

## **Henry “Teddy” Frank (1840/1841-1881)**

Henry “Teddy” Frank was born in Pennsylvania in 1840 or 1841 and lived there until the Civil War began in 1861. He joined the Pennsylvania Volunteer Reserve Corps and fought in the battles of Manassas, Fredericksburg, and Second Bull Run. Despite all the fighting, he was never seriously hurt. He served until 1864. During this time, Teddy married his first wife, and they had a daughter, but his wife passed away around 1865.

After the war, he moved to Bloomington with his family. Teddy was the oldest of seven children, though one brother died in the Civil War. He remarried in Bloomington, but they didn’t have any children. Teddy got a job as a jailer at the McLean County Jail.

On October 1, 1881, Teddy’s day started like any other. At 6:30 p.m., he arrived at the jail to prepare dinner for 22 prisoners. By this time, Bloomington had grown from a small frontier town to a place with almost 20,000 people. The jail, which was built for only 10 prisoners, was overcrowded. That evening, a prisoner named Charles Pierce, who had been convicted of horse theft, claimed he was sick and needed to leave his cell. Teddy, believing Pierce, took him to a room used for female prisoners. When Pierce still seemed ill, Teddy returned him to his cell. As Teddy bent down to lock the door, Pierce grabbed Teddy’s revolver from his pocket and shot him in the shoulder. They fought over the gun, and Pierce shot Teddy two more times. Sheriff Joseph Ator, who was eating nearby, heard the shots and rushed to the scene. Pierce, thinking the sheriff had a gun, surrendered. Sheriff Ator locked Pierce in his cell and moved his cellmate to another one.

Teddy died ten minutes later from his injuries. The day before, Pierce had joked about killing Teddy and escaping, but Teddy had laughed it off. After hearing about Teddy’s death, a mob of about 5,000 people gathered outside the jail, angry at the murder of the kind jailer. They beat the jail with tools like sledgehammers and crowbars. They may also have been upset about a recent court ruling giving a new trial to Pierce’s cellmate, Patsy Devine. The mob tried to break into the jail. The McLean County State’s Attorney arrived and tried to talk some sense into the mob. Even the first department came with the intention to spray water on the mob, but they found that their hoses had been cut.

The 21 other prisoners at the jail, who Teddy had treated well, signed a statement praising him. They called him kind and generous, and they all mourned his death. The mob eventually broke into the jail, found Pierce, and dragged him outside. Pierce begged for a moment to pray, but the mob didn’t listen. They hung him from a tree across from the jail. It was later revealed that the mob had also planned to hang Devine, but he had been secretly moved to another town for his safety.

The next day, newspapers called Teddy’s death the “Crimson Crime” and painted him as a martyr. They described the murder as senseless and pointed out how kind and honest Teddy had been. Meanwhile, people began to question the justice system in Bloomington. Some believed that the city had too many lawyers who would do anything to get criminals off the hook, even when they were guilty. These lawyers were seen as part of the reason why Teddy’s murder had happened.

Teddy was buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery, and the whole town mourned his death. Many people spoke about how honest and good-hearted he had been. His funeral was well-attended, and even the fire department’s bell tolled in his honor. The sheriff’s wife, who considered him part of the family, was deeply saddened.