

The Black Sheep of the Family

By RICIGS member Kathy Elliott

I always thought of my family as being law abiding and respectable but I found out otherwise last fall when I was researching my great-great grandmother's family, the Pike's. While at the Waukegan, Illinois Historical Society looking for information on her parents and siblings we came across the following article from the Waukegan Daily Sun dated August 18, 1916. At first I thought this wasn't my relative because my Daniel Pike died in the 1880's, but in reading further I determined this was his grandson and a "notorious police character" as well. This just proves you never know who you might be related to. Following is the article I found:

MEETS DEATH ON ELECTRIC NEAR BEACH

Dan Pike, a Notorious Police Character and an Unfortunate Man, Meets Death. Walks in Front of Limited Train at Zion; is Killed.

Daniel Pike is dead. This notorious police character was fatally injured about 1 o'clock this afternoon when struck by a limited train on the Chicago, North Shore & Milwaukee Electric line near Zion and died on the operation table at the Jane McAlister hospital at 1:30 p.m.

The scion of one of the pioneer families of Waukegan, Pike was known in every nook and corner of the city. For years his faults and short-comings had been paraded before the public when the police interfered with his plans and with the manner in which he derived the pleasures of life.

In one sense of the word Dan Pike could be termed a "boomer." He worked – when whisky and beer were not available. His chief occupation in life was carting beer from the beer depots to saloons and private residences. When sober and out of funds he fished as a means of livelihood.

With two other men Pike went to the roadhouse at the state line this morning. He imbibed quite freely, it is said, and when he met his death he is declared to have been anything but sober. Two pint bottles of whiskey were found in his trousers pockets when he was carried into the hospital and he carried the stuff which had ruined his career to his death – for neither bottle had been broken by the impact. Drink caused his downfall and drink indirectly caused his death.

It is recalled that Pike was arrested several years ago when fire attacked the Clarke homestead on North Sheridan Road and when Pike was assisting, or pretending to assist, the firemen. He was seen to slip valuables into his pockets and when taken to the police station and searched it was found his presence at the fire had been for no good purpose.

He was rushed by ambulance to the hospital but died on the operating table just five minutes after he was carried into the institution. Pike's identity was not established until his lifeless body had been carried into the morgue at the undertaking parlors of Conrad & Wetzel.

"Don't you know who he was?" was asked. "Why it's Danny Pike," spoke up Deputy Coroner Edward Conrad and Assistant Police Chief Thomas Tyrrell.

Pike leaves an aged mother, Mrs. D. W. Pike and one sister, Mrs. Treynor, to mourn his demise. He lived with his sister at 220 Oak Street.