

DEFENSE HAS DUDGEON CASE

Acquitted Farm Hand Testi- fies for Accused in Hodel Death

(By Associated Press.)

White Cloud, June 5.—Robert Bennett, a farmhand, who was tried and acquitted of complicity in the murder of Romie Hodel, today testified for Lee and Alice Dudgeon in their trial on the same charge. Lee was convicted at the same time Bennett was freed, but was granted a new trial on appeal to the supreme court.

His testimony was entirely different from his confession, which featured the first trial. He declared the first he knew of Hodel's death was when he went to the Terwilliger barn with Lee Dudgeon to feed the stock and Lee found Hodel's body hanging in the barn loft.

Bennett was called to the stand late yesterday just after Frank Wetmore of defense counsel had announced in court that the abandoned home of the Dudgeons, in which the state charges Hodel was killed, had burned to the ground some time Wednesday night.

Word of the fire created a mild sensation and set going many rumors as to its origin.

There was some talk here last night and today that the fire may have been of incendiary origin as a flaming message of warning that there still exists a sentiment against the Dudgeons.

There was another rumor that the homestead was burned in the fear that the 68-year-old Mrs. Dudgeon and her son might win their freedom and return to their home.

The conjecture that the place was struck by lightning, however, was given the most general credence, although many persons pretended to see it as an enigmatic move of fate, inasmuch as it occurred at this time when its former mistress and her son were on trial.

The monetary loss as a result of the fire is slight, the house having been allowed to deteriorate since the Dudgeons were taken from it nearly three years ago and placed in jail for Hodel's murder. Its windows were broken, boards had fallen from their places and there was about it an air of lost hope—a derelict of the Newaygo county swamp lands.

The reading yesterday of Meda
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DEFENSE TAKES OVER DUDGEON CASE

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Hodel's testimony at the first trial of her mother here occupied a large part of the day. Meda, who was Romie's wife, is charged with complicity in his murder. She has never been brought to trial on the charge, having been convicted of the murder of David Hodel, her father-in-law and sentenced to life imprisonment at the Detroit House of Correction. It was the investigation of the death of Romie Hodel that led the authorities to discover that the elder Hodel, whose death preceded his son's by three months, had been poisoned.

Meda's testimony in some respects offered a motive for her husband's hanging himself, as the defense has maintained. She said that he was in debt to the amount of \$1,800, and despondent. She said he had been unable to support her part of their married life and that he had told her to divorce him.

Other witnesses had testified that Romie was despondent because of the belief that his wife's love was being won from him, and that he had asked her on the day of his death to go away with him so they might "die together."