

(a) provides that a person is eligible for naturalization if he or she has been residing in the U.S. for five years prior to application and has been physically present in the U.S. at least two and a half years prior to the application for naturalization. Further requirements include that the person has to reside continuously in the U.S. from the date of application up to the time of admission for citizenship. Besides the residency requirements, a good moral character is a major requirement to be eligible for naturalized citizenship.

A Tabloid Tale

By Lloyd E. Fisher Jr.

Anna Marie Hahn has the dubious distinction of being the first woman to die in “Old Sparky,” the Ohio electric chair. Convicted of multiple murders in 1937, she was executed on Dec. 7, 1938.

The youngest of 12 children, her tabloid-story life began at her birth in Bavaria in 1906. As a teenager, she had an out-of-wedlock son, Oscar, whom she left in Bavaria in 1927, when she came to Cincinnati to live with relatives. She later brought Oscar to Ohio during a failing marriage and, after the break-up, needing money to support a gambling addiction, she began to offer her “nursing” services to elderly men in the Cincinnati German community. Her first patient was Ernest Koch, who died on May 6, 1932. Ernest’s will left Anna his house which also included a doctor’s office. The office apparently was a source of the blank prescriptions which Anna later used to obtain drugs.

Anna’s next patient was Albert Parker, from whom she borrowed money prior to his death. In quick succession, Jacob Wagner and George Gsellman both died under Anna’s “care.” Wagner included Anna in his will for a gift of \$17,000 and Gsellman provided her with \$15,000.

Anna’s apparent last victim was George Oberdoerfer with whom she and Oscar had traveled to Colorado in 1937. While there, George died an inexplicable death, and doctors notified the local authorities. Their investigation revealed that, posing as Mrs. Oberdoerfer, Anna had tried to obtain George’s funds and had attempted to pawn diamonds stolen from the hotel.

The Colorado authorities obtained a warrant for Anna’s arrest but, by that time, she had returned to Cincinnati. Confronted by local police, Anna claimed that she had met George on the train to Colorado. She said that they had agreed to share a hotel room but then he became ill.

Suspicious, the Hamilton County authorities obtained orders for autopsies of the bodies of several of Anna’s “patients.” All of the tests revealed poisoning. In August 1937, Anna was charged with the murder of Jacob Wagner.

The trial began on Oct. 11, 1937 and the state presented a solid case. A newspaper account stated that a chemist testified that the victim had enough arsenic in him “to kill four men.” The evidence also included jars containing the organs of two of the other victims. The prosecutor gave a vivid and dramatic closing argument, while the defense attorney said, “Although she is no angel, she is not guilty of the murder of Jacob Wagner.”

After only two hours of deliberation, the jury, consisting of 11 women and one man, found Anna guilty, with no recommendation for mercy. Following extensive but futile appeals, on Dec. 7, 1938, Anna was strapped in the electric chair in the Ohio State Penitentiary in Columbus and was electrocuted, holding the prison chaplain’s hand.

Anna’s last letters were sold to the Cincinnati Enquirer under an agreement that placed the payments into a trust for Oscar. His later life was never made public except to note that he served in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

Anna’s story is detailed in the book “The Good-Bye Door” by Diana Britt Franklin, a winner of the Governor Thomas Worthington Award for Ohio Biography.



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