entire community was aroused and up in arms. Guards were stationed about the house ready to shoot the murderer if he attempted to escape. His appearance at a window would be followed by a volley of rifles and muskets. During this engagement John Musser, located at a stable, got a flesh wound in the neck. Mrs. Etlinger is said to have appeared at the window and fired shots. This condition of affairs continued until night and from all directions people came by the hundreds.

SHERIFF CONDO ARRIVES.

Early in the afternoon a messenger hastened to Coburn, and the telegram sent to Belleville at about 4 o'clock. The sheriff and a lot of deputies by special train left here at 6 p. m., arrived at Coburn at 7, and at Woodward soon after 8 p. m. He found the community demoralized with fear, and the town in the vicinity of Etlinger's house deserted. Several hundred armed men surrounded the building and kept up a constant fir-

ing. This was done to prevent the man from attempting to escape to the mountains close by. It was decided to try and keep the prisoner in the house, in this manner, until morning. The men soon used up all the ammunition at Woodward. A fresh supply from Millheim was soon exhausted, Al Garman and Harry Jackson started for Belleville by special train from Coburn during the night. They got a large lot of cartridges and started back again by special conveyance at 5 o'clock Friday morning. During the entire night there was a constant firing into the house and there was no reply. When morning came many were of the opinion that the man had escaped.

Sheriff Condo consulted with prominent citizens and the attorneys as to what course should be pursued, as something definite must be speedily done. To dynamite the building would be a mistake as they were liable to kill the two little children. Etlinger was known to have a large quantity of this explosive in his residence and that could explode and destroy the innocent little ones. This idea was then abandoned.

There was an impression abroad that a reward of \$300 was offered for the capture of Etlinger. Complaints were heard that the Belleville people would get it. Upon hearing this Sheriff Condo put some of the loud-mouths quiet by offering them, point blank, his bond of \$300 to any man who would secure Etlinger. None of the would-be bravados were equal for the task. That put an end to that kind of nonsense. Etlinger's brother, heretofore brave, did not have the courage to go near the building.

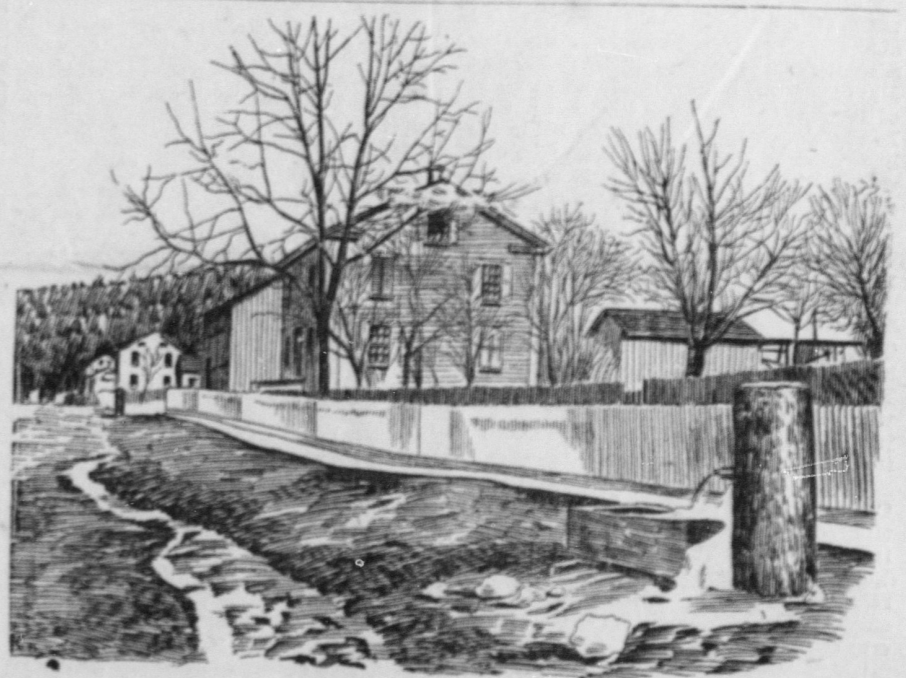
In order to make sure that Etlinger was still there, a raid on the house was planned. This was led by Sheriff Condo, Policeman H. H. Montgomery and

window and threw the turpentine in and on the outside. A match to some cotton waste, thrown inside, and the interior was soon ablaze. Cornely made a good job of it, and under the constant fusillade of the riflemen, made safe his retreat. In a short time the shop was enveloped in flames. Owing to it being a calm day the flames were slow in communicating with the house. Parties at the blacksmith shop, fearing that the house might not burn, made cotton balls saturated with turpentine, and threw them over the building to Etlinger's house. Two of these fire balls dropped in the front yard. Etlinger showed his ingenuity in this case by throwing out a small piece of dynamite from a cellar window, that knocked the ball out of sight by the explosion. The buildings were fired at 11:30 and at 12:30 the roof on the residence caught ablaze. In a few minutes the entire attic was aflame. The supreme moment was approaching—every body was eagerly looking for the appearance of the inmates. At 12:50 the cellar door, on the east side of the building, was opened.

THE CHILDREN APPEAR.

At about 1 o'clock Mrs. Etlinger was seen in the cellar way and carried out the little 3 year old boy. Then she brought out her 5 year old girl and placed them outside and went back. The little boy was poorly clad and carried a partly eaten apple in the left hand. The little ones were bewildered and crying. They ran around in the yard, the girl following the boy until they came across to the planingmill where Al Garman stepped out and took them in charge.

This was an affecting scene. The rescue of the children was what everyone was most concerned about, and their appearance brought tears over the cheeks of strong stalwart men who had performed daring deeds during the day. The



ETLINGER'S RESIDENCE, at Woodward.

Wm. Garis, Hugh Taylor, Esq., Samuel Gettig, Esq., Charles Bell, J. C. Meyer, Esq., all of Belleville, and Samuel Musser of Millheim. They were armed with rifles and axes. As they advanced there was a breathless silence. The stillness of the occasion was broken when Etlinger opened fire from an upstairs window.

A ball went close by Policeman Montgomery's head, Sheriff Condo felt the flash of another close to his face. This showed them that their move was foolhardy and too dangerous. They quickly retreated. One point though was gained—it was definitely settled that their prisoner had not escaped.

After this, firing on the house was renewed with vigor. Missiles rained down on it thick and fast. The windows were all broken, the doors and weather boarding shattered and splintered with flying missiles. A crowd in the blacksmith shop across the street were in position to fire into the cellar where Etlinger now was located, and from which he did most of his firing through the small cellar windows, and came very near shooting several parties. In one instance he sent a rifle ball that grazed the ear of a man in the shop. Other equally close calls are narrated.

DRIVEN OUT BY FIRE.

After another consultation it was decided that it would be necessary to burn the building to get the prisoner, unless he should kill his family and himself and be burned up, which was very improbable. To carry this into effect, a detachment of expert riflemen were stationed in the woods, back of the barn. They were located so as to be able to cover every window in that end of the house. At a given signal a constant fire of rifles was opened on the rear windows to prevent Etlinger from attempting to shoot in that direction. At the same time the hero of the day appeared in the person of James Cornely. Carrying a pail of turpentine and cotton waste he made his way from the woods down to the barn. From there, a distance of seventy feet, he made to the out-house or work shop, that stood about twenty feet from the residence, unharmed. He broke in a

little onto were taken to the home of Benjamin Benner, their grandfather. On the little girl's clothing Etlinger had pinned \$85 in greenbacks, and had also given the boy his gold watch and chain.

MRS. ETLINGER APPEARS.

About ten minutes later another exciting scene occurred when Mrs. Etlinger appeared at the cellar door, she came up and sat upon the side of the door, with her feet hanging in the cellar way. She appeared to be frantic and struggling. She would wring her hands and scream and hold her hands to her ears. During this occurrence many shots were fired in the cellar-way, in the hope of striking Etlinger who was still holding his wife by the limbs and skirt to prevent her escape. From those near by there were calls for her to come, as no one would harm her. The noise of the rifles and shouts of the excited mob drowned her replies. She remained in this position about five minutes with rifle balls dropping about her.

Suddenly she drew her feet from the cellarway, Etlinger being compelled to seek safety, and she started to run along the side of the house. At this moment there was another suspense, and as she ran away and fell, three revolver shots followed her in quick succession from the cellarway, by her husband, who now seemed determined to kill his wife for deserting him in this critical moment. She reached the planingmill and was taken in charge by several men. Weak and exhausted, she was carried to her father's house. She was thinly clad and on her right ankle a steel hobble was still dangling that had been placed there by her husband. Heretofore the crowd considered Mrs. Etlinger an equally guilty participant, but the sight of the cruel hobbles that lacerated her limbs changed their bitterness to tender sympathy for the poor woman.

THE DESPERADO SURRENDERS.

The next and most tragic event of the day followed. Messrs. Ira Gramley, of Aaronsburg, Sam Miller, Sheriff Condo and Al. Garman, all of Belleville, were located at the planing mill building, and

(Continued on 4th page.)