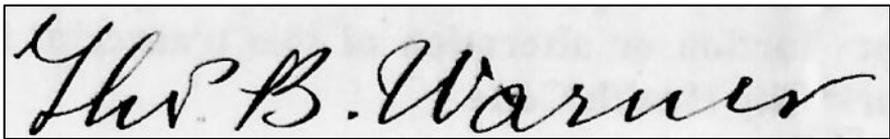


CHAPTER EIGHT

TOM, MARY AND GRACE

Thomas Benson Warner was our great granduncle. He has no living descendants.

I HAVE A SPECIAL AFFECTION for James and Margaret's fifth child, their third son, Thomas. Our great granduncle was one of the hardest of our relatives to track down in the records. For years he was a mystery. Then, in the spring of 2015, the missing puzzle pieces started to turn up and fall into place. Within a month or so, I was finally able to pull together the story of this elusive uncle.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thos B. Warner". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Thomas Warner's signature (from his marriage certificate dated December 31st, 1891)

That story, however, turned out to be one of the saddest in our family history. Throughout his brief adult life, Tom struggled to find his way. Whatever his personal weaknesses were, they were compounded by more than his share of ill fortune. Over and over, he tried, failed and tried again. His moments of happiness were brief. He was just forty-four when he died, alone and in despair.

Thomas Benson Warner, "Tom" as he was known, was born in his parents' house on Sayer Street, in Toronto, in March of 1864. Or maybe it was May. The records give conflicting information.

As a child, he attended the elementary school on Elizabeth Street along with his brothers and sisters. He was seven the winter that his baby brother Edward died of the croup. The family was renting a house on Centre Street at the time, but would move the following year to 145 University Street.

Tom was a smart boy. When he was ten, he was awarded a certificate of honour in the Senior Boys' Division at the school. He wasn't first in the division, but he was a solid third place. That was the year that his mother gave birth to his little brother Harry, our great grandfather and the last of James and Margaret's ten children. The year that Tom turned thirteen, his brother William married Lizzie Clark and moved to upstate New York to work in a foundry there. Tom's other brother Robert died that July, at the age of eighteen, of typhoid fever.

By the time he was seventeen, in 1881, Tom had already taken up his father's trade. According to the census taken that year, he was living with his parents and four younger siblings and working as a printer. A year later, in 1882, he was working for Byron Hill and Robert Weir, the owners of Hill & Weir, a fine art printing company on Temperance Street in Toronto.

They proudly advertised that they had "the only cylinder press in Ontario which will print all kinds of two color work at one impression."

His job there didn't last, though. The next year, in 1883, he moved to the United States in search of work. He was nineteen. We don't know where he found it but, wherever it was, that job didn't last either. By 1886, Tom, who was now twenty-two, was back in Toronto and living with his family again.

Sometime between 1887 and 1891, Tom moved to the United States a second time, this time to New York City, where he met and courted a German girl named Maria Hantz (1868-1895).

BYRON J. HILL. ROBERT S. WEIR.

HILL & WEIR
PRINTERS
ST. JAMES ST.
Toronto, Ont.

Book and Pamphlet Printing. Work in the Finest Style
of the Art
Only Cylinder Press in Ontario which will print
all kinds of Two-Color work at one impression.

ESTIMATES FURNISHED

Advertisement in the Toronto City Directory for 1883. It was printed in two colours and pasted into the directory to demonstrate the capability of their cylinder press. Tom may have set the type for this ad, or operated the press that printed it.

Maria was the daughter of Mathias Hantz (1836-?) and Elisabeth Presser (1835-1919). She was born on April 20th, 1868 and baptized six days later in a Catholic church in the town of Köllerbach, in what is now Germany. Her parents were from the nearby town of Kaiserslautern, in an area that – at that time – was a province of the Kingdom of Bavaria.

In 1881, when Maria was twelve, her parents decided to emigrate. Together with her older sister Elisabeth (1865-?) and her younger brother Albert (1874-1941), Maria and her parents travelled to Belgium, where they boarded the *Zeeland* in Antwerp. The *Zeeland* belonged to the Red Star shipping line and was a product of the era when sailing ships were transitioning to the age of steam. Built in 1865 in Glasgow, it was a sailing ship that was also powered by compound steam engines. A single smokestack complemented the sails on its three tall masts.

It was on April 14th, 1881 that the Hantz family sailed into New York harbour. There was no Statue of Liberty to greet them as they arrived. That American landmark would not be erected until five years later. Nor were they among the millions who passed through the famous immigration station on Ellis Island. It would not open its doors for another eleven years.

All three children had a birthday that April, the month they arrived in the United States. It was Elizabeth's sixteenth, Maria's thirteenth and Albert's seventh. There was another brother, Otto (1876-?), who would have been almost five, but his name does not appear on the passenger list of the *Zeeland*. We can only guess that he had died back in Germany.

Tom and Mary met sometime in the late 1880s or early 1890s. All we know is that they were married in Manhattan on the last day of 1891. He was twenty-seven and she was twenty-three. Although the bride's German name was Maria, her New York friends knew her as Mary. Tom was a Methodist and Mary was a Roman Catholic, but that didn't bother either of them. They settled in Brooklyn and Tom continued to work as a printer.

When the census taker came to do the New York State census in 1892, two months after their New Years' Eve wedding, Tom told him that he was a "compositor" (you've seen that word before in our story, a synonym for typesetter). He also said that he was a citizen of the United States of America, but we don't know if that was true or not. Probably not.

Tom and Mary's marriage was a brief one. Their happiness was even briefer. About the time of their third anniversary, in 1894, Mary was diagnosed with tuberculosis. She was twenty-six. Her health declined steadily over the next year and she was hospitalized for five weeks near the end. At six in the morning on December 7th, 1895, three weeks short of their fourth wedding anniversary, Mary died in Brooklyn, in their little apartment at the rear of 214 Avenue A (what is now called Albemarle Road). She was buried the next day in Most Holy Trinity Cemetery in Brooklyn.

It appears that Tom stayed on in Brooklyn for almost five years after Mary died. When the United States census was taken on June 1st, 1900, he was sharing a small apartment at 123 Main Street with an Irish couple, Joe and Mary Preston, and Mary's two American-born sons from a previous marriage, Joe and Jim Malone. All four men in the house were printers: Joe Preston and Tom were compositors; Joe Malone was an "all round printer" and his brother Jim was a printer's apprentice. The apartment building was at the corner of Front Street, about a hundred yards from the Brooklyn Bridge.

That crowded arrangement may not have worked out, or perhaps it was Tom's job that didn't work out. In any case, he returned to Canada later that year and, at the age of thirty-six, moved for the second time back into his mother and father's house.

In Toronto, he went to work at Copp Clark Company Limited, one of Canada's major publishing houses. On March 31st, 1901, according to the Canada census taken that year, Tom had worked as a pressman for eight of the previous twelve months and had managed to earn 300 dollars. This compared favourably with the 275 dollars that his father had

earned as a printer in the same period. His sisters Daisy and Sadie had earned 280 dollars each, one as a clerk at the Methodist Book and Publishing House and the other as a cashier at Eaton's department store. His other sister, Ella, had made 300 dollars as a kindergarten teacher at the Palmerston Avenue School.

Tom's luck seemed to be improving, at least temporarily. With a combined household income of 1,435 dollars for six adults living under the same roof, life would have been fairly good for the Warner family in that spring of 1901. Unfortunately, things didn't stay that way. As the spring came to an end and summer began, Tom's life took a sudden turn for the worse.

TORONTO MAN INJURED.
Accident on the Pittsburg & Erie.

That headline appeared on the front page of the *Toronto Globe* on Tuesday, June 25th, 1901. The story was covered in newspapers across the continent. Tom sustained an injury that may have marked the end of his work as a typesetter.

The episode began in Pittsburgh on Monday, June 24th, shortly after three in the afternoon, when Tom boarded the northbound Cleveland Express at the recently completed Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad Station. The station was a beautiful new edifice that had taken the company two years and 750,000 dollars to build. It is a bit of a mystery why Tom was there at all. We know that he spent a lot of time in the United States but, as far as we know, it was always in New York City. If he were travelling between New York and Toronto, then going through Pittsburgh would have taken him two hundred miles out of his way.

So why was he getting on that train in Pittsburgh? One explanation, the only one that seems to make sense, is that he might have gone to New York to visit friends or to look for work, and then decided to visit his brother William and his family in Detroit before returning home to Toronto. William had a steady job in a factory in Detroit, and maybe Tom was hoping to find work there. To get from New York City to

Detroit, Tom's plan would have been to catch a train to Pittsburgh, change trains there for Cleveland, and then board a westbound train in Cleveland that would take him to Toledo and then Detroit.



The Pittsburgh terminal of the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad, where Thomas Warner boarded the Cleveland Express on the afternoon of June 24th, 1901. The photo was taken 104 years and 1 day later, on June 25th, 2015.

Whatever the reason, Tom was aboard the P&LERR's Train No. 23 that hot, sunny June afternoon when, at five minutes past four o'clock and twenty-six miles into its journey, it derailed just south of the town of Monaca (which the locals pronounce "Muh-NACK-uh").

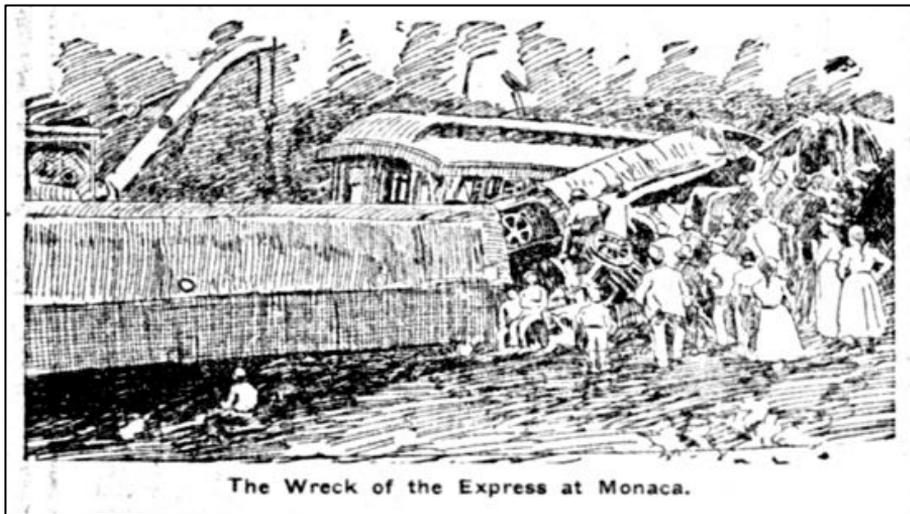
Of all the press coverage, it is the Pittsburgh *Post* that gave the most accurate and complete account of the wreck:

While running at the rate of nearly 50 miles an hour train No. 23 of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie railroad, known as the Cleveland express, jumped the track at South Monaca station at 4:05 o'clock yesterday afternoon, tearing up 300 feet of side-track and sliding over an embankment 15 feet

high. Two men were instantly killed, and of the 79 passengers 39 were injured. The terrible wreck is supposed to have been due to an open switch or a broken frog. Every car left the track, the engine was reduced to scrap iron, and the combination baggage and express car was crushed. The wreck is said by officials of the road to be one of the worst, if not the worst, in the history of the road.

The wreck presented a fearful sight. The cars lay on their sides, one or two being almost upside down, the trucks and airbrake apparatus sticking up into the air. The three coaches remained coupled together. The engine, which had been going north, was found pointing south, while the baggage car was perched on top of what remained of the engine. The tender was thrown 50 feet ahead of the locomotive.

The engineer, J. R. Brown, was thrown free of the locomotive, landed in a soft embankment, and was only slightly bruised. The fireman, William Cunningham, and the baggage master, Lowry Black, lost their lives.

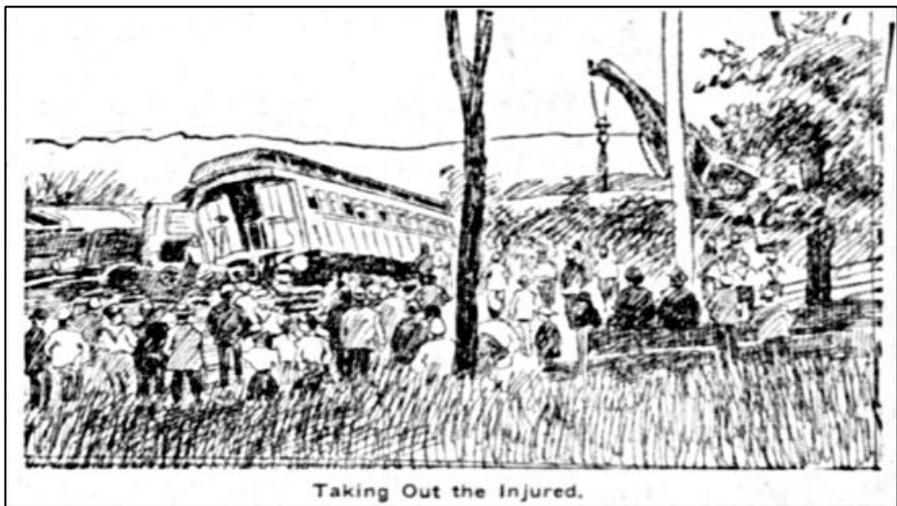


Pittsburgh Daily Post, June 25th, 1901

The cause of the crash, according to the inquest completed a few weeks later, was indeed an open switch. The crew of the railroad's construction train No. 15 had opened it earlier that day to work on a nearby siding, but failed to close it after passing through. Criminal charges were laid

against four of No. 15's crew: the conductor, Harry Demorest; the flagman, J. F. Lowry; and two brakemen, E. McMullen and J. C. Hooper.

A special train took Tom and other injured passengers back down the line to the West Penn Hospital in Pittsburgh. Tom's injury was not life-threatening but it may have been livelihood-threatening. As a typesetter, he needed dexterity in the fingers of his working hand. If he was like most people, that would be his right hand, and Tom's right hand was crushed in the wreck.



Pittsburgh Daily Post, June 25th, 1901

We don't know how long it was before Tom found his way back to Toronto, how long it took him to recover full use of his hand, if he ever did, or when he was able to go back to work. There is one bit of evidence that suggests he may have fallen on very hard times indeed. On Thursday January 23rd, 1902, a man named Thomas Warner appeared before Deputy Magistrate Kingford, in a Toronto courtroom, and was remanded a week for vagrancy. In those days, it was a crime to be homeless, and the offence was known as vagrancy. We can only hope that this wasn't our Tom. We do know, at least, that he wasn't the only Thomas Warner living in the city around that time.

Even assuming that Tom hadn't fallen to the point of homelessness, this must have been a very difficult period for him. At least one good thing came out of it, though. It was during this time that Tom was lucky enough to attract the attention of a small-town girl named Grace Taylor.

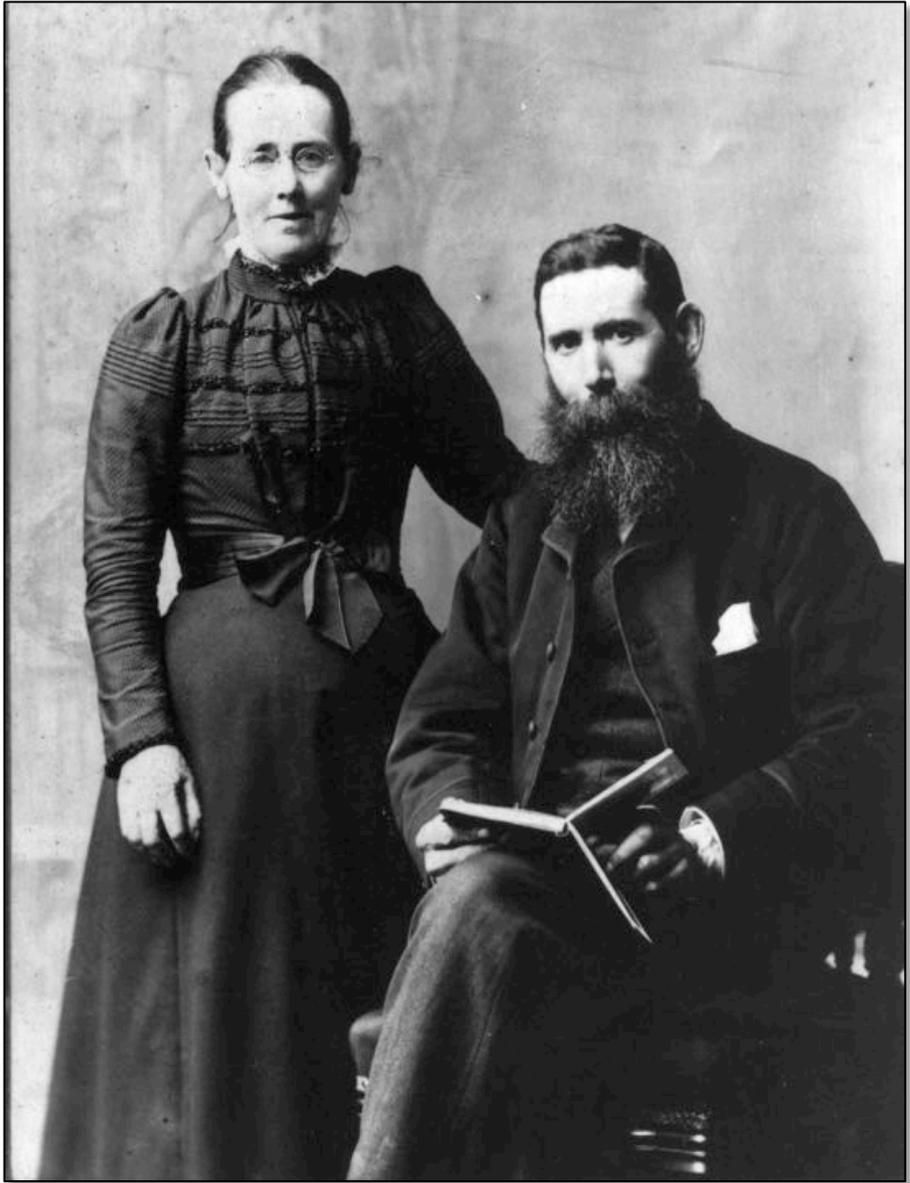
Grace was born in Belleville, Ontario on April 9th, 1879, making her fifteen years younger than Tom and in her early twenties when they met. Her father was Arthur Taylor (1856-1937), an Englishman from Gloucestershire who had arrived in Canada in 1876, at the age of nineteen.

In less than a year Arthur had met and married a woman with the delightful name of Cinderella Mikel (1847-1935). Cinderella, who was nine years Arthur's senior, was from Ameliasburgh Township in Prince Edward County, Ontario. The couple settled at first in Belleville, a town in Hastings County, east of Toronto, where Arthur earned a living as a house painter. By the end of the 1880s, the family – by then seven including Grace, her brother Ernest, and her sisters, Maude, Ethel and Ida – had moved to Toronto.

There are at least three ways that Tom and Grace might have met. The first, and most probable, is through the church. They lived in the same neighbourhood and would have belonged to the same Methodist church. When Tom moved back to his parents' home in 1901, they were living at 108 Bellevue Avenue, just south of College Street and west of Spadina Avenue. Grace's family lived a ten-minute walk away, at 100 Baldwin Street, which is just east of Spadina at Huron Street.

Tom's younger sisters, Sadie, Daisy and Ella, were regular churchgoers, even if Tom may not have been, and they were closer in age to Grace. So it could have been one of the sisters who introduced the couple.

If it wasn't church that brought the two together, it might have been Tom's profession. Grace's brother Ernest was a printer, as Tom had been all his life. While Tom was working at Copp Clark, Ernest worked at Endeavour Herald Company. If the two somehow met through work, then it might have been Ernest who introduced Tom to his sister.



Cinderella Mikel and Arthur Taylor, the parents of Grace Taylor, Thomas Warner's second wife.

And finally, if it wasn't Tom's work that brought the couple together, it might have been Grace's. She was working as a clerk in a store, and Tom, or one of his sisters, could have met her that way.

In any case, Tom and Grace did meet and they did get married. It looks as if they may have eloped, given that the wedding was not in Toronto,

where both their families could have attended, but in New York City. They were married in Manhattan on August 30th, 1902. He was thirty-eight and she was twenty-three. Strangely, Tom declared on the marriage certificate that he was single, not a widower, and that this marriage was his first. Could it be that he never told Grace he had been married before?

I have found no trace of Tom and Grace's life together in New York. It appears that they returned to Toronto in 1904 or 1905 and Tom went to work for a company with the very twentieth-century name of Business Systems Limited. According to the city directory, they were "manufacturers and devisers of loose leaf systems." It was printing-related work but, given Tom's injury, it may be that he was no longer setting type.

The job didn't pay enough for Tom and Grace to get a place of their own so, as Tom had done several times before, they moved in with parents. It wasn't with Tom's parents this time, but with his in-laws. They moved into Arthur and Cinderella Taylor's house on Baldwin Street. It may be that Tom, now a man of forty, had finally worn out his welcome at his parents' home.

Not only did Tom's job not pay very well, it seems that it didn't last very long either. In 1906, he and Grace left Toronto again and moved back to New York City one final time.

At this point, I'd like to intervene with an unsubstantiated opinion about Tom. I honour, respect and, strangely, have come to be very fond of the great granduncle who died forty-two years before I was born. In the context of that honour, respect and fondness, I am troubled by his struggle and I wonder what it was that caused him to fail at job after job and, possibly, to fail at his marriage.

Some of the tragedies in Tom's life – Mary's tuberculosis and his injury in the Pennsylvania train wreck, for example – were beyond his control, of course. But at least some of his hardships must have been the consequence of his own nature. I suspect, without much evidence, that one or both of two things could have been at the root of Tom's constant

problems. If he suffered from depression or some other mental disorder, he would not be alone in the Warner family. If he became an alcoholic, he would not have been the first or the last Warner to do so. His failures in life are certainly consistent with depression, alcoholism, or both.

That said, let's get back to Tom's story, which is about to come to an end.

It was Sunday, September 27th, 1908. Tom and Grace had moved into a tenement building at 431 West 21st Street between Ninth Avenue and Tenth Avenue in Manhattan. Or it may be, based on the little we know, that the two had separated by then and that Tom was living there alone. Tom wasn't at home when he died. He was eighteen blocks uptown and on the other side of Manhattan, in a room at 242 East 39th Street between Second Avenue and Third Avenue. The place was probably a boarding house. Tom may have checked in with the manager but, if so, he didn't give his name or perhaps he gave a false name. He was carrying no identification.

Some time that afternoon or evening, Tom Warner climbed the stairs to the tiny room and sat down to consider the state of his life, his marriage and his future prospects. He could see no happiness and no hope. He was probably in tears. He may have been drunk. Finally, his decision was made. He reached for the valve of the one gas lamp in the room and turned it counter clockwise. He listened to the sound of the escaping gas. He didn't light the lamp. He just listened as the gas continued to hiss, until it finally put him to sleep.

Tom was discovered that evening or the next day, but no one knew who he was. The corpse was taken to the New York City morgue and, after several days without being identified, it was handed over to the coroner's office on Wednesday, September 30th. Eventually someone, probably Grace, came forward to identify the body. A telegram was sent to Toronto. James and Margaret went into mourning. Three of their five sons were now dead. The coroner was a Tammany Hall politician named Peter Acritelli. It took him some time to complete his inquest, and so it wasn't until Friday, October 23rd that the New York Board of Health

was able to approve Tom's death certificate. Two days later, on Sunday, October 25th, exactly four weeks after his death, Thomas Benson Warner was finally laid to rest at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

THE CITY OF NEW YORK. STATE OF NEW YORK. No. of Certificate, 29974

CERTIFICATE AND RECORD OF DEATH
OF
THOMAS B WARNER

Sex	male	Color	white	Place of Death	242 East 39th Street
Age	43	Yrs.		Mos.	
Single, married, widowed or divorced	Married		Character of premises, whether tenement, private, etc. If hotel, hospital or other institution, state full title		
Occupation	Printer		Father's Name	James	
Birthplace	Canada		Father's Birthplace	Canada	
How long in U. S. if foreign born	3 years		Mother's Maiden Name	Margaret	
How long resident in City of New York	"		Mother's Birthplace	Canada	

This is to certify that I, Peter P Acritelli Coroner in and for the Borough of Manhattan City of New York, have this 30 th day of Sep't 1908, taken charge of the body of Deceased found at Morgue in the Ward of said Borough, and that an inquest thereon is pending.

Peter P Acritelli Coroner.

I hereby certify that I have viewed said body, and from examination and evidence, that he died on the 27th day of Sep't 1908, at M, and that the cause of his death was

Asphyxia by illuminating gas.
(Suicide)

Special INFORMATION required in deaths in hospitals and institutions and in deaths of non-residents and recent residents.

Former or Usual Residence, 431 West 21 st.

How long Resident at Place of Death,

H. J. Weston
for J. B. Sausser M. D.
Chapman Coroner's Physician.

Thomas Warner's death certificate.

I don't know how many family members were able to attend the funeral. For many of them, it wouldn't have been easy to get to New York. Most of the family was in Toronto. Tom's brother William still lived in Detroit. His sister Ella, who was eight months pregnant, lived in Sherbrooke, Quebec. His father was suffering from heart disease and would die a few months later. I have a feeling that at least his mother and his younger sisters, Daisy and Sadie, would have made the train journey to be there.



Thomas Benson Warner's gravestone in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn.

Grace would have been there. Or maybe not. We don't know how bad things got between them near the end. After Tom's death, she returned to Toronto to live with her mother and father, but then went back to New York, around 1911, where she married Arthur Amsden in 1912. They were soon divorced, and she married Edward Fletcher, also in New York, in 1920. After Edward died, she married her fourth husband, Ben Webb, in Toronto in 1934. We lose track of poor Grace after that.

Although Tom's funeral was probably poorly attended, and the family members at the graveside were probably few, the plain little stone that marks his grave seems to me to be a testimony to the family's love for him. They chose an inscription that is one of the simplest and most touching that I have seen. It says, wasting no words,

*In Loving Memory
Of
Our dear Tom
T. B. Warner
Died Sept. 27, 1908*

Tom had no children, but his name lived on for more than a century. The fact that it did is, I believe, another indication of his family's love and respect.

Here is how it happened. When the awful news of Tom's death reached Detroit, his brother William had just received two pieces of very good news. His daughter, Annie, and his daughter-in-law, Lillian, Willie's wife, were both pregnant. Both babies were due in May of 1909, and both turned out to be boys.

Annie's boy was given the name Bernard, after his father. Willie and Lillian gave their baby the names of two of Willie's uncles who had died before their time: Robert (1859-1877) and Thomas (1864-1908).

Twenty-two years later, when the baby Robert Thomas Warner had grown to be a man, he also named his son Robert Thomas. That same Robert Thomas Warner Jr., our third cousin and Tom's great

grandnephew, lived in Connecticut until his death in March of 2016. In that sense, “our dear Tom” lived on for 108 years after his sad death in 1908.