

Elmer Ellsworth Barner, (13 Jun 1865 – 23 Jul 1901), Newport News, July 25, 1901



Elmer E. Barner was hanged in the jail yard at Harrisburg at 10:10 o'clock Tuesday morning for the murder of his brother-in-law, **Isaac Miller**, in Halifax Township, Dauphin County, January 15, 1900. He and **Miller** married sisters and lived as neighbors in Halifax Township for nine years prior to the spring of 1899, when **Barner** removed to South Dakota. While there he formed an opinion that his wife had not been true to him and like all similar delusions, the more he brooded over it the more positive he became that **Miller** had seduced his wife. To set matters right she agreed to come back to Dauphin County with him. They arrived at Millerstown, this county, January 15, 1900, from where they went across the country of **Miller's** home, after the children had gone to bed. **Barner** unburdened his mind. **Miller**, entirely innocent as is generally

believed, indignantly denied **Barner's** charges when the latter drew a revolver and shot him dead.

He was arrested, tried and convicted. Nothing else then conviction could be expected, so unmistakable and unjustifiable was his crime. A new trial was refused, the case was appealed to the Supreme Court, where the judgment of the lower court was confirmed and as a last effort to save the man's life, the case was taken to the Board of Pardons who refused to commute the sentence.

His execution was without incident save the indifference with which he met his fate. Accompanied by his spiritual adviser, Rev. Isaac W. Bagley, and the sheriff's deputies, **Barner** walked to the scaffold, dressed in the same suit that he wore when he killed **Miller**. He slept well during the night and for breakfast drank a glass of milk and ate some ice. The balance of the time preceding his execution was occupied with Rev. Bagley in prayer and song, the last hymn they sang being "In The Sweet By and By."

By his request the officers did not handcuff him in the march to the gallows. He made no dying statement and his death was due to strangulation, so pronounced by the physicians in attendance fifteen minutes after the trap door had been sprung by Sheriff Reiff. **Barner's** brothers and sisters called to see him Tuesday, but none of them witnessed his execution. His father died at his home near Liverpool, this county, last January. At the same hour his sister, **Mrs. Grisom**, died at Rye, NY. Both bodies were buried on the same day at Barner's Cemetery, in Liverpool Township.

Elmer Barner was born in Susquehanna Township, Juniata County. His parents were **Mr.** and **Mrs. Henry Barner**, highly respected citizens. He and **Maggie Cox** were married December 24, 1889, her father being **Thomas Cox**, a well known citizen of Seven Stars, Juniata County, adjoining the Perry County line. **Isaac Miller** and **Sarah A. Cox**, **Mrs. Barner's** sister, were married in Newport, February 27, 1876, by Rev. A. Stapleton.

The body of **Barner** was buried yesterday in Barner's Cemetery near Liverpool.

The close student of human beings has little doubt that **Elmer E. Barner** had an insane delusion when he came all the way from South Dakota to kill his brother-in-law, **Isaac Miller**, of anything were wanted to confirm this belief it was his mental condition at the time of his execution. He was an impotent child but he was without fear. He expressed no regret for his awful deed, had no sorrow, no sentiment in his impotent soul, but indifferently went to his death without affection for those living whom he should have loved, and with suppressed hate for every person that ever impeded his selfish course in life, really or imaginarily.

While it was quite difficult to prove him insane from the standpoint of stereotyped medical jurisprudence, he was doubtless possessed of an insane delusion as to his wife's fidelity. In the hurly-burly of his untutored intellect, the probable inheritance of generations of antecedent indifference and neglect, he imagined that he almost gleefully killed after traveling hundreds of miles with no other purpose in view.

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