

PART VIII

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

Lull Between Trials

Part VIII ended with the civil case decision in favor of the insurance companies in all 32 law suits. Arson Charges against Samuel F. Bennett, Adam Fralick and Edward Briggs were then pursued in earnest.

This new part begins by going back to the middle of June 1871 and the arson incitements handed down and runs up to the start of the criminal trial of Adam Fralick. Bennett and Briggs were successful in getting their trial postponed until Fralick's trial was concluded.

During this time F. P. Vedder who avoided being indicted for arson and had turned States Evidence to be the key witness in the criminal trials continued to have a turbulent life. In August 1871 he was sued by insurance companies to recover payments made for the fire and by March 1872 Vedder was in Bankruptcy. In March his daughter 19 year old went missing and with Fralick's trial about to begin in May Vedder again would find himself in the center of the storm so to speak. As the key witness implicating Fralick of setting the match and intentionally burning Bennett Brother's store with 70 people asleep in apartments or rooms above the stress in his life would continue.

The news media in Auburn took great offense at statements made during the change of venue hearing and an Auburn newspaper article reflects their feelings. Bennett's creditors meet and decide on whether to bring a new civil suit in light of the insurance company's recent verdict.

At the beginning of Fralick's trial over 30 months have passed since the night of the blaze.

Part IX will cover Fralick's criminal trial with a good deal of the testimony as reported in the local papers.

**MADISON OBSERVER
MORRISVILLE, NEW YORK
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 1871**

The Syracuse Arson Case – Adam Fralick, Samuel F. Bennett, and Edward S. Briggs were indicted at the Oyer and Terminer sitting last week in Syracuse, for the crime of arson in the first degree and arson in the second degree in burning the dwelling house of William II Craig, in the night time, and also burning the goods of Samuel F. Bennett, with intent to defraud the insurance companies. Fralick is in jail and the others defendants, Bennett and Briggs, were arraigned and plead not guilty, and gave bail in the sum of \$25,000. Trial was put over to the next September Oyer and Terminer.

**OSWEGO WEEKLY ADVERTISER
OSWEGO, NEW YORK
AUGUST 30, 1871**

THE BENNETT CASE – IMPORTANT ACTION

A meeting of the creditors of Mr. Samuel F. Bennett has been held in the City of New York, to take into consideration the decision of the referees in the recent insurance case which attracted so much attention. After discussing the subject at considerable length, it was decided to make a motion for a new suit and to that end action will be taken at an early day. We presume that the creditors were influenced in part to take this course by the discovery of the contradictory affidavit made by Vedder, in which he swore that he knew nothing of the alleged plot to fire Bennett's store until three weeks after the fire. There were other considerations also, disconnected from Vedder's affidavit, which had great weight in causing them to make an effort to secure a new trial. Thus it appears that the public has not heard the last of this case which has already proved to be one of the most famous in the history of fire insurance – Syracuse Journal.

AUBURN DAILY BULLETIN
AUBURN, NEW YORK
MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 1872

Change of Venue – The counsel in the Adam Fralick arson case, at Syracuse, have secured a change of venue, and the trial will be transferred to Auburn, on the alleged ground that an impartial hearing could not be secured in Onondaga County.

It was claimed by the counsel for prisoners, that the press of Syracuse had been paid for prejudicing the case in favor of the insurance companies – a claim which is “too thin” as Shakespeare says to excite a moment’s consideration. One clause of the charge, however, in the application for the change of venue, where it speaks of “the poor hotels and Court House of Auburn” we wish distinctly to refute. However “poor” our Court House may be, our hotels are as good as the best, including the St. James, National, and Curtis House. They might be more grand and showy - but they are kept by gentlemen who “know how” and can accommodate the Courts much better than the Court House can do its part. In this connection it might be well to suggest that the reputation of the latter edifice ought to satisfy our taxpayers that we need a better institution – at some rate.

THE DAILY COURIER
Syracuse, New York
March 14, 1872

BANKRUPTCY SALE – Notice is hereby given that shall sell at public auction, to the highest bidder, the homestead house and lot of Francis P. Vedder on South Salina Street, Syracuse on the 28th day of February, instant at 10 o'clock A. M. Said sale will be made upon the premise, and up to said day I will receive private proposals for the property, subject to the approval of the court.

Dated February 6, 1872
Charles Chadwick
Assignee of Francis P. Vedder

The above sale is adjourned to take place at the court house in this city at 10 o'clock A. M. Wednesday March 27, 1872
Charles Chadwick
Assignee of Francis P. Vedder

AUBURN DAILY BULLETIN
AUBURN, NEW YORK
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 1872

The Bennett Case – It is expected that Governor Hoffman will appointed an Extraordinary term of court in Cayuga County, for some time in the month of June, for the trial of Messrs. Bennett, Fralick and Briggs, on the charge of arson-Syracuse Courier

**ROMAN CITIZEN
ROME, NEW YORK
APRIL 12, 1872**

A SYRACUSE MYSTERY

Another Chapter in the Bennett Arson Case
--A Mysterious Disappearance and
Unavailing Search

Once more we are called upon to record another link in the chain of results attending the supposed Bennett arson case, which has from time to time been presented to the public. It will be remembered by our readers that Francis P. Vedder was an important witness in the civil case against the insurance companies, and that it was his evidence which appeared to substantiate not only the theory but the chain of circumstantial evidence elicited in the trial.

This man, Vedder, was at one time one of our prosperous merchants, worth at least thirty thousand dollars. His connection with the parties concerned in that case has left him not only bankrupt but broken down physically. To-day he is a white-haired invalid, and lives in a house which (formally his) was but a few days since sold to satisfy the demands of his creditors.

Mr. Vedder has a daughter, accomplished, amiable and fair, and well brought up and beloved by a large circle of friends. She is of a sensitive nature, and the misfortunes of her family had galled her proud spirit, so much so that she had frequently said that if the house in which they lived was sold she would never stay in it another day. On the 27th of March the house and lot was sold at auction. About four o'clock of that day Miss Carrie A. Vedder (the young lady in question) started out, but in a moment returned and threw her muff on the stairs and again went out. Not returned as soon as she was expected her family inquired at a neighbor's house where it was thought she might be, but she had not been there. She has not been seen since. Further investigation showed that she had taken a small satchel and a bundle of clothing. Search was immediately made, even in houses of bad repute, but she has not been found. Fears were also entertained that she had committed suicide but no clue as to her whereabouts has been obtained. Her friends are confident that wherever she may be, she will keep herself above reproach, as her friends were all well chosen, and she spent her evenings at home, which is more than can be said of many daughters. The police were notified but can find no trace.

Our reporter visited the family yesterday and after careful inquiry, discovered that she had a penchant for the stage, and, without the knowledge of her father, had made applications at various times for a position in some theatrical company. She had an intimate lady friend in whom she had confided so much but had not spoken of going away. From these circumstances it would appear that she has some romantic notions of supporting herself, and not to be a burden on her father, and had thus clandestinely gone away with this object in view, knowing that her desire would be opposed if expressed. She was known to sent a letter to Marston & Stone, whose company visited this city during the past winter, and she was also well posted in theatrical matters.

Mr. Vedder is almost heart-broken on account of his daughter's disappearance, and this seemed to be the finishing touch to all his misfortunes. We append as accurate a description of her appearance as can be known; hoping that our exchanges will relate the circumstances, and if possible induce this mistaken girl to return to her family. She is nineteen years old the day she left, was tall and slim, is of a dark complexion, has dark eyes and hair. She had a hand satchel, probably a bundle of clothing and wore a black alpaca dress with a plaid shawl and a black velvet jockey hat, with a green feather. She could not have gone far without assistance, as she had but five dollars in money. --- Syracuse Courier, of the 6th inst.

UTICA NEW YORK DAILY OBSERVER APRIL 11, 1872

THE BENNET ARSON CASE—SAMUEL F. BENNET and EDWARD S. BRIGGS were arrested yesterday morning, on an order by Judge Morgan for the purpose of renewing their bail for their appearance at their approaching trial for arson.

FRANCIS VEDDER, of Syracuse, has heard from his daughter, who so mysteriously disappeared some time ago. She wrote from Philadelphia to sell her piano and forward the proceeds to her. Mr. Vedder passed through this city last night, on his way to Philadelphia after her.

AUBURN DAILY BULLETIN
AUBURN, NEW YORK
TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 1872

The Arson Trial – The Syracuse Courier says that Samuel F. Bennett and Edward S. Briggs, who were arrested by Deputy Sheriff Meldram, on Saturday, on a bench warrant issued by District Attorney Goodelle, were taken before Judge Morgan yesterday, and both have bail, the former in the sum of \$25,000 and the latter, in the sum of \$15,000 for their appearance at the special and extra ordinary term of the Cayuga County Oyer and Terminer, set down for the 18th of May. Their former bondsman signed the new bail bonds.