

### COLLETTSVILLE FATHER TAKES LIVES OF EIGHT CHILDREN; COMMITS SUICIDE

Lenoir.—Eight children were killed last Wednesday night by their father in their home in Collettsville, ten miles north of Lenoir.

The father, 36-year-old Ralph Gragg, then set fire to the house and killed himself with a shotgun.

Gragg was injured in an accident last November in a sawmill and had been unable to work since.

The children ranged from 15 to three years of age. Their mother had been living away from home for the last month.

Neighbors told Sheriff George Greer the house "lit up all of a sudden" about eight o'clock the night of the incident. Shortly afterwards the bodies of Gragg and his eight children were found. Gragg's body was found in a hall beside a five-gallon can and a shotgun.

The coroner, Marshall Kincaid, said there would be no inquest. He said the skulls of the children had been fractured.

#### Mother Views Bodies

The mother, in her thirties, viewed the charred bodies of her children—six girls and two boys—in horror. All of them were burned beyond recognition. Officers, in identifying them, went mostly by their sizes.

Her voice broken with sobs, Mrs. Gragg told Coroner Kincaid that "he threatened to do this before—that's why I had to leave there. I was afraid of him." She said her husband had bought kerosene about two months ago, apparently laying his plans for the tragedy at that time, the coroner reported.

The coroner reconstructed the events of the night from stories given by neighbors in the Blue Ridge Mountain community. One neighbor, Wesley Setzer, lives only about 200 yards from the site where the one and one-half story dwelling stood in a valley.

#### Neighbors Heard Shouts

Setzer told the coroner that he had heard shouts and muffled noises in the Gragg home but he thought perhaps they were caused by children. The coroner quoted other neighbors as saying the children were "terribly scared" of the father and often were punished.

The coroner said that Gragg apparently had used a club, an axe or some similar object to knock several of the children into unconsciousness before shooting them.

The coroner said Gragg "went from room to room, killing the children and closing each door behind him." He added that after the two smaller children had been killed, the father went out the back door with a lighted flashlight in his hand.

#### Then All Was Quiet

"Neighbors said he stood on the front porch for a few minutes and then the flashlight went out," Kincaid went on. "Just a minute or two later, the house was covered by the flash of fire."

There were no outcries from the blazing building, indicating all the trapped victims were unconscious.

Mass funeral services were conducted for Gragg and the eight children at Mt. View Baptist church on the Lenoir-Collettsville road at 11 o'clock Friday morning. Burial was in the church cemetery.

The remains were contained in two adult size caskets with the remains of four children in one and the remains of the father and four other children in the second.

### County Agents Have Free Building Plans

Farmers who want practical help with building problems can obtain free blueprints and other assistance from county farm and home agents of the State College Extension Service.

This is pointed out by H. M. Ellis, extension agricultural engineer, who says many Tar Heel citizens may not know about this service.

Some 500 sets of plans for practically all types of farm buildings, including dwellings, are available. Upon request, the agents will show actual construction drawings and assist the farmer in choosing the type of building best suited to his needs.

Types of structures included in the list are buildings for poultry, swine, sheep, beef cattle, dairy cattle, tobacco, grain, and sweet potatoes. In the prepara-

tion of each type, specialists in that field were called upon for help in the functional design. Agricultural engineers then prepared the drawings with the tim-

of making each building as convenient, economical, and attractive as possible.

The plans include blueprints for some 30 or more types of

farm homes. All were prepared with the help of home management specialists.

Ellis says about 12,000 plans of all types were distributed last

year. Persons desiring copies of any of the drawings may obtain them from the local farm agent or home agent, whose offices are located in the county seat.

**TRAINS COLLIDE IN TUNNEL**  
Livingston, Mont.—One freight train rammed into another, head-on, in a tunnel near here and the impact derailed more

than a half-dozen cars, causing one of the worst wrecks in the history of the 4,000-foot tunnel under the Bozeman Hill. No one was hurt.



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