

**PART XII
FINAL CHAPTER**

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

In the final chapter of our journey, after almost four years from the date of the fire, we have come full circle. In a true story with many different twist and turns the final chapter gives us one more surprise.

I have now included all the articles relating to this story (except for duplicate articles in more than one paper) that could be found after hundreds of hours of research. Locating surviving news accounts from over 140 years ago unfortunately leaves some gaps in coverage. No information was ever located on any trial or disposition of the arson charges against Edward Briggs.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this real life drama that would still ring true in today's news coverage.

**ROME NEW YORK
ROMAN CITIZEN
JUNE 1872**

Arson Cases

The trial of Bennett and Briggs is expected to take place at Auburn next week, commencing the 18th. These, it will be remembered, are the Syracuse arson cases; the trials are likely to be long and tedious, and probably occupying the greater part of a month. The prisoners are defended by D. C. Pomeroy, of Rome, C. B. Sedgwick, of Syracuse, and two or three other lawyers from the locality of Auburn. D. J. Mitchell, of Syracuse, assist the prosecution.

**THE SYRACUSE DAILY STANDARD
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
JANUARY 22, 1873**

CRIMINAL MATTERS

The trial of the indictment of Edward S. Briggs, indicted for arson in the first degree, was put over by consent of counsel to the next September Circuit.

The case of Bennett will not come up this term; it is probable that some motion will be taken in the matter, in the next Circuit to be held in February next.

**AUBURN DAILY BULLETIN
AUBURN, NEW YORK
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1873**

THE SYRACUSE ARSON CASE—S.F. BENNETT DECLARED INSANE—

This remarkable case, once tried in this city, and in connection with which was the conviction of Adam Fralick, and his subsequent suicide, is further noted by the Syracuse Courier, which says:

The incidents in the great case which had become familiar to our readers as the “Bennett arson case” gradually developed and occasionally something new is unfolded which takes the community by surprise. For some time reports have been current that Samuel F. Bennett was becoming insane. Those rumors were received with incredulity, but yesterday proceedings were taken which are conclusive in the case. There is a law that no prisoner whether out on bail or confined in jail, shall be tried for any offense when insane. The case of Mr. Bennett was set down for the present term of court, but the counsel for the prisoner has applied to Judge Riegel for a jury to decide whether or not Mr. Bennett was insane. This jury was summoned and yesterday the question was tried before Judge Riegel.

The only evidence offered was the testimony of Dr. Pease, Dunlop and Mercer, and a letter from Dr. Gray. These gentlemen all testified that Samuel F. Bennett was not in his right mind; in short, that his brain is diseased, and the spinal cord is affected. He is becoming demented. The evidence showed that his father became demented in the same way, and that he now has a brother in the same condition. The jury decided in accordance with the evidence and declared Mr. Bennett insane.

“The jury will issue an order for his confinement in the Utica insane asylum until he shall recover. This disposes of the question of a trial, for the present, at least.

**SYRACUSE DAILY JOURNAL
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1873**

INSANE

Samuel F. Bennett Pronounced Demented

**A JURY DECIDED HIS BRAIN DISEASED AND
HIS SPINAL CORD AFFECTED.**

The ever to be remembered Bennett-Fralick-Briggs arson case has assumed a new phase, in as much as one of the principals in that great drama has been pronounced insane, which fact precludes his being brought to trial while he remains in that condition.

For several months past reports have been current, that Samuel F. Bennett was becoming

INSANE

Such reports were generally treated with incredulity, many declaring it but another attempt to escape trial. The trial of Mr. Bennett was set down for the present term of the Circuit Court, and a short time since his counsel applied to Judge Riegel for a jury to investigate and decide upon the sanity or insanity of Mr. Bennett. Judge Riegel appointed Drs. Pease and Dunlop of this city, and Mercer, and Dr. Gray of Utica, such commission, and yesterday a report was made before Judge Riegel. The evidence of all three members of the jury was to the effect that Samuel F. Bennett was not

IN HIS RIGHT MIND,

That his brain is diseased, that the spinal cord is affected, and that he is becoming

DEMENTED

This disposes of the question of a trial for the present. We understand the jury will issue an order for his confinement at Utica, until he shall recover.

AUBURN WEEKLY NEWS
AUBURN, NEW YORK
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1873

Samuel F. Bennett, who was to be tried in this city in connection with Adam Fralick, on the Syracuse arson case, was recently sent to the Utica Asylum, as a lunatic. It is now announced that he has been failing gradually, and Judge Morgan issued an order for his release. He was taken from the asylum on Tuesday last, and returned to his home in Syracuse, where he will probably die, a victim to the sufferings brought upon himself through an effort to gain money unlawfully.

CREDITS

NEWSPAPER CREDITS

Syracuse New York Daily Journal
Syracuse New York Daily Standard
White Hall Illinois Register
Oswego New York Weekly Advertiser
New York Daily Palladium
Batavia New York Republican Advocate
Morrisville New York, Madison Observer
Auburn New York Daily Bulletin
Syracuse New York Daily Courier
Rome New York Roman Citizen
Utica New York Daily Observer
Auburn New York Weekly News

OTHER SOURCE CREDITS

www.ancestry.com
www.oneidacountyhistory.com
Onondaga County, New York Historical Association
Greene County, Illinois Historical Society
www.correctionhistory.org
www.eliasclark.com family history
www.fultonhistory.com