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# THE DEATH OF CLARENCE LEADER DAME

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DIED WHILE CHASING A BURGLER

BY KATE MONTRESSOR

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## THE BACKGROUND

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This story about my great-great-grandfather was never passed down from my mother. I found out about it by searching old newspapers for articles of interest. I remember asking my mother about her family, and none of the stories she told me were true. (I am not descended from the daughter of a native American chief and my great-grandfather wasn't a war hero.) I imagine the stories were modified through the generations and any deception was not intentional. The real stories are much more interesting.

My great-grandfather lost his father when he was 8 years old. His mother later married a Canadian, and I can imagine my great-grandfather hearing stories of his mother's ancestry (she was descended from Mayflower passengers) and living with an immigrant sparked a deep interest in genealogy and how our people got to America. Clarence E. Dame was a life-time member of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, and his work inspired me to further document and verify our family.

Clarence Leader Dame was an average working man, providing for his wife and two children in Newmarket, New Hampshire. Born in Malden, census data shows him moving around (1880, Epping, New Hampshire; 1890, Salem, Massachusetts). As a harness maker, jobs were still in demand at this time and his income was comfortable. He and his wife were both Mayflower descendants and took pride in their heritage.

In those days, small towns didn't usually have a formal post office. The mail was usually collected and dispersed by a respected local citizen. Clarence was a friend and neighbor to Dr. Charles Morse, who was not only the area's general physician, but also the postmaster. He kept the mail in a separate room in his home and received the U.S. mail daily. When notified, people would come to him to pick up their mail.

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## THE CRIME

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The evening of April 14, 1894, Dr. Morse prepared for bed, taking off his shoes and one sock. He suddenly heard a disturbance from another section of his house. Hastily, he rushed toward the commotion and came upon a stranger attempting to break into the postal room through a window. During those times, people frequently sent money through the mail, which was the burglar's target. The intruder had seized a handful of letters when Dr. Morse arrived in the room. Dr. Morse swiftly took the letters from the intruder's grasp and tried to restrain him. However, the burglar retaliated by swiping at his face with a knife and biting his hand. He then made a hasty escape through the window.

Dr. Morse ran out of his house, yelling at the burglar and yelling for help. Next door, Clarence heard his friend in trouble and ran out to assist. Without thinking, he saw the intruder and ran after him, down the street and around the corner.

Dr. Morse, wearing a single sock, could not run as fast. Townspeople heard the commotion and joined in the chase. As they rounded the corner, they saw a man lying face down on the ground. Dr. Morse didn't recognize his friend. He felt his pulse, determined he was alive, then left to go home to put on his shoes.

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The Boston Globe, Boston, MA; 15 Apr 1894

**FATAL THRUST**

CLARENCE DAME KILLED BY A BURGLAR  
POSTMASTER MORSE OF NEWMARKET ALSO STABBED  
BOTH HAD GIVEN CHASE TO FLEEING ROBBER  
WHEN CAUGHT HE TURNED ON HIS PURSUERS  
WHOLE TOWN ROUSED AND JOIN IN THE SEARCH

Newmarket, NH, April 14 —Tonight Dr Charles A. Morse discovered a man breaking into his house and gave chase, with Clarence Dame.

They overtook the burglar, who killed Dame with a knife and severely injured Morse.

The fire bells were rung and all the townspeople turned out to search for the murderer, who is described as about 5 feet 10 inches in height, 170 pounds weight, dark complexion and wearing a dark overcoat and derby hat.

The murderer is known, and there seems strong reasons for believing that he will be soon captured. The fellow has been hanging about town for some time, and it is supposed that his intention was to rob the postoffice, which is located in Dr Morse's house.

In this however, he was unsuccessful, being frightened away before he had secured any money.

Clarence Dame, the neighbor, who assisted in pursuit of the thief, and who is dead, was affected with heart trouble, and it is likely that his death resulted from the excitement fully as much as from the knife wound inflicted by the fleeing robber.

He was about 45 years of age. Word was at once sent to Dover, Portsmouth, Exeter, and other places, notifying the authorities of the crime, and a vigorous search is being made through this neighborhood.

It appears that Dame caught the fellow, when the latter pulled a knife and stabbed Dame in the neck.

Dr Morse came to the rescue of Dame, when the man stabbed him in the side, making a very serious wound. It is now believed that the murderer took the midnight freight for Boston.

There is great excitement in the town.

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## THE DEATH

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The next day, more details emerge.

No one had been able to catch the burglar, although many saw him and the police got descriptions.

Clarence was dying.

The crowd turned him over and saw who it was. After a few moments, he breathed his last.

The town thought at first that he must have been stabbed by the burglar, but no knife wounds were seen. Only a few bruises on his head. Perhaps he tripped and hit his head.

Dr. Morse was told what was happening and returned to his friend. Someone suggested Clarence had a heart attack, but Dr. Morse objected, as he was Clarence's physician and there had been no indication of heart trouble from such a robust man.

## THE BURGLAR

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Meanwhile, the search for the burglar continued.

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The Boston Globe, Boston, MA; 16 Apr 1894

### **PLUCKY MORSE**

CHASED BURGLAR IN HIS STOCKINGS AND SHIRT  
NEWMARKET, N.H. LOOKING FOR HIS COWARDLY  
ASSAILANT

DAME MAY HAVE BEEN HIT BY THIEF'S COMRADE  
SOME THINK HIS DEATH DUE TO HEART FAILURE  
INQUEST TODAY WILL DISCLOSE FACTS OF THE CASE  
Newmarket, N H, April 15—This town is in a state of  
intense excitement over an unsuccessful attempt at  
burglary last night, an assault by the would-be robber  
on one of its most prominent citizens, and what may  
prove to be a murder.

The assault was made on Dr Charles A. Morse,  
postmaster of the town, whose house the assailant  
evidently intended entering.

The victim of what many consider murder was Charles  
L. Dame, a harness maker of the town.

Hundreds of citizens are scouring the woods for the  
assailant of Dr Morse.

Dr Morse is not seriously injured, but is suffering from  
a severely lacerated finger, the result of a bite from the  
assailant, and also from a gash in his cheek made by a  
knife.

[The doctor describes his encounter with the thief, and  
how he comes upon Dame lying on the ground]

“Priest then said, ‘No, I think he’s dying, doctor.’ I felt  
his pulse, and found it was all right, and said, ‘He’s  
alive.’ and went on to my home, little dreaming it was  
my neighbor, Clarence Dame.”

Dame died a few minutes after the doctor had seen  
him, without speaking, and, as a crowd gathered  
around, he was recognized, and then intense  
excitement prevailed.

Hearing the cries of Dr Morse, John H. Griffin, the  
chairman of the selectmen, had ordered the fire all

rung, and as a consequence within a few minutes a  
great crowd was on the spot.

At first it was thought that Dame had been stabbed,  
but only a few bruises could be seen on his head.

Some think he died of heart disease or fight.

Dr Morse is positive that he did not die of heart  
trouble, for he says he was not subject to trouble of  
that kin.

Dame as a man 6 feet tall and weighed 190 pounds. He  
did not run more than 200 yards.

Just before Dame was found Mrs Priest, from her  
chamber window, saw two men jump over a fence near  
by and run.

It is believed by many that someone struck Dame with  
a sandbag, and from the effect of the blow he died.

Search with a lantern was made at the scene of the  
scrimmage with Morse near the grape vine, and a  
heavy knife covered with blood was found on the  
ground.

Chairman Griffin of the board of selectmen, who keep  
a hardware store, recognized the knife as one he had  
sold a Frenchman two weeks previous.

This gave the first clew to the ‘perpetrator of the  
assault, and upon comparing a description of the man  
with that given by Dr Morse the were found identical.  
The Frenchman is about 30, 5 feet 6 inches, and about  
160 pounds. He had a dark complexion and wore a dark  
overcoat and an ordinary derby hat, a stand-up collar  
with turned down points.

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Clarence Dame leaves a wife and two children, who are  
heartbroken.

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The hunt for the perpetrator continues. Boston is kept up to date.

The Boston Globe, Boston, MA; 16 Apr 1894

### **NEWMARKET'S BURGLAR**

EXCITEMENT RUNS HIGH OVER SATURDAY'S AFFRAY  
ONE MAN HELD BY THE MALDEN POLICE WHO ANSWERS  
DESCRIPTION

ANOTHER SEEN AT MILTON, NH, WHO WILL BE ARRESTED  
TODAY

Newmarket, NH, April 16—The excitement is still  
intense here over the death of Clarence Dame and the  
assault on Dr C. A. Morse Saturday night.

No one has been arrested as yet, but tonight parties  
will go to Malden to see if the man arrested there can  
be identified.

C. Griffin left this morning for Hampton, where a chum of the missing man is at work in a sawmill, thinking the wanted man might be there.

A jury consisting of W. W. Durell, C. V. Doe, and Joseph Pinkham have been summoned by Coroner A. L. Mellows, and the inquest over the death of Dame will take place this noon.

The funeral of Clarence Dame will be held at the Baptist church Wednesday morning.

The two friends of the missing man who were arrested yesterday are still held in the lockup. The missing man went under the name of William Guarantee.

A telegram was received at 11 this morning from the station agent at Milton, NH, stating that a man answering the description of the man wanted, as given in The Globe, had just passed the state there on the track. Orders were sent to hold him.

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## THE EYEWITNESSES

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The Boston Globe, Boston, MA; 16 Apr 1894

### **STRANGE MAN SEEN**

ACTED SUSPICIOUSLY NIGHT OF NEWMARKET TRAGEDY  
SEVERAL WITNESSES AT THE INQUEST TESTIFY TO  
MEETING HIM

AUTOPSY WILL BE HELD TODAY ON THE BODY OF  
CLARENCE DAME

Newmarket, NH, April 16—The manner in which Clarence L. Dame met his death last Saturday night is not yet settled, and opinions differ in the matter.

As there were no outward appearances of his having received a blow or a wound, the first theory would be that he died of heart disease.

The coroner's inquest today brings out the fact from four witnesses that a strange man came running up Exeter St, and when seen turned and ran back again.

Each of these witnesses state positively that the man was not Dame.

No one has yet found out who the man is, and if it had been any one in town he would have spoken to these men who saw him, or else would have told of it since.

If it had been Dame he would not have cried "fire" and then run, for Dame knew what the trouble was.

As to the theory of heart disease, Dr Morse states that he has been his physician, and never knew of his having any sign of heart disease.

Dame went to a hospital in Boston last Thanksgiving and had an operation performed, and was given ether at the time.

If he was liable to heart trouble Dr Morse claims that the hospital physicians would not have etherized him. An autopsy will probably show whether Dame received a blow or not.

The inquest was held at the office of Coroner Aaron L. Mellow this afternoon.

The jury consisted of Woodbury W. Durell, Joseph Pinkham and Charles V. Doe.

The first witness called was Albert H. Place. He said:

"I was in my house at 11.15, when I heard yelling and running.

"I went to the door, and saw a man apparently leaning against a fence on opposite side of road.

Went into the house to get my hat, and when I came out again, upon going down the street, saw Hale Evans and a lady on the other side.

"Hale said he thought there was a 'scrap' up street.

"Left sidewalk and went into the road and saw a man lying on his face. Turned him over and felt his pulse, which was strong.

"Evans came along, and we picked him up.

"Dr Morse then came along and told us of his chase and fight with a man. "Evans said, here's one of the men, I guess.

"Morse felt of his pulse and said he was alive, and then went home.

"We afterward recognized the man we had as Dame.

"Took him to my house, and he was apparently dead when we got there.

Tried to revive him, but couldn't. "Found no bruise except a small one near the cheek bone on his face.

"Saw no clubs or sticks or rocks near him.

"Dame was found not far from the fence on which I saw the man leaning.

Hale Evans 2d was the next person sworn, who said:

"Was on Main St when I heard a halloing on Exeter St.

"I ran down the street and first saw Dame lying in the road on his face, with hands over his head.

"Picked him up and stood him against the York house, where he opened his mouth and put his hand out, as if reaching for something.

"I saw a man going down Exeter St, crying fire, and I followed him.

"When the man saw me he turned and ran in the opposite direction. "I knew it was not Dame. "He was a stranger.

"He was walking toward me at first and didn't holler until he saw me, then he turned and ran."

Dr Charles A. Morse, the victim of the assault, was next called, and he described all the facts about going to the postoffice after coming from an entertainment in the

hall and getting a satchel, in which he had \$400 worth of bills and stamps, which he took home.

His account of his chasing the supposed burglar and the assault was practically the same as that given in The Globe today.

Willie L. Priest, 16-year-old son of A. M. Priest, said: "Was out running with my father, having heard the cries of Dr Morse.

"Saw a man first at the edge of the sidewalk in front of the York house. "

"The man went down on one knee then rallied and sprang up, then ran about eight or ten feet further and fell to the ground.

"Didn't see any one else near me and didn't know it was Dame until later."

Thomas Brechney Jr testified:

"Was on my way home about 11:30 Saturday night, when I met Tom O'Brien, and as we got to the corner of Main and Exeter Sts we heard cries.

"Just then a man came running up the hill from Exeter St, and I think I cried Fire!' He then turned and ran back again.

"We then went along down Exeter St and met Dr Morse, with his shirt all bloody.

"We then came to the place where Dame was, and Place had hold of him lifting him up.

"O'Brien lifted up Dame's cap, and Dame rolled up his eyes.

"We then recognized him as Dame.

"The man who came up Exeter St and ran back was not Clarence L. Dame.

"I am positive the man came up Exeter St toward Main St."

Mamie Caswell said: "I was on my way home, accompanied by Hale Evans when I saw a man walking up Exeter St, who turned and ran back quick. The man was not Dame."

Mrs Priest was then called and told a story similar to that published this morning.

Here the jury rested.

It was decided to hold an autopsy on the body of Dame tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

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On a side note:

The Boston Globe, Boston, MA; 16 Apr 1894

#### **DECLINED TO LEAVE MALDEN.**

CANADIAN HELD FOR THE NEWMARKET  
AUTHORITIES OFFERED HIS LIBERTY.

Peter Chartier, the French Canadian arrested at Malden on suspicion of being the burglar who assaulted postmaster Morse at Newmarket. N H,

Saturday evening, is still in the lockup in Malden. He was offered his liberty last night but declined to go.

The Newmarket authorities, who were expected to call for him, did not appear.

Clarence Dame, who is said to have died of heart failure while chasing the New- market burglar, was formerly a citizen of Malden

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## THE AUTOPSY

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The Boston Globe, Boston, MA; 17 Apr 1894

#### **DAME DIES OF HEART DISEASE**

WIFE OBJECTS TO AUTOPSY—VERDICT WILL PROBABLY BE  
RENDERED TONIGHT AT EXETER BY CORONER'S JURY

Exeter, April 17—At the continuation of the inquest this morning on the death of Clarence L. Dame of Newmarket, Dr Greene testified that he had doctored the deceased for a heart trouble a year ago and that he had examined him within a week.

His pulse then was 54 to the minute, and every fourth beat was intermittent. He did not consider that Dame

was able to run 300 yards without being affected by his trouble.

The undertaker, Charles E. Tasker, says that there were no contusions on the body, except the one near his eye, probably caused by his fall to the ground.

Mrs Dame objected to the autopsy being performed on the body, and accordingly the jury adjourned until tonight, when a verdict that his death was probably caused by heart disease will be rendered.

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OK, I have questions.

He had been seeing a doctor in Boston for over a year, and his wife didn't know? And his best friend, a doctor, didn't know? I guess he didn't want to people to worry about him. He must have known it would be harmful to him to suddenly exert himself. Which is worse: having people fret over your health, or be devastated by your sudden death?

Why didn't his wife, Susan, want an autopsy? Was it for religious reasons? Or was it because she didn't want to face the truth? She was a nurse by profession, so should have known how helpful this would be.

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### THE CONCLUSION

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They caught the guy. He was tried and sentenced for breaking and entering, and attempted theft. He wasn't held responsible for the death of Clarence L. Dame. Clarence was 32 years old. He died 16 days before his next birthday. His grave marker is pretty nice, so I am guessing the town chipped in to get it for him.

Susan married widower James Main 12 years later (1906) and the family moved back to Malden. They had a daughter who was 21 years younger than great-grandfather Clarence. A year after the daughter was born, Clarence married my great-grandmother, Edwinna. Susan died 31 years later, 10 years before her husband, James.

