

CHIEF OF POLICE STURGUS FOUND DEAD

JURY RETURNS VERDICT THAT STURGUS CAME TO HIS DEATH AT HANDS UNKNOWN PARTIES

TESTIMONY AT CORONER'S INQUEST FIXING HOUR OF DEATH—EVIDENCE OF CORROBORATIVE NATURE—NO NEW DEVELOPMENTS; RELIABLE WITNESSES TESTIFY TO HEARING SHOT—CASE Baffles OFFICERS.

That "the death of John J. Sturgus was due to a gunshot wound, injuring the heart and other organs, and that the shot which caused his death was fired from a gun in the hands of parties unknown, with intent to kill" was the verdict rendered by the jury that heard the testimony in the coroner's inquest held yesterday afternoon.

No New Developments.

With Judge Leopold David presiding the inquisition upon the body of Sturgus was called at 2:30. The following were impaneled and sworn in as jurors: Jack Callin, Charles Cadwalader, R. O. Albritton, H. J. Emdar, Carl Martin and Lyle Larson.

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney J. S. Truitt represented the government. Testimony of the various witnesses brought out no new developments and the verdict rendered was freely predicted.

McNutt's Testimony.

John McNutt, special night watchman and fire patrol, paid by the merchants, was the first witness and the evidence divulged did not vary particularly from former reports.

McNutt told of finding the body of Sturgus near the foot of the stairway leading to the second story of the Kyvig building, occupied as living quarters. He explained that in his duties of patrolman he watched the fires in the different buildings and occasionally "stoked up." Leaving the Hewitt building, where he had fixed the furnace fire, McNutt, on his rounds passed at the rear of the Kyvig building where he noticed a man lying prone in the path, which leads from Fourth avenue to the premises. McNutt testified that he presumed the man was an ordinary drunk whom he did not recognize as Sturgus from the fact that after failing to get a response to his efforts to get the man up McNutt started after Sturgus, as was his custom in previous cases of a similar nature. McNutt testified that the

man was groaning and was lying prone on his back with arms extended. He told of noticing Sturgus' hat near the body but did not see the gun, which was afterwards found by Deputy U. S. Marshal Casler.

McNutt immediately started for Baxter's news stand, where Sturgus was in the habit of frequenting, and about half way between the stairway and Baxter's he met Mrs. Baxter, whom he told of the occurrence. McNutt said that he then continued his journey in quest of Sturgus and went even so far as the Crescent hotel. McNutt testified that the body was lying in the snow near the foot of the stairway with his head pointing east; the man's coat was open but McNutt said he did not remember about the condition of the vest. The snow was well packed and McNutt said he saw no signs of a struggle in the vicinity. He practically fixed the hour of finding the body at 9:15 Sunday night and said that two hours previously he had heard a shot but could not locate the direction. Following testimony proved conclusively that the shot he heard had no bearing on the case.

Mrs. Baxter's Testimony.

Mrs. Henry Baxter was the next witness called and she told of returning from the first show with her son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Lyle Larson, at about 9:15 Sunday night. The two families occupy apartments on the second floor of the Kyvig building, first floor occupied by the Anchorage Drug store. At the Fourth avenue entrance Mrs. Baxter stated

(Continued on page 2.)

CORONER'S JURY RETURNS VERDICT

(Continued from page 1)

that Sturgus addressed them but none of the party understood his words. Mrs. Baxter said she noticed that Sturgus acted peculiarly and after going up stairs and fixing the fires she said she got to worrying about the incident and again went down stairs to ascertain if anything was wrong with Sturgus who was a friend of the Baxters of many years standing. Not finding Sturgus in Baxter's News Stand she said she went to the Sturgus home and not finding him asked Mrs. Sturgus where he was.

Returning to town Mrs. Baxter intended to call on Mrs. Felix Brown, living at the Anchorage hotel, and later changed her mind and walked across from E street, at the rear of the Baxter store, to the rear stairway leading to the Baxter apartments above referred to. The witness told of meeting McNutt as corroborated in

his testimony. When told of the man lying or the snow at the foot of the stairs Mrs. Baxter immediately went to him and recognized Sturgus, who she said was groaning audibly and throwing his head from side to side. The witness said she knelt at the side of the body and saw he was badly hurt. Sturgus recognized her and called her "Ma," a name she is known by to other Anchorage friends. Seeing that she could do nothing alone Mrs. Baxter rushed to the Baxter store and notified her husband and other gentlemen who immediately went to Sturgus' assistance.

Mrs. Baxter said she heard no report of a gun, nor any disturbance. The witness corroborated other testimony relative to the position of the body, condition of clothes, time of shooting and other details. During her testimony Mrs. Baxter mentioned that she noticed Sturgus had acted peculiarly during the early part of the afternoon when he made a friendly visit to the family, as was his custom.

Saw Flash of Gun.

Mrs. Lillian Keely, employe at the government hospital, followed Mrs. Baxter, and testified that she saw the flash of a gun Sunday night while walking east in the alley, between Third and Fourth avenue, on the way to the hospital. Mrs. Keely described her location at the time at a point in the rear of the vacant lot, fronting on Fourth, between the Kyvig and Shaw buildings. Also she fixed the location of the flash at the rear of the Kyvig building and the time about 9:15 Sunday night. Mrs. Keely said she heard

no disturbance nor any evidence of a scuffle. She heard the report, which she said was muffled. The witness saw no one in the vicinity of where the report came from and particularly said she watched for movements. Later she met and talked to Mrs. Ernest Richter and saw a man at the rear of the Liberty cafe, who it later developed was Louis Poppas. Mrs. Keely said the flash was about on the level with her eyes.

Mrs. Richter Testifies.

Mrs. Ernest Richter, of the Richter hotel, testified that as she and her young son were returning from the first show, about 9:15 Sunday night she heard the report of a gun. Mrs. Richter, at the time, was near the southeast entrance of the hotel, which is situated on the alley off of E street and across from the Hewitt building. Mrs. Richter testified that she heard no commotion of any kind, nor did she see anyone running away from or in the vicinity of the place where the report came from, although the lights from the Richter hotel illuminate considerable space in the rear of the business houses frequently referred to. The witness in the main substantiated Mrs. Keely's testimony in reference to time, location of the report and other points connected with the case.

Louis Poppas Testifies.

Louis Poppas, proprietor of a coffee house located on the alley corner fronting E street and in the same building with the Liberty cafe, testified that he heard the report but could not locate the position. Poppas said he went to the rear of his place at the time he heard the report, which he said sounded like the report of a .22 calibre rifle. He mentioned having seen Mrs. Richter and Mrs. Keely and said that he saw no one other than the two ladies in the vicinity of the shooting.

Corroborative Testimony.

Archie Adams, affiliated with the Alaskan Engineering commission, testified that as he was returning from the first show Sunday night he heard the report of a gun and fixed the location at the rear of the Kyvig building. Mr. Adams said at the time of the report he was walking along the north side of Fourth avenue and between the Shaw and Kyvig buildings. He also fixed the hour at about 9:15 and said that he saw some one in the alley, which was proven to have been Mrs. Keely. Adams said he did not hear any sounds of a struggle nor see anyone running away from the spot, although he listened and looked intently for such signs.

(Continued on page 5.)

CORONER'S JURY RETURNS VERDICT

(Continued from page 2)

Other Witnesses.

Oscar Anderson, Anchorage merchant, told of having met and spoken to Sturgus shortly after 9 o'clock Sunday evening in front of the Kyvig building and a few moments afterward heard a report to which he attached no significance.

Wm. C. Hunt, of the Anchorage Machine shops, told of having met Sturgus in front of the Hewitt building as he and a party were returning from the first show. Hunt testified to later assisting in carrying the body to the Richter hotel. The witness said that when he reached Sturgus, he was groaning and said "Oh my head" and "Oh Bobby, Bobby." The witness said that Sturgus' mackinaw and coat were unbuttoned and he thought the two top buttons of his vest were unbuttoned.

The witness substantiated former evidence as regards the position of the body and said that he searched but did not find any gun on Sturgus. There was no evidence of a struggle in the vicinity of where the body was found, Hunt said.

Deputy Marshal Casler told of finding a gun a few feet away from where the body was lying and identified the gun, which was produced as an exhibit in the case. Casler said that when he found the gun one shell was empty. He could not say whether the hammer at the time was on the empty shell.

Drs. Romig and Spalding appeared as professional witnesses and explained the direct cause of death, leading up to the point with detailed testimony of a technical nature.

Both doctors testified that Sturgus' shirt, which was shown as evidence, has powder marks on it, under the flap of the left pocket where the bullet entered. They told of efforts made to alleviate suffering and to save Sturgus' life. The bullet extracted from the body was identified by both Dr. Romig and Dr. Spalding.

Dr. Romig testified that while on the operating table and also while at Richter's Sturgus several times spoke and asked to be turned over and said the light hurt his eyes. To repeated questions asked him regarding who shot him Sturgus did not answer.

The professional testimony was practically identical, and included a report of the second autopsy which failed to reveal any contusion on the brain and no injury either internal or external to the scalp or skull.

Carried Two Guns.

The testimony of Deputy U. S. Marshal Clarence Mossman brought out the fact that the deceased was in the habit of carrying two guns, of different calibre. The witness identified the gun found near the body as the one he had given Sturgus. Mossman said the gun showed signs of having been recently fired, and identified the bullet extracted from the body as belonging to Sturgus' gun. The witness explained to the jury the result of his demonstration of firing a gun from different distances relative to the bullet hole and marks on the shirt worn by the deceased. He said he did not know of Sturgus having any particular trouble or enemies other than the usual affairs connected with the life of a peace officer. The witness stated that he did not believe Sturgus was laboring under any mental strain and if he was being shadowed he, Mossman, was not aware of the fact.

He mentioned the fact that Sturgus had left his "billy" and handcuffs, together with his money and papers, at home Sunday, and that the second gun was unaccounted for. Mossman testified that his efforts to arouse Sturgus while at the hospital and at Richter's were unavailing and he received no reply to the repeated questions in the endeavor to learn of some clue to the crime.

Following the hearing of testimony the jury examined the body at the morgue and further examination of a purely technical nature was heard.

Funeral This Afternoon.

A large number of friends of the deceased and family attended the solemn funeral ceremony conducted by the members of the Anchorage Elks

lodge this afternoon in Roberts' hall. The services were especially impressive and marked the respect in which the deceased was held by the people of Anchorage. Members of the Moose and Eagle lodges attended the funeral in a body. A large number of mourners followed the body to the Anchorage cemetery, where further services were conducted.

The Bank of Anchorage and the Bank of Alaska and many business houses closed during the funeral hour and flags flying from the federal building, townsite building, fire hall and others were at half mast all day today.

The city council has offered a reward of \$1,000 and the members of the council \$250 for the apprehension of the slayer of Jack Sturgus, whose untimely death all Anchorage mourns.