

CENTERVILLE, IOWA

## MRS. WAKEFIELD OF MYSTIC VICTIM OF OTTUMWA FIRE

VISITING AT OTTUMWA WHEN  
FRIGHTFUL ACCIDENT  
OCCURRED.

(Ottumwa Courier.)

The prostrate body of Mrs. Mireiva Wakefield lying across a chair enveloped in flames was the ghastly sight that met the eyes of Henry Wagers, Roy Hill and Benjamin Stall when they broke into the burning Wakefield residence at 109 South Clay street about 8:20 Friday morning. The charred remains of the woman wrapped in burning bed clothes were found near the window, mute testimony of her last effort to get to the open air and summon help. Life had ebbed away before the rescuers arrived.

No one will ever know the true cause of Mrs. Wakefield's death, as she was the only one in the house at the time of the fire. An open door in the sitting-room stove bears out the belief of those who were first on the scene, that an explosion of coal gases had blown the door open and puffed the flames out, igniting the woman's clothing. That she had made a frantic attempt at self-preservation was shown by the fact that she had entered the bedroom near by and had taken the bed clothing off of the bed and wrapped them around her burning body in an effort to smother the flames. She had probably attempted to open the window, beside which the body was found, in a last frantic effort to call assistance or to escape from the burning home.

The fire in the Wakefield home was discovered by Willie Ulin, a lad of fourteen years who was passing the house on his way to school. Noticing smoke issuing from the house and seeing the flames eating the lace curtains, he rushed into the Wells grocery nearby and turned in the alarm. Roy Phillips, Henry Wagers and Benjamin Stall, who were in the store at the time, hurried to the place, but their entrance to the house was delayed by the fact that all of the doors were locked. Wagers, who carried a skeleton key, opened the front door and entered the sitting room to find the place filled with flames and smoke and the charred remains of Mrs. Wakefield beyond human aid.

An alarm had been turned into the fire department, but when the department arrived the flames had been extinguished by the neighbors. Assistant Chief Charles Sloane immediately notified Coroner A. W. Slaughter and the remains were turned over to the undertaker, C. T. Sullivan.

Mrs. Wakefield was alone at the time, her daughter, Miss Sadie Wakefield, having gone to the Hardscog factory, where she was employed. She was notified of her mother's death and hurried to the home. A son, Benjamin Wakefield, is employed on the Milwaukee road as fireman, and he was notified of his mother's death and returned to the city. Three other children survive the mother—William Wakefield, who has been making his home in Colorado, but who in his last letter expressed his intention of returning to Mystic; Hattie Wakefield, who resides in Mystic, and Mrs. Lydia McGraff, who lives at Layland, N. M. The deceased was 57 years of age.

The remains will be taken to Mystic for interment.