



the **Prairie Tales** podcast

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Compiled by Darren McMannis

SOURCE ARTICLES

1871-08 – TRAIL TO THE DEEPEST PIT OF HELL

HORSE THIEF

AUGUST 23, 1871 - CASE # 1871-HM09

NEWTON – Newton was the scene of another outrage yesterday. Though no blood flowed, the result was equally fatal to life. It appears that a number of horses have been stolen from the town and vicinity and until yesterday no one was caught. This man was caught at the stock yards. A wagon pole was put across the corner of a fence and upon this the guilty was hung until life was extinct. *The Kansas Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas. Thursday, August 24, 1871. Page 4.*

NEWTON - A horse thief was hung yesterday at Newton. *The Emporia News, Emporia, Kansas. Friday, August 25, 1871. Page 2.*

WHISKEY AND BRAINS

TOPEKA – The United Presbyterians commenced work on the foundation of their Church building yesterday... Every additional Church in our city tends to attract that class of settlers, who furnish the best guarantee of the maintenance of law and order, as well as the increase of material prosperity. From all such godless towns as Newton, “the good Lord deliver us.” *The Kansas Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas. Tuesday, September 19, 1871. Page 4.*

EMPORIA – Whiskey and Brains. Read the Newton tragedy and the seventeen other horrible murders found in our Kansas state papers for a single week. Note the increasing number of sensual looking loungers on our streets; the boisterous laugh from the crowd of poor invalids waiting at our drug-stores to get medicine. Think how much of this kind of brain-element do we wish to encourage in our community? - W.B., Emporia, Kansas.

And there is phosphorus in good whisky,” added one of our leading citizens. *The Emporia Weekly News, Emporia, Kansas. Friday, September 22, 1871. Page 2.*

NEWTON – A Description of the Gold Room. Portraits of the Professional Gamblers. Preaching Mixed With Monte and Dog Fighting. The reputation of Newton is by this time pretty widely and well established. Its name of the “wickedest city in Kansas” (given, I believe, by the editor of the Commonwealth,) sticks so fast to it, and has now come to be regarded as its pet alias. People here smile when they see it in print, just as the victorious prize fighter smiles when an enthusiastic pal slaps him on the back and says, “Mike, you’re a good ‘un,” for they know it is not very far from the truth, and the truth quaintly told is nearly always provocative of a smile.

Now, as long as it is the wickedest city in Kansas, let us see what makes it so. It is not because the blood in men’s veins is any more liable to find unnatural outlets in Newton than elsewhere. The “late lamented” John Allen never killed anybody, so far as the public knows, and yet John was called the “wickedest man in New York,” a place 900 times larger than Newton. John made money off that name and so has Newton, and so it will continue to do as long as it does not run off the track into the ditch of hyper morality, which has swallowed up so many frontier towns. Out West, or, as the Eastern reader would say, away out west, excitement whether healthy or otherwise is a necessary companion to the prosperity of a new town. No life is more pregnant with curious and thrilling vicissitudes than that of a frontiersman – your real old frontiersman, who coughs at the smell of coal and draws his six-shooter at the sight of a pile of bricks.

Newton is par excellence a frontier town. It burns no coal, and it builds with wood, and besides that it is on the “Chisholm trail,” which is, perhaps, as hot a meridian as any that transects the western country. They flock to it from afar for that very reason, “old times” men who went to California in ’48, and who have exhausted every mushroom place that has sprung up since then; - younger men whose rough experience has been shorter lived, and still more recent comers who have fixed upon Newton as the font of their novitiate.

Business men have come here, too, but not of the order of your eastern shop keeper, who insists on clear coffee and polished boots. “Rough and ready” is the cherished motto of Newtonians. Its incongruous population clings to it by instinct and illustrates it because it is the easiest motto to adopt. Still there are men of refined tastes and culture even in Newton.

There is a magistrate, who is not easily surpassed in the matter of running up fines and costs anywhere in the country. There is a lawyer who has never been known to gain a case. There is a hotel keeper who measures his guests by the complaints they make about bed bugs.

There is a policeman who tries to keep the peace by offers to fight the crowds, and there is a reporter, a weak year-old novice in the business, who never slept for a whole night after he saw his first article in print, because he himself formed its central figure. Lump the animal ingredients of Newton and you have a queer compound, so queer that I am tempted to separate them, and dwell a little on their principal characteristics.

I shall find it hard enough to cramp Newton, of the “sporting” element, within reasonable space, and for that reason shall be compelled to defer for another letter, a sketch of any remaining subjects that, in this connection, it may be fit to touch upon.

There is a mania for gambling in Newton. In the heart of every man who has been here long enough to dig down a little to the sub-strata of life, nestles the germ of this passion. In some it has matured into a full blown flower. These latter are mostly professionals, who sit on the percent side of the table. Most of them are well known all over the extreme west. Listen to their chat as they sit together after dinner or supper smoking their cigars and recounting by-gone experiences, and you will discover that they are well traveled, earnest men – thinkers in a rough sort of way, and invariably readers of human nature. They drink little but smoke a great deal, and, with but few exceptions are temperate to an unexpected degree. They are sufficiently numerous to well season the human pot-pie of Newton. Before the railroad was opened, and people came to Newton on horseback and in wagons, there were but few gamblers here. The railroad, however, brought with it so quick and ready an access, that their ranks have swelled until now there are at least 80 professional gamblers out of a population of 800, or one for every 10 persons.

The Texans are the principal patrons of the gaming tables. Borne with the cry of “In the door” and “Alcie” ringing in their ears, they take to a monte game as voraciously and naturally as a hungry child to its mother’s breast. Any stake, however small, will do for a “snap,” and so long as the other side has to do the guessing, Texas “opens” and is happy. There are games of greater or less magnitude all over town; one in one place, two or three in another, and so until the climax is reached in the “Gold Rooms” with its half a dozen tables, mammoth bar, music and side shows.

The Gold Rooms! Here runs the black heart’s blood of gaming excitement. Games elsewhere radiate from it, as it were, like spokes from a hub. In one sense, it is the pivot of the town, for its influence is greater than that of any other one house; and, sometime or other, during the day, it comes in contact with almost every male inhabitant of the town. In the railroad interest it has, perhaps, its most formidable rival. The latter beat it, in the late election for city officers, where the “Spivey” ticket was (according to the decision of the judges,) carried by a strong majority. It is situated on Main street about midway between the railroad depot and the post office, which are the respective termini of Newton. The stranger on entering it finds himself in a frame building about sixty feet in length by thirty in width, roughly put together, with the roof freely ribbed with timbers, which slant downwards and outwards in the shape of the latter A. Daylight glimmers through cracks here and there, and spider webs hang in corners and from the rafters, and the place throughout has a new, fresh, rough look, that well accords with the general appearance of the town. On the left of the entrance is a bar, extending back some twenty feet,

and behind which is shoved a long row of barrels stored with all kinds of liquors and wines. Over these stands the mantle or show part of the bar, lined with clusters of decanters and glasses daintily arranged and polished until their shimmer is like that of diamonds. On the other side of the hall, and commencing immediately at the doorway, are the gaming tables. They range close to the wall, and in construction are of a primitive rather than an elegant nature. They are all covered with green baize, and are square, with little semi circles cut out in one of the long sides, so that the dealer can have the board closer and have a better control of his "lay out."

Elsewhere in the room, scattered about promiscuously, are little round tables for the use of private card parties. At the rear of the hall is a raised platform, made expressly for the "negro song and dance man," J.T. Smith, an old eastern varieties artist, who, by some curious freak of fortune, has wandered to Newton. He is out of his element, however, like all good talent that comes to this country. Contiguous to the stage is a corner for the piano and musicians, and a friendly calaboose for the unfortunate patron of the house whose "spirits" become too strong for his flesh. Behind the main building, at an interval of about 30 feet, is a dormitory, where the waiter girls and other employees of the house sleep. A comfortable place is this in hot weather, with nothing but a thin sheeting of boards to separate it from the heavily stocked ice house. Delicious neighbor when the thermometer is 100* above.

Such is the "Gold Rooms" establishment without its human adjuncts. The latter, however, are its principle feature – the red pepper of the compound. Everybody within a radius of a thousand miles of Newton knows Doc. Thayer and Bill Pierce, the proprietors of the Gold Rooms. Doc. doesn't look a bit like a saloon keeper. He always keeps his coat on, wears faultless linen, and his pants on the outside of his boots, and is decidedly the swell of the town. He has a quick, sly sort of humor, made the more pungent by an appearance which inclines somewhat to the clerical. Doc runs the gambling tables and such other business as does not come within the legitimate province of the bar. Pierce, to many of your Topeka readers, is a familiar photograph. Old mountaineers recognize him as a former chum, and at one time possessed of one of the largest ranches in the Indian country. He is a free and easy, jovial sort of a man, of large stature, and has the reputation of having more friends and attracting a large custom to his bar than any man in the country.

Of the six or more tables that are constantly running, four are for "monte," one for "faro," and the other for "chuck luck," "three card monte," or the "mustang." The proprietor of the latter table is a character that, once seen, will not easily be forgotten. His parents christened him John Gallagher, but nobody knows him by that name. Give him his soubriquet, "Corn-Hole Johnny," or "Three-Card Johnny," or "Chuck-Luck Johnny," and there is nobody but doesn't know him. Though but 26 years of age, he is an old timer, having taken to cards as soon as he could discriminate between the spots. He is the bantam of the Newton sports, short and chunky, with bright, sparkling eyes and a quick, nervous movement of the body, that well illustrates the

character of the mental man. His skill in shaking dice and throwing cards is marvelous, excelled only by the bland, adroit manner in which he approaches and captivates the game he has spotted. Unlike most small dealers who go on the principle that a "sucker should be taken in from the jump," Johnny almost always forces him to win a first stake. "He is sure to come back at me again," he will say, "and then I not only get his money, but his watch and revolver besides, if he has any." Johnny traveled for a long time on the line of the U.P. railroad, and talks about how "we got away" with so and so, as if he were the Gulliver, and the rest of the world the Lilliputes.

Dick Clark and Jim Moon deal monte. The former's travels have thrown him principally in the southern country. He, too, is widely known, and has the reputation of being one of the best-hearted men and cleverest poker players in the country. His face, while engaged in play, is one of the most impassive and stone I ever saw. Moon, his partner, has more the style of the New York gambler than any one in town, save a next door neighbor. He is a well proportioned, athletic man, with brown hair and moustache, and has a tout ensemble that is decidedly prepossessing.

"Poney" Reid and "Trick" Brown are also monte dealers on as large a scale as any of their confreres. Reid has dark hair and beard, and wears a white hat, which distinguishes him at once in any crowd, however numerous. He never feels more at home than when sitting at the poker table. "Truck" Brown is a Texas man. One would know it from the slow, precise manner in which he utters his words. He never has to repeat anything, for his voice cuts like a knife. He is one of that class of men, and a very small one it is, too, that wins and loses with equal indifference. Besides this attractive quality, there is a sort of magnetism about him that invariably draws patrons to his table when the other games have all closed.

There is one other principal man in the gold rooms who is worthy of mention, but whose name, for obvious reasons, I suppress. His face has never been known to wear anything else than a smile. Were he not a handsome man, one might attach to him the title of Dumas' great creation – "L'homme qui rit." He can deal monte with the endurance of a machine.

A new gambling house has opened within the last few days just above the gold rooms. It will be fully inaugurated to-morrow.

Other games are carried on, one at each of the "dance houses" – one at the "Texas Billiard Hall" and one at the "Bull's Head." The latter is run by Bruton, a "long horn," who wears a hat wide enough to deal his game upon, and a face that seems to scintillate sparks of good nature. Like Brown, he loses with extreme good grace. Among the "cappers" and "ropers" is one big, fat man, who, besides being king of the local fraternity, is not far from being king of the west. His best credentials may be found, perhaps, in a remark once made by "Corn hole" Johnny: "When

that man is capping for a game I wouldn't give five cents on the dollar for all the money the "sucker" has in his pocket."

And now while on this subject I want to make brief mention of a little scene that took place in these very gold rooms and among the very men of whom I have been writing.

At an early hour last Sunday evening a stranger approached the bar, and asking for the proprietor, stated that he was a clergyman and would like to have permission to conduct Divine services on the premises. The games were in full blast, crowds stood around the tables, and the voices of the players rose on the night air in discordant and babel-like harshness. The fiddlers were squeaking their loudest, the melodeon was growling out its deepest bass, the song and dance man was executing one of his most brilliant pirouettes, the waiter girls with huge trays loaded with glasses were dodging here and there among the crowd, the two rival dogs of the town were being rubbed and pulled for their third and great fight of the day, and the badger and coons were washing their faces preparatory to starting in when time was called for them. Divine service amid all this! The proprietor coughed and expectorated. He did not exactly understand; would the gentleman repeat his question? The gentleman did so. The answer this time came quick, for in the moment given him for thought, he saw an opening for business. "By all means, sir, we should be most happy to have you preach. When would you like to open up?" "At eight o'clock, if you please," was the response, saying which the gentleman withdrew.

Here was a breeze, make no mistake. It was whispered first among the employees of the house. It gathered strength and blew indiscriminately over the whole establishment. It culminated and roared and raged around the street corners and into people's houses, until the whole town knew there was to be preaching in the gold rooms. Great was the crowd in consequence thereof. The preacher came. He had to pass by the bar. "Say, old chap, let's have a drink," greeted him on all sides. The preacher had a red nose. He disregarded the invitations, but his nose blushed deeper, and he sniffed spasmodically. Some one saw it and was cruel enough to call out, "Don't go back on your spiritual friends, old fellow."

Services began with prayer. Somebody was playing faro in hard luck. The queen had beaten him three times. He lost again just as the prayer was on its last legs. "D***n the luck!" broke from the gambler's lips just as "Amen" followed from the platform. The effect was indescribable. The whole house roared. Some one let the dogs loose, and a dog fight, aided by the barking of the coons, was added to the scene. Notwithstanding, the services went on and hymns and a sermon followed. It is needless to dwell further on the pictures. The preacher took up a collection and a drink, and left, and it has since transpired that he was no preacher at all, but simply a hard up sharper who was in want of a week's board money. [Other witness accounts deny this.]

The town is very quiet and orderly. But few disturbances of the peace have arisen. Several saloons are on the eve of closing in consequence of want of patronage, induced mainly by the inferior liquors sold.

Buffalo hunting is now becoming fashionable. Buffalo are now ranging within 30 miles of Newton. - Allegro. *The Kansas Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas. Sunday, September 17, 1871. Page 1.*

ANNIE GLINN

SEPTEMBER 5, 1871 - CASE # 1871-HM10

NEWTON – A Baptism Of Blood. “Hide Park” has received another baptism of blood. Suicide has supplemented murder and with features scarcely less horrible and appalling. The victim is a young woman – one of those whose feet have but lately become entangled in the mire of prostitution. She was a newcomer to Newton, and made her first appearance in the well known saloon of Harry Lovett as a waiter girl, or in more familiar parlance a “beer jerker.” Her real name is Annie Glinn, and her home is somewhere in the vicinity of St. Louis where her parents reside, supporting themselves by keeping a boarding house. Leaving her family and friends voluntarily about 2 years since, she went to Kansas City and soon after made her entrée into fast life as a “pretty waiter girl,” which occupation she has ostensibly followed up to Wednesday of last week, when she removed to one of the numerous ba quis in “Hide Park,” and became a professional courtesan.

Like nearly all young hands at the business she had a lover (a railroad man well known to Newtonians) to whom she was ardently attached, but who, au contraire, showed no reciprocity of feeling, and, notwithstanding the most endearing caresses on her part did not hesitate to tell her of his indifference, and went so far even as to forbid her “troubling” him, saying that there were “others for whom he cared more.”

On hearing the bitter reproaches and stern injunction of him whom she worshipped, she turned away with a face ghastly pale, and without saying a word left the dance house for her own room where she remained some little time. She next approached the cook with a request to go to town and get her something which she would write down on paper, at the drug store. The cook being busy at the time refused, and the poisoning project, for such she had evidently conceived, had to be abandoned.

To divert suspicion from her next step she mingled freely for about an hour in the crowd that always assembles on Sundays at the dance houses; then quietly slipping away she returned to her own room, having first secretly secured a large size revolver belonging to the proprietor of

the house. The rest of the story is soon told. A deafening report, the fall of a heavy body and a piercing shriek, soon brought a crowd to the bedside, across which the unfortunate girl lay, her cloths blackened and smoking with the fire which the fatal powder had ignited. The pistol had been held firmly against the pit of the stomach and the ball had passed through the body to the skin of the back whence it was afterwards extracted by Dr. Gaston Boyd. A bed was at once made on the floor and the dying girl placed upon it.

At the latter's request the unwilling and unfortunate cause of the tragedy was sent for. He came and her eyes never left him from the moment he entered the room until the film of death shut out all sight of the outer world. At half past five this afternoon, just six hours after the occurrence, the doctor rose from her bed side and the spirit of Annie Glinn went to meet its maker. Coroner Bowman held an inquest over the remains this evening, and they will be buried to-morrow by the side of those of the victims of the previous tragedy **in Boot Hill**. So mows the scythe of time. - Allegro. *The Kansas Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas. Tuesday, September 5, 1871. Page 4.*