

**“If Ever Two Women Deserved What They Got”: The Kate Stocker Murder as
Reported in the *Jersey City News***

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Abstract: The recent movement toward digitizing historical newspapers has made them easily accessible—allowing research to be conducted from computers and mobile devices anywhere. As historical newspapers are increasingly available online, it becomes easier to come across “forgotten” stories reported in them. This article focuses on the murder of Catherine (“Kate”) Stocker by her husband Arthur in 1892 and Arthur’s subsequent trial as recounted in the Jersey City News, a newspaper digitized as part of the National Endowment for the Humanities National Digital Newspaper Program. Although Arthur shot Kate in front of witnesses, the paper claimed she “deserved” it because she had been unfaithful and driven her husband into a jealous rage. The sensational depiction of the Stocker trial in the Jersey City News and sympathy toward Stocker provide a way to understand why, although convicted and sentenced to ten years hard labor in prison, Stocker was paroled within two years.

In the late twentieth century, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) sponsored the U.S. Newspaper Program with assistance from the Library of Congress. This program enabled individual states to “locate, catalog, and preserve on microfilm” newspapers published in their cities and towns. Along with preservation, the microfilm provided an improved level of accessibility, albeit one that depended on a researcher’s ability to get a

service copy of the microfilm and find a machine on which to read it. In the early twenty-first century, the NEH and Library of Congress initiated the National Digital Newspaper Program, turning its attention and providing grants to fund the digitization of microfilmed newspapers, making them discoverable and searchable on the Library of Congress's Chronicling America website. As of this writing, the site has grown to papers from all 50 states and two territories, representing more than 20 million pages.¹

Between 2016 and 2023, New Jersey was an awardee of the National Digital Newspaper Program, contributing newspapers to Chronicling America. The author served as project director and co-principal investigator throughout the entire project. The NJ Digital Newspaper Project, as it was termed, contributed more than 300,000 pages digitized from U.S. Newspaper Project microfilm held by the New Jersey State Archives. Among the papers digitized in the project's first years were the *Jersey City News* and its Sunday edition, the *Sunday Morning News*.

Most of the nineteenth century New Jersey newspapers in Chronicling America were published weekly. These were valuable for providing snapshots of what was happening in a city or town but did not get into the details as news broke daily. As a daily paper, the *Jersey City News* offered a broad view of life in Jersey City and its adjacent cities and towns, such as Hoboken and West Hoboken.² Paging through the 1890s *Jersey City News*, the number of stories shared on the seven columns on the front page is overwhelming. Day after day, the paper detailed tragedies, oddities, and events that affected the lives of Jersey City's residents. Viewing them from the

¹ The author would like to thank the anonymous peer reviewers for their insights and suggestions. She also thanks John Brennan, Lee Ann Fullington, Tara Maharjan, John White, Peter Wosh, Patricia Schall and the colleagues, partners, and advisors who worked on the New Jersey Digital Newspaper Project. To learn more about the U.S. Newspaper Program, <https://www.neh.gov/us-newspaper-program>. More information about the National Digital Newspaper Program and Chronicling America are available at <https://www.loc.gov/ndnp/> and <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

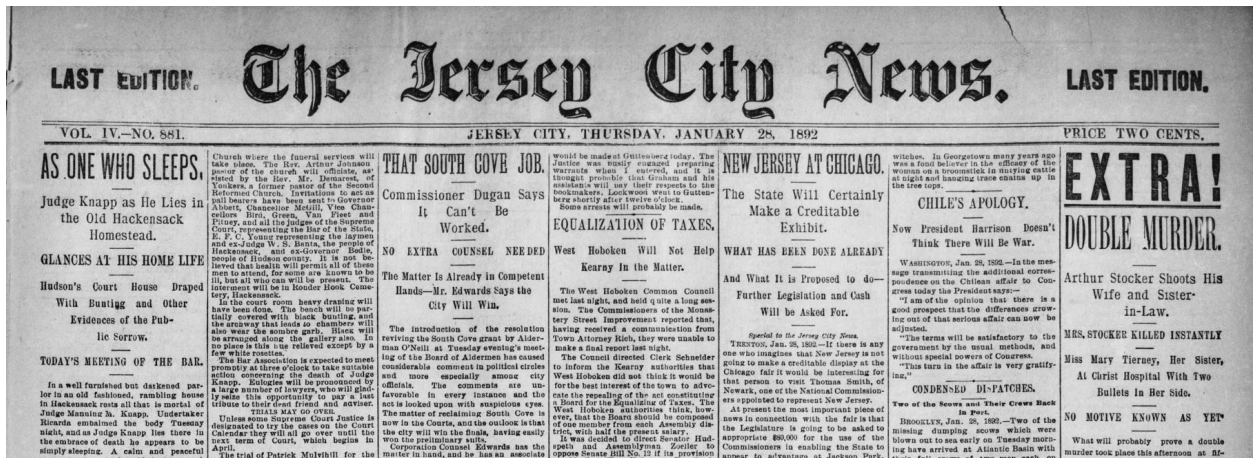
² More information about the *Jersey City News* can be found at its "About" page on Chronicling America, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/>.

twenty-first century, the headlines and stories draw a reader in. One such story appeared between January and July 1892, as the *Jersey City News* dedicated space and ink, much of it on the front page, to the murder of 21-year-old Catherine (“Kate” or “Katie”) Stocker and the subsequent trial of her husband Arthur.

The Crime and Initial Reporting

On January 28, 1892, an extra edition of the *Jersey City News* blared out the following headline:

“EXTRA! DOUBLE MURDER! Arthur Stocker Shoots His Wife and Sister-In-Law. Mrs. Stocker Killed Instantly. Miss Mary Tierney, Her Sister, At Christ Hospital With Two Bullets In Her Side. No Motive Known as Yet!”³



January 28, 1892, Issue of the *Jersey City News* as featured in *Chronicling America*.

³ “EXTRA! Double Murder. Arthur Stocker Shoots Wife and Sister-in-Law,” *Jersey City News*, January 28, 1892, (last edition) *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Lib. of Congress, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-01-28/ed-1/seq-1/>. The coverage of the murder and trial in the *Jersey City News* is frequent and thorough, but on occasions statements are made that are later changed or accounted for differently as more information became available.

A short time after noon on Thursday, January 28, Kate had run out of her family's house at 90 Zabriskie Street, screaming for help. Arthur, having already shot and wounded Kate's 18-year-old sister Mary (called Mamie) chased Kate down the street, shot her at close range—observed by several horrified witnesses—and continued running after political organizer John E. Dunne, who had been at a gathering at the family house and had taken off when the shooting started. A second man, George Bremner, had been at the house as well, but had left and was in his own home by the time the shootings took place.

The headline acknowledged that one of the victims of the “double murder” was in the hospital. In fact, Mamie survived and later testified against Stocker. Although the headline says no motive was known, it was soon clear that Arthur was jealous and angry about his wife's behavior with other men.



Detail from Jersey City and Hoboken, NJ map, 1879, showing Zabriskie Street and Summit Avenue. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/doi:10.7282/T3DF6S6S>. Held by Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries.⁴

⁴ The author created two maps to show some of the events around the murder on Zabriskie Street, following reporting in the Jersey City News. “The Murder of Kate Stocker 1892: Places” can be found at

Although Arthur Stocker had committed the crime, Kate and Mamie's characters were quickly judged and disparaged in the *Jersey City News*. Two days after the shootings, the paper stated:

Nobody can sympathize with murder, and we hope Arthur Stocker will be severely punished for the deliberate killing of his wife and the shooting of her sister. But, it must be said, that if ever two women deserved what they got, these two did. The provocation offered to the wretched husband was more than human nature could bear.⁵

The "provocation" referred to the deteriorated Stocker marriage and Kate's spending time with other men. Although Kate and Arthur were separated in January 1892, he was living with his in-laws on Zabriskie Street. On the evening of January 27, 1892, Kate and Mamie, along with their 13-year-old sister Tillie and their mother, Mrs. Tierney, attended a ball hosted by the John E. Dunne political association at Pohlman's Hall on Ogden Avenue. Kate was seen dancing and spending time with a man called Arthur O'Neill. Arthur Stocker arrived around 11 and interacted with Mrs. Tierney and Tillie, but not Kate or Mamie, and left around 3:30 am. The Tierney family and Kate returned home around 5:45 in the morning, joined by John E. Dunne and George Bremner, who had served as floor supervisor at the ball. Dunne, who had been seeing Mamie romantically, had offered the women a ride home in his carriage. As there was not enough room for everyone, Bremner and Kate walked the 20 minutes back to 90 Zabriskie. Mrs. Tierney invited the men in for coffee, which they accepted.

<https://arcg.is/1jyG914>. "The Murder of Kate Stocker, 1892, Witness Statements" can be found at <https://arcg.is/1jTm1u4>.

⁵ "A Word as to John E. Dunne," *Jersey City News*, January 30, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Lib. of Congress, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-01-30/ed-1/seq-2/>.

Ironically, the January 28 edition of the *Jersey City News* that reports the murder has an item on the fourth page declaring the ball was a “gigantic success” and noted Kate (with the last name Tierney) and Mamie as guests.⁶

After coming home from the ball, Arthur went to bed before leaving for his work as a tinsmith [roofer] after 7 a.m. When he came down to the parlor in the morning, he found the after party, and they continued to drink and chat as he said good morning and left. He returned around 8:30 saying it was too cold for him to work (according to the paper, it was in the low 20s). He joined the group, playing card games and drinking milk punch and whiskey. They were playing a game called Black Peter, in which the loser might get a black marking on their face. At some point, different members of the party left the parlor to go into a small bedroom off to the side. Both Bremner and Dunne had gone in to take naps and each woke up with his face blackened, by Kate or Mamie, or both of them together.⁷

After watching the movements in and out of the bedroom, Stocker went upstairs and came down saying he was going out for a walk. He asked Kate to dress their 4-year-old daughter Tillie so that she could walk with him, but Kate refused, saying that if it was too cold for him to work, it was too cold for their daughter to go outside. He left and returned 20 minutes to half an hour later. Bremner testified that he decided to leave and stepped out onto the porch, meeting Stocker as he came back from his walk. Stocker invited Bremner to stay for a drink, but pleading tiredness after

⁶ “Dunne Association,” *Jersey City News*, 28 Jan. 1892, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-01-28/ed-1/seq-4/>.

⁷ “Weather Indications,” *Jersey City News*, January 28, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-01-28/ed-1/seq-1/>. The first mention of the Black Peter card game appears in “Stocker’s Ordeal: On Trial for Murder of His Pretty Wife After the Dunne Ball,” *Jersey City News*, June 14, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-06-14/ed-1/seq-1/>.

a long night, Bremner walked back six blocks to his place, noting that he heard the noon whistle blowing after he had changed his clothes.⁸

After Bremner left, Dunne indicated he planned to leave as well. Arthur got a pitcher of beer and he and Kate began to argue. According to Mrs. Tierney, “He beat her and said he would end her.”⁹ At this point, Mamie started to get involved. Dunne told her to stay out of it and headed to their yard to use the water closet. As the arguing continued, the beer pitcher was thrown (no one knew for sure who threw it), and Arthur pulled out the revolver and fired a shot in the parlor that Mrs. Tierney later found while sweeping up. Kate ran out the front door on to Zabriskie Street and Mamie out the side door into an alley. Dunne, hearing the shot from outside, decided to leave, quickly moving up Zabriskie Street toward Summit Avenue. Stocker first followed Mamie into the alleyway next to the house. After shooting her, he ran out to Zabriskie Street, caught up to Kate and shot her, and continued up Zabriskie and onto Summit in pursuit of Dunne.

On Summit Avenue, Dunne ran into a grocery store and Stocker followed him in. Dunne asked Stocker why he wanted to shoot him at which point Stocker declared himself satisfied and left.

Returning to Zabriskie Street, Stocker saw Kate lying in the street, a crowd starting to form. Crouching by her body, he kissed her forehead. He was apprehended by a fireman named Richard White who made a citizen’s arrest and brought Stocker to the nearby precinct

⁸ “Goaded to Kill. Arthur Stocker’s Story of His Wife’s Shameless Infidelity in Her Own Home,” *Jersey City News*, June 15, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Lib. of Congress, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-06-15/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁹ Mrs. Tierney’s and others accounts of the events leading up to the shooting appear in “Stocker’s Ordeal: On Trial for Murder of His Pretty Wife After the Dunne Ball.”

where he was put in jail. White later testified that Stocker told him “I did exactly what I wanted to do.”¹⁰

Two days after the shootings, a brief item appeared in the *Jersey City News* about the death of 35-year-old Emily De Mora as “a victim of the Stocker tragedy.” De Mora, a piano teacher, was visiting a pupil on Zabriskie Street on January 28. As she left, she heard shots and turned to see Stocker standing over his wife’s body, revolver in hand. Seeing Stocker running up the street in her direction as he went after Dunne, a terrified De Mora ran into a shop on Summit Avenue. She recovered and went home. The next day, a doctor came to her house to see her son for an appointment and instead found that De Mora had collapsed and died. She was known to have a heart issue; the verdict was that she died as a result of the fear and trauma she experienced during the shooting.¹¹

Along with De Mora, many other people had been on the street or in their homes at the time and witnessed Kate’s murder. One testified that Kate’s last words were “I’m afraid I’m gone,”¹² although no other witness mentioned this. However, one phrase was repeated through the *Jersey City News’s* coverage, that Arthur’s last words to Kate were that “you’ll die easy” or “you died easy.” The first variation comes from Richard White’s testimony at the inquest in February 1892:

We heard a pistol shot . . . and I thought some one was shooting a dog. We ran around the corner, and I saw Mrs. Stocker lying face downward on the sidewalk. Stocker turned her over as I approached, and kissed her face. He then started across the street. I followed, and

¹⁰ “‘I Guess I’m Gone.’ These Were Kate Stocker’s Dying Words, Heard by Emma McCullough,” *Jersey City News*, February 2, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-02-02/ed-1/seq-1/>

¹¹ “Died from Shock: Mrs. De Mora a Victim of the Stocker Tragedy,” *Jersey City News*, January 31, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-02-01/ed-1/seq-1/>

¹² “‘I Guess I’m Gone.’ These Were Kate Stocker’s Dying Words, Heard by Emma McCullough.”

placed him under arrest. He gave me the revolver when I asked for it. I didn't see Miss Tierney at all. "Mrs. Stocker died easy, I guess," he added.¹³

Patrick Gallagher, another witness at the inquest, shared that he was on Zabriskie when he saw a woman run across the street toward him, followed by a man who came close behind and shot her and ran toward Summit Avenue. He witnessed Stocker return, kiss Kate, and say "You'll die easy, Kate."¹⁴ White's later testimony at the trial attributes the words to Stocker.¹⁵

Portrayals and Sympathies

Although the *Jersey City News* acknowledged that Arthur Stocker's crime was terrible, it was clear in their reporting that they felt the blame lay in Kate's behavior. Kate had not yet been buried when the *Jersey City News* made its statement that she had deserved what happened to her. Days later, the paper later detailed that Catholic cemeteries refused to bury her, eventually being interred in the Flower Hill Cemetery in North Bergen.¹⁶ Mamie was portrayed as a sexually promiscuous bad woman and Mrs. Tierney as immoral and unnatural. The paper implied that Tillie, who was thirteen (and "pretty") was evasive at the inquest and that she "earnestly tried not to tell what she knew and was successful."¹⁷

In their accounts, the *Jersey City News* focused on Katie's and Mamie's looks and behavior.

¹³ "Goaded to Murder: A Tragic Aftermath of the John E. Dunne Ball," *Jersey City News*, January 29, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-01-29/ed-1/seq-1/>

¹⁴ "'I Guess I'm Gone.' These Were Kate Stocker's Dying Words, Heard by Emma McCullough."

¹⁵ "Goaded to Kill. Arthur Stocker's Story of His Wife's Shameless Infidelity in Her Own Home."

¹⁶ "LIES AT FLOWER HILL. Bishop Winger's Verdict Was Against Mrs. Stocker," *Jersey City News*, January 31, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-02-01/ed-1/seq-1/>.

¹⁷ "John E. Dunne's Story. What He Had to Do with the Famous Stocker Tragedy," *Jersey City News*, January 31, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-02-03/ed-1/seq-2/>

“In time the girls grew to be beautiful young women. They had long, flowing black hair, beautiful brown eyes, and olive complexions. They were hand-somely formed, and wherever they went they excited admiration.”¹⁸ They added that people were surprised when Kate married Stocker, because they thought she could do better, but noted, “Three months after the couple’s marriage a girl baby was born. Then the gossips’ tongues wagged”¹⁹ The *Jersey City News* even commented on Kate’s appearance in death as “still handsome. . . it looked as if a smile lingered around the prettily formed mouth.”²⁰

The accounts of Mamie were particularly unkind in part because of her association and intimacies with Dunne. The paper mocked Mamie’s embarrassed response to Dunne’s declaration that although he took “liberties” with her, he had no intention of getting engaged to her, noting, “so she can blush.”²¹

Dunne’s actions of running away from the house rather than helping Mamie and Kate were perceived as cowardly and cost him his reputation. He was ultimately forced to resign from his political association. One example of the *Jersey City News*’s attitude toward Dunne was a brief editorial statement that “Arthur Stocker in the midst of his homicidal rage took one look at John E. Dunne and decided the fellow was not worth killing.”²²

The *Jersey City News*’s portrayal of Stocker is not as sympathetic as one might expect based on their pronouncements and portrayals of Kate and Mamie. It was clear in their reporting that the

¹⁸ “Goaded to Kill. Arthur Stocker’s Story of His Wife’s Shameless Infidelity in Her Own Home.”

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “Dunne’s Disgrace: Won’t Talk about the Stocker Tragedy but Is All Broke Up,” *Jersey City News*, January 30, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-01-30/ed-1/seq-1/>.

²¹ “Words of Fire: Splendid Addresses of Judge Hoffman and Mr. Winfield in the Stocker Trial,” *Jersey City News*, June 16, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-06-16/ed-1/seq-1/>.

²² No title, *Jersey City News*, June 15, 1892, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-06-15/ed-1/seq-2/>

sentiment of the public was with him, noting Odd Fellows club members fundraising on his behalf: “the treasurer, has received over \$1,000 for the Stocker fund. The money is to be employed in defraying the expenses of Stocker, who shot and killed his unfaithful spouse on the Heights. Steuben Lodge, of which he was a member, will pay any excess over the amount that has been collected.”²³

When Stocker was arraigned the morning of Jan 29, the paper noted that “he appeared cool and collected,” glancing around the court room with “half smile on his face.”

“He is a man apparently of thirty years. He is about 5 feet 8 inches high, and wore in court a semi-working suit, and a long, seedy brown overcoat. He has piercing black eyes, close cropped black hair and a long black mustache, curling at the ends. His forehead is high, and only the prominent cheek bones and thinness of his face would prevent his being termed good looking.”²⁴

Stocker contended throughout that he was driven to the murder by Kate and her flagrant infidelity. Echoing the editorial statement about Kate deserving her fate, the *Jersey City News* stated:

A strong sentiment is being aroused in favor of the murderer, who is said by a who all know him to be a steady, hardworking man. His friends, who were aware of the character borne by the dead wife, hesitate to say aught against her now that she is dead, but are not slow to declare that her misdeeds were the direct incentive of the

²³ “Independent Order of Odd Fellows,” *Jersey City News*, May 21, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-05-21/ed-1/seq-3/>.

²⁴ “Goaded to Murder: A Tragic Aftermath of the John E. Dunne Ball.” The “Words of Fire” article on June 16 changes one of the details of his appearance when it mentioned Arthur’s “twinkling blue eyes.”

murder, and that her end, though swift and terrible, was but a natural result of the disregard she showed for her marriage vows.²⁵

The paper details that the prevailing belief was that Kate married Stocker to “shield for her own misdeeds,” because she had been pregnant by another man. It also noted allegations that Kate had arranged for male friends to beat Arthur.²⁶ Among his contentions in opening the defense, Stocker’s attorney Salinger maintained that Kate was the “victim of a loathsome disease,” which Stocker and their daughter had subsequently contracted. Stocker’s later testimony was that he and Kate had separated and two or three weeks after they reconciled he found he had become “diseased” and knew she was the cause. He said they separated again and she would have lived with him again but was ashamed of having the disease and giving it to him.²⁷

Stocker’s Version

In his testimony, Stocker said that he and Kate had been rather happily married but then separated. She started to go around with other men, including Arthur O’Neill, the man she was seen frequently dancing with at the ball (O’Neill, the son of the former mayor of Hoboken, ignored his subpoena, and was in Washington, DC, with his dying father at the time of the trial).²⁸

Stocker’s version of the events of the day aligned with the others’ testimony about the ball and comings and goings at 90 Zabriskie. But he claimed that first Kate had been in the bedroom with Dunne and Bremner, and at one point she said how their activities reminded her of how life had been in younger days, “kissing and hugging and loving.” He said when Mamie and Dunne

²⁵ “Dunne’s Disgrace,” *Jersey City News*, January 30, 1892, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-01-30/ed-1/seq-4/>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Presumably “loathsome” refers to a venereal disease. “Goaded to Kill. Arthur Stocker’s Story of His Wife’s Shameless Infidelity in Her Own Home.”

²⁸ “Words of Fire.”

came out, he then walked past and saw Kate and Bremner in the bedroom. He went upstairs and then out and claimed that when he came back he saw Kate and Bremner against a wall and that “their actions were such that I don’t remember what I did beyond going upstairs.”²⁹

Asked by his other attorney, Hoffman, what he saw, the newspaper reported that “Stocker, trembling with excitement, stood upon his feet and excitedly exclaimed: ‘I’ll give my life before I’ll speak the word. I want to spare my little one the disgrace.’” The prosecutor told him to sit, and that “we have had enough of this dramatic effort.” Stocker’s lawyer responded that as his witness “he shall tell his story however he pleases.”³⁰

The paper then says he was persuaded to tell what he saw but that testimony was not shared. The language used by the newspaper and shared by witnesses used by the newspaper suggests that Stocker found his wife and Bremner having intercourse. One of the police officers at the station after Stocker’s arrest said Stocker told him “they were going too far. The four of them were rolling in the bedroom together” and that he had shot Mamie because she was the person who had led Kate astray.³¹

Stocker maintained that after seeing the shocking scene he remembered nothing, only that he knew he went upstairs and knew nothing else until his arrest. His testimony contradicts the other witnesses who said Bremner had left just as Arthur was returning. Based on the witness accounts, the incident in the room was followed by Stocker going upstairs, getting his coat and going out, meeting Bremner on his way back in and getting in the argument with Kate that precipitated the shooting. Stocker’s version places Bremner inside the house when he returned and that he went up to the bedroom a second time, presumably to get the gun.

²⁹ “Goaded to Kill. Arthur Stocker’s Story of His Wife’s Shameless Infidelity in Her Own Home.”

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ “Words of Fire: Splendid Addresses of Judge Hoffman and Mr. Winfield in the Stocker Trial.”

Unless Bremner and the others were lying about his leaving, Stocker's account does not make sense.

<p>GOADED TO KILL.</p> <p>—</p> <p>Arthur Stocker's Story of His Wife's Shame- less Infidelity In Her Own Home.</p> <p>—</p> <p>He and Her Mother Wit- nessed Her Misconduct With George Bremner.</p> <p>—</p> <p>THEN ALL WAS A BLANK</p> <p>—</p> <p>He Has No Recollection of Get- ting the Pistol, Shooting Her, or Pursuing Dunne.</p> <p>—</p> <p>TWO INFAMOUS WRETCHES.</p> <p>—</p> <p>"The Great John E." Swears He Is a Coward and a Blackguard— Sensations in Court.</p>	<p>turned. He sat down for five minutes, and then the quarrel began. It was a quarter before twelve o'clock when Stocker came in the last time. It was ten minutes past twelve when he fired the first shot; I am not positive as to the time. Mrs. Stocker was standing by the dining room door with him when he drew the pistol. She fled to the parlor through the folding doors."</p> <p>At this point Lawyer Salinger and the witness could not understand each other as to the location of the occupants of the room and Prosecutor Winfield said:—"Max, you and the witness are all tangled up."</p> <p>"The trouble about the matter is," retorted Salinger, "that I haven't been training this witness." He then asked witness to leave the stand and look at the plans of the house on the easel near by. After some unimportant evidence was given, George Bremner was called.</p> <p>BREMNER'S ADMISSIONS.</p> <p>—</p> <p>A Horrible Morning Orgy—Out of the Room With the Women.</p> <p>—</p> <p>Bremner looked nervous and his beardless face was flushed. Every one in the court room looked intently at him and all expected racy developments. Bremner said it was fifteen minutes before five when he met Mrs. Tierney's party at the ball.</p> <p>"I had a lady friend there," he said, "and after I took her home I returned to the ball. It was then that I met the party. They were at a table. I shook hands all around and then went away to greet other friends. I returned to the table and I had one dance with Mrs. Stocker. It was a waltz."</p> <p>The preceding witnesses had all sworn positively that Bremner and Mrs. Stocker had not danced together. Witness then related the story of going home with Mrs. Stocker and being invited into the house by Mrs. Tierney.</p> <p>"She rang a bell soon afterward and awakened Stocker. Her husband and her son then came downstairs and had</p>
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Headlines for the coverage of Stockers testimony in the June 14, 1892, *Jersey City News* as featured in *Chronicling America*

In her testimony, Mrs. Tierney had detailed the Stockers' troubled marriage and said that Stocker constantly threatened to physically harm Kate. Mrs. Tierney let him stay in their house during their separation because Stocker begged, cried, and said that if she made him leave "he would shoot Katie in the street." He had also told Kate that if she left him "I will fix you so that you won't live with another man."³² Mamie affirmed that Arthur had threatened Kate as well. The

³² "Stocker's Ordeal: On Trial for Murder of His Pretty Wife After the Dunne Ball."

coroner had noted there were bruises and abrasions on Kate's body,³³ but Arthur denied knowing where these had come from.

Final Summations

In their final summations before turning the case over to jury, both sides delivered passionate arguments. Hoffman said the jury should reject any argument that Arthur is a "butcher and a liar" and to not commit "judicial murder" by sending Arthur, who was "irresponsible" for Kate's murder, to his death. The responsibility lay with ". . . the complaisant, unnatural mother, the guilty participating sister and the two paramours, Dunne and Bremner." Hoffman asked the male jury to put themselves in Arthur's place:

But the law has Stocker in its clutches for it and seeks to kill him, who had heard his wife pointed out with lewd remarks. Think of this heart-broken man with his bowed head, ruined hearth-stone, and disgraced daughter, and think of your own pure wives and unpolluted beds, and say whether Arthur Stocker should be killed. Forbid it, forbid it.³⁴

Hoffman continued with a rousing speech, at one point bringing the courtroom to applause. He discounted Richard White's account that Stocker had told him about buying bullets that morning as no one was able to determine where and when they had been purchased.³⁵ He emphasized the bad characters and behavior of Kate and Mamie. Calling back to Dunne's initial testimony that Kate and Mamie had changed into "wrappers" when

³³ "Goaded to Kill. Arthur Stocker's Story of His Wife's Shameless Infidelity in Her Own Home."

³⁴ "Words of Fire: Splendid Addresses of Judge Hoffman and Mr. Winfield in the Stocker Trial."

³⁵ White had said at Stocker's hearing and trial that Stocker told him he had purchased the cartridges for the gun that morning. See, "I Guess I'm Gone," and "Goaded to Kill."

they arrived home, Hoffman noted that the change into this “loose” clothing “was not for comfort, but for convenience,” implying a plan to commit immoral acts.³⁶

Winfield, the attorney for the prosecution, rejected the victim blaming, saying “Whatever faults Catherine Stocker may have had she had a right to live. Whatever had been in her habits it did not lie in the province of that man who had sworn to protect her to take her life.” He pointed out that all evidence was that Stocker was having a good time with their company that morning and that his treatment of Bremner at the door did not sound like that of a man who had just seen Bremner with his wife in a compromising position.³⁷

Finally, Judge Werts addressed the jury, stating that the question is not so much of whether Stocker was guilty of murder, but whether it was first or second degree—was there malice aforethought or was it a crime of passion. He noted the issue of timing—Bremner left at 11:45 but the shooting occurred between 12:10 and 12:15—and the question of when Stocker got the gun and why.

Jury deliberations took a little more than two hours, after which the verdict of guilty of second-degree murder and recommendation Stocker not be sentenced to death were announced. The paper noted that if sentenced to prison, the term would be between 5 and 20 years, but the Court of Pardons could reduce it.³⁸ The *Jersey City News* reporter asserted that he learned that initially six

³⁶ Words of Fire.” Kate and Mamie changing into “loose wrappers” comes from testimony given by John Dunne at the inquest (see “John E. Dunne’s Story”) and at the trial, (see “Goaded to Kill”). A wrapper is not a robe, but rather a dress like garment that was for wearing around the house. After a night in a cumbersome and restrictive ball gown, it’s possible Mamie and Kate might have wanted to be more comfortable. For more about wrappers, see <https://www.mdhistory.org/if-clothes-could-talk-the-social-history-of-the-tea-gown/>. For an example of an 1890s wrapper from historical newspaper advertisements, see image on this page from the *Omaha Daily Bee*, April 10, 1892, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1892-04-10/ed-1/seq-5/>.

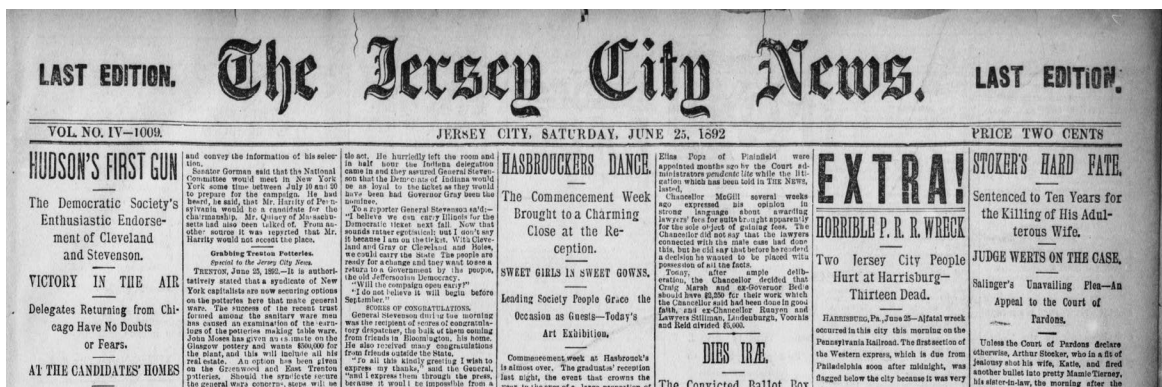
³⁷ “Words of Fire: Splendid Addresses of Judge Hoffman and Mr. Winfield in the Stocker Trial.”

³⁸ EXTRA! Second Degree. The Jury in the Stocker Trial Finds a Compromise Verdict,” *Jersey City News*, June 16, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress* <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-06-16/ed-1/seq-5/>

of the jurors had wanted to convict of first-degree murder and six were torn between acquitting and second, so the verdict was a compromise.³⁹

On June 25, Judge Werts sentenced Arthur Stocker to ten years, seven with good behavior. This was more than expected by his attorneys and the public, and his lawyer said that the defense was hampered by nonappearance of witnesses who ran off rather than be mixed up in the case (including Arthur O'Neill). His lawyers maintained that Stocker was insane when he committed this crime and his sentence should be the minimum under the law.

Werts noted he was guided by what was presented and that it was clear the jury felt there were extenuating circumstances. Taking everything into consideration, Arthur would be “confined at hard labor in the State Prison for a term of ten years and on the other indictment for assault and battery on Mamie Tierney, you will serve one year, both terms to run concurrently. Stocker groaned and cried, having believed he wouldn’t get a harsh sentence.” The last line of the article says that the Court of Pardons will be petitioned on his behalf.⁴⁰



The June 25, 1892, *Jersey City News* announcing Stocker’s (misspelled as “Stoker”) ten year sentence. From *Chronicling America*.

³⁹ “Stoker Was Brave. He Waited To Learn His Fate with a Smile on His Lips,” *Jersey City News*, June 17, 1892 (last edition), *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Lib. of Congress, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-06-17/ed-1/seq-1/>

⁴⁰ “Stoker’s Hard Fate,” *Jersey City News*, 25 June 1892, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Lib. of Congress, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-06-25/ed-1/seq-1/>.

Post Conviction

After the trial, Stocker appeared in the *Jersey City News* less frequently, such as noting when he went to prison in Trenton in its July 8, 1892, issue. After that, one other item in January 1893 shared that Arthur had petitioned the court that his mother get custody of his daughter rather than Mrs. Tierney, who he maintained was not a proper parent.⁴¹

The final piece of news about Stocker came on December 20, 1893, almost two years after the murder, with the headline reading:

STOCKER PAROLED. He Had Shot His Wife After the John E. Dunn Ball—Other Cases Acted On.⁴²

A petition for Stocker's parole had indeed made it through the Court of Pardons. In a cruel irony for the victims, the governor who had final authority over the parole was George Theodore Werts, whose initial sentence had shocked Stocker's defenders. In the time since the trial, Werts was elected governor of New Jersey. It is not clear how or why his thinking had changed regarding Stocker's case.

Although the article is short, Stocker was given a paragraph that included the summary that Stocker had come home and found Dunne and Bremner "carousing" with Kate and Mamie and that the men had "fled leaving the women to Stocker's mercy." Given its previous editorializing about the victims, it is surprising that the paper did not comment further, but the case had faded from memory and the *Jersey City News* had moved on—as early as September 1892 another spousal murder in Jersey City was compared to the Stocker case due to the roles of infidelity and

⁴¹ "Stocker and His Child," *Jersey City News*. January 13, 1893, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1893-01-13/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁴² "Stocker Paroled: He Had Shot His Wife After the John E. Dunn Ball—Other Cases Acted On," *Jersey City News* December 20, 1893, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1893-12-20/ed-1/seq-1/>.

alcohol.⁴³ After his release, Stocker returned to his work as a tinsmith, sending letters to Governor Werts monthly sharing his location as a condition of his parole.⁴⁴

After Stocker's conviction, the *Jersey City News* continued to offer sarcastic comments on John Dunne. In its coverage of his being forced to resign from his association it noted under the headline "Dunne Up For Ever" that "The John E. Dunne Association is no more. It died as quickly as the woman Kate Stocker died when the coward Dunne fled and left her to the mercy of an outraged husband."⁴⁵ On August 26, the paper noted that the Dunne Association had changed its name, saying that in the "Process of Purification begun in the Local Democracy," the new name was the "Andrew Jackson club."⁴⁶ Both he and Bremner's name appeared in another article about illicit sexual activities unrelated to the Stocker case entirely but noted that the witness observed "some fellow behaving in a manner only authorized by the social code of Messrs. John E. Dunn[e] and George Bremner." It is also worth noting that despite the testimony that George Bremner had left before the shooting started, he was referred to as having "fled" with Dunne.⁴⁷

⁴³ The Hayner-Adams case as it was called had several similarities to Stocker. Prosecutor Winfield, who served the same capacity in this case as in the Stocker trial compared Hayner's behavior in killing his wife and her lover to Stocker's in his final summation. See, "It Was a Rum Tragedy," *Jersey City News*, Sept. 9, 1892, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*,

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-09-09/ed-1/seq-2/> and "Kinney Hayner's Fate," *Jersey City News*, December 5, 1892, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-12-05/ed-1/seq-1/>

⁴⁴ Arthur Stocker's letters to Governor Werts can be found in New Jersey State Archives Department of State, Secretary of State's Office, Paroles Granted by the Court of Pardons, 1891-1905, Box 7, Arthur Stocker Folder.

⁴⁵ "Dunne Up For Forever: The Ignoble 'Standard Bearer' Compelled by the Association to Resign," *Jersey City News*, July 15, 1892, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*,

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-07-15/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁴⁶ "Exit the Dunes," *Jersey City News*, August 26, 1892, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*,

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-08-26/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁴⁷ "Depraving the Girls," *Jersey City News*, June 17, 1892, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1892-06-17/ed-1/seq-1/>. "Stocker Paroled."

The *Evening Journal's* Coverage

The murder was reported in newspapers across the United States, generally briefly.⁴⁸ Another Jersey City paper, the *Evening Journal* (which later became the *Jersey Journal*) also dedicated significant space to the Stocker murder. The *Evening Journal* has also been digitized and is available by subscription via Newsbank and GenealogyBank. It is not as detailed or frequent in its reporting of developments—Emily De Mora's death is not mentioned, for example. As the trial got underway, it summarized, while occasionally offering some longer quotes. An interesting comparison is how both papers elide Arthur's words about what he saw Bremner and Kate doing that drove him insane—the *Evening Journal* says that he found them in "criminal contiguity" while the *Jersey City News* uses "direct criminal acts."⁴⁹ The *Evening Journal's* headlines on top of and within their stories are not as frequent or as sensational as the *Jersey City News's*.⁵⁰

The *Evening Journal* did not editorialize as brazenly as the *Jersey City News*—there is no statement comparable to the *Jersey City News's* contention that Kate and Mamie "deserved" to be shot, wounded, and killed—although it does depict Arthur as the wronged husband of an unfaithful wife and supported his parole. In its report of Arthur's lodge raising funds to defend him, the paper

⁴⁸ In *Chronicling America*, the author found items and articles on the murder in, for example, the Carson City (NV) *Morning Appeal*, *The Omaha Daily Bee*, *New York Herald*, and *New York Tribune*—reporting on the murder, the sentencing, or the parole.

⁴⁹ "Criminal Contiguity" can be found in "Temporary Insanity." *Evening Journal*, June 15, 1892, via Newsbank/GenealogyBank. "Direct Criminal Acts" is in one of the "in story" headlines in the *Jersey City News* "Goaded to Kill," article of June 15, 1892 (another headline refers to an orgy).

⁵⁰ A comparison of the June 15, 1892 headlines show the difference: The *Jersey City News* as seen above says "GOADED TO KILL, Arthur Stocker's Story of His Wife's Shameless Infidelity in Her Own Home. He and Her Mother Witnessed Her Misconduct With George Bremner. THEN ALL WAS A BLANK. He Has No Recollection of Getting the Pistol, Shooting Her, Or Pursuing Dunne. TWO INFAMOUS WRETCHES." "The "Great John E." Swears He is Coward and a Blackguard—Sensations in Court." The *Evening Journal* headline for the same day says, "TEMPORARY INSANITY. Outline of the Defence in the Stocker Murder Trial. THE ACCUSED TESTIFIES. A Detailed History of the Family From His Marriage Down to and Including the Day in Which the Woman Was Killed."

noted that the details that might come out in trial were awaited with interest as it was likely to be scandalous and that men in the fourth ward will have names tarnished and “be forever disgraced.” Once Arthur was paroled, the *Evening Journal* notes that it is partly the result of their work on his behalf, claiming they said he should have been freed all along.⁵¹

Conclusion

The details of the Stocker case make for fascinating, shocking, saddening, and disappointing reading. It is clear that although *the Jersey City News* expressed an outrage at Arthur Stocker’s actions on January 28, 1892, it sympathized with and exonerated him. Although reporting on the fundraising efforts of the Odd Fellows is more factual, stating that Kate and Mamie deserved what happened and conveying their opinions of the victims via the testimony confirmed their belief that Kate and Mamie were bad women. Their disparagement of John E. Dunne and George Bremner, particularly their repetition that the latter had run away when testimony showed he had left prior to the shooting, shows their determination to make Stocker’s story a narrative of justice served and wrongdoers punished.

In reading this story around 130 years later, there is a sense of relief that mores have changed so that this story can be read in a different way. The digitization of newspapers allows for stories such as that of Katie Stocker to be discovered, whether by searching for terms appearing in the coverage of her story or by the serendipity of coming across a particular issue or page. For ephemeral products of their times, it is a huge boon to research that some newspaper runs survive more or less intact and have gone through the processes that make

⁵¹ “Arthur Stocker Free,” *Evening Journal*, December 20, 1893, p. 6. Available via Newsbank/GenealogyBank. In “Stocker Grateful,” *Evening Journal*, December 28, 1893, they say he’s expressed his gratitude to the paper for its efforts on his behalf.

them easily searched and found online. The number of stories that may not have survived due to newspapers being lost is sobering.

With the exception of an article about the Stocker murder written by John White, a descendant of Richard White, who arrested Stocker,⁵² there has not been attention given to this case beyond a blurb or two on a true crime website.⁵³ In sharing this story more widely, the author draws from other recent works on true crime murder in New Jersey, especially Peter Wosh's and Patricia Schall's *Murder on the Mountain*, which stands in stark contrast to Kate Stocker's story, in that the likely innocent spouse, Margaret Meierhofer, was executed for killing her husband, while Stocker was a husband who committed his crime in front of witnesses and was ultimately paroled early into his prison term.⁵⁴

Postscript

The author attempted some tracing to find out what happened to the people involved in the case. Arthur appears to have remarried a woman named Anna according to the 1920 census and continued working as a tinsmith.⁵⁵ Mamie married Gottfried Walbaum, a man of some notoriety known in racing and gambling circles (and 28 years Mamie's senior); although notice of her wedding in the *Jersey City News* did not note her connection to the case it did mention that

⁵² John White, "Political Scandal in the Jersey City Heights in 1892," *Hudson Roots: The Newsletter of the Hudson County Genealogical & Historical Society*. Feb. 18, 2017, <https://hudsoncountynjgenealogy.org/hudsonroots/2017/02/18/political-scandal-in-the-jersey-city-heights-in-1892/>.

⁵³ Comtesse Despair, "Shot Her on the Street!" *Garrettdom* (blog), November 17, 2013, <http://decidedlygrim.net/garrettdom/?p=271>

⁵⁴ Peter J. Wosh and Patricia L. Schall, *Murder on the Mountain: Crime, Passion, and Punishment in Gilded Age New Jersey* (New Brunswick, Newark, Camden, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press), 2022. Other recent works featuring newspaper treatments of notorious New Jersey crimes include *Killing the Poormaster: A Saga of Poverty, Corruption, and Murder in the Great Depression*, by Holly Metz and *Blood & Ink: The Scandalous Jazz Age Double Murder that Hooked America on True Crime*, by Joe Pompeo, which focused on the infamous Hall-Mills murder.

⁵⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 1920. New Jersey, Hudson County, Arthur Stocker, accessed through MyHeritage.com, <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-10133-158764364/arthur-stocker-in-1920-united-states-federal-census>

Gottfried had been married twice before and the second marriage had ended in divorce only two months previously.⁵⁶

In May 2024, the author came across an article in the *New York Times* about a scholar's "rediscovery" of a "long-forgotten slave narrative" that he found while searching Trove, an Australian Newspaper Database similar to Chronicling America. The author read with interest and perhaps some disappointment. Like many stories of "discoveries," this one acknowledged the database—and in the comments the article's author praised how online historical newspapers "have opened up new avenues of discovery," but did not acknowledge the labor and need for funding that allows them to be present and accessible for such discoveries to be made from half a world away.⁵⁷

In writing this article, the author felt it was important to both acknowledge and feature the labor around how the *Jersey City News* came to be online so that the details of the Stocker case are available for anyone to read. It is the reflection of decades of labor and the fortunate fact that there were, at one time, physical copies of the *Jersey City News* that were available to be microfilmed and that the National Endowment for the Humanities acquired and provided funding for this work.

More generally, the author appreciates how being able to access digitized newspapers online has advantages over working with microfilm, particularly due to the serendipitous nature of coming across a story and being able to quickly find more. However, the author

⁵⁶ "Gottfried Walbaum Weds," *Jersey City News*, 03 June 1899, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87068097/1899-06-03/ed-1/seq-4/> The connection confirming that this was the same Mary Tierney can be found in "Walbaum Marries Again," *New-York tribune*, 03 June 1899, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Lib. of Congress*, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1899-06-03/ed-1/seq-5/>

⁵⁷ Jennifer Schuessler, "A Furious Forgotten Slave Narrative Resurfaces After Nearly 170 Years," *New York Times*, May 23, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/23/arts/john-jacobs-slavery-discovery.html>. The comment quote is from Schuessler's response to commenter "New York Forever" on May 24, 2024.

noted that even navigating digitized papers is sometimes complicated. Common names can make searching challenging, and smaller items, like the comment about Kate and Mamie deserving to get shot, may be missed. Also, the papers often got names or details wrong, which confuses the narrative.

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