

The Darker Side: A Dandie Mystery

By Matthew Wilkinson

Thomas Dandie was born in County Flare, Ireland, in 1837. Together with his wife Sarah, he immigrated to Canada in 1861, settling in Streetsville. Thomas was a painter by trade, and his skills were in demand in his new home. Thomas is said to have been a “Dandie by name and Dandy by nature”, and always carried himself straight and proud.



Thomas Dandie

Thomas and Sarah welcomed their first child, Elizabeth, in 1857, before they came to Canada. After their arrival in Streetsville, the family grew to include Mary (born 1863), Frances (1865), James (1867) and Sophia (1870).

Thomas’ work often took him some distance away from home, occasionally finding work in neighbouring Trafalgar Township, Milton and Oakville. In the summer of 1879 Thomas had been employed for painting at the farm of John Thomas McCauley on the Base Line (modern Eglinton Avenue), and in the first days of September Thomas, having just been paid for this work, was making his way home from Oakville. He did not arrive.

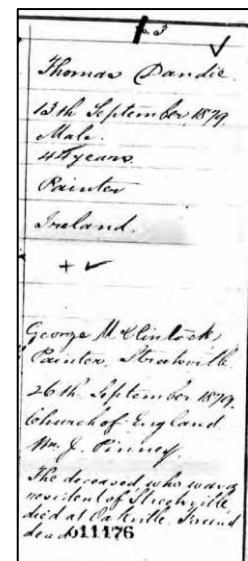
On or about September 3rd, 1879, Thomas’ lifeless body was found in a “bush”, a farm woodlot that would later be known as “Fasken’s Bush”, near where modern Erin Mills Parkway meets the QEW (then known as Fifth Line West and the Middle Road). It is recorded that there was no money found on his body when he was discovered. No trace of any inquest or police investigation into the death of Thomas Dandie has been located, and no persons were ever charged in his death. Also, no reference to his death was located in local newspapers. So what happened? Was this a murder?

The local coroner simply lists his cause of death as “Found Dead”. For generations descendants have maintained that he had been robbed and murdered. Thomas was only 42 years old when he died, and left behind a wife and 5 children. The only identified reference to his mysterious passing and the belief that he met with foul play is found in family histories recorded by descendants.

Thomas’ wife lived until 1917 and is buried in the Streetsville Public Cemetery, and the family gravestone carries Thomas’ name. However, it is probable that Thomas himself is buried unmarked across the river in the old Pioneer Cemetery on Queen Street, as his death occurred before the Public Cemetery had opened.

Interestingly, although likely unrelated, “Fasken’s Bush”, where Thomas’ body was found in 1879, was the focal point of the murder of Oleck Leutik in 1908 and the subsequent trial and execution of Stefan Swryda.

Was the death of Thomas Dandie a crime? We will never know.



**Thomas
Dandie's Death
Certificate**