

CHESTER TIMES – October 9, 1908

MILITARY HONORS FOR CAPTAIN ERB – Funeral of the Murdered Man
Taken Place on Sunday Afternoon from Residence of Sister – Question of Insurance

Captain J. Clayton Erb, victim of the bloody tragedy at Red Gables, Village Green, on Tuesday night, will be buried with military honors. Arrangements have been made for the funeral to take place on Sunday afternoon at 1:30 o'clock from the residence of his sister, Miss Kate L. Erb, at 336 South Thirteenth Street, Philadelphia, from where the body was removed yesterday. Rev. Mr. Gorman will officiate and the internment will be made in Laurel Hill Cemetery.

Captain Erb was in command of Company F, Third Regiment, N.G.P., and members of the regiment will attend and bury him with military honors. Deceased was also a member of the Mount Mariah Lodge No. 155, F. & A.M. Young Republican and the Pen and Pencil Club and other organizations, all of which will attend the funeral obsequies.

The report was circulated on the streets yesterday to the effect that there was a heavy insurance on the life of J. Clayton Erb taken out in the name of his wife, and as the report circulated it gained in strength. William I. Schaffer, attorney for the Erb estate, was seen during the course of the afternoon and he denied any personal knowledge of insurance which was carried by the deceased.

"Remember," said Mr. Schaffer, "I do not mean to say that he had no insurance on his life, but that as far as my personal knowledge is concerned I know of none whatever. As far as his personal business transactions are concerned they have been in the hands of Mr. Horwitz, of Philadelphia, and he is the man you will have to see to learn anything about the insurance matter."

George Q. Horwitz, Esq., was seen later in the day but in response to questions as to the insurance carried by the deceased he refused to talk or give out any information. It is generally presumed that there was a good sum of insurance on the life of the dead man, but all efforts which have been made by outside persons to ascertain facts about this phase of the question have been unavailing, although it is generally conceded that a man of the standing in life of Erb would scarcely live and not carry a fair sum of insurance on his life, and later developments will have to be awaited.

George Armstrong, city garbage contractor, expressed much regret over the untimely and tragic death of Captain J. Clayton Erb, whom he knew personally. Some years ago both men were members of the Philadelphia Stock Exchange and they became intimately acquainted in that way. "He was a fine man," said Mr. Armstrong, "one of those big, open-hearted men who would help a friend out of difficulty and divide his last dollar with him to do him a good turn. It is too bad that he had to die the way he did."

Philadelphia detectives were at Red Gables all of yesterday guarding the body and property of Captain J. Clayton Erb, who was shot on Tuesday night. The killing of Captain Erb is the sensation of the hour in this State owing to his wide political acquaintance, and no effort is being allowed to pass by his political life to bring to justice his murderer. While the detectives were doing this, their power to hasten the investigation of Erb and his sister, Mrs. Catherine Beisel, counsel for the accused were doing all they could to unearth facts which will be used in their defense at habeas corpus proceedings.

Counsel for Mrs. Erb said positively that proceedings will be instituted in a few days to have Mrs. Erb released from jail on bail or discharged entirely, for Messrs. Rhoads

and Fronfield feel secure in the statement that the commonwealth can produce nothing at the habeas corpus hearing to hold her. They would venture no statement as to what would be done in the case of Mrs. Beisel, but it is likely that no steps will be taken to free her from prison until the December term of court when her counsel hopes for an acquittal at the hands of a jury.

While all this was going on the accused women refused to see any visitors at the jail except their lawyers. The husband of Mrs. Beisel was at the prison for a short time and sometime during the afternoon a young man called and told Warden Fields that he was a brother of the accused, but he was denied admittance unless counsel for the women would consent to him seeing them. He did not return to the prison but said that he would come back today.

DOING FANCCY WORK – During the early morning a large handbag belonging to Mrs. Erb reached the prison, but before its contents were given to her, counsel was called in to see whether it would be proper. It proved that the bag was filled with fancy work Mrs. Erb had been working on before her arrest and it was immediately sent to her cell. She put in most of the day after a long conference with her attorneys in the morning working on this fancy work.

EXTRA FOOD FOR PRISONERS – Her sister, who has not recovered from the shock of the tragedy at Red Gables, put in most of the day lying down. She is still quite ill although much improved after a good night's sleep. By direction of counsel neither prisoners will say anything. Mrs. Erb occupies cell NO. 3 and Mrs. Beisel cell NO. 1, of the men's department.

At the breakfast hour yesterday they partook of the prison fare, but during the day arrangement was made by counsel to have something extra sent in by a nearby restaurant.

NO FIGHT OVER BODY – Mrs. Erb issued a statement from the prison at Media yesterday through her lawyers denying the fact that she had trouble with the sister of Captain Erb about where his body should be interred.

"You can say that there is not a word or truth in those published statements," said Messrs. Rhodes and Fronfield. "The fact is that when Mrs. Erb came down stairs on Wednesday morning and found the house occupied by Miss Erb and some Philadelphia detectives she told Miss Erb that she had no objections to the body of Captain Erb being taken to Philadelphia and interred in the family lot. To this Miss Erb made no reply but ignored Mrs. Erb entirely."

According to counsel later in the day there was some objection to the manner in which it was attempted to run things at Red Gables and this caused the statement to go out that Mrs. Erb and her sister-in-law had quarreled about the body. But if the statement of Mrs. Erb is true this was not the case. Smarting under what they term, "Philadelphia political influence" in hounding down Mrs. Erb and Mrs. Beisel, counsel offered some objections. It was then that Mrs. Erb was arrested and brought to the jail at Media. The body was removed yesterday without any trouble, being taken to Philadelphia by Colonel Good.

District Attorney Albert Dutton MacDade and his assistant, J. Rohrman Robinson, have been so busy in the criminal court that they have had but little time to think about the murder of Captain Erb and in the absence of any report to them, on the part of the detectives no plan of action has been outlined as to the trial. All they know at present is what developed at the coroner's inquest.

SELF-DEFENSE AND ABBERRATION – Counsel for Mrs. Erb and Mrs. Beisel also refused yesterday to discuss the line of defense. It is the general opinion that a plea of self-defense will be offered, backed by facts to show that mental aberration runs through the family. Late in the afternoon, Messrs. Fronefield and Rhodes went into Philadelphia, and it is believed that their business related to the granting of letters of administration upon the dead man's estate.

PROTEST OVER ESTATE – George Q. Horwitz and William I. Schaffer, counsel for Captain Erb's estate, evidently intend that Mrs. Erb shall have no hand in the settlement of the dead man's estate. Yesterday they filed a protest with the Register of Wills at Media as follows:

"Representing the heirs at law and next of kin of J. Clayton Erb we hereby give you notice not to grant letters of administration upon his estate to any person until after you have notified us, and given us an opportunity to be heard, as the late Captain Erb was not a resident of Delaware County."

Frank B. Rhodes and W. Roger Fronefield, counsel for Mrs. Erb and her sister, Mrs. Beisel, were much put out over this action on the part of counsel for Erb, but this feeling of resentment at what they call the work of the Philadelphia politicians was intensified when the news came out from Philadelphia that counsel for Captain Erb's estate had taken out letters of administration in that city.

"Backed by the strongest kind of political influence that is the only place such a thing could have been done," said Mrs. Erb's counsel.

KEITH LOCKHART COLLECTION