

William Smith Daggett (1864-1912)

For the descendants of his daughter

Dorothy Ann "Billie" Daggett Wild (1900-1964)

By Janice Mattson Gallant, her granddaughter

William Smith Daggett was born in Illinois in 1864. He grew up in Dunleith, Illinois with his parents, sister and two brothers. When he was 16 years old, the family moved to Allison, Iowa. William appears in the 1880 census as a 16 year old clerk at the Allison railroad station, where his father served as an agent. In 1881, he was a member of The Brass Band of Allison, consisting of three cornets, a tuba, a bass drum, a snare drum and five singers. Will Daggett was second tenor.



William Smith Daggett moved to St. Paul, Minnesota as a young man. He first appears in the 1887 St. Paul city directory as a telegraph operator. By the end of 1888, he was working as a United States deputy marshal. In 1889, Marshal Daggett appeared in the St. Paul newspaper several times as he carried out his job of arresting suspects, finding fugitives, transporting federal prisoners, and so on. The young marshal must have been well-liked; the following humorous anecdote about him appeared in the St. Paul Globe on November 3, 1889:

Maj. Daggett, the United States deputy marshal, formerly made his bread and butter while most people slept. He was one of the vast army of men who work nights in this Northwestern metropolis. In those days the major lived in a furnished room, and every morning about 8 o'clock, as he entered his apartment he found it in splendid condition. He lived contented in his bachelor way until one cold morning he went home unusually early and found his bed occupied. The intrusion somewhat exasperated the major. He was in a hurry to go to bed, but didn't like the idea of "doubling up" with a stranger. He gave the man in bed a sharp punch in the ribs which awakened him.

"What are you doing in my bed?" demanded the major.

But in reply the stranger simply stared at Daggett.

"Get out o' that. You've got lots o' nerve to come in a fellow's room and go to bed. Get up," shouted the major.

But not a word came from the stranger, who seemed just as astonished as Daggett. Finally the man got out of bed, took a pad of paper and a pencil from his coat pocket and wrote the following message to Daggett: "I'm deaf and dumb. Be merciful and don't scare me to death. You can have what little money I've got if you'll get out of my room."

Daggett read the message, shouted a few words which would melt these type, and wrote as follows to the mute: "You are mistaken. This is not your room. I've slept in this room for six months and paid the rent."

Quite a correspondence followed between the two. Both were obstinate. Both claimed to have paid the rent of the room, and both "kicked" for possession. Finally the landlady was called in to settle the dispute.

"Why Mr. Daggett," she said, "it's just this way. You're never in your room nights and I didn't think you would care if I let this man sleep here at night time. We always have the bed made up before you come in. But, of course, if you have any ---"

"Oh, you're making too much money out of rooms," murmured Daggett as he started out to look for new quarters.

In June 1890, Marshal Daggett achieved some notoriety when he became a central figure in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Census War. In 1890, there was a fierce competition between Minneapolis and St. Paul as to which city had the greater population. This wasn't just for bragging rights -- there were financial and political implications -- and census takers (aka "enumerators") were not above cheating. Things came to a head in June 1890, when St. Paul officials learned from an informant named Mason that the Minneapolites were indeed cheating on the census. From American Heritage Magazine, July/August 1990:

On June 17 William Pitt Murray, a St. Paul census official who had long tried to discredit the population count in Minneapolis, [swore] out a complaint against a score of [the] enumerators. That evening Deputy U.S. Marshal W. S. Daggett and Mason set out for Minneapolis to nab the malefactors.

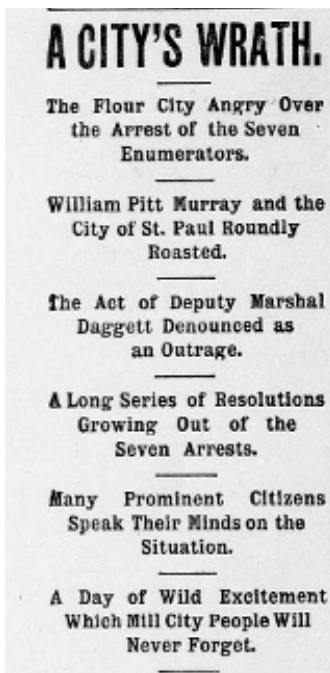
Once across the river, Daggett and Mason walked to the Vanderburgh Building, where Mason had worked. The deputy marshal left Mason to guard the head of the stairwell, knocked on the door of Room 22, and asked to see Ben Aarons, one of the enumerators whom Mason had charged with fraud. Aarons identified himself. Daggett produced the warrant for his arrest and read the charges against him.

"Aaron[s], who is very lame, did not make any especial demur," the St. Paul Daily Pioneer Press reported, "and Daggett read the names of the others wanted." Suddenly their boss, Edward Stevens, appeared. "Then matters assumed a different phase," the newspaper continued, "and the eighteen or twenty men in and about the rooms... commenced to mutter and talk about resistance."

Daggett stepped outside to whistle for help from Mason. "As [Daggett] attempted to re-enter the room Ed Stevens pushed the door violently and tried to shut him out." The door's glass window shattered and cut Daggett's head. Drawing his .42-caliber pistol, Daggett "leveled it at Stevens and the others in line with him, saying: 'I'll put a hole through the first man who attempts to move through that door!'"

Naturally, the version of this encounter that circulated in Minneapolis was far different. "After violently breaking in a door," says the report of the Business Men's Union of Minneapolis, "[Daggett] found several enumerators at work checking over their lists with the names collected by the citizens' committee... Notwithstanding their surprise, the men quietly prepared to accompany the officer, but that official produced a revolver and subsequently boasted of his valor in making the arrest."

Four Minneapolis policemen, ignorant of the charges against the men, packed seven enumerators and six sacks of evidence into a wagon. They dropped off their entire load, including Daggett and Mason, at the rail station, where Daggett led his prisoners onto the ninety-three train to St. Paul...



The incident marked a low point in the relationship between Minneapolis and St. Paul. From an article in the St. Paul Globe the next day:

Everywhere was denunciation of William Pitt Murray, Commissioner McCafferty and Marshal Daggett. It will be a long time ere the names of those three men will be with equanimity heard mentioned in Minneapolis. They are all three cordially hated by almost every man who calls Minneapolis his home.

An interesting detail of this incident suggests that although Marshal Daggett was capable of using force, he preferred using his brain. An account of the incident as reported in the St. Paul Globe on June 18, 1890:

...Deputy Daggett went to Minneapolis early last evening, and called at police headquarters, where he chatted

pleasantly with Capt. Heim for a few minutes. As he was about to leave he remarked: "By the way, captain, I will have several United States prisoners when I leave, and I would like to use your patrol wagon to take them to the union depot."

"All right, you can have it," answered the captain. An hour later a call was rung in..and seven men and six large bags filled with paper were found in the custody of the deputy marshal. Without the policemen making any inquiry the men and bags were hustled into the patrol wagon and driven to the union depot...Marshal Daggett said that when he went to serve the warrants some of the men resisted him, and one of them struck him on the forehead, cutting it slightly. He drew his revolver, and after that he had no more trouble with them.

The hapless Capt. Heim and his colleague Sergeant Kirkham were roundly criticized for having trusted Marshal Daggett. From the St. Paul Globe on June 19, 1890:

The failure of the police force in not divining at once the purpose of Marshal Daggett's visit to Minneapolis is attributed to stupidity and incompetence. Capt. Hein's graceful tender of the user of the patrol wagon to cart the arrested enumerators and the return to the depot to be carried to St. Paul has been roundly denounced as a crime amounting to treason. Sergeant Kirkham's accomodating kindness in guarding the prisoners while the marshal and his assistants went back after the bags of census blanks is cited as another instance of lamblike simplicity that was taken advantage of by the St. Paul wolves...Kirkham was summoned before the business men's union in the afternoon, and although he protested he was no mind-reader and could not, therefore, anticipate Marshal Daggett's fell intentions, was subjected to a tongue lashing that he will probably remember. His discharge from the police force is likely to be called for.

Daggett was intensely unpopular in Minneapolis. Several days after he arrested the enumerators, an article appeared in the Minneapolis Tribune which tried to link him with drug usage. The Minneapolis Tribune article is not available, but the following article about Daggett's reaction to it appeared in the St. Paul Daily Globe on June 24, 1890:

Deputy Marshal Daggett read the "hop" story in the Minneapolis Tribune yesterday with disgust. With its customary disregard for truth, that paper published an alleged sensational chase which Mr. Daggett led a reporter in Minneapolis on Sunday. Up one street and down another, out on the motor and back on a street car, into stables and by-ways, the paper represents to have chased the detective like the shadow of an avenging angel, and all this time Mr. Daggett was at White Bear lake with a lady. Such was the "tale of woe," and it is reported that the opium joints have been driven out of Minneapolis.

About a month later, Daggett was still being followed by Minneapolis detectives. From the St. Paul Globe on July 19, 1890:

It was stated that Detective Mason and Deputy Marshal Daggett were unusually busy and that wherever either of them went a dark figure slunk after them. Daggett came down out of the Germania bank and went into the custom house, and one of the figures furtively eyed him and then took up a position near the stairs. When Mason went to lunch an unknown man was at his heels, and when Daggett went home at night his footsteps were stealthily dogged. Mason strolled down street after supper, and a strange man strolled fifty feet behind him. Of course both Mason and Daggett were aware of this espionage. They knew that Minneapolis detectives, two relays of them, were shadowing every movement, but they enjoyed it. The note books of these detectives must make interesting reading.

Daggett appeared regularly in the newspaper during the summer of 1890 as the census enumerator case worked its way through the legal system. In August 1890, Daggett submitted his resignation as Deputy Marshall. From the St. Paul Daily Globe, August 21, 1890:

W.S. Daggett has tendered his resignation as deputy to United States Marshal Donahower, to take effect as soon as a selection can be made to fill his position as office clerk. Marshal

Donahower has tendered the position to a young man now engaged in one of the St. Paul banks, and the probabilities are he will accept and enter upon the duties within a few days. Mr. Daggett stated that he has accepted another position, but said he did not care to make its nature known at present. It is understood, however, that he will take a position on the corps of a detective agency.

His resignation became effective in early September 1890. From the St. Paul Daily Globe, Sep 2, 1890:

W.S. Daggett has severed his connection with the United States marshal's office as deputy. He went to Indiana yesterday on business for a few days.

Daggett appears much less frequently in the St. Paul Globe in 1891. There is a brief mention of him on February 15, 1891:

Ex-Marshal Daggett has left for Dallas, Tex., to engage in business with his brother at that place.

But Daggett didn't stay in Texas for very long, because he appears again in the St. Paul Globe on October 13, 1891:

William S. Daggett and Miss Anne Ryder were united in marriage at the cathedral yesterday at 3:30 p.m. by Rev. Dr. Heffron, the pastor. The occasion was a very quiet, but happy, one, attended by a gathering of the immediate friends of the young couple. After receiving the congratulations and good wishes of those in attendance, Mr. and Mrs. Daggett left immediately for White Earth, where they will at once settle down to housekeeping. Mr. Daggett is at present connected with the Chippewa Indian commission.

The young couple spent some months at White Earth, but by October 1892, Daggett was back in St. Paul, now a detective. By June 1894, he was a Deputy United States marshal again, but based in Fargo instead of St. Paul.

In 1894, the country was in the middle of a four-year economic depression that was the worst in United States history to that time. A populist named Jacob Coxey led a protest march of unemployed workers to Washington, D.C. in May 1894, and the term Coxeyite came to be used for militant unemployed men of the time, many of them former railroad workers. On June 13, 1894, the St. Paul Daily Globe reported that Coxeyites had attempted to take over a passenger train in Bismarck:



Bismarck, N.D., June 12 -- The city is swarming with Coxeyites, and hundreds more are expected from the West. Last night over 100 took possession of a special train having Supt. Wilson, of the Northern Pacific, aboard, and refused to vacate until surrounded by the sheriff and deputies. This afternoon, upon the arrival of the passenger train from the West, 100 attempted to board it, and the train was delayed half an hour...

Fargo, N.D., June 12 -- Deputy Marshal Daggett has subpoenaed forty men, and will leave at once for Bismarck to aid in dispersing Coxeyites, who refuse to allow trains to run through on the Northern Pacific. He has orders to clear the tracks of all obstructions, and the men are armed to the teeth. the situation is reported critical.

Deputy Marshal Daggett left for Bismarck with sixty deputies. Others will be picked up en route, and his force will number 150 when the capital is reached...United States officers here have received word that the Coxeyites are piling ties upon the track to prevent trains running through without stopping, as the through passenger did today...

The Coxeyites left Bismarck before Marshal Daggett arrived. From the Salt Lake Herald on June 14, 1894:

Bismarck, N.D., June 13 -- The Coxeyites succeeded in getting out of town on stolen handcars, fitted up with platforms made of stolen lumber. The cars were found near Steele today, but the wealers had fled. An army of 400 is being mobilized here and at Mandan. United States Deputy Marshal Daggett has arrived with a force of deputies and trains are being sent out under armed protection.

Marshal Daggett followed the Coxeyites, and apprehended them in Dawson. From the St. Paul Daily Globe on June 18, 1894:

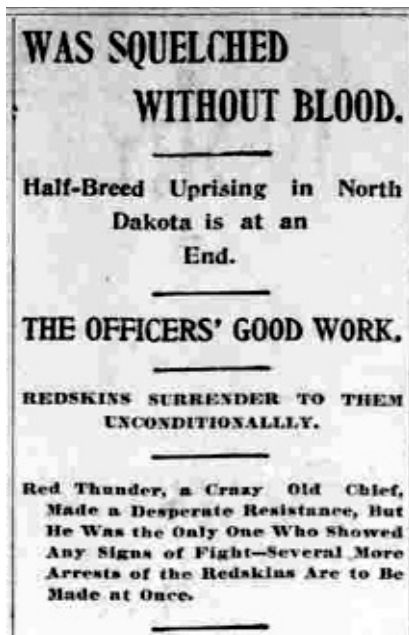
Jamestown, N.D. -- The shooting at Dawson by Coxey men occurred yesterday. One deputy had a ball sent through his clothing, but was uninjured. Another deputy, F.N. Stacy, was slightly burned in the back by a rifle ball passing through his clothing. Another deputy was hurt on the head by a fish plate. Eight men, charged with stealing a Northern Pacific engine and train, were captured here today and taken to Bismarck tonight by Deputy Marshal Daggett.

Marshal Daggett dealt with another dangerous situation in May 1895 when some native Americans threatened to attack white settlers in North Dakota. From the St. Paul Globe on May 3, 1895:

Grand Forks, N.D., May 2 -- The Indians about St. John are growing more ugly, and the situation is becoming more serious. There are 300 American Indians on the reservation, which is thirty by twenty-four square miles, and 700 Canadian Indians have crossed the line. Chief Little Shell and Chief Red Thunder want a fight. They are on a tear, and have commenced burning dwellings, barns and other property. The reds are driving white people from the reservation.

Church's Ferry, N.D., May 2 -- United States Marshal Cronan left here for St. Johns this afternoon with Deputies Daggett, Loomis, Leech, Regan,...The posse will go no farther than Rolla tonight, which is twenty miles south of St. Johns...The breeds are encamped at Joseph Langan's, three miles west of St. Johns...[Langan] has the reputation of being a fair citizen and has much influence over the breeds, who say they will fight before they will let him be taken. The deputies are each armed with a Winchester and revolvers, are all picked men and will give good account of themselves if necessary...

From the Fort Worth Gazette, May 6, 1895:



St. Paul, Minn., May 5 -- The Indian uprising has been squelched, and without loss of life. Deputies were astir soon after daybreak this morning, Marshal Cronin having decided that further effort at inducing a peaceful surrender was misplaced and determined that if they would not surrender their fort at Langans to storm it...The Indians asked for a conference and were told that they must surrender unconditionally or fight. After some deliberation they decided to surrender and eight of them for whom warrants were ready were arrested and brought here this afternoon. The others will be arrested later...Red Thunder made a desperate resistance when arrested, attacking Deputy Daggett with his knife. It took three men to handcuff him. He is 87 years old but almost crazy and possesses maniacal strength...

Daggett spoke about this episode when he visited St. Paul a couple of weeks later. From the St. Paul Daily Globe, May 19, 1895:

...Daggett was loath to speak about the recent Indian trouble, but did finally talk...Concerning the capture of the breeds, he said: "It was a mean report to send out that the marshals were trying to swell their fees, when we were forced to strip for what we expected to be a fight for life and shoulder winchesters to serve civil papers. It was simply a question of whether those chaps were to be allowed to stand off United States officers or not, and Marshal Cronin determined to serve the papers and get his men. As a matter of fact we only had warrants for three leaders -- the two Langans and Demarais -- but the impression prevailed that we had warrants for every man in Langan's fort. That Sunday morning when we surprised them by making a detour and coming on them from a direction they did not expect, our party consisted of about forty men. Most of them were stripped to an undershirt and pantaloons. Under his arm each man had strapped a belt of Winchester cartridges, and around his waist another belt with two revolvers and cartridges for them. Besides, we carried spades to make breastworks; and if any one supposes that soldier duty is agreeable for civil officers, even to swell fees, as alleged, he is very badly mistaken. Had the besieged been Sioux Indians it is almost a certainty that every

man of the posse would have been killed. But the breeds lost all desire for fight when they realized that the marshal meant business."...



Daggett became involved in a completely different line of work in 1896: manufacturing and selling patent medicine. At that time, Fletcher's Castoria was sold by the Centaur Company as a stomach remedy. In early 1896, Daggett went into business with Jacob Heinsfurter to manufacture "Castoria" in Fargo. Not surprisingly, this brought them to the attention of the Centaur Company. But in the end, Heinsfurter and Daggett prevailed. From the Bismarck Tribune, January 11, 1898:

An interesting case has been decided by the United States court of appeals in the matter of the contest as to the right to use the name Castoria, in the making of patent medicine. The parties interested are Deputy United States Marshal Daggett and Jake Heinsfurter of Fargo, and they have been doing quite a business in the way of making this medicine. As there is a big demand for it, and they can put it on the market cheap -- there is big money in it.

The Forum of yesterday says: The two happiest men in Fargo this afternoon are Jake Heinsfurter and Deputy Marshal Daggett. A telegram was received from the clerk of the U.S. court of appeals at St. Louis this afternoon stating that the decision of Judge Lochren in their favor was affirmed. This was handed down by Justice Brewer, who is considered the ablest man on the supreme bench, and no wonder the partners feel good. This gives them the right not only to manufacture the medicine and use the word "Castoria" but also to use the word "Pitcher's" as well.

The decision has been hanging fire since last September, and while the gentlemen have always been rather confident of winning, they are glad to have it decided so favorably.

A location has been secured, conditionally, on the west side in Chicago, and the plant will be removed there, probably within the next month and the work started on a larger scale. The material has to be shipped here and as the bulk of the trade is in the east there is a double freight rate. The Chicago location will be a much better one.

Two years later, the following appeared in the Bismarck Tribune:

W.S. Daggett has retired from the Castoria Company, Chicago, having disposed of his interest to Messrs. Heinsfurter and Hazen. Mr. Daggett will return to North Dakota and enter the law business of Tracy Bangs of Grand Forks.



The 1900 US census shows the Daggett household back in St. Paul. Daggett's occupation is given as "manufacturer". However, by 1903 he appears in the St. Paul directory with an occupation of detective. By this time, the Daggett household included his wife Anne, his elderly parents, and five children, including Dorothy "Billie" Daggett, future wife of Edward George Wild.

His father John Minot Daggett died in 1905. In 1909, the Daggett family appeared in the newspaper because of a scary - but ultimately harmless - incident:

Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 4 - William Daggett, Minneapolis grain commission man, who at one time lived in St. Paul, and Mrs. Daggett, are now the happiest couple in the Mill City, just having located their 14-year-old daughter, Martha, who was lost en route to Fargo, Friday last. Mrs. Daggett sent the girl to Fargo for a visit at the home of Mrs. James Grady. She placed her on a Great Northern train instead of the Northern Pacific as arranged. Later, a telegram notified Mrs. Daggett that her daughter had not arrived and for hours the mother was distracted. Another telegram followed, however, this informing her that the girl had finally reached Fargo. The Daggetts live at 3505 Third avenue south, Minneapolis.

In the 1910 federal census, Daggett's occupation is given as "grain merchant". His mother Martha died in 1911, and William Smith Daggett died the following year at the age of 48. His death certificate lists his occupation as "grain broker" and the cause of death as "chronic nephritis".

Anne Ryder Daggett remarried a grain broker, William B. Hatch, sometime between 1917 and 1920. They lived in Minneapolis for many years until Hatch died in 1933. By 1935, Anne Ryder Daggett Hatch was residing at St. Raphael's Home for the Aged, run by Benedictine nuns in St. Cloud, Minnesota. She died in St. Cloud of a stroke in 1945.