

Transcript for: "Mrs. Hossack May Yet Be Proven Innocent," *Des Moines Daily News*, December 12, 1900

MRS. HOSSACK MAY YET BE PROVEN INNOCENT

Tide of Sentiment Turns Slightly in Her Favor -- Notified Today That She Will Soon Be Released

First Photograph Bearing on the Tragedy

INDIANOLA, Dec. 12.--(Special)--Mrs. Hossack was notified this morning in her cell that in all probability she would be released within the week on bail. Sheriff Hodson conveyed the news to the aged prisoner. She looked up into the officer's face, smiled and remarked that she would be glad to get home again with her children, but did not manifest any great degree of joy at the news.

Justice Ross yesterday completed the examination of the transcript taken at the coroner's inquest and announced that in his estimation the offense was a bailable one, but he had not arrived at any conclusions relative to the amount. It is expected that it will not be excessive, however, for the reason that Mrs. Hossack is an aged woman and one who would not try in any manner to escape. It is believed that the magistrate, in the face of these facts, will keep the amount within the limit of \$10,000. This sum the relatives and friends of the Hossack family are ready to put up the moment it is necessary.

As was announced yesterday there will be no special session of the grand jury. County Attorney Clammer does not deem it advisable and unless there is a demand on the part of the defense, which is not at all likely, the matter will be allowed to rest until the January term of court, which convenes on the 8th of next month. Both sides will require time to look up facts before the trial, as it is now conceded the case will be one of the bitterest and most hotly contested of any that has ever been tried in the criminal division of Warren county courts.

Detectives at Work.

It was rumored today on absolute authority that detectives are to be set to work on the case at the instigation of the defense. Mrs. Hossack has stoutly affirmed her innocence from the first and repeatedly asserts that if the matter is looked into there will be a different story to tell. Since, however, Henderson and Berry have taken hold of her case she has maintained a discreet silence, refusing absolutely to talk of the matter to her most intimate friends, who have access to her cell. Whether or not the prisoner, if she is innocent of the crime of murdering her husband, believes some other member of the family is responsible, is not known. At any rate it is understood the members of the family and all others likely to be concerned will be kept under the closest surveillance from now until the date of the trial.

Son Is Interested.

John Hossack, Jr., over whom many of the quarrels in the Hossack family were said to have originated, is one of the most interested. To a number of friends in Indianola while here a few days ago he announced that it was his intention to do all that is within his power to have the matter cleared up. He does not believe his mother is guilty and says it will be proven so before the grand jury. It is understood he is inclined to the belief the object being to rob.

This son, it developed at the coroner's inquest, was the cause of the first breach in the family between the father and mother. Their quarrels after that were numerous, all of which are said to be directly traceable to him. It is, therefore, his desire that the matter be cleared up as quickly as possible, so there can be no finger of suspicion pointed in his direction.

Is Chain Broken?

While the analysis of the blood on the axe is yet a secret and will remain so until the date of the trial, it is rumored that the attorneys for the defense know the result of the analysis and it is favorable in their behalf. If that is true one of the strongest links in the chain of circumstantial evidence is broken. It will be remembered this axe was found on the Monday following the ghastly murder of John Hossack with the helve buried to the pole under the granary. The blade was covered with blood and a substance resembling brains. It was at first supposed the instrument was that used by the murderess or murderer, who after inflicting the fatal blows, carried [it] there and stuck the blade into the ground for the purpose of removing the clots of blood. The state's theory is that Mrs. Hossack secured the axe, crept softly into the room when the old man was sleeping, struck the blows, and then sped to the granary and secreted it as above. It is then supposed she returned to the house and placed herself beside the wounded man, giving the alarm that woke the household.

If this version is conclusively substantiated by other evidence borne by the facts now in possession of the state then the chances for Mrs. Hossack's acquittal are in jeopardy. If, however, as has been rumored, the analysis of the blood resulted in the discovery that it was that of fowls the evidence against the prisoner will be severely shaken.

The axe is one that was used for the purpose of butchering fowls and was kept in the back yard. The fact that it was found hidden under the granary with the blade buried in the ground excited the suspicion at once that it was the instrument with which the murderer or murderess delivered the blows. The further fact that the wounds were made by just such an instrument lent strength to the belief that the old axe was used. However, if the analysis proves conclusively that the blood is not human then the theory will be advanced that some one else and not Mrs. Hossack did the deed, though the fact that she claims to have known nothing of the tragedy until all was over will be strongly against her.

Rumors of Confession.

Rumor comes from New Virginia, the home of the Hossacks, that on the Sunday following the night of the murder, Mrs. Hossack lost that strange self-control which she has borne all through the trying ordeals and muttered in incoherent tones, between moans and sighs, something that sounded as though she was trying to confess something of the affair. When questioned, however, by some of the members present, she immediately regained her usual demeanor and positively refused to be further questioned along those lines. The state is said to have been informed of this rumor and will make a diligent search between now and the date of the trial to secure the parties who are said to have noticed the actions and bring them here as witnesses during the trial. Many are inclined to the belief, however, that it is mere rumor and that little credence can be given it.

Plea of Insanity.

There is a well-defined rumor current to the effect that Messrs. Berry and Henderson will enter a plea of insanity if their efforts in behalf of their client before the grand jury are of no avail. It is understood some of the best citizens of the neighborhood where the Hossacks reside will testify that Mrs. Hossack has acted queerly on several occasions, threatening to take the life of her husband. The testimony of the man Haines before the coroner was to the effect that he had been approached by Mrs. Hossack with the request that he help her get rid of the old man. The fact that Mrs. Hossack had developed this strange feeling toward Hossack during the past few months is taken as an indication that her mind is not as mentally bright as normal conditions should justify.

Blood on Her Clothes.

Relative to the alleged spots of blood on Mrs. Hossack's clothes discovered after the murder, but which she explained as blood from a fowl, it is claimed by the state that it will be able to prove definitely that the blood is human and an investigation is being made as in the case of the axe. The garment is in possession of the state and will be introduced as evidence at the January trial.

The sentiment of the best people of Indianola, those who know the family well, is that Mrs. Hossack was either crazy or that she did not commit the crime. She is intelligent and to visitors who had occasion to go to the home even only a few months prior to the murder she was attentive to her husband, seeming to anticipate his wants, and saw that he wished for nothing. She is said to be a woman who is quick tempered, high strung, like all Scotch women, but of a deeply religious turn of mind.

Hossack was above the average in intellect. Two years ago he was prominently mentioned for treasurer of Warren County and had the votes pledged that would have named him for the place. A division was about to be made in the party, however, and he came forward and withdrew his name. Since that time he has been mentioned for some of the highest offices in Warren county, but has refused. No one ever regarded the quarrels between the couple as serious.

