

**Murder Trial Articles for Sarah Ryder Earhart  
(Mother-in-law of Martin Foutz)  
and  
Articles on the Suicide of Martin Foutz**

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**Generation 1**

1. **Sarah Ryder** (daughter of Jacob Ryder and Mary Wortz) was born about 1804 in PA. She died (Per Gale Honeyman, she notes that Sarah died 2 Aug 1877 age 74 in the home of her daughter Elizabeth Foutz south of West Alexandria). She married **William Ehrhart** (son of John Ehrhart and Elizabeth) in PA?. He was born in PA (Possibly Adams Co.). He died in 1847 in Preble Co., OH (See probate note dated 1854).

Notes for Sarah Ryder:

Newspaper sources: West Alexandria Library, Ohio, Genealogist; Cincinnati Gazette, Genealogybank.com, Newspapers.com, Dayton Library, Montgomery County Archives and Wright State University Library, and Ron Earhart. Ron Earhart, Dayton, Ohio, is a descendant of Henry, brother of William Earhart (William is the father of Michael Earhart; one of the persons on trial.)

The following are newspaper articles on the trial of Sarah Earhart and her son Michael, who were arrested on attempted murder charges. Sarah was the mother-in-law of Martin Foutz.

*Cincinnati Gazette*

**THE GERMANTOWN POISONING**

**Full Report of the Circumstances Attending the Sickness of the Hanna Family**

Special Correspondence of the Cincinnati Gazette

Dayton, O., May 17, 1873

I came to Dayton to-day to investigate the circumstances attending the alleged poisoning in Germantown.

The families concerned in the poisoning case are well to do farmers, the Hannas living about a mile and a half northwest of Georgetown, and the Earharts living about two miles beyond. Both are Pennsylvania Dutch by birth, and have been regarded as industrious, orderly, and honest. The families are connected by marriage, Michael Earhart having married Mary Hanna, who is a daughter of John Hanna, sr., about a year ago. The Earhart family is composed of Sarah Earhart, seventy years of age; Michael Earhart, her son, who is about thirty-two years of age, and his wife. The Hanna family is likewise composed of three members-John Hanna, sr., who is about sixty years of age; John, his son, aged about thirty-eight, and his sister Catharine, evidently of nearly the same age.

The families have been on intimate terms ever since they became neighbors, and, until the recent poisoning affair, there had never been either misunderstanding or coolness.

On Tuesday, the 22d of April, at a little after 1 o'clock, Sarah, Michael, and Mary Earhart drove up to the Hanna's in a wagon, on their way home from Germantown, and stopped for dinner, to which they sat down with old Mr. Hanna and Catharine. Soon after they started home, and John Hanna, who had been out in the field of a neighbor, John Rhoads, reached home for dinner. He helped himself to a cold lunch from the cupboard, and drank a cup of coffee from what remained over from the family dinner, which Catharine was keeping with the intention of heating over for supper. He had not finished the cup when he was seized with a violent spell of vomiting, accompanied with severe pains, and followed with a burning sensation in the stomach, and an uncontrollable appetite for acids. He obtained quiet on drinking some herb tea, after which he went to bed.

At about dark Catharine prepared supper for her father and herself, heating over the coffee, of which about three pints remained from dinner. Both were seized with vomiting at the table, accompanied with pains such as those experienced by John in the afternoon, only more severe. They passed the night in great agony, all of them sick and alone. Katie pulled off the old man's boots, and he managed to crawl off to bed upon his hands and knees. In the morning Katie, believing the coffee to have been the cause of their sickness, threw the balance out, and sent a neighbor for Dr. Donnellan. The Dr. recognized symptoms of poisoning, and, examining the coffee

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pot, discovered small granules, which he took to be white arsenic, on the sides and in the bottom with the small quantity of grounds remaining. He drew off about a thimbleful of the fluid, and scraped out the grounds, which he sent to Prof. Wayne, of Cincinnati, for analysis, and the answer was returned that they contained arsenic.

The Hannas were sick seven or eight days, and, as soon as he was able, the old man swore out a warrant before Squire Frank, of Germantown, charging Sarah and Michael Earhart with unlawfully, maliciously, and feloniously mixing a drachm or more of arsenic in coffee with intent to take the lives of the three. The examination took place on Thursday last, G.W. Mayer, Esq., of Farmersville, ably conducting the prosecution.

In the examination Catharine stated that, after dinner was over, when she was putting the things away, old Mrs. Earhart took a seat near the stove in the outdoor kitchen, where she was at work; that she asked her to go into the house, where it was pleasanter, but the old woman declined, saying the kitchen was good enough for her. The coffee pot was on the stove, and the old woman sat within a foot and a half of it and remained in the kitchen while she was running back and forward to the house, and the cellar. It is believed that it was at this time that the poison was dropped into the coffee.

Michael Earhart denied that he had been to the drug store that Tuesday morning, and of course that he had bought arsenic at any time, and the old woman denied also that she had ever purchased or administered any. Shrewd cross-examination caused Michael to contradict his statement in some respects and R.W. Schaffer, a druggist's clerk, testified that he had sold arsenic on that day to a man who looked very much like Michael Earhart. He wouldn't like to swear, but he thought it was him.

Both parties were bound over in \$1000 each, bonds for which were easily furnished by Michael, but only with extreme difficulty by his mother. John Ryder, her brother, a wealthy farmer, refused a note for \$800 from Sarah Earhart, as security for his bond, unless she would give a mortgage for the remaining \$200. At night, when there was a prospect of her remaining until morning in the custody of the officers, some kind of arrangement was made, and John Ryder and Elijah Foutz signed the bond.

The case will probably come up before the grand jury in Dayton this afternoon or tomorrow morning.

The Hannas are a most innocent and inoffensive family, with scarcely combativeness enough to defend themselves in the ordinary affairs of life. In conversation with your correspondent on Saturday, Catharine hesitated for some time to speak of the affair, admitting that she had been poisoned, but saying that "she wouldn't like to say anything against Granny; they had always been good friends, and she hadn't nothin' agin her now." John, her brother, however, said that "Granny came over while they were sick to inquire how they were, but they wouldn't have anything to say to her, and she soon withdrew."

On the death of the Hanna family, unless a new will should be made, the entire property would fall to Michael's wife—a fact which many regard as the clue to the attempt upon their lives.

Since the above case became noised over the country, reports of other crimes arose and flew like wildfire, until in almost every house there was some new story of the woman's guilt. Out of the mass of them there are a number which are generally credited from the familiarity of her neighbors with circumstances attending the affairs. She is charged with having poisoned her husband 18 or 20 years ago; of having poisoned the wife of Michael, who died seventeen months ago. Of the latter charge the physician, Dr. Hinkle, states that the lady, who was a daughter of Mr. Abner McLean, had been slightly ill, and believing she had about recovered, left her in the care of Sarah Earhart. In less than twenty-four hours she was dead—her husband saying, from inflammation of the bowels. The next charge is that of killing the child of Martin Foutz, of West Alexandria, her son-in-law, by administering arsenic spread on bread and butter. Dr. R.D. Huggins, who attended the child in its last moments, says the symptoms were altogether those of poisoning by arsenic. It is said that Mr. Foutz, who was a gentleman of wealth and social position, believed her guilty of the last two mentioned; that the knowledge of it, without courage to call her out, so preyed upon his mind that he became melancholy, and soon after hearing of her attempt upon the

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lives of the Hannas he went out and shot himself through the head with a rifle.

Another charge is that of killing a woman, who is said to have been the first wife of Michael, a few years ago, in Indiana. The question of a wife in Indiana was a disputed one, some people asserting that Michael was a widower when he married Miss McLean, which he denied, insisting that she was his first wife. People in West Alexandria, where the family was better known than in Germantown, add barn burning and poisoning of animals to the old woman's crimes, but there is no proof of this, or anything more than suspicion to warrant the charge.

Arrangements have been made for exhuming the bodies of Mrs. McLean, Earhart, and the child of Martin Foutz some time during the present week, when an analysis will be made of the content of the stomachs.

Eaton Democrat (ED) & the Eaton Register (ER):

"Mrs. Earhart, mother-in-law of Martin Foutz whose tragic death occurred last week, and her son were arrested a few days ago and taken to Germantown where they had a preliminary trial on a charge of poisoning. They were held for their appearance for the sum of \$1000. Both gave the required bond. Great excitement exists in and around Germantown and in the neighborhood of West Alex. Several bodies, relatives of Mrs. Earhart, are to be exhumed." ED May 22, 1873

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"It will be remembered that some four or five weeks ago, a family named Hanna, the father, son and daughter, living near Germantown, were all more or less severely poisoned from drinking coffee in which arsenic had been introduced. Last week a warrant was sworn by John Hanna, the father, against Michael Earhart and his mother, the latter of Lanier Twp., as the guilty persons.

They were brought before Justice Frank on the 14th and gave bail in \$1000 each for their appearance at next term of court. The mother had little difficulty in finding bail.

It may be proper to add that the charge is that Mrs. Earhart's son had married one of Hanna's daughters, and that having bought a farm, and being unable to meet the payments, the mother concluded to help her son to some money by putting his wife's family out of the way so that she would come in for the estate, thus enabling her husband to meet his liabilities, and further, that the son sided in the wicked work which was only frustrated by their overdoing the matter in giving too much poison. Since this occurrence it is currently reported that the old lady poisoned a former wife of Michael, 17 months ago; that she poisoned a child of Martin Foutz some time since, which with her other crimes so prayed upon him that he shot himself, and that her life has been full of crime, poisoning stock, burning barns, etc. for years." ER May 22, 1873

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"Sarah Earhart and Michael Earhart, her son, were indicted last week by the Grand Jury of Montgomery Co. for poisoning the Hanna family." ER May 29, 1873

**Letter to the Editor:**

"In your issue of May 22, you have an article in reference to the Hannah poisoning case, in which you make some remarks which in my judgement are not sustained by any evidence offered in the case.

I am informed by parties that know, that Mr. Earhart's farm is worth from \$6000 to \$8000 and that his indebtedness on the same is but \$500 and that there is not a particle of evidence to sustain such a slanderous and wicked report. But it seems there must be a motive to sustain the charge against these parties; hence these wicked and dark insinuation to forestall and poison the public mind against these defendants and especially the old helpless woman who is now made the wicked instrument of causing the death of every member of the entire connection for the last twenty

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or thirty years, by these dark and damnable reports, and all seems to have but one object in view, to so prejudice the public mind against this helpless old woman of 70 years, and bring her to the gallows or to confine her within the walls of a gloomy prison, to take out a miserable remnant of a few years of shame and disgrace.

Oh, for shame! Stop and think if your article will not assist in the consummation of the punishment of this old and helpless woman, though she may be as innocent as the unborn babe. My idea is that when such awful charges are made against any fellow being, that the public should withhold its judgment until the charge is fully proven. This seems to me would be more in accordance with a Christian spirit and a sense of equal justice.

It seems to me that such articles as the one in the Register of the 22nd, participates in tone and spirit largely of the olden times and dark ages, when they would charge old helpless women with being witches, and bring them to the scaffold and ignominious death, and that too by the same kind of evidence that is charged against this helpless old woman. Your article as I understand it, assumes that these wild and damnable rumors are true, when there is not a single sentence or word in the evidence to sustain them. Would it not be more in keeping with Christian sympathy to withhold from the public gaze such dark rumors of crime until there is some proof to justify such publications?

Now Mr. Editor, I am informed by the brother of Martin Foutz that Mrs. Earhart was staying or living with him at the time the child referred to was taken sick and that she was not present and did not know that the child was sick until she was sent for only a few hours before the child died, and that he is satisfied from a conversation he had with his brother the day before he committed the rash act, that this circumstance had nothing whatever to do in bringing about his melancholy affair, and it happens that the old lady was hundreds of miles away when some of these things transpired that rumor says she was guilty of, unless, indeed, she is a witch and can be visible and invisible hundreds of miles away and commit a crime and be back the next instant and no one have seen her. If she is guilty of all that rumor charges her with, she must be one of the presto change kind.

I hope you will have an article in your next issue charging her with being a witch and so shaping public opinion and have her indicted as a witch. "With malice toward none and charity for all" is your motto. Then for the sake of charity do justice to this old broken-hearted woman. I am no apologist for the testimony before Esquire Frank of Germantown, to invite such charges as alleged in your article. Now our laws hold all persons innocent until they are proven guilty; and I hold that all such articles as the one referred to are very painful and insulting to a very large and respectable circle of friends of the accused and very unjust to the defendants themselves, because it tends to prejudice public opinion against them before their trial and tends to manufacture evidence with a view to convict and consequently are cruelly unjust, cowardly and mean to the accused parties.

These defendants are now undergoing a judicial investigation. I therefore ask in the name of the accused parties and in the name of humanity and common justice to all, a suspension of public judgment until this case has been heard by the proper authorities."  
West Alexandria

"Remark - Perhaps the writer of the above is a relative of the accused, which will explain the warmth with which he writes. For ourselves, we can truly say that while we gave the reports that we had seen and heard, and only these, we most earnestly hope there may not be a word of truth in them. Far be it from us to injure Mrs. Earhart, or anyone else." ER June 5, 1873  
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"Mrs. Earhart is now in a far way to be prosecuted for poisoning her son's second wife, a daughter of Mr. McLane of Farmersville. An inquest was to be held yesterday and the stomach was to be

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submitted to chemical analysis." ER June 26, 1873

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"The trial of Sarah and Michael Earhart takes place this week at Dayton. A dispatch from Dayton says of the case: "In an interview with Sarah Earhart a few days since at her home near West Alexandria, Preble County, she asserted her entire innocence of ever dreaming of poisoning the Hanna family, or anybody else. She cannot conceive whatever put such a thing into anybody's head as to charge her with poisoning them. She asserts that when the case comes before a jury, everybody will wonder why such a charge was ever thought of or made. She asserts that there are others who had a thousand times more reason to poison the Hanna family than she had, and that it will probably transpire on the trial that some folks had better let this poisoning affair alone."

ER Nov 20, 1873

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Trial articles Ron Earhart found at the Dayton Library and the Wright State University Library in Ohio: The first 2 articles are only summarized, the 3rd article is typed in its entirety.

Dayton Daily Journal: Thursday January 29, 1874

**EARHART POISONING CASE - The Trial in the Court of Common Pleas Today**

"The trial of Mrs Sarah Earhart and her son, Michael, is set down for today, in the Court of Common Pleas, on a charge of poisoning the Hanna family, near Germantown, last spring. When the charge was first brought, it excited an unusual degree of interest, which will be revived by the trial now about to take place. The defendants are respectably connected, and the advanced age (seventy) of Mrs. Earhart, together with the fact that it was her son's wife's family that she is charged with poisoning, interests the case with an interest that it would not otherwise possess.

The readers of the Journal will recollect that the Hanna family, whose lives were attempted, consists of three persons - John Hanna, sen. and his son John and daughter Catherine. They live a mile and a half from Germantown on the Farmersville pike, and are well to do, but very simple and ignorant people. One of Hanna's daughters, Mary, is the wife of Michael Earhart, one of the parties charged with the crime, and the son of Mrs. Earhart, the other defendant. So, this unhappy woman is placed in the painful position of seeing her husband and mother-in-law prosecuted by her father, brother and sister on a charge of attempting to take their lives..."

Dayton Daily Journal: Friday January 30, 1874

This article presents the evidence in the case and testimony from witnesses. It basically goes into detail about how the two families ate dinner together and drank coffee afterwards. The coffee pot was found to have a small amount of arsenic granules.

Dayton Daily Journal: Saturday January 31, 1874

**EARHART POISONING CASE**

**The Defendants Acquitted - - The Affair Still a Mystery**

"The Earhart poisoning case came to a rather sudden termination in the Court of Common Pleas yesterday, by the abandonment of their prosecution on the part of the State. Mrs. Sarah Earhart and her son Michael have been pronounced not guilty of the offense with which they were charged, and this leaves the violent sickness of the Hanna family on the 23d of last April, when they had every symptom of having been poisoned, a greater mystery than it was before the trial.

On the assembling of the Court yesterday morning, counsel for defendants recalled John Hanna, sen., who made some additional explanations of his statements in his previous examination. On Thursday he had been understood to say that on the 23rd of April he had seen his son vomiting

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while he was sick. Yesterday he said that his statement was incorrect if he had made it. He had heard John complaining of being sick, but did not recollect to have seen him vomiting.

The State re????ed and introduced Constable Young, of Germantown. His testimony related to the arrest of the defendants and his custody of the coffee pot, in which it was supposed the poison was deposited. His statements had no material bearing on the case either one way or the other.

Mr. Schaeffer, the Germantown drug clerk who it was alleged had sold arsenic to Mike Earhart on the 2d of April, was also introduced, but he was unable to identify Earhart as the man to whom he had sold it. Somebody had bought arsenic at the store that day, but he could not say that it was the defendant. With the failure to establish this material fact, the prosecution broke down, whereupon Prosecuting Attorney Young consented that the jury should return a verdict of not guilty as to Sarah Earhart, and he entered a nolle\* as to Michael. The defendants received the announcement of the result with the same imperturbable composure that has marked them throughout the trial."

*Cincinnati Gazette*: Jan 31, 1874

**EARHART-HANNA POISONING CASE**

**Defendant Acquitted**

Special Report for the Cincinnati Gazette

On the calling of the case, this morning, the attendance was not quite as large as that of yesterday. The testimony for the State was so thin yesterday that it had deprived the case of most of its interest. I would not present an epitome of the evidence of to-day if it were not that I desire the readers of the Gazette, who have read so much that is prejudicial to the defendants, to see how little there was in the case to furnish a pretext for bringing good people into court for the purpose of annoying them and destroying their reputation. It will be remembered by those who have kept the run of this case, that I some time ago indicated the probable termination of this trial. I did not, however apprehend so complete an overthrow of the prosecution.

The defendant, Sarah Earhart, with her son Michael, and a number of relatives and friends, were in the court room before the hour set for reopening the case, and were represented by Hon. Samuel Craighead and W.W. Shuey, Esq. The State was represented by Prosecutor Young, assisted by Elibu Thompson, Esq.

Soon after the case was called, Robert W. Schaeffer, the "material witness" for the State whose absence at the former term of court caused the continuance of the case, made his appearance in the court room, and, by reason of his relation to the case, soon became "the observed of all observers." On taking the witness stand, Mr. Schaeffer was asked a question which Mr. Craighead deemed incompetent and improper. It indicated the purpose of the prosecution to show a conspiracy on the part of Mrs. Earhart and her son to poison the Hannas, without having first offered proof to establish a conspiracy. He submitted that the fact that mother and son were together on the day of the alleged poisoning was no evidence of conspiracy, because they resided together for many years, and were in daily intercourse. The defense did not care anything about the testimony, but deemed it incompetent, and of mischievous tendency. Judge Elliott remarked that, while the testimony was not offered in the proper order, it was a statement of facts, and the jury could decide what weight it was entitled to. The Court was free to say that he couldn't see what relevance the evidence sought to be elicited could have to the case, and thereupon the prosecution did not press the matter further.

Mr. Schaeffer then stated in reply to a question from the State's attorney, that he was a clerk in the drug store of Mr. Roseberry, in Germantown, at the time of the alleged poisoning of the Hanna family. He was not acquainted with Michael Earhart; couldn't positively identify him as the man who purchased poison on the day of the alleged poisoning but thought he somewhat resembled him. He sold eight drachms of white, powdered arsenic to a man who said the rats were so bad out at his place that they threatened to carry off the house, and he was determined to make way with them. He couldn't say whether this was in the forenoon or afternoon. The man who sat before him, and was designated as Michael Earhart, somewhat resembled the man who got the

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poison, but he wouldn't say he was the man.

On cross-examination witness said he waited on the man who got the poison, and that no other person was in the store at the time. He noticed nothing unusual in the man's actions, and he only remembered the circumstance from the reference the stranger made to killing rats. Dr. Donnellan got a small quantity of arsenic afterward from the same jar, for experiment, he said. Witness said when he heard of the poisoning the next day and had a description of Earhart, that he believed he was the man who got the poison; he went out to Earhart's with an officer to see if Earhart was really the one who got the poison, but he was not certain about it. He might have told persons that Earhart was the man, and he might have told others that he was not certain about it; he had been asked so much about the matter that he could not remember what he had said. He might have told parties that the man who got the poison was a heavy set man and had a darker complexion than Earhart. The fact was, when he went to Earhart's he expected to find a larger man than Mike Earhart, and he had admitted that he was probably mistaken, and that the man who got the poison was heavier than Earhart, to whom he sold poison on the same day.

To the question, "Did you not know that it was a violation of the law to sell poison without making a complete record of the transaction-date, name and description of purchaser, with place of residence, purpose, etc.," witness declined making reply, on the ground that he would criminate himself, Mr. Craighead remarked that on account of the failure of the witness to observe the law in this very important particular, the defendant had been dragged into court to defend her fair name, and repel an outrageous imputation upon her honor. Had the name and address been recorded, as the law requires, this case would never have been brought against defendant. He trusted that druggists and drug clerks will learn an important lesson from the case in hearing, and that hereafter they will realize the necessity of conforming to the law. The court said it was competent for the witness to state whether he made a record in the case in hearing, and Schaeffer answered that he did not; that while he was with Roseberry it was not the rule to make record of the sale of poisons, and he only followed custom.

I have given the substance of Schaeffer's testimony; and when it will be remembered that he was relied upon to convict the defendants in this case, the reader will be prepared for the denouement.

After the brief examination of a witness, the constable who made the arrest of Mrs. Earhart and her son, which failed to throw any light on the case, Mr. Thompson, Assistant Attorney for the State, arose and said the State having failed in making out anything like a case against the defendant Sarah Earhart, recommended that the Court instruct the jury to render a verdict of not guilty without leaving their box. And a verdict was rendered, accordingly, just as soon as it could be written and signed.

The Prosecuting Attorney then said that, as Michael Earhart had been indicted jointly with his mother, and the case resting on the same testimony, he moved that a nolle be entered in his case, and that defendants and their sureties be discharged.

The result was received with gratification by the audience in the court room, and the mother and son were warmly congratulated by the attorneys, relatives, and friends; and none were more earnest in their congratulations than John Hanna and his daughter Katie, two of the three persons whom the defendants were falsely alleged to have poisoned.

No such scene was ever before enacted in the Court House, and it is proper to say that the Earharts stand higher in community than ever before, from the fact that they are more widely known, and their excellent qualities appreciated, by reason of this trial.

\* I looked up the legal term nolle and the closest match to this is nolle prosequi, which means "we shall no longer prosecute." Essentially, it is an admission on the part of the prosecution that some aspect of its case against the defendant has fallen apart.

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**Articles/Announcements of the death of Martin Foutz**

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Preble County, Probate Court mailed a listing of death announcements for Preble County which contained a brief notice on Martin Foutz. It reads, "Foutz, Martin, of Lanier twp. shot himself May 10, 1873". The clerk also included a copy of a publication called, "Abstracts from The Eaton Democrat-Preble County Ohio 1872 - 1877 Vol 1". This document reads, "Martin Fouts of Lanier Twp, Suicide, died May 10, 1873, age 47. Leaves wife and 8 children. Owner of Fulling mill on Banta Creek."

**Excerpt from the Eaton Register Newspaper:**

"The people of Lanier Twp. and around West Alex were shocked on Friday last by the suicide of Martin Foutz, a citizen widely known throughout this county and universally respected. He was starting on a squirrel hunt with a nephew, a son of Elijah Foutz, and after proceeding some ways from the house, said to his nephew that he would end his troubles, whereupon he put the muzzle of his gun against his forehead and touching the trigger with a stick, discharged the gun, inflicting a wound that terminated his life at 4 on Saturday morning.

The source of his deep trouble seems to have been a son whom he loved dearly and who has been deeply afflicted with a cancerous affliction for years and which now threatens his life, and perhaps, other troubles of which even his family was not advised. On Thursday night, the poor man walked the floor the whole night without a moments sleep, declaring at times that his trouble was more than he could stand. He leaves a worthy but sad and deeply afflicted family." Eaton Register, May 15, 1873.

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**Dayton Journal, Monday, May 12, 1873, p. 4 col. 4.**

Copy provided by: The Dayton & Montgomery County Public Library, 215 E. Third St., Dayton, OH, [www.dayton.lib.oh.us](http://www.dayton.lib.oh.us)

Article headline:

**SUICIDE - A Prominent Citizen of West Alexandria Blows His Brains Out.**

The citizens of West Alexandria and vicinity were thrown into a terrible state of excitement last Friday afternoon by the announcement that Martin Foutz, of the firm of M. & E. Foutz, proprietors of the woolen mills near that village, had committed suicide by blowing out his brains with a shot-gun.

About 1 o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Foutz, in company with a nephew of his, went to a grove near his residence for the purpose of shooting a squirrel that had just been seen by some member of the family on a tree. On their arrival in the grove he said to his nephew, "Tell them to bury me as they like, I'll trouble myself no more," and before the young man could realize what his uncle meant, the unhappy man placed the muzzle of the gun to his forehead, and moving the trigger with the ramrod, the contents were discharged into his head, inflicting a terrible wound, through which the brain instantly commenced oozing out. He was conveyed to the house, where he lingered until next morning at 4 o'clock, when he died.

Mr. Foutz was a most estimable man, successful in business, and it is not to be wondered at that the story of the tragedy created a profound sensation in his neighborhood. He was a married man, about 40 or 45 years of age, with a family of several children, was a member of the Reformed Church and of the Masonic Order. His oldest son, a promising young man to whom his father was much attached, has a tumor growing upon his neck, which, the physicians say, will soon end his days, and it is thought by some of his neighbors that this had a tendency to produce the melancholy which resulted in the suicide.

Recently, he has been much depressed, but at the dinner table, just before he took his life, he was in excellent spirits. There are causes assigned by some of his neighbors for the rash act, which we do not deem it proper to give publicity to, until we are more fully advised on the subject.

The funeral took place yesterday, the ceremonies being conducted by the Masonic order, and was largely attended.

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*The Kansas Chief, 29 May 1873, Thu, Page 2*  
TROY, KANSAS: Thursday, May 20, 1873

**An Ohio Horror**

The people of Montgomery and Preble Counties are enjoying a horror of the Lucretia Borgia type, and as we happen to personally know all the parties concerned, we are more than usually interested in the developments. A family residing near Germantown, named Henne, consisting of a father, a son and a daughter, were poisoned, almost fatally, by means of arsenic secretly deposited in the coffee pot. From circumstances, leaving but little reason for doubt, suspicion rested upon an old woman named Earhart, about 70 years of age, who, with her son Michael, was arrested, and placed under bond. Michael was married to a daughter of Henne; and if the Henne family had died, all the property would have gone to Earhart.

Since this affair occurred, facts have come to light creating the belief that this old woman has been carrying on a system of poisoning extending over a period of twenty years. Strange symptoms attending many deaths in families where she was in attendance, or had access, are remembered to have borne such a remarkable similarity, that it is believed she poisoned them all. The Earhart family formerly resided near West Alexandria, in Preble County, and the husband was one of the most respectable men in that community. He died suddenly and mysteriously, some eighteen years ago, and it is now thought that he was poisoned. It is asserted that the first wife of Michael Earhart, mentioned above, was also poisoned, and that his child shared the same fate. Martin Foutz, married to a daughter of Mrs. Earhart, died a similar death several years ago, while the old woman was staying in the family. Since the commencement of the exposures, Foutz became fully convinced that this was the fact, which so operated upon his mind, that he went into the woods and blew out his brains with a rifle. The alleged victims of this female fiend were to have been disinterred, and the contents of the stomachs analyzed; but we have not yet heard the result.

Something near twenty-five years ago, a large barn on a farm adjoining the Earhart place, belonging to a brother of Mrs. Earhart, was burned, with all its contents. It was at first believed to have been set on fire, either purposely or accidentally, by some boys from town, who were on the farm for the purpose of stealing fruit or melons; then suspicion rested upon a hard case in the neighborhood, who held a grudge against the owner of the barn; but now, from circumstances which at the time did not attract much attention, it is believed that this same woman burned her brother's barn.

If all or half be true that is charged, this old fiend is a fit companion, in devilish malignity, for the Bender family.

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**The Eaton Democrat (Eaton Ohio) - 12 Jun 1873, Page 4**

Source: Newspapers.com

**An Ohio Borgia** - Mrs. Earhart, an old woman, wrinkled, gray and ugly, has been arrested at Germantown, O., for a stunning catalogue of crimes. It is charged that during the last twenty years she has poisoned her father, two of her children, her son's wife and two of his children. Scientific experts are to go to work right away on the exhumed bodies of all these mouldering victims, and in the meantime the authorities will take testimony on the charge that she burned her uncle's barn about five years ago.

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**Birth Notes:**

Alternate spelling: Rider - Susana (Earhart) Pfoutz' death certificate gives the names of her parents as Sarah Ryder and Wm Ehrhart.

**More About William Ehrhart:**

Probate: 26 Oct 1854 in Preble Co., Ohio; Probate notice in Eaton Democrat, Pg 3

**Murder Trial Articles for Sarah Ryder Earhart  
(Mother-in-law of Martin Foutz)  
and  
Articles on the Suicide of Martin Foutz**

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Notes for William Ehrhart:

Name Notes:

Alternate spelling; Earhart. Ehrhart is the German spelling of the name.

Ron Earhart's line is Henry, the brother of William. (Ron helped me with the research on the Sarah Earhart trial)

Source: Publication, Ancestors of William Ehrhart taken from "Montgomery County Ohio 1990", A history written by the people of Montgomery County, Ohio and compiled and published by the Montgomery History Planning Committee. Library of Congress No. 89-063721.

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