William W. Anderson Impact Upon Denver's Legal and Journalism History

On January 12, 1900 attorney William W. Anderson walked down the 18 steps from his home at 2329 North Eliot Street to catch the trolley to his office in the Cooper Building downtown. Shortly before noon he engaged in a confrontation with the publishers of the *Denver Post* that set off a series of events which tested the very foundation of the judicial system in Denver and made headlines in every Colorado mining camp and news from San Francisco to New York. William Anderson in a brawl with Harry Tammen and Frederick Bonfils over the legal representation of Colorado cannibal Alfred Packer, pulled out his revolver and shot both of them in what was claimed as self-defense. The final turn of this story is that Anderson was acquitted of assault while Harry Tammen and three officers of the court were found guilty of jury tampering as the Colorado Bar Association called for disbarment of Denver District Court Judge Mullins. This saga played out over a period of three years in front page news, public discourse and intense legal wrangling among the best attorneys and judges in the city.

Harry H. Tammen and Frederick G. Bonfils were ruthless in their pursuit of advertising and circulation in the highly competitive newspaper business in Denver. They viciously attacked and spread false rumors of business men who refused to advertise in their newspaper and it was alleged they engaged in blackmail. Sensationalism or yellow journalism was their formula for expanding circulation with no holds barred on exaggeration, fabrication and sordid tales of life and death.

Anderson's first trial ended in April 1901 with a hung jury, then as the second trial began in summer of 1901 rumors began that Bonfils and Tammen had corrupted the Denver court of Judge Mullins by attempting to bribe for conviction William Anderson's jury. Then six jurors filed complaints that officers of the court, the Police Magistrate, the Bailiff and the Fire Warden from North Denver attempted to bribe them with promises of jobs and cash up to \$1,000 and when that failed there were threats of job losses and intimidation saying they would never get another job in Denver.

Upon returning to Denver from a mountain vacation, Judge Mullins insisted on conducting his own investigation of the charges in his court. He then conducted a show trial wherein all, including Harry Tammen were absolved of their guilt by claiming there was no law against attempted bribery in Colorado. This blew the lid off the scandal as the Colorado Bar Association called for Mullins disbarment in his last days in office in September 1901. Newspaper headlines and editorials raged with indignation calling for convictions and the purification of the entire justice system in Denver.

Succeeding Mullins, District Court Judge Johnson called for a Grand Jury investigation and was blocked and delayed along the way by Harry Tammen's lawyers. The Colorado Supreme Court ruled in early November 1901 the Grand Jury could be empaneled. While this was going on, ten days later on November 18, 1901 William W. Anderson was acquitted in his third trial of all charges of assault. After more and lengthy delaying

tactics by Tammen's lawyers, the Grand Jury concluded its investigation in early April 1903 paving the path for a jury trial.

Trials were scheduled to start on Monday April 27, 1903. Then shocking the entire city, on the Saturday before, Harry Tammen, the Bailiff and the Fire Warden all plead guilty to embracery, jury tampering. The Police Magistrate entered a plea of no contest in order to avoid disbarment. The reason they rushed to confessed, the *Denver Times* said was to avoid a jury trial which would cast light on other officials and the *Denver Post* which were engaged in this conspiracy to convict William Anderson.

William W. Anderson continued his law practice and after moving away for several years, returned to purchase the home at 2329 Eliot in 1915 where he passed away in 1930. Alfred Packer was paroled by Governor Thomas in January 1901 and died in Littleton in 1907. Harry Tammen and Frederick Bonfils continued to publish the *Denver Post* and build it into a major voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire, but not without continued controversy. Harry Tammens' beautiful mansion is located at 1061 Humboldt.

William W. Anderson's home at 2329 Eliot was built in 1888 in the original Town of Highlands then known as a safe community above the drunkenness and smoke filled city below. Trolley car 34 ran past the home headed west to Sloans Lake or east to 15th Street. Architecturally the home is described as upper-middle class Queen Anne style and is located high on a hill over-looking Denver. When built in 1888 it was surrounded by open lots not built upon until after the Silver Crash of 1893. The Anderson family came to occupy the home several years prior to 1900 and remained during the trial years, then moved away only to return in 1915 to buy 2329 Eliot where William Anderson died January 19, 1930. Today the home is the last remaining example of this style Queen Anne in the Jefferson Park neighborhood. With its history and architecture it deserves Preservation.

Denver was fortunate in 1900 to have competing newspapers. In particular, without the *Denver Times* this story of jury tampering and revelations of unethical journalism practices by the *Denver Post* would not have been revealed, with the consequence a miscarriage of justice would have occurred.

In today's world the *Denver Times* should be awarded a post-humus Pulitzer Prize for investigative journalism.

Book Reviews

You must read Laura R. Hinsdale's book reviews if you hope to keep abreast of the times. They will be found on page 6 of the magazine.

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DENVER, COLORADO, SATURDAY EVENENG, APRIL 25, 1903.—20 PAGES

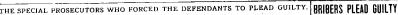
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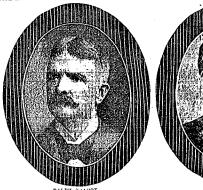
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MEMBERS OF THE ANDERSON JURY





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Extraction of the American Commercial Extraction

Six of the Jurymen Meet and Will File Information Monday. Judge Thomas, D. J. Sadlier and Bailiff Schroeder Mentioned by Jurors as Having Attempted to Bribe.

TWO REMARKABLE VIEWS OF DENVER