

PART II EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE FIRE

THE SOUTH SALINA STREET ARSON THE BENNETT INSURANCE CASE SYRACUSE, NEW YORK, 1869

Francis P. Vedder spent most of his adult life in Greene County, Illinois and amassed quite a pile of money and many in the county questioned how he saved \$ 28,000 on the salary of a public servant. Some county papers believed he may have left the county with twice that amount. In today's dollars that would be over \$600,000.

In 1862 his wife, a highly respected woman, Wilmina Vedder died and Francis remarried in 1863 to Sarah Brown of New York. Sarah was much younger than Francis. In 1865 they moved to New York and entered into business. Our story picks up there.

The Syracuse Daily Journal has an article in October 1865 showing Vedder is selling Morning Light stoves out of 29 East Water Street.



Syracuse, NY Late 1800's
From: www.ancestry.com

The following advertisement ran June 5, 1866 shows Vedder had expanded his wares and has moved to 77 South Salina Street.

SYRACUSE NY DAILY JOURNAL
JUNE 5, 1866

STOVES.
HOUSE FURNISHING GOODS,
TIN WARE, &C.
Cheaper Than Ever.
F. P. VEDDER & CO.,
77 South Salina Street.
Exclusive Agents for
F. P. STEWART'S
COOK AND PARLOR STOVES,
AND THE
AMERICAN HOT AIR COOK STOVE,
(Improved.)
Also Dealers in
TIN PLATES,
SHEET IRON,
COPPER,
WIRE.
ZINC, &C, &C.
OUR STOCK IS NEW AND OUR PRICES LOW.
Come and see us.

As best can be made of various newspaper account F. P. continued selling stoves from 1865 until late 1868 when he bought out Adam Fralick's dry good business.

In the fall of 1867 Vedder was offering his house for sale in an advertisement in the Syracuse NY Daily Journal.

HOUSE FOR SALE.

F. P. VEDDER.
77 South Salina Street, offers for sale his
HOUSE AND LOT.
No. 12 Farmer Block.
Madison St.,
Which is now vacant.

Sep12d1w

The Syracuse Daily Standard newspaper reported “that dullness of business in New York and throughout the East, and in fact it may be said that a general stagnation in business prevails over the whole country”.

It is under that backdrop that Vedder entered the dry goods retail business. The following ran in The Syracuse Daily Standard on March 8, 1869, just 9 months before the fire that destroyed eight stores.

F. P. Vedder will open in his new store, 88 South Salina Street, on Monday, March 8th, 500 pieces Lawndale bleached sheeting a yard wide, which will be sold at eleven cents a yard; also, various other styles and grades of cotton goods worth 25cents a yard, will be sold for 16 cents a yard; also, a great variety of ladies dress goods, table linens, towelings, napkins, bead spreads, &c., all of which will be sold as to astonish the buyer, and no one wishing to buy anything in the way of dry goods should not neglect to call as soon as possible, as the inducements offered will certainly be very great.

Sometime prior to late December 1869 Vedder secured \$ 40,000 worth of insurance on his dry good inventory.

In part three, I will cover a few events between the fire and Vedder’s confession including Vedder’s reopening for business, Insurance claims paid and Vedder’s attempt to grow larger and compete with Bennett Brother. I will also add a more detailed article on Vedders testimony including the actual questions and answers during Vedders time on the stand.