

WINNIPEG DRUGGIST SLAIN BY BANDITS

Manitoba Free Press headline, Friday, December 28, 1928

On the cold winter night of December 27, 1928, Digby Poyntz was anxious to close up his drugstore at 871 Westminster (now Prairie Sky) and go home to his new house in River Heights. At 11 p.m., as Mr. Poyntz and his assistant, Mrs. Gertrude Pascal, were preparing to leave, two men entered the premises. As Mr. Poyntz came forward to serve them, he was shot twice at close range. Mr. J. Ardell, the upstairs tenant, ran to fetch Dr. R. F. Rorke who lived at 160 Home Street, but Mr. Poyntz was dead within minutes.

Young Manuel Lecker of 119 Evanson Street saw two men leave the drugstore and get into a car and drive north. The stolen car was found near the home of George and Ernie Vanderlip, already suspects in several earlier robberies. Questioned by police, they ratted on their accomplice and agreed to lure him out of his rooming house on McDermot. There, on Sunday, December 30, Carl "Gunner" McGee died in a hail of police bullets. Detective Sgt. Charles MacIvor was wounded in the gun battle. McGee had already done time in San Quentin for armed robbery. The Vanderlips served long prison sentences. And that was the end of one of Winnipeg's earlier crime waves.

Mr. Poyntz' father, Thomas G. Poyntz, came from Ontario in 1882, bringing his ten-year-old son with him. T. G. Poyntz owned the Bodega Bar on Main Street in the early 1880s, but soon went into the drugstore business and was joined by his son. Poyntz and Son Druggists were in business at 506 Main Street, but by 1915 the business had moved to 871 Westminster. In 1900 both Thomas G. Poyntz and Digby Poyntz, druggists, resided at 275 Young Street. In 1915 Digby Poyntz and family lived at 581 Furby Street and had moved his business to the bustling new suburb of Wolseley.

A few people still remember the white-haired gentleman with the piercing blue eyes who sold penny candy – chocolate-marshmallow mice, gum drop dolls, licorice whips, fruit drops, suckers and more. Beatrice Milne remembers coming to the drugstore with a few pennies to spend. Sometimes she dropped a penny under the wooden sidewalk and Mr. Poyntz would come out and lift up the planks so she could retrieve it.

At the time of his murder Leslie Digby Poyntz was 56 years old and the father of a 14 year old daughter Aileen and a 19 year old son Tom. In 1930 Mrs. Alice Poyntz lived at 137 Waterloo, and Thomas G. Poyntz, a student in accounting at Geo. A. Touche, is shown at the same address.

THE NESTI HOUSE

The duplex at 264-266 Home Street, a large house on a much larger lot than usual for the neighbourhood, has an interesting history. The house was owned, from c. 1920 to at least 1950, by brothers Frank and Samuel Nesti, although they were not the original builders. Joseph, Frank and Samuel Nesti in 1916 owned the Corona Café and lived at 484 Banning Street. It seems that the brothers prospered as they were able to buy this impressive dwelling by 1920. The Nesti family operated the Corona and Kensington Cafés and Frank later owned Piccadilly Florists.