**The Pocasset Murder – Selected Newspaper Articles**

**compiled by Roger W. Smith and Stephen Best**

The following are transcripts of newspaper articles about the so called Pocasset murder of Edith Burgess Freeman by her father, Charles F. Freeman, in 1879.

The murder was widely covered nationwide. Selected articles about the case have been transcribed here. It should be noted that many newspapers copied accounts that had been published elsewhere.

A separate document contains a transcript of a series of key articles that appeared sequentially in the *Falmouth* (MA) *Enterprise* on June 8, July 12, July 15, and July 19, 1938.

I have transcribed the articles that follow. They were contemporaneous with the case (with the exception of one retrospective article published in 1885) and are ordered chronologically.

*Roger W. Smith*

*March 2021*

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Indianapolis News*, 6 May 1879[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**AN AWFUL CRIME**

**Freeman’s Murder of His Child in Pocasset**

The Religious Frenzy That Led Him to Kill His Little Child—And the Mother to Consent to the Sacrifice—Their Fellow-Worshippers Approving of the Deed and Making Themselves Accessories After the Face—The Freemans in Jail.

(Boston Dispatch New York Sun.)

The somewhat meager details already published of the murder of little Edith Freeman, on Thursday morning, gave only faint and somewhat incorrect impressions of the act itself, and of the influences and circumstances that made it possible. Even the local authorities, when their attention was first called to the crime, believed that Charles F. Freeman, the father, when he raised the bed clothes and thrust a knife to the heart of his sleeping child, must have been irresponsible for what he did; but the developments of today show that if Freeman was insane, so were his wife and twenty other men and women of hitherto irreproachable character, although more or less ignorant, for legally the wife and mother was equally the murderer of the child and the other villagers referred to are accessories after the fact. Dr. Smith, the medical examiner of the county, is inclined to think that the peculiar religious sect who believe with the Second Adventists in the immediate personal coming of Christ, and who also, as distinguished from many people of that faith, believe in revelations and miracles and signs, have, in the murder of Edith Freeman, reached the climax toward which their views naturally developed. It is the same fanaticism, he says, which leads the Hindoos to throw themselves under the car of Juggernaut, the savages to crucify the flesh, and which led the Aztecs to make human sacrifices to their gods. That is, in his opinion, and in that of others, the kind of insanity which Mr. Freeman and his wife and friends are afflicted with, and the civil authorities of the county are also of the opinion that it is not the kind of insanity which the law takes notice of. In this section which is that part of Cape Cod known as Sandwich, among the educated and respectable the cruelty and unnaturalness of the crime are overshadowed by the influence that made it possible for a father and mother to commit it, and for others quietly to assent thereto. The story of the death of Edith Freeman should be told with these particular influences in view.

Freeman had been a convert to this shade of Second Adventism about a year, and it is now certain that he believed that he was called upon to make some great sacrifice, not only to show his abiding faith, but also to mark him as specifically fitted to be the evangelist and prophet of his religion. He has hinted as much for some time to his neighbors. He himself says—and with his wife, whose faith in her husband seems to surpass even her trust in her religion, corroborates him—that the revelation came to him suddenly about two weeks ago that this sacrifice was the death of a member of his family and at his hands. His family were his wife—a tall, slender, blue-eyed woman of thirty, whom he married ten years ago—and his two daughters, Bessie, born in 1872, and Edith, two years later. It is admitted that he has been a kind husband and a loving father, and he has appeared almost to idolize little Edith; yet he tells his wife that the revelation calls upon him to sacrifice some member of his family. They pray together; they ask in their petition that so great a test of their faith may not be required of them. They seem to have talked it over as they would any matter of mutual concern. He even hinted something of it to his fellow believers, and now says that he prayed that if any life were required, his own might be that one, but as it is unquestionable that he intended to become an intolerant preacher, or, as he prefers to call it, a prophet, there is some doubt expressed as to the fervency of such a prayer, if it was made.

Freeman says that he knew that the further revelation would come that would indicate the member of his family whose death was required, and that he and his wife waited patiently to receive it. It came (to continue his story, wholly corroborated by his wife) in the dead of night Wednesday or perhaps just after midnight on Thursday morning. Then he suddenly awakened, and the revelation that he received was that his baby pet, Edith, a blue eyed, fair and brown haired girl, must be offered up as a sacrifice. He at once awoke his wife, and he told her of his commission. The maternal instinct for a time was the stronger. She had been able to talk vaguely about the loss of her children; but when she was brought face to face with it, she at first protested. Freeman says that she begged him not to do it. She pleaded—so he told Mr. Orr, who subsequently had a talk with him—with the tears streaming down her cheeks, for the life of her darling Edith. “But I talked with her,” says Freeman. “I told her that we would not risk the displeasure of God, and when I persuaded her that Edith would either be restored to us after three days or else would be translated, then she assented. She saw that it was divine command.” Freeman also says that he knelt by the bedside and prayed, while great drops of sweat stood upon his forehead, that the test of his faith might not be required. Then, as he expresses it, his soul was filled with peace and he prepared with his wife to make the sacrifice.

“I had hopes,” he said to one gentleman on the cars on Friday, “when I went to the shed to get the knife, that God would stay my hand, as He did Abraham’s as he was about to offer up Isaac but I determined if my hand was not stayed to make the sacrifice as gently as possible, so that my idol would pass away without suffering.” Mrs. Freeman, who now recalls the event without the slightest appearance of suffering, lighted a lamp and placed it on a chair by the bedside where the two daughters were sleeping. Then she leaned over Edith, who was sleeping on the outside of the bed, and lifting Bessie in her arms, took her away to her own chamber. Freeman then turning down the bed clothes, and raising little Edith’s arm so that nothing might interfere with the blow, raised the knife. “I held it a minute or two,” he said, “hoping that I should receive the call to stay my hand, but I did not.” The blade penetrated the heart, passing between the fifth and sixth ribs. The little girl opened her eyes and fixed them on their father. He says she murmured, “Oh Papa,” and that he held her to his heart until she was dead. Dr. Smith, who made an examination today of the wound, says that she could not have lived a minute. The hemorrhage was mostly internal. Then Freeman put her back upon the pillow, offered up another prayer, and, lying down beside her, went peacefully to sleep. His wife was already asleep in the adjoining chamber, with Bessie in her arms. They rose early and he went about his official duties, for he carries the mails from the depot to the village post office, he asked his religious friends to attend a meeting at his house, as he had a revelation to make, and he also urged one of the constables and a selectman to be present. About twenty persons got together in the front room of his little farm house, which is isolated in a little valley, about half a mile from the Pocasset depot, and fully that distance from any other residence. Of what occurred in that meeting, only the most vague report can be obtained. Freeman himself talks the most freely about it. He certainly preached for about half an hour, dwelling especially upon the value of the divine revelations and the necessity of strictly obeying their command. He prayed and quoted passage after passage from the scriptures, but he does not appear to have told them precisely what the revelation was until the worshippers were nearly ready to go. When he did inform them—according to the story that Miss Davis, who was present, now rather reluctantly tells—they at first would not believe it, and then he led them to the bedside and showed the dead body of his child and the wound that had caused her death. There seems to have been some slight protest at first—what it was no one will say—but Freeman told them that it was the glorious test of his and their faith; that God had required the sacrifice in order to awaken the world and to teach the doctrine that immortality is not a certainty, but a gift from God to the good. It is believed that every person at the meeting, while rejoicing that such a sacrifice was not demanded of himself, accepted Freeman’s view, and went away more than ever convinced of the truth of their special doctrine. At all events, not one of them said a word to any of the authorities about it, and thus, wittingly or unwittingly, made themselves accessories after the fact. Among those was Mrs. Swift, Mrs. Freeman’s mother, and she, like the rest, seemed persuaded that her son-in-law had worked out the divine command.

The discovery of the crime was accidental. The Miss Davis just alluded to was receiving a call in the evening from the village constable, Mr. Reddy, and upon his pressing her to explain the cause of her very sorrowful mood she told him briefly what had happened. He could not believe it, and neither could the selectman to whom he at once went; but happening to meet farmer Howard, who Reddy knew was at the meeting, Reddy asked him about it, and Howard, without the least excitement, said that Freeman had obeyed the divine command. The deputy sheriff was at once sent for, and arrested Freeman and his wife, and locked them up in the jail at Barnstable. Freeman said that he was perfectly ready to go to jail, and his wife, who seemed almost under a mesmeric influence from her husband, cheerfully went with him and the sheriff.

“My child will rise from the dead on Sunday,” said Freeman in the cars on his way to the jail. “Then will be seen the wonderful goodness of God, and then will be the beginning of the latter day.” If this is insanity, it is an insanity which afflicts Freeman’s wife, his mother-in-law and some twenty of his neighbors, for they seem to have just the same implicit confidence in little Edith’s resurrection as they do to the divine revelation which lead to her death.

The village of Pocasset, where Freeman has lived for several years, is just one of those localities where the form of worship adopted by this shade of second Adventists would flourish. All over Massachusetts in the rural towns, especially those sparsely settled, and in many places in New Hampshire and Connecticut, the sect has flourished intermittently for thirty years. It is known that for some time that free love doctrine was its especial hobby, and this is even now true of some of the thinly settled areas in northwestern Massachusetts; but it has always been some hobby or other which has furnished the devotees with an excitement that has passed for, and which many of them believe is worship. It is comparatively of recent date that the cardinal doctrine has been the reception of divine revelation, and this has not been adopted by all who believe in the immediate personal coming of Christ, but it took deep roots in and around Pocasset about a year ago. Then an itinerant, who called himself elder Brown, preached in that neighborhood, and made many converts. Frequently it developed into that sort of religious ecstasy that has been characteristic of negro revival meetings. Men and women who are sensible enough in other matters, seemed to have lost all notion of reason, and frequently of decency, while under the excitement. Only the ignorant appear to have yielded, to any considerable extent, to such influences—such men as cultivate the stony, marshy plots of ground in Pocasset, and get a scanty living thereby. No other means of excitement have been offered them, and they seem to have accepted this as a relief to their otherwise mechanical lives.

Freeman, however, is a better educated man than some of his neighbors. He was born in Vermont about thirty-three years ago, and received a fair common school education. Then he learned the trade of shoe-making, and, after serving in the army, got employment in Lynn. He was known as a steady workman, but rather opinionated and fond of an argument. He once joined a Methodist church, but until he was reached by Elder Brown’s preaching, he never seemed greatly interested in religious topics. He is said to have begun a systematic course of bible study after his conversion last year, and he certainly can quote scripture with great fluency, and has a seemingly apposite text for every doctrine that he maintains. He has led the Pocasset meetings much of the time since Elder Brown went away, and the faith of the little congregation in him has been, it is said, unbounded.

Freeman’s fellow worshippers are hard-faced, unintellectual, singularly forbidding appearing men and women. They appear as those do who have a constant hand-to-mouth struggle with existence. Those who own pieces of ground do not seem to get along much better in the world than those who live by hard labor, for the ground is very poor, and cannot be coaxed in producing very much. Such are the people who share Freeman’s fanaticism, and who could hear of the murder of a child with less excitement than they would have displayed at a birth.

The better class of people are not only shocked, but ready to see some sort of punishment inflicted, not only upon Freeman and his wife, but upon the others. The people have been somewhat scandalized by a great many peculiarities of these Second Adventists. They have frequently interrupted services in the churches and insisted that the preachers should enter into theological arguments with them. I do not learn that Freeman has ever done this, but Mrs. [Harriet] Swift,[[2]](#footnote-2) his mother-in-law, is said to have done so, once at least, as have others. It is therefore seriously under consideration to arrest two or three, at least, of the most intelligent men who attended the meeting at Freeman’s house, on a warrant charging them with being accessories after the fact.

This morning Freeman and his wife were arraigned before Justice Hopkins at Barnstable. Freeman was perfectly composed, as was his wife, when they were shown into the court room. They glanced at the justice, and then began to whisper to each other. Mrs. Freeman was neatly dressed. Freeman wore such clothes as a man in his occupation might be expected to wear. They both pleaded not guilty to the charge of murdering their child. Testimony from the deputy sheriff, Dr. Smith, Constable Reddy, and others, was offered bearing out the substance of the statement offered above, and the case was continued, the evidence not being all complete.

Little Edith’s body was placed in a coffin by kind neighbors today, and, while her father and mother languish in the Barnstable jail, tomorrow her funeral will take place from the house of Mr. [Alden] Davis, a neighbor. Freeman has announced that he wants no lawyer to defend him, but that he shall state plainly to the court why he found it necessary to take the life of his daughter. If the judge does not think the reason good, he is willing, and his wife is willing to be hanged.

Pocasset, May 5. — The following named persons will be arrested as accessories to the killing of the Freeman child: Alden P. Davis, Chas. F. Howard, Nathaniel Wing, Alvin Wing, Walter H. Wing, Phineas Gibbs, Jr., *Harriet N. Swift* [italics added] and Ann Louise Howard.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Mass.), Saturday May 3, 1879**

**A Terrible Murder**

One of the most terrible tales of crime that has been recorded for a long time comes from the village of Pocasset in the town of Sandwich. On Thursday night Charles Freeman, an Adventist, who had become greatly excited over the late revival meetings of the sect in that village, deliberately stabbed his daughter Edith, only five years of age, causing her death in a few moments. On the next afternoon he called a meeting of Adventists to his house, told those present what he had done and exhibited to them the body of the murdered child. The most incredible part of the story is, that they all agreed to keep the matter secret, and even now defend his action. The secret was at last let out by a young girl who had been present at the meeting. Freeman and his wife [Harriet Ellis Freeman] were arrested, Thursday, and taken to the jail at Barnstable, still glorifying over their deed.

He says that the Lord told him to do it, and that the child will come to life Sunday morning. Freeman says that for 36 hours it had been impressed upon him that he must kill one of his family, but he was doubtful whether it should be himself, his wife, his older girl or the little girl. Finally the Lord made it clear to him that it must be the little girl. He did not tell his wife at first. He waked up at half-past two Thursday morning, and told his wife what he was going to do. They talked it over and both agreed that it was right. They then knelt by the bed and prayed. He did not tell his wife at first because Abraham did not tell his wife when he went to sacrifice Isaac. After they had agreed to kill the child both went into the room where the two little girls were sleeping together. The man went out to the shop and procured a large sheath-knife with a long blade, singing all the way out and back. He said he never felt so happy in his life. He set the lamp in the chair and his wife stood by looking on. He turned the bedclothes down to expose the child and stabbed her in the left side. She awoke, turned toward her father, stretched up her arms and said “O father.” He took her and held her till she died, which was in about five minutes. The older girl became partially awake and the mother carried her out of the room before she knew of her sister’s death, and she does not know of it yet. Freeman then got into bed with the dead child in his arms and stayed till after daylight; then he dressed and went to the station for the mail which he carries. Meeting Alvin Wing there he asked him to notify the Second Adventists in the neighborhood of a meeting at his house at 3 o’clock that afternoon. The Adventists came, supposing it was a farewell meeting before Freeman went on his tour as preacher. In the meeting, Freeman told the whole story of killing the child, and showed the body to them all. Strange as it may seem, they all kept the matter secret and told no one after the meeting dispersed.

Thursday evening, Constable H. Seth Reading was talking with Minnie Davis, a daughter of Alvin [should be Alden] Davis, 15 years of age, who was one of the persons present at the meeting. She was in apparent distress and finally told him the whole story of the murder. It was then 10 o’clock, and it was half-past 12 when Selectman Nye, who had been notified, reached Freeman’s house, and it was 3 p. m., when the officers reached Pocasset. Contrary to general expectation, when the officers arrived on the spot Freeman made no resistance to arrest. He and his wife were taken to the Monument station and thence to Barnstable and lodged in jail. Before leaving they shook hands with their Adventist friends, Freeman saying that he had searched the Bible all through, and it would come out all right. Freeman not handcuffed, and was taken to the station in a covered carryall. During the ride, however, he was noisy, and kept saying that it would be “all right,” and, as his driver says, “sang funny pieces.” He and his wife talked freely together during the ride, and were evidently not sorry for their deed. They did not address themselves to the officers, but confined their talk wholly to themselves. Freeman says he is not insane, and all the Adventists say the same thing of him. With the exception of his talk about his deed he had every appearance of being sane and collected. Freeman is about 34 years old and his wife is about 32. He was a Methodist probationer before he became an Adventist.

On the train going to Barnstable, Freeman got on his knees on the car seat and addressed the forty passengers who were in the same car. He said God would justify him, the child, if not raised in three days, would be translated bodily to heaven. “God has come to judge the world in righteousness,” said he. He had studied the Bible three years, and seemed very familiar with all parts of it. He professed religion when twenty-one years old, but was led away by bad Christians; God had revealed that a new dispensation is near, and put on his wife and on himself the duty of awakening the world to a sense of its wickedness. He felt that God had deserted him as he did Christ on the cross and said he did not expect to be hung, he would have done the same thing to his wife or his other child. He protest [sic] that he was not insane, if he must die, he would die cheerfully. On arriving at Barnstable, he was taken quietly to the jail.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post*, Saturday, May 3, 1879**

A terrible tragedy occurred at Pocasset on Cape Cod Thursday. Charles F. Freeman of Pocasset, in a freak of religious frenzy, killed his five-year-old daughter. He then went to a prayer-meeting and told that he had done the deed “By command of the Lord, and that the Lord would raise her again.”

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Weekly Globe*, Tuesday, May 6, 1879**

**A HORRIBLE SACRIFICE.**

**A Little Child Killed by Its Own Father.**

**The Terrible Deed Done in a Religious Frenzy.**

**The Madman Bars His House and Threatens to Kill Intruders.**

On Wednesday Charles F. Freeman of Pocasset, in a freak of religious frenzy, killed his five-year-old daughter Edith. The man is a Second Adventist, and has become greatly excited during the last few days while attending a series of revival meetings. About a week ago he claimed to have received a “wonderful revelation,” and has not eaten or slept since. He says that the Lord directed him to sacrifice his little daughter, and declared that she would rise again in three days. He sent word around the village that he would make the revelation known, and offer an Orthodox sacrifice at 3 o’clock in the afternoon. A number of the Second Advent people assembled at his house. Previous to their arrival the horrible deed was performed, with cool deliberation, and accompanied with what was intended to be an impressive religious ceremony. The little one was

**Transfixed with a Knife by Her Insane Father,**

and her blood was poured out upon a table, which was improvised as an altar. Those people present at Freeman’s house in the afternoon refused to state the circumstances of the terrible affair. The madman drove every one from his house; he locked and barred the doors and windows, and being supplied with firearms, he threatened death to anyone who should interfere. Alone with his dead he went through a horrible incantation, which he said would in three days result in the “resurrection of my beloved child.” Freeman was in moderate circumstances at the time of the murder, but had been in very poor circumstances for some time previous. At the age of twenty-one he experienced religion, but says he was beat out of it by backsliding Christians. In February, 1878, he was converted to Adventism, and has been a very earnest worker and speaker for the cause since, and recognized as a leader of the Second Adventists here for over a year. Mr. and Mrs. Freeman have always lived happily together, and idolized the bright children who had comforted them.

**The Meeting at Freeman’s House.**

The invitation had been extended to the townspeople to be present, as important revelations would be made during the afternoon. Only a score of friends assembled, however, and these were all of the Adventist faith. Freeman called the meeting to order, and thought it best to dispense with usual singing and prayer. He then said he was very sorry outsiders and unconverted were absent. The Lord had showed him that the kingdom of Christ was near at hand, and that the presence of the Lord had been in the house for two weeks. He then gave a religious discourse for a half an hour, and said: “The question has been submitted, shall I give up my child? Shall I offer her as a sacrifice as Abraham offered Isaac? I then laughed at the idea. The Lord brought it nearer to me, and pointed out the child.” He then went into a statement of the details of the murder, and for a few moments the greatest consternation was manifested. The visitors were astounded, and refused to believe it until their own eyes saw what their conscience refused to accept. After this Mrs. Freeman made a few remarks, indorsing everything Freeman had said. She was followed by others present, who believed that it was the will of the Lord, and that Freeman had obeyed the commands of God. The company then separated.

**THE FREEMANS IN COURT.**

**Arraigned for Murder—They Plead Not Guilty—Committed to Jail, Where They Will Spend the Summer.**

Charles F. Freeman was brought before Trial Justice Smith K. Hopkins on Saturday morning [a whole line of type illegible] hour. Deputy Sheriff Harris first read the warrant arresting both Charles F. Freeman his wife, Harriet R. Freeman. The complaint was then read by the justice, to which Freeman and his wife pleaded “Not guilty.”

Testimony of Deputy Sheriff Harris: Arrived at Pocasset Friday afternoon; found a large crowd standing outside the house; Freeman and his wife were in the house and cordially welcomed me; went in with Medical Examiners Dr. J. M. Smith of Barnstable and Dr. George N. Munsell of Harwich; found the child lying on its left side on the bed where it was killed. Freeman made no resistance when I took him to the train en route for Barnstable jail.

Testimony of Dr. J. M. Smith: Arrived at the house at about 3:15; found the child as stated by Sheriff Harris; made an examination of the wound; found it to be done with a knife, which pierced the child’s body below the fifth and sixth ribs, under the arm-pit, being about one and one-quarter inches in length and three inches in depth, sufficient to enter the heart; thought the child could not have lived more than two or three minutes; called for the father and mother of the child; and in its presence asked him if he took its life; Freeman said, “yes, by order of the Lord, as Abraham was ordered to sacrifice his son Isaac, and if the Lord had not meant that I should kill her, he would have stayed my hand;” when the wife was questioned she said she assented to all, and knew the father had gone in to kill his child, whom he loved as he did his life; she went into the room about three minutes after the deed was done and found the child breathing its last.

No other witness being called, they were taken to jail to wait for trial at the October term. When Freeman was taken to jail no handcuffs were put on him, but his wife, taking his arm, followed the sheriff to their summer quarters. While waiting at the court-house, this morning, Freeman and his wife conversed together, and occasionally he would sing “Nearer my God, to Thee,” and often smile. They both listened attentively to the testimony, and Freeman said that all that the doctor had said was true; that he had been very fair in relating the conversation. When taken to jail Friday night he was put in a cell. He did not want any supper, and in the morning did not eat much breakfast. Not a tear was shed by either party, or any evidence of sorrow shown. He said the child would come to life Sunday morning or the Lord would take it bodily up to heaven.

**Probable Arrest of Several Adventists.**

The rumored arrest reported last night was somewhat premature, but this evening Judge Whittemore of Sandwich said to The Globe reporter that probably all who were present at the meeting on Thursday would be arrested soon as accessories after the fact. The names of the parties as far as learned are as follows: Nathaniel Wing and wife, Gardner Hathaway and wife, Joseph Shurtleff, wife, and daughter, Alvin [sic] and Walter Wing, Mrs. Hannah Swift, Phineas Gibbs and wife, C. Foster Howard and wife, Mrs. A. P. Davis and daughter, Gerty West, and several others. So great was the excitement today that many desired their arrest while they sat in church during the funeral services. Deputy Sheriff Harris of Barnstable will probably be here tomorrow with the necessary papers for their arrest.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post*, Tuesday, May 6, 1879**

**THE POCASSET CRIME.**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**A Public Meeting Held Under Direction of the Selectmen; Six Men and Two Women to be Arrested as Accessories to the Murder—The Disgraceful Scenes at the Burial of the Infant Victim—Strange Fanaticism of the People, Etc., Etc.**

Wareham, Mass., May 5. —The Selectmen of Sandwich arrived at Pocasset this forenoon. A public meeting was held at the Bay View House, and G. O. Ellis, Chairman of the Selectmen, called the meeting to order. Capt. John Becerman was chosen Chairman and David Nye, Esq., Secretary. The following-named persons gave in their testimony who have held conversation with those who are said to be accessories to the crime after the deed: M. Dimmick, H. Phinney, Oliver Wing, C. Wrightcap, John Becerman, Capt. E. Nye, and F. W. Murdoch, reporter of the New Bedford Mercury. After the testimonies had been received, it was voted unanimously to arrest the following-named persons as accessories to the crime after the deed: Alden P. Davis, Charles F. Howard, Nathaniel Wing, Oliver Wing, Walter H. Wing, Phineas Gibbs, Jr., Harriet N. Swift, Ann Louise Howard. Much indignation was expressed at the inefficient manner in which the whole proceedings have been conducted by the Pocasset officials. The following is a synopsis of the testimony given to-day:--

F. Dimmick of the Bay View House testified in regard to the tragedy, that he was at Freeman’s house at 10:30 o’clock Friday; had not been there long before Davis came in; he remarked that if I was not in sympathy with the family I had better go out; I thought his conversation was addressed to all who were not in sympathy with the murderer ; Mrs H. Swift and Mrs Dr Wood were there, who, by their remarks, I thought were in sympathy with the family.

Oliver C. Wing testified : Joseph Turner came to my house Friday morning at about 4 o’clock; told me Freeman had murdered his child; went out on the hill and saw there Mr Eddy; talked with him a little while upon the subject, and then started for Freeman’s; went to the back door; Mrs A. P. Davis answered the call; asked if Mr Freeman had got up; she said, “He is abed” ; I did not enter the main part of the house; stopped in the back room ; heard Officer Reading say to Freeman, “I have come here to arrest you” ; Freeman then asked him if had a warrant ; the officer said no, but the proper officer will soon be here with one ; heard Davis say that all who were not in sympathy with the family had better go out ; heard Freeman’s testimony given to Mr F. W. Murdoch, the reporter ; Mr C. Wright was down to Freeman’s on Friday in the morning ; was standing near a little corn-house talking with a number of friends about the murder, when A. P. Davis came out of the house and told us he did not think it was any place for those who were not in sympathy with the family.

Officer Seth Redding testified: The first information I had of the murder was at Mr Davis’s at 10 o’clock Thursday evening ; Davis’s oldest daughter, Minnie, was crying ; I asked her what was the matter ; I thought at the time something terrible had taken place ; after a while she told me all ; I could hardly believe it; I went down and called upon C. Foster Howard; I asked him if he had been to Mr Freeman’s ; my business is here to find out if Freeman has murdered his daughter; he said he had; went down to Mr Nye’s and then to Freeman’s again ; Mrs Wing thought they had done God’s will in killing the child ; was in the room when Davis ordered all out.

F. W. Murdoch, reporter, testified—Had a conversation with A. P. Davis and also with Harriet N. Swift; they both talked in sympathy with the murderer; Davis did not want me to enter the house; he said he could give me all the required information I wanted in regard to the murder; he talked very strange; Mrs Swift told me she thought God would justify Charles in his act.

Capt. E. Nye said: My feelings are so badly shocked I can hardly say anything; I have done all I could to prevent their meetings, but they were lost to all reason; I have conferred with them at my house in regard to this; I ask you all to take this matter up, and to carry it as far as the law will allow in regard to the murder; I have it from others, but it is all corroborated; it is the truth; I believe they should be arrested.

The meeting decided, before any arrests are made, to consult the District Attorney in regard to the matter, and it is now thought that within a few hours they who were accessory to the crime will be in custody.

**THE DISORDERLY AND DISGRACEFUL SCENES AT THE FUNERAL.**

The scenes at Pocasset, at the funeral of the Freeman child on Sunday, were simply disgraceful, and the people of Pocasset are incensed beyond measure at the doings of the Adventists. During the morning the proprietors of the Methodist church decided that the funeral services could be held in their place of worship, providing that none of the Adventists took part in the same. The Rev. Edward Williams agreed to officiate, and in a short time the church was filled to overflowing by a very intelligent audience, who came from all directions, on foot and in carriages. Rev. Mr Williams, pastor of the church, entered in company with the Rev. Alexander H. Murray of Boston, who is at present supplying the pulpit at the Baptist Church, Pocasset. Shortly after this the funeral procession made its appearance. The casket containing the body of the murdered girl was borne by Mr Alden P. Davis in an open buggy owned by Charles Freeman, followed by a carriage containing little Mildred (the living child, to whom the sad facts were broken that morning by Mrs James H. West), Mrs Harriet Swift, the mother of Mrs Freeman, and Mr O. W. Freeman of Natick, the brother of Charles Freeman. Then followed carriages containing members of the Advent Church. Davis took the casket under his arm, and refusing the assistance which was proffered, walked into the church, and deposited the casket on a table directly in front of the pulpit. The casket was of plain stained wood and ornamented with a simple wreath of Mayflowers. The services were simple and brief. The last hymn was given out, when Davis, rising, said that while the people were viewing the body he wished to make a few remarks. “We don’t wish any remarks,” interrupted the preacher. “Then,” replied the man, “the remains will be exposed to view outside the church.”

The coffin lid was replaced and the body was carried to the small graveyard in the rear of the church, the crowd following. The remains were then uncovered. Davis, who had charge of the services, then got upon a fallen gravestone by the side of the casket and commenced to make a speech. He began by saying that until two years ago he was an infidel, but at that time God was pleased to reveal Himself to him and let light into his soul. He believed the Bible to be God’s word and he had studied it diligently ever since. He then called on all to repeat with him the Lord’s Prayer, which he said contained sentiments upon which Christians could not agree. A few of the Adventists in the crowd responded. The man then began to get excited, saying that he was talking to the whole world and that a great responsibility was upon him. “The world,” he said, “is standing aghast at the deed and its causes. I know some, but not all of those causes. No one knows better than I the motives of this afflicted man and wife now in jail. Mr Freeman’s character, his Christian integrity, has been questioned, and he has been called a hypocrite. I declare in his defence that there never lived a purer and better man.” Selectman David Nye here interrupted the excited man, and asked him in the name of decency and of the friends of the family to cease. Davis retorted angrily that he should do as he pleased; that he was given charge of the body by a higher authority than any in the town—by the Medical Examiner. “I intend,” he shouted, “to defend the motives of my friend in committing this \_\_\_\_\_” “Murder! Murder! ” cried the crowd. The incensed assembly crowded up around the man, who was clamoring loudly to be heard, when Rev. Mr Williams, stepping to the front and baring his head, asked Davis if he would not, out of respect to the cause of Christ and to the innocent, desist. He turned excitedly to the crowd, crying, “I am asked to desist in defending the father of the child in the coffin before you.” He demanded a vote on the subject, and asked all in favor of his discontinuing his remarks to hold up their hands. Nearly all went up, and on the other side being called for only six or seven of Davis’s supporters responded.

Davis then said the meeting was dismissed, but stepped forward again, saying that he had forgotten to make announcement: “I give notice,” he said, “that there will be held here, under the auspices of the Second Adventists, a grove camp-meeting from June 15 to June 30, to which I invite every denomination to send their champion men to \_\_\_\_\_\_.” “To be murdered,” interrupted voices. Mr Freeman, the brother of the man in Barnstable jail, implored David: “Do, for God’s sake, stop that we may bury the dead.” Amid great confusion the burial was finally accomplished. Rev. Mr Williams read brief scripture selections, and Rev. Mr Murray pronounced the benediction. Davis shovelled the earth into the grave, and the crowd then commenced to disperse.

Several of Freeman’s most ardent supporters say that as God did not manifest Himself by bringing the child to life He will do so in some other way. He had the power to do so, but it was His will that it should not be. Their faith is not at all shaken. Others were unable to explain the fact that the resurrection did not take place. Foster Howard, an old man, and of the leaders, said it was all very mysterious. He confidently expected that the Lord would manifest Himself to the world by raising that child from the dead. He could not understand the failure of the promise, and did not know what to believe. The authorities and many of the citizens fear that an attempt will be made to rob the grave, arguing that the Adventists will endeavor to show that the body really was translated to heaven on the third day. The grave was made very shallow, and was filled with loose earth.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Harrisburg Daily Independent* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), Tuesday, May 6, 1879**

**The Child Sacrifice.**

Pocasset, Mass., May 6. —The Selectmen arrived at Pocasset yesterday and a public meeting was held at the Bayview House. Captain John Becerman was chosen chairman, and David Nye secretary. Several persons gave in their testimony who have held conversations with those who are said to be accessories to the crime, after the deed. From the evidence received, it was voted unanimously to arrest the following named persons as accessories to the crime after the deed: --Alden P. Davis, Charles F. Howard, Nathaniel Wing, Alvin Wing, Walter H Wing, Phineas Gibbs, Jr., Harriet N. Swift, and Ann Louise Howard.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post*, Tuesday, May 13, 1879**

**THE POCASSET CRIME.**

**Condition of Mr and Mrs Freeman; Verdict of the Coroner’s Inquest.**

Barnstable, Mass. May 12. —Mrs Freeman has completely broken down. She sits in her cell in an agony of grief, bewailing the sad fate of her little daughter. She will talk with no one, eats but little, and scarcely sleeps at all. It is feared that her mind will soon give way under the terrible strain. The jailer this morning says that he does not believe she can live until the trial in October. Mr Freeman’s condition is apparently unchanged. He remains quietly by himself, and has no desire to talk with any one. He was visited to-day by members of the press. He seems to be indifferent as to the course of action taken in his case, and remarked to the reporters to day that he would not accept the assistance of any lawyer in Southeastern Massachusetts to defend him, and if it seemed to be necessary that he should have counsel, that he should engage Hon. George A. Somerby of Boston to defend his action on the ground as has been expressed, it being his sincere belief in the manifested revelations of God, and in accordance with the teachings of his religion, that he would not be liable for murder. He still maintains that he has done a great duty to his God, and he says still that God will has revealed to him “that there will be an astonishing revelation made on the 21st of May.” He says he is free from care and sorrow, and his cheerful manner presents a very striking contrast to that of his sorrow stricken wife, who occupies the cell above. Mrs Freeman did not wish to hold much conversation with any of those who visited the jail to-day. No intimation that arrests are to be made have yet been received by Justice Hopkins. Justice Hopkins of the District Court of Barnstable rendered the following verdict at the inquest this morning: --

At an inquest duly holden before the undersigned at Barnstable, May 5, and by adjournment, at Pocasset, May 9 and 10, 1879, in accordance with chapter 200 of the acts of 1877, to inquire into the cause and manner of the death of Edith Burgess Freeman, whose body was found in Pocasset, within the jurisdiction of the undersigned, I having been duly notified of the said death and the circumstances attending the same by Dr George W. Munsell, Medical Examiner, after hearing the testimony relative to the cause and manner of said death, do find that Edith Burgess Freeman came to her death at Pocasset, on Thursday, May 1, 1879, in consequence of a stab with a knife, inflicted by Charles F. Freeman of Pocasset, the knife wounding her in the left breast and penetrating the heart, causing nearly instantaneous death, and that the stab and wound were inflicted by Charles F. Freeman with full deliberation and without any provocation or excuse, and that Harriet R. Freeman, his wife, was present at the time, aiding, abetting and assisting the act by her voluntary consent; and I further find that the commission of homicide by Charles F. Freeman and his wife, Harriet R. Freeman, was by reason of their belief that the same was required by Almighty God as a proof or illustration of their faith in Him.

Smith K. Hopkins, Justice (Signed)

Barnstable, May 12, 1879.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Marion County Record* (Marion, Kansas), Friday, May 16, 1879**

Alden P. Davis, Charles F. Howard, Nathaniel Wing, Alvin Wing, Walter H. Wing, Phineas Gibbs, Jr., Harriet N. Swift, and Ann Louise Howard have been arrested as accessories to the killing of little Edith Freeman at Pocasset, Mass. At the funeral of the victim, Alden P. Davis, one of the Adventist fanatics, mounted a tombstone and began an address to the crowd assembled, attempting to prove that Freeman was justified by God in killing the child. He was rebuked by the crowd, however, who compelled him to desist. Neither Freeman nor his wife show the slightest sign of pity or remorse for the taking off of their innocent child.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post*, Tuesday, May 27, 1879**

The new county jail at Barnstable has been completed, and the Pocasset Freemans were removed from their temporary confinement on Friday. Charles F. Freeman was the first to occupy a cell, which is on the ground floor in the northwest corner, near the office door. When he was shown his room he walked in deliberately, took off his coat, which he laid on his bed, and began to whistle. About half an hour after he was brought down Mrs Freeman was conducted to her room, which is on the second floor in the southeast corner. She has a large, pleasant and sunny room and can look directly on the depot and see the arrival and departure of the trains, while her husband, being in the lower floor on the north side, will not get the sun’s rays direct, although he can see a little of the main street and the back of the Court House. They will remain in these cells until the meeting of the Grand Jury in October.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Weekly Globe,* Tuesday, May 27, 1879**

**The Pocasset Sacrifice.**

Barnstable, May 26. —Medical Examiner Munsell does not consider Charles F. Freeman insane. Mrs. Freeman is pining away, and while she claims that neither she nor her husband was guilty of a crime, she admits that the act was the result of a mistaken faith. She does not want little Bessie brought to see her.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post*, Friday, July 11, 1879**

Mrs Swift, mother of Mrs Charles Freeman, still persists in adhering to the Pocasset doctrine. Her brother and two sisters have done all they could in endeavoring to persuade her to renounce this hallucination, but their endeavors have been of but little success. Mrs Swift said in the presence of a representative of the press that if she believed in the sanctification doctrine as she did two years ago and had died, she knew she never would have been saved. Her sisters have no correspondence whatever with her on account of her assimilating and acting with the above society. At Rev. Mr Williams’s church at Pocasset the other Sabbath, Mrs Swift endeavored to make a few remarks, but was requested to at once desist, which she did. She still persists in believing that God will justify her.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post*, Thursday, October 16, 1879**

The Superior Court for Barnstable County opened at Waltham Wednesday, Judge P. A. Aldrich of Worcester presiding. The Grand Jury were empaneled. In a letter received by Mrs. A. P. Davis, written Tuesday evening by Mrs. Charles Freeman, who is confined in jail, she says she feels no anxiety whatever as regards the decision of the Grand Jury. Their faith is as strong as ever. She has no more appetite. Her health and strength she leaves with her God. She also said that if by asking God would save their lives, she would not do it. She never has offered up a prayer to that effect, and never will. They think, by this letter, they will soon be free again.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Mass.), Saturday, October 16, 1879**

The Barnstable grand jury, before which the Pocasset tragedy is to come for consideration, met Wednesday. Mrs. Freeman has written a letter to a friend, in which she reasserts her blind faith that she and her misguided husband were obeying the Almighty’s command when they butchered their sleeping babe.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post*, Friday, October 17, 1879**

**THE POCASSET TRAGEDY.**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**THE GRAND JURY WILL PROBABLY INDICT FREEMAN FOR WILLFUL MURDER.**

Wareham, Mass., Oct. 16. —The grand jury of the Superior Court has been in session all day at Barnstable, most of the time being taken in consideration of the Freeman case. The jury has resolved itself into a deliberative body nearly the whole day, and the various pros and cons of the case have been discussed by the members. The complaint was made by Deputy Sheriff Thomas K. Hopkins of Barnstable and charges Charles F. Freeman with the willful murder of his daughter Edith, Mrs. Freeman being charged as an accessory before the fact. The proceedings of the grand jury have been held in secret session. The jury will probably report a bill of willful murder tomorrow. District Attorney Knowlton stated to the representatives of the press to-day that it was impossible to tell when a decision would take place with the jury. Miss Minnie Davis of Pocasset was before the grand jury to-day and was excused until further orders.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Mass.), Saturday, October 18, 1879**

The result of the case of Charles F. Freeman of Pocasset, before the grand jury of the October term of the superior court for the county of Barnstable, before Judge P. Emery Aldrich, was presented to the court, Friday afternoon. At 4:45, the court room being crowded with spectators, Freeman and his wife, with other prisoners, were brought into the room. An effort was made by the spectators to get a fair view of them both. At 5:05. Mrs. Freeman was placed at the bar, when the clerk of the court said: “Harriet R. E. Freeman, the grand jury having found no bill against you, you are discharged.” She was immediately conducted out of the court room. Through a mistake of the officer in charge, Mr. Freeman was brought into court, but, before his wife was discharged, he was taken back to jail. The grand jury find, in the case of Charles F. Freeman, that, on the morning of May 1, 1879, he being at the time of sound mind, did willfully commit the crime of murder on one Edith, his daughter, with a butcher-knife, killing her instantly. Verdict, murder in the first degree. Freeman will be arraigned at a special session of the supreme court, which will be called sometime in December next.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post*, Thursday, October 23, 1879**

Mrs. Freeman has left jail and is now stopping in the family of the Rev. W. Walker, Baptist minister of Barnstable.

[a separate item in a different part of the same page as the above item] Mrs. Freeman, the wife of Charles F. Freeman, is still an inmate of the family of Mr. Inman, the jailor, at Barnstable. She sees to be in a very melancholy state, and her mind is apparently wandering. She still thinks and believes her husband will be set at liberty again. “Fanatically” her belief is the same as when first incarcerated. Her later trouble is now wearing heavily on her mind, and she begins to look old and careworn. When she takes her departure from Barnstable, she will, as far as can be ascertained, go to the home of her mother in Pocasset. She will not, as reported, at present, go to reside at the scene of the tragedy in the above village. Her little daughter is still with friends, the mother not having as yet seen her since her release from jail. The late home at Pocasset remains as it was left by the Freemans on the day of the murder, with the exception of what has been disturbed by relic seekers in their ravages of the house a few weeks ago.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Mass.), Wednesday, November 12, 1879**

Mrs. Hattie R. Freeman, wife of Charles F. Freeman of Pocasset tragedy fame, has returned to her mother, Harriet N. Swift, in Pocasset. An Advent meeting was held at Mrs. Swift’s on the evening of the 4th, and nearly all of the principal Adventists, were present. Mrs. Freeman spoke at the meeting, and it is said she expressed herself as being very happy in her mind.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Mass.), Thursday, December 11, 1879**

Mrs. Charles F. Freeman has returned to Barnstable and taken up her abode for the winter, and will enter into dress-making, having a large number of orders. Her little daughter,[[3]](#footnote-3) it is said, will live with her.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Mass.), Thursday, January 29, 1880**

Charles F. Freeman, the Pocasset fanatic, will be arraigned for trial before Judge Morton of the supreme court, to-day. Witnesses, it is said, are to help establish the fact of the insanity of Freeman. A number of medical experts have already arrived. The general feeling is that the case will end by sending Freeman to an insane asylum.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post,* Friday, January 30, 1880**

Charles F. Freeman, the Pocasset child murderer, was arraigned in the Supreme Court at Barnstable yesterday. Medical experts unanimously testified to his insanity, and the Court ordered the prisoner remanded to jail until the May term of the Supreme Court, when, if his condition shall still be the same, he will be sent to a lunatic asylum.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post,* Tuesday, February 3, 1880**

**The Pocasset Child Murderer.**

Charles F. Freeman, the Pocasset child murderer, accompanied by his wife, was brought to this city Monday morning by the Sheriff of Barnstable county. He was met at the Old Colony station by his counsel, and the party started at 12 o’clock for Salem, where Freeman was taken before Judge Choate of the Essex County Probate Court. The necessary formulae were observed, and late in the afternoon Freeman was placed in the State Lunatic Hospital at Danvers.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post,* Tuesday, May 4, 1880**

It appears that the object of taking Charles F. Freeman to Barnstable from the Danvers Lunatic Asylum, is to have him fully committed as insane by order of the Supreme Court, the Governor having only temporary power in such matters.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Boston Post,* Wednesday, May 5, 1880**

**THE POCASSET CHILD MURDERER.**

Barnstable, Mass., —May 4. The May term of the Supreme Judicial Court for Barnstable county opened to-day, Judge Morton presiding. A dozen divorce cases were disposed of. Attorney General Marston moved for a writ of habeas corpus to bring Charles F. Freeman, the Pocasset child murderer, from his present place of confinement at the Danvers Lunatic Hospital, to appear before the court now sitting here. Judge Morton ordered the issuance of the writ. This afternoon Deputy Sheriff Crocker will go to Boston on the way to the Danvers Hospital. The Attorney General informed representatives of the press that it is his intention to have Freeman brought here on the afternoon train to-morrow, and he will be brought before Judge Morton the same evening, in order to that Freeman may be returned to his quarters at Danvers on the morning train of Thursday.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Mass.), Wednesday, May 5, 1880**

At the opening of the May term of the supreme judicial court for Barnstable county, Tuesday, Attorney General Marston moved for a writ of habeas corpus to bring Charles F. Freeman, the Pocasset child murderer, from his present place of confinement at the Danvers lunatic hospital to appear before the court. Judge Morton ordered the issuance of the writ and Freeman will be brought before the court to-day, and without doubt the order will be made placing him permanently in the Danvers institution, and he will by [sic] returned the next day.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***The Times* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Saturday, May 9 1885**

**THE FREEMAN HORROR.**

**Pocasset, the Pretty Place Where Fanaticism Claimed a Victim.**

**THE ASSASSIN’S REVELATION\**

**Freeman’s Deluded Followers Becoming Infidels and Spiritualists.**

Special Correspondence of The Times.

Pocasset, Mass., May 3

The name of this little village is still significant the world over for the strangest outbreak of religious fanaticism the present age has seen. Six years ago this first Sunday in May the village church and graveyard, overlooking Buzzard’s Bay, witnessed a display of anti-barbaric superstition far more incomprehensible than the startling tragedy that had three days preceded it. The occasion was the burial of a little child, Edith Freeman, who had been slain by her parents, as they proclaimed it, in obedience to the hand of God. On that gray, cheerless Sunday afternoon I sat in the small church, where I could scan the faces of three hundred people, who crowded all the pews. Presently there strode up the aisle a friend of Freeman, the jailed fanatic, carrying under his arm a small coffin, which he placed in front of the altar. It was the test moment for the faith of the band of believers in the congregation. Their leader, “the Christ of the nineteenth century,” had told them that the martyred child should rise from the dead on this, the third day. Their faith was great, but their faces told of intense anxiety. The coffin was opened and during the solemn service they watched for some sign of life from the little form within. Freeman’s representative was not allowed to address them at the close of the short Methodist service and the coffin was carried out in the same manner it had been brought in to the grave that unbelieving friends had prepared. Again the lid was removed and over the sleeping figure there was a scene which no one of the three hundred witnesses has been able adequately to describe. The desperate, almost maniacal attempt of Freeman’s lieutenant to defend the motives of the deluded murderer, the indignant protest of the outsiders, the persistent defiant defense, the rage of the people, the cry for a rope and for a lynching, the peace-making prayer of a white-haired minister, the final burial of the child—all have become matters of religious and secular history. As the earth began to fall upon the coffin I found upon the outskirts of the crowd a trembling old man, who had been one of the most earnest of the Adventists, as they were called. Leaning despondently upon a gravestone, he pitifully cried in the depths of his despair: “Why has God failed to fulfill His promises?” He knew not what to believe. The faith of all his band was terribly shaken. Some sought refuge in the idea that they had miscalculated the time for the child’s resurrection and to prevent any attempt at body-snatching the grave was watched for some days by the Sherriff.

**causes of the delusion.**

I remained for some time in the village, studying the causes and effects of the strange delusion which had unbalanced the reason of an entire community. The social and physical conditions of the place were scarcely abnormal or different from those of scores of New England hamlets. Pocasset is a village of about four hundred souls, only about sixty miles south of Boston, but still out of the world on the sandy shoulder of Cape Cod. In summer it is one of the most delightful spots on this attractive coast, but during seven months of the year it is wind-swept and almost desolate. The sandy soil makes farming scarcely profitable—indeed the cranberry seems to be the only indigenous product of value. But the oyster beds are valuable and the fishing is good. The people are intelligent and thrifty, though necessarily frugal and simple in their manner of life. It was more than a year prior to the tragic climax of May, 1879, that the seeds of a religious future were planted here. A series of revival meetings was held, led by one or two so-called Second Advent elders who visited the town. The movement resulted in the secession of a large faction from the Union Evangelical Church in the village, over which a Methodist clergyman presided. The schism became social as well as theological, and during the dreary winter, when the horizon bounded their world, the division among them became sharp, bitter and personal. Charles F. Freeman became the leader of the leader of the dissenters. Having no hall or meeting-house, the Adventists met frequently in each other’s homes, and finally developed among themselves by some inexplicable process of evolution the blind, unreasoning faith which led to such a terrible culmination.

Now that time has mitigated or swept away the immediate effects of the great tragedy, a study of mental and moral developments during the intervening years becomes almost as fascinating and significant as the original inquiry. The balance-wheel of common sense in the village has been fully repaired. The bitterness which at one time threatened violence between the fanatics and their enemies has for the most part disappeared from the daily life of the people, but the social and religious breach has not been fully closed. The gradual progress of religious disintegration among the Adventists is easy to trace. First defiant and obstinate, then bitterly doubtful, the progress to unbelief or to some other erratic but more material faith came almost as a matter of course. A few, a very few, there are who still defend Freeman in his “obedience of God’s commands.”

**freeman’s startling revelation.**

One of them has told me the true story of Freeman’s revelation of his deed to his followers. At the time of the tragedy, when the law threatened to punish all as accomplices in the crime, it was impossible to get the exact truth about their relations to the deed. They were summoned to their leader’s house on Thursday afternoon, relates one of the company of twenty or more who responded to the call. They found Freeman and his wife in an unusually gentle and happy mood. The dining room had been prepared for one of the usual meetings, and Freeman remarked at the opening that the usual singing would be omitted, because he had much to say to them. He then read a chapter from the Bible and offered an earnest prayer. Beginning an impassioned address he dwelt first on the sacrifice of Abel, to illustrate that some are chosen of God and that others are rejected. The command of God to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac was touchingly reviewed, and he next spoke, with much feeling, of the sacrifice of Christ. He added: “Ours is a religion of sacrifice and God has called for one more offering. It is for Edie. Come!” and he led the way into the next room, where the child lay upon its pillow stabbed to the heart and sleeping in death.

The little assembly was awe-struck and amazed. Freeman, with tears in his eyes, told of his terrible struggle before he was willing to give up his best-loved little one and he added God’s comforting promise to restore her on the third day. Nathaniel Wing was the only one who spoke after the awful announcement. He would not attempt, he said, to judge of the deed. He had not known it was contemplated and he could not realize all it implied. The benediction was pronounced and the group of believers was dismissed, with instructions to reassemble at the resurrection scene on the following Sunday. But in the meantime a child in her terror disclosed the secret to an unbeliever and the law soon usurped the place of the fanatical leader and his divinely-inspired plans.

A prominent friend of the imprisoned zealot talked freely with me yesterday about Freeman and his delusion. This man has become an outspoken and radical infidel. “It would have puzzled me at the time,” he said, “to have told just when Freeman’s insanity began, but now I can tell you the day and the hour. It was when he became converted, and any Christian who tests the faith he claims to have is just as crazy.”

Such talk gives a fair idea of the position in which a few of the Adventists have taken refuge. Others express simple unbelief in any religious doctrine, without undertaking to deny the Bible or the truths of Christianity. Nearly all are convinced of their great error under Freeman’s guidance, but a few still refuse to make any such acknowledgment to their neighbors or to the church from which they were expelled. There are others who have embraced Spiritualism and who claim to have visions of and communications from the spirits of the departed. Only two or three have resumed worship at the Methodist Church. The church has pursued a policy of inactivity toward the fanatical faction. Always ready to welcome back any willing to acknowledge having made a mistake, it has been deemed unwise to bring about a reconciliation by argument or solicitation.

**streams of relic-hunters.**

In material prosperity, the town is fully recovered from the blighting effects of the crime. City residents have found that the village is one of the loveliest in point of natural advantages of any on the coast and scores of families spend the summer in pleasant cottages, everywhere going up. The townsfolk who live here through the year deplore the worldwide notoriety the village has gained and they are naturally slow to forgive those of their neighbors whose blind credulity made the stain upon their good name possible. The Freeman homestead has remained unchanged since the tragedy. Everything movable has been carried off by relic-hunters, who, when opportunity offers, steel [sic] even the shingles from the roof. The house is occupied by a family whose lives are almost made a burden to them in summer by the stream of visitors, many of whom have made pilgrimages from long distances to the scene of the sacrifice. Charles F. Freeman, the chief actor in the great tragedy, is kept under mild restraint in the State Insane Hospital at Danvers. Two years ago he was pronounced sane—indeed he never exhibited any sign of insanity, except in connection with the craze which culminated in the death of his child, and by decree of the courts he will remain in confinement during life, unless pardoned by the Governor. He never talks upon religious subjects, but he admits freely that he was grievously led astray. His wife, now a broken-hearted woman, is earning a living with her needle.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***National Republican* (Washington, DC), Thursday, March 17, 1887**

**A Murderer Released.**

Boston, Mar. 16—Charles F. Freeman, who murdered his daughter in 1883 [sic] while insane and was confined to Danvers Insane Asylum under a life sentence, was released to day, physicians having certified that he was harmless.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***The Bremen Enquirer* (Bremen, Indiana), Saturday, March 19, 1887**

The Governor and Council of Massachusetts on the 16th ordered the release of Charles F. Freeman, the Pocasset fanatic, who butchered his child in May 1879, as a sacrifice to God, and was sent to an insane asylum for life.

1. I think this article did the best job of any in explaining why Charles Freeman did what he did. Knowing how desolate Pocasset can get off season in 2016, I can only imagine how it was in 1879 -- Stephen Best. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. N.B. – Harriet N. Swift was my great-great grandmother – Roger W. Smith. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bessie. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)