

The Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York,

*A. W. Brown,
Manager,
Davenport, Iowa,
Ernest East*

Peoria, Ill.,

July 30, 1923

*and
H. Bartholomew,
District Managers,
Lehmann Bldg.*

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
McClure Newspaper Syndicate,
New York City.

Dear Madam:

I read yesterday one of your excellent articles on Abraham Lincoln, "Why Men Loved Lincoln," appearing in the Peoria Star. Reference to Duff Armstrong and the "Moonlight Murder" trial aroused my interest since in 1909 when a reporter on the Star I was fortunate enough to interview a man who witnessed the killing of "Press" (James Preston) Metzger by Duff (William) Armstrong and Jim Henry Norris.

This story may add a little light to your knowledge of Lincoln history and I pass it on to you for what it may be worth.

Enclosed is a letter written on Feb. 8, 1909, by A. E. Morpew, a highly respected citizen of Havana, Ill., to the Editor of the Peoria Star. Editor Eugene F. Baldwin, himself a great student of Lincoln history, handed me the letter.

The evening of its receipt I visited Henry Sutton at his home in East Peoria. It appears that I noted his address on the letter, later erasing this portion.

Mr. Sutton was 68 years old. He was not willing to talk. He and the Armstrong boys had been reared together and he said he wanted to do nothing which would impair the friendship of the families. I persisted and put to him leading questions. I asked him, in substance, if Duff Armstrong was equally guilty with Jim Henry Norris, convicted and sentenced to serve seven years for complicity in the killing of Metzger.

"Yes, and worse," was Sutton's reply.

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I asked him if he saw struck by Armstrong the blow that killed Metzger. He said he did.

"Was the moon shining?" I asked him in substance.

Sutton hesitated, then nodded his head and said "Yes."

This article was published in the Peoria Star on Sunday morning next following Feb. 8. It was headed "Lincoln's Doctored Almanac."

Appended to this story was a dispatch from our correspondent at Virginia, Ill., or appearing as such. I am of the opinion that I wrote this "dispatch" after telephonic conversation with persons at Beardstown, including the editor of the Beardstown daily.

In this the version was presented that Lincoln did not introduce the almanac in evidence but employed it collateral in his address to the jury. It was stated that Mr. Lincoln asked the clerk of the court to bring an almanac. The alleged doctored almanac was then produced. The editor, I forget his name, at Beardstown, said local story was that Lincoln had left the almanac in the clerk's office.

Armstrong was a member of Co. E, 85th Illinois Volunteer Infantry. Report is that "Aunt Hanner" Armstrong asked President Lincoln to discharge him because all of her sons were away from home in the army. Lincoln is said to have ordered his discharge, to have written Armstrong a note saying his mother needed him, and to have attached a twenty dollar bill to the note. Another story is that Armstrong deserted and Lincoln pardoned him.

I do not know whether Sutton or Morpew is living.

Please return Morpew letter at your convenience,
Yours very truly,

Ernest East

COPY

Havana, Ill. Feb. 8, 1909

Editor Peoria Star
Peoria, Ills.

Having read a number of so called accounts of the killing of Mitzker by Duff Armstrong and noticing the difference in the statements, I will say if you will send a reporter to interview Mr. Henry Sutton of east Peoria you will get a true statement from him he was an eye witness to the affair and immediately left the Country to avoid being a witness. Mr. Sutton is well known to me and what he tells will be reliable.

Respectfully

E. A. Morphew
Havana Ills.