

Fact-Checking the Past: When “an intelligent Irish woman” Reports a Crime

Christine D. Myers, Independent Scholar
ACIS Midwest Regional Conference, 17 October 2025
<http://cdmyers.info/FactChecking.pdf>



INFANTICIDE.

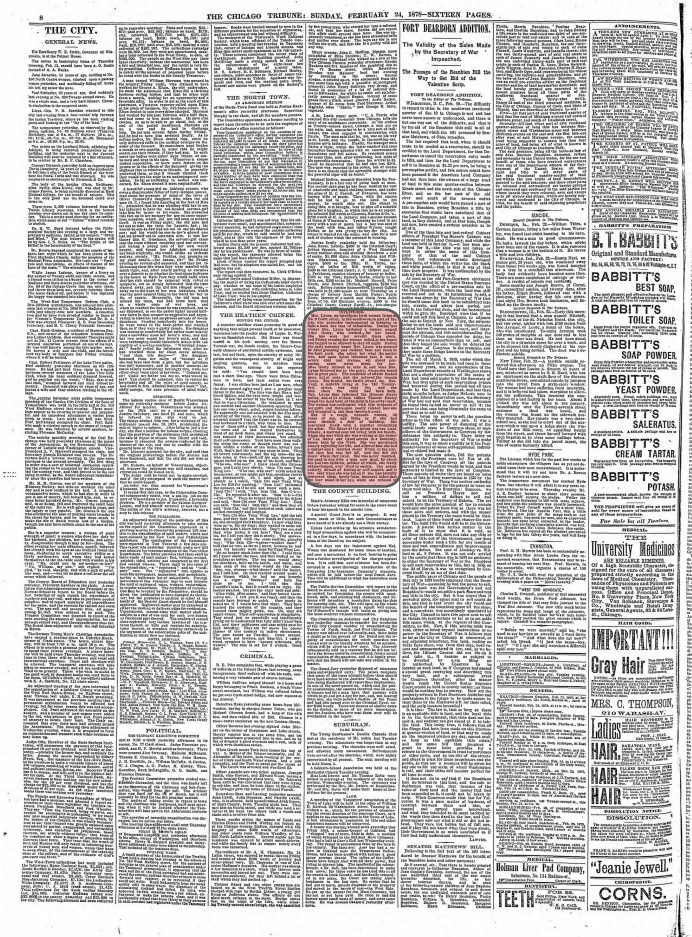
Mrs. Lyons, an intelligent Irish woman living at No. 9 Court street, in the southwestern part of the city, was yesterday instrumental in bringing to light a bona fide case of infanticide. During last winter Mrs. Lyons harbored a woman named Alice Geary, who worked for her board. She has seen her several times since, and Friday evening the woman called at her house and begged to be allowed to stay all night. During the early morning hours Mrs. Lyons was aroused by Alice groaning and rushing back and forth in the back yard. She asked her what the matter was, and upon being informed that it was a severe cold and cramps, set about preparing some warm drink for her. Miss Geary refused to take it, and later Mrs. Lyons followed her to the privy, where she found her in great pain. The condition of affairs flashed upon her at once, and she accused the woman Geary. She denied, but finally owned up. Mrs. Vogt, a midwife living at No. 742 Twenty-first street, was sent for, and she told them the child had been born. Mrs. Lyons then informed the Hinman Street police, and at 11 o'clock Officer Thomas Dooley found the dead body of the child in the privy-vault. The woman was confronted with this evidence of her guilt, and thereupon coolly related how she had strangled it, and then thrown it away. She is a rough, uncouth woman, 40 years of age, and looks as if she had gone through a deal of hardship. She conversed freely with a reporter concerning the affair. The father of the infant was one Luke Brophy, a married man not living with his family, whom she met while she was working at the corner of Van Buren and Canal streets in a boarding-house kept by one Ward. She was questioned closely regarding her life, and allowed that she had a mother and a married sister living in the city, but they had cast her off, and she did not know where they lived. She was never married, but used to live with a man now dead, by whom she had two children, neither of which, she freely acknowledged, ever lived to suckle. She seems entirely devoid of feeling or self-respect, and it was only when she was asked if she had actually murdered three newly-born innocent babes that the tear stood in her eye, while she refused to answer.

The Chicago Daily Tribune, Sunday, February 24, 1878, p. 8.

The paper was 16 pages in length.

Other items on the page include:

- An assortment of city notices
- An article about 'The Heathen Chinees'
- An article about Fort Dearborn
- An article about a suicide in Dubuque
- Several advertisements



<https://www.Loc.Gov/item/sn84031492/?St=calendar&year=1878>



The Inter Ocean Archive

Chicago, Illinois
1872-1914

Share

OverviewBrowseNearby Papers

Browse

Year · 43	Month · 12	Date · 24	
1877	January	Feb 1, 1878, Fri	← Select date Search within February
1878	February	Feb 2, 1878, Sat	
1879	March	Feb 4, 1878, Mon	
1880	April	Feb 5, 1878, Tue	
1881	May	Feb 6, 1878, Wed	
1882	June	Feb 7, 1878, Thu	
1883	July	Feb 8, 1878, Fri	
1884	August	Feb 9, 1878, Sat	
1885	September	Feb 11, 1878, Mon	
1886	October	Feb 12, 1878, Tue	
1887	November	Feb 13, 1878, Wed	
1888	December	Feb 14, 1878, Thu	
1889		Feb 15, 1878, Fri	
1890		Feb 16, 1878, Sat	
1891		Feb 18, 1878, Mon	
1892		Feb 19, 1878, Tue	

The Inter Ocean

Tue, Feb 26, 1878 · Page 8

From the West Side Police Court: Alice Geary, infanticide, held to the Criminal Court without bail. James Donahue and Pat and John Cahill, \$1,500 each to the 27th for robbing John Crowe, of Iowa. Thomas Garvey, John Massey, Caspar Whithy, for criminally assaulting Bertha Lieber, \$1,500 each to March 2. W. S. Parkhurst, larceny as bailee, to the 27th. George and Josie Eichorn, obtaining money under false pretenses, to the 6th.

The Inter Ocean

Wed, Feb 27, 1878 · Page 8

At 7 o'clock yesterday morning James O'Neill, one of Pinkerton's watchmen, found the body of a full grown male infant in rear of Sprague, Warner & Co.'s premises, 7 and 9 Randolph street. An inquest was held later, at which it was decided that the child was born alive, but died from exposure and cruel treatment. It is a clear case of infanticide, and the police have it in hand.

<https://www.Newspapers.Com/paper/the-inter-ocean/909/>



“Mrs. Lyons...
living at No. 9
Court street, in the
southwestern part
of the city.”

<https://www.davidrumsey.com/>

Chicago Streets

Avenue - Title applied mostly to streets running North and South. There are exceptions.

Blvd - Title given to streets where trucks over 5 tons are not permitted.

Court - Title given to short roadway.

Parkway - Title given to street that ends at a park.

Place - Title given to street running the 1/2 block between streets.

Street - Title applied mostly to streets running East and West. There are exceptions.

Court Pl., 135N 1 to 740W. Named after the old Court House and was an alley running to the County Building in the Loop. Centre Pl., St., Waldo Pl.

-Court Pl., 70th Pl. 300 to 350W.

-Court ?., Pierce Ave. 4100 to 4150W.

-Court St., 108th Pl., 1600 to 1699W.

-Court St., Now alley East of Halsted from Monroe St. to Arcade Pl.

<http://chsmedia.Org/househistory/namechanges/start.pdf>



Women with the surname Lyons, who were born in Ireland, that were recorded in the 1880 U.S. Census.

https://www.Familysearch.Org/en/wiki/united_states_census

12th Census of Population 1900: Chicago. Census 1900

#004113714 › Item 2

NAMES INFORMATION

SAVE RECORD

Image 145 of 225

View item 2 by itself

5				Sarah	Daughter	W	7 July 1891	8											
6				Fred	son	W	1891	79											
7	742	11	27	Gotthard	Head	W	1841	58	W	32				Germany	Germany	Germany	1872		
8				Lena	Wife	W	7 July 1840	59	W	32	5	1		Germany	Germany	Germany	1876		
9				Susie	Daughter	W	7 July 1873	25						Ireland	Germany	Germany	1896		

Gotthard, Lena, and Susie Vogt living at 742 W. 21st Street in 1900

https://www.Familysearch.Org/en/wiki/united_states_census

Virchow Julius, carp. r. 333 N. Paulina
 Virdux Eloff, engineer, r. 964 Dearborn
 Virgil John, real est. r. 117 W. Jackson
 Virgo Wm. G. painter, r. 871 S. Halsted
 Virmond John, baker, bds. 163 W. Randolph
 Virmond Joseph, baker 163 W. Randolph
 Visenhal Michael, bartndr. 24 Block
 Viskey Julius, lab. r. 164 Jane
 Viskocil John, lab. r. es. Butler nr. 31st
 Visser Edward, printer, r. 476 W. 14th
 Visser Hotse T. carp. r. 426 W. 15th
 Visser Jacob, carp. r. 537 W. 14th
 Visser Jacob, foreman I. C. shops, r. 13 13th pl.
 Visser Reize, carp. r. 767 W. 14th
 Vit John, mason, r. 638 S. Union
 Vite John, clk. 776 W. VanBuren, r. 393 Ogden av
 Vite Louis, lab. r. 128 Hinman
 Vitens Henry, truckman, r. 213 Dayton
 Vithift Henry, carp. r. 560 Loomis
 Vitt Adolph, plasterer, r. 44 Samuel
 Vitt Anna, wid. Michael, r. 785 S. Jefferson
 Vitt August, mason, r. 13 Ruble
 Vitt Daniel, carp. r. 785 S. Jefferson
 Vitt John, carp. r. W. 15th ne. cor. Paulina
 Vivian John H. jewelry 22d ne. cor. Wabash av. r.
 28 Langley av.
 Vivian Thomas, blksmith. 56 Curtis, r. 16 N. May
 Vizents William, lab. bds. 545 Blue Island av.
 Vlasak Joseph, tailor 603 Centre av. r. 95 Fisk
 Vlasati John, lab. r. 685 S. Jefferson

Vogt Alfred, r. 198 N. Desplaines
 Vogt Catherine, wid. Philip, r. rear Napoleon pl.
 Vogt Charles, plasterer, r. rear 107 Mohawk
 Vogt C. A. H. builder, r. 263 29th
 Vogt Francis J. cigarmkr. r. 38th nr. Wallace
 Vogt Frederick, blksmith. r. 256 North av.
 Vogt Frederick, plasterer, r. 144 W. Huron
 Vogt Frederick, shoemkr. 247 Augusta
 Vogt George, restaurant 167 Madison
 Vogt Gotthard, carp. r. 742 W. 21st
 Vogt Henry, carp. r. 598 N. Dearborn
 Vogt Henry, driver, r. 9 Napoleon pl.
 Vogt Henry, gardener, r. 409 Orchard
 Vogt Henry, switchman, r. 94 N. Washtenaw av.
 Vogt Herman, carp. r. 263 29th
 Vogt Joseph, saloon 41 Chicago av.
 Vogt Lena, midwife, r. 742 W. 21st
 Vogt Louis, lockmkr. r. 9 Archer av.
 Vogt Mary, milliner 381 N. Wells

H. M. WILMARTH & BRO.
Gas Fixtures,
AND GAS FITTING,
191 and 193 State Street,
CHICAGO.

LOUIS LLOYD & CO. ADVERTISING AGENTS,
 93 Washington Street. Insert Advertisements
 in all the CHICAGO DAILY NEWSPAPERS, at Publishers' Lowest Rates.

Gotthard Vogt,
 carpenter
 &
 Lena Vogt, midwife
 whose address is
 r. 742 W. 21st

<https://www.Chicagoancestors.Org/content/1875-chicago-directory>



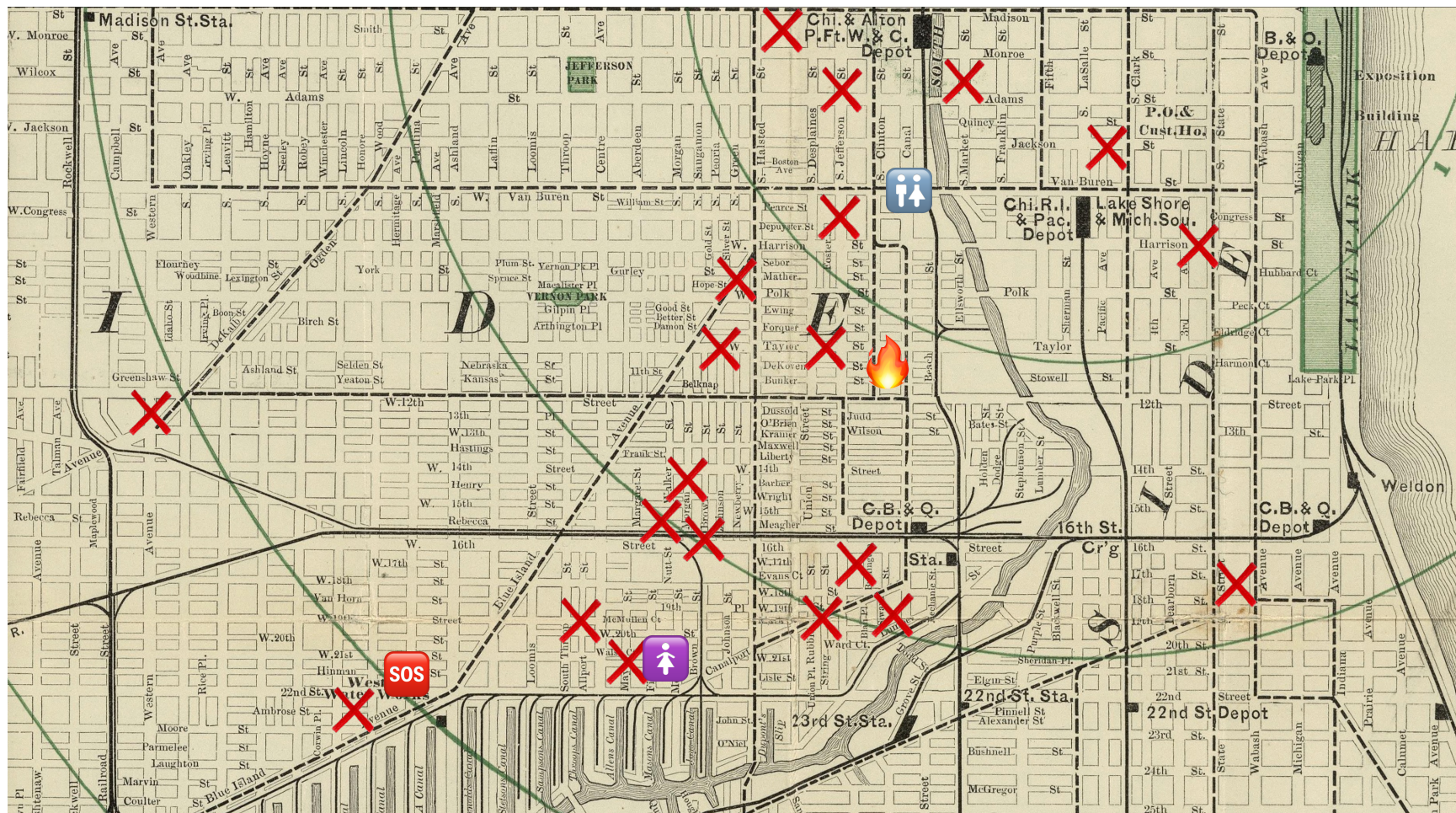
Summary [\[edit \]](#)

Description	English: Chicago's Hinman Street police station, engraving from 1889. The station house stood at the corner of Hinman and Paulina streets and housed the 23rd Precinct.
Date	1889
Source	Northern Illinois University, Digital Collections and Collaborative Projects.
Author	F. J. Schulte & Company



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Digital Library

https://commons.Wikimedia.Org/wiki/file:hinman_street_station.png



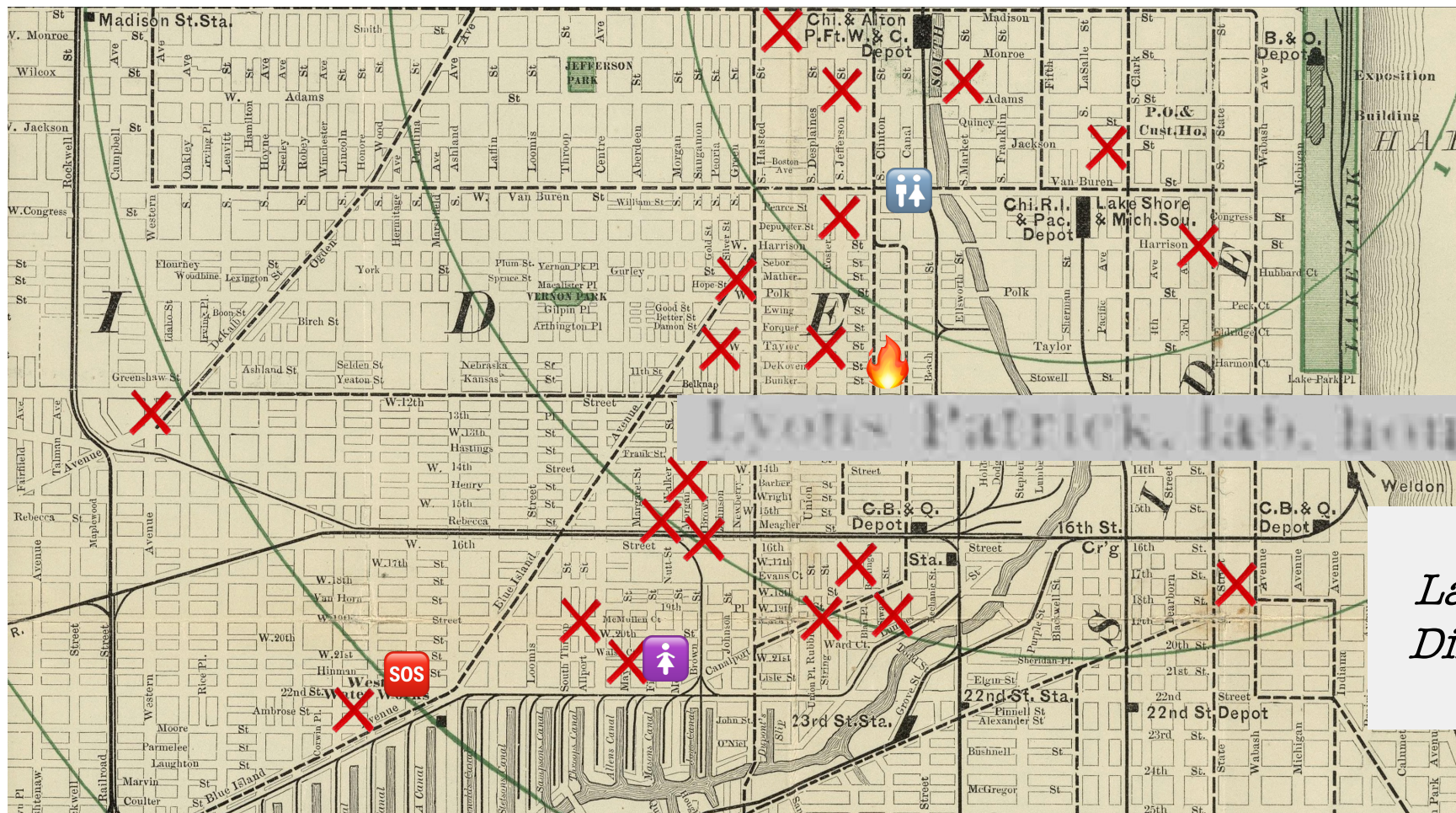
= Boarding House



= Hinman Street Station



= Midwife



Lyons Patrick, lab. house 9 Court

*Lakeside Annual
Directory (1878)*



= Boarding House



= Hinman Street Station



= Midwife

Coroner Diezsch yesterday held an inquest upon the babe slaughtered by Alice Geary. A verdict of manslaughter was returned, and the unfortunate woman was held without bail to the Grand Jury. An inquest was held upon Paul Schwindler, an old

Tuesday, Feb. 26, 1878, p. 8

Alice Geary's crime has set a bad example. Yesterday morning a full-grown boy baby, that had evidently been choked to death immediately after its birth, was found in the rear of Sprague, Warner & Co.'s grocery on Wabash avenue. The Coroner held an inquest, and a verdict of infanticide was returned. The guilty mother has not yet been discovered.

Chicago Tribune

Wednesday, Feb. 27, 1878, p. 8

<https://www.Loc.Gov/item/sn84031492/?St=calendar&year=1878>

HOMICIDE IN CHICAGO 1870-1930

THE HISTORY OF HOMICIDE IN CHICAGO, 1870-1930, BASED ON OVER 11,000 CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT HOMICIDE REPORTS.

SEARCH THE DATABASE

ABOUT THIS WEBSITE

AutoSave OFF

Data+Set++Suspected+of+Infanticide

Search (Cmd + Ctrl + U)

Home Insert Draw Page Layout Formulas Data Review View

Screenshot

Arial 10 A⁺ A⁻

B I U

General

Conditional Formatting

Format as Table

Cell Styles

Insert

Delete

Format

Σ

Sort & Filter

Find & Select

Add-ins

Comments

Share

B28

fx Alice Geary

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
28	1878-02-24	Alice Geary	Tribune / Coroner Inquest	40	Servant	Domestic servant, admitted to strangling infant in privy. / "on the 23rd of Feb 1878 by suffocation caused by being thrown in the privy vault in the reat at 9 Court St. by its mother Alice Geary... we the jury find said Alice Geary guilty of infanticide and recommend the Coroner hold her to the Grand Jury"	

Find

Q Geary

<https://homicide.northwestern.edu/>

Male Child Geary

Vital • Illinois, Deaths and Burials, 1749-1999

SAVEEDITSHARE



Name	Male Child Geary
Sex	Male
Mother's Name	Alice Geary
Mother's Sex	Female
Event Type	Death
Event Date	23 Feb 1878
Event Place	Chicago, Cook, Illinois, United States
Source Details	Inq 3645 pg. 572

Tree

ATTACH TO TREE

Similar Records

No similar records were found.

Document Information

Collection Information

[Illinois, Deaths and Burials, 1749-1999](#)

Male Child Geary's Parents and Siblings

[Alice Geary](#)

Mother

F

OPEN ALL

Alice Geary, about 40 years of age, an out-cast, is a prisoner at Hinman Street Station, charged with infanticide. She accuses Luke Brophy, a married man, living near the corner of Union and Van Buren streets, with being the author of her misery.

The Inter-Ocean

Monday, Feb. 25, 1878, p. 8

From the West Side Police Court: Alice Geary, infanticide, held to the Criminal Court without bail. James Donahue and Pat and John Cahill, \$1,500 each to the 27th for robbing John Crowe, of Iowa. Thomas Garvey, John Massey.

Tuesday, Feb. 26, 1878, p. 8

Alice Geary, the infanticide, whose crime was reported two weeks ago, was yesterday booked at the West Side for murder.

Tuesday, Mar. 7, 1878, p. 8

<https://www.Newspapers.Com/paper/the-inter-ocean/909/>

LICENSED.

The County Clerk issued the following marriage licenses yesterday:

John Bailey and Liza J. Curran.

John Jefferson Waldron and Ellen May Woodson.

Paul A. Foster and Lizzie Fisher.

Peter Klein and Dora Dorman.

John Keller and Theresa A. Hartmann.

Nils Holmquist and Louise Hendrickson.

Luke Brophy and Katie Nolan.

Henry Muhl and Wilhelmine Caroline Meyer.

Gustav F. Lindblad and Minnie Carlson.

James F. Nolan and Mary McCarthy.

Edward J. Martin and Amanda Anderson.

The Inter-Ocean

Tuesday, Jul. 23, 1878, p. 8

<https://www.Newspapers.Com/paper/the-inter-ocean/909/>



ILLINOIS SECRETARY *of* STATE
ALEXI GIANNOULIAS

Search Ilsos.gov...



Driver's Licenses & ID Cards ▾

Vehicles, Plates & Titles ▾

Business Services ▾

More Services ▾

[Departments](#) > [Archives](#) > [Databases](#) > Illinois Statewide Marriage Index

Illinois Statewide Marriage Index Illinois State Archives

Search Criteria: **Brophy, Luke**

Groom	Bride	Date	Volume	Page	Lic No.	County
BROPHY, LUKE	NOLAN, KATIE	1878-07-22	000		00036540	COOK

[Return to Search](#)

<https://apps.ilsos.gov/isavital/marriagesrch.jsp>

BROPHY—Luke Brophy, 55 years, at No. 106 Ewing street, of pneumonia, Oct. 25.

Saturday, Oct. 28, 1882, p. 8

PROBATE.

BEFORE JUDGE KNICKERBOCKER.

Will—Estate of William F. Barrentner: will proven and letters test issued to Nicholas Hardekopf, ind bond in \$2,400 apprd.

Guardianship—Estate of Daniel Tracey et al, minors: letters of guardnsp issued to Margaret A. Tracey, bond in \$500 apprd.

Administrations—Estate of John Naper; letters of admu issued to Augusta C. D. Naper, bond in \$10,000 apprd—Estate of Luke Brophy; letters of admu issued to Catherine Brophy, bond in \$200 apprd—Estate of Dora A. Weddell; letters of admu issued to J. Robson Weddell, bond in \$2,000 apprd.

The Inter-Ocean

Saturday, Dec. 16, 1882, p. 9

<https://www.Newspapers.Com/paper/the-inter-ocean/909/>

If she was 40 in 1878, then she was born in about 1838.

“a mother and a married sister living in the city, but they had cast her off”

“never married, but used to live with a man now dead”

Alice Geary (b. 1835) who married Thomas Long and had 11 children

Alice (b. 1837) who married James Geary and lived in Hyde Park

<https://www.Newspapers.Com/paper/the-inter-ocean/909/>

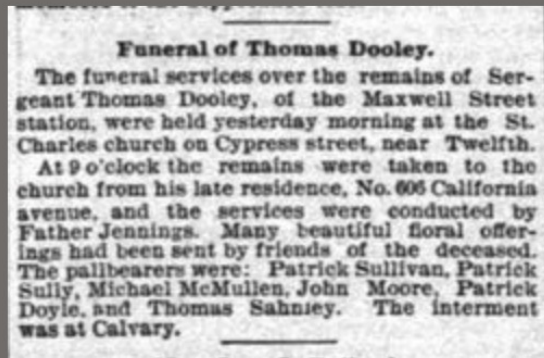


Photo added by [Lacey K.](#)

 Add Photos

 Request Photo

SGT Thomas Dooley

BIRTH

1842

County Limerick, Ireland

DEATH

Nov 1893 (aged 50–51)

Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, USA

BURIAL

[Calvary Catholic Cemetery](#)

Evanston, Cook County, Illinois, USA  [Add to Map](#)

MEMORIAL ID

186462631 · [View Source](#)

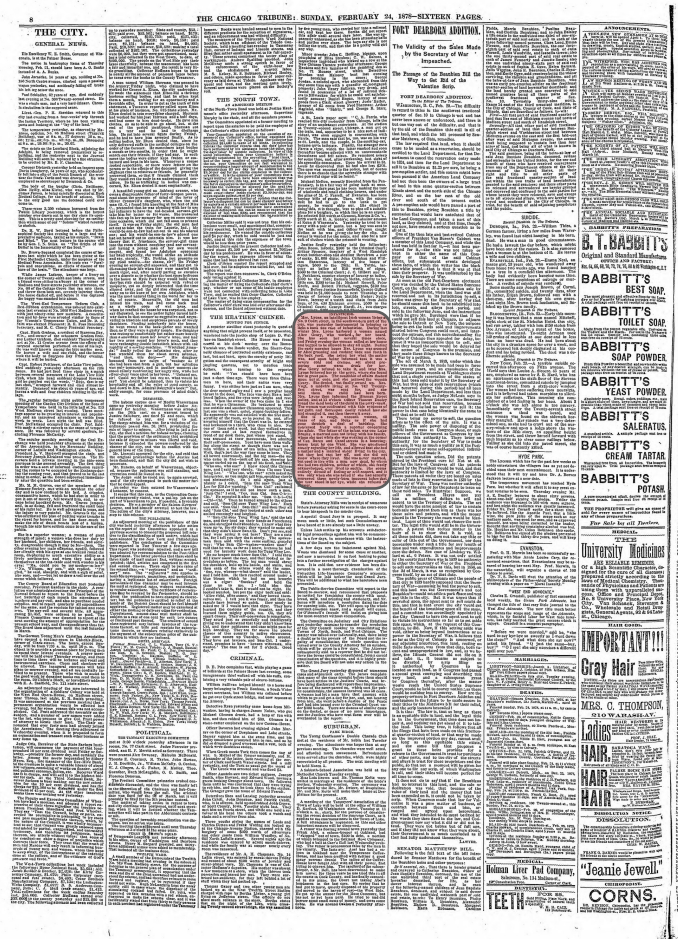
SHARE

 SAVE TO

SUGGEST EDITS



<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/105009/calvary-catholic-cemetery>



On the night of Saturday, Feb. 23, 1878,
someone calling herself Alice Geary
gave birth to a baby boy who died.

The police were summoned, the baby's mother was
arrested, a coroner's inquest was held, and
manslaughter charges were filed.

There was no trial held, presumably because the
baby's mother plead guilty.

<https://www.Loc.Gov/item/sn84031492/?St=calendar&year=1878>

Additional Sources Cited:

1871 Chicago Directory - <https://www.chicagoancestors.org/content/1871-chicago-directory>

1878 Lakeside Annual Directory -

<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/798295-chicago-city-directories-1878>

February Temperature Rankings for Chicago -

https://www.weather.gov/lot/february_temperature_rankings_chicago

Illinois, Chicago, Catholic Church Records, 1833-1925 -

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/collection/1452409>

Handout available at <http://cdmyers.info/FactCheckingHandout.pdf>