

IOWA HISTORY



(Courtesy Library of Congress)

All For the Love of Money

Cora Smith's friends noticed a change in her. She appeared to be under a great deal of distress. It seemed she was constantly in a worrisome state. What was wrong with her? She admitted she was having trouble sleeping nights.

Cora lived in Omaha, Nebraska, in early 1895 but had moved there only recently from Des Moines, Iowa, when her acquaintances noticed her unusual demeanor. The mystery behind Cora's behavior was soon to come out. It was a sad tale of greed and murder.

Mike Smith, Cora's dad, had been murdered in May 1894. Before his death by poison in May 1894 someone had attempted to kill him with a shot to the head. The bullet passed through his head behind his eyes—blinding him. Mike suspected an acquaintance of his, but no one could prove those suspicions. The police suspected a plot by family members, but Mike refused to consider such a terrible possibility.

However, police arrested Mike's wife for the murder. She was charged and convicted of the crime. She was sent to the Iowa state penitentiary where she was serving a life sentence. Cora moved to Omaha but kept in touch with her mother through frequent letters.

In one of those letters that passed between mother and daughter, Cora admitted that she had poisoned her dad and implicated an aunt. She also indicated that her mother's conviction for a crime she had not committed was "preying upon her mind" until she had become "almost crazed." Unknown to Cora, detectives were intercepting her letters; and they exposed her scheme to the authorities.

Cora turned herself in and said she was ready to return to Des Moines in order to liberate her mother. She admitted she and her aunt had poisoned her dad in order to collect his life insurance--\$6000. However, the insurance company refused to pay.

Source

"Confesses to Parricide," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Mar 29, 1895.

"Cora Smith is Indicted," *Bystander*, Apr 19, 1895.

"Sent Up for Life," *Bystander*, Apr 26, 1895.

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