

TOUR

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More of Pittsburgh's History



Allegheny Cemetery Historical Association

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Pittsburgh PA 15201-2999

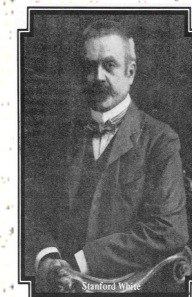
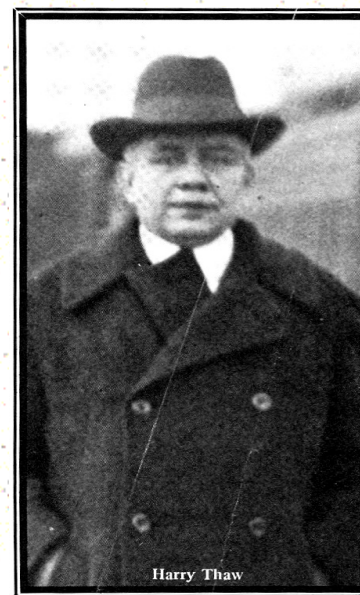
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Harry Kendall Thaw

Renowned Pittsburgh Millionaire

and the "Girl in the Red Velvet Swing"



Thaw Family Lot

Section 16—Lot 119



ALLEGHENY CEMETERY

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA



Harry K. Thaw Critically Ill

SUFFERS HEART ATTACK IN FLORIDA HOME

(headline from Pittsburgh Press February 22, 1947)

Miami Beach, February 21st (AP)Harry K. Thaw was critically ill of a heart attack today, nearly 41 years after his fatal shooting of Stanford White, a famous architect. A medical bulletin reported: "Mr. Thaw, suffered an attack of coronary thrombosis nearly a week ago. He is making rather slow headway due to complications commonly encountered in this type of heart attack, but has some chance of recovery." The seriously ill one-time millionaire playboy is in his rented home on fashionable North Bay Road. He was 76 years old on February 11th.



Thaw's Body Due in City Wednesday

WILL BE BURIED IN ALLEGHENY CEMETERY AFTER PRIVATE SERVICES

(headline from Pittsburgh Press February 24, 1947)

Harry Kendall Thaw, whose seemingly insatiable appetite for bright lights and gay champagne parties thrilled and shocked two continents, will be brought home to Pittsburgh, Wednesday, from Miami Beach, Florida where he died Saturday night. And in simple and private services, he will be buried Wednesday afternoon in the Thaw family plot in Allegheny Cemetery. Only a few relatives and friends will attend the services at H. Samson, Inc., 537 Neville Street. The Reverend Dr. A. Stillman Foster, pastor of Third Presbyterian Church, to which his family belonged will read the service.



The Scandalous Story — Love Triangle & Murder

Harry K. Thaw, Evelyn Nesbit (actress) and Stanford White (architect)

Harry Thaw was born into one of Pittsburgh's wealthiest and most respected families on February 11, 1871. He was the son of the Vice President of the Pennsylvania Railroad lines and Mary Copley Thaw who descended from a pioneer western Pennsylvania family and was one of the leading figures in Pittsburgh. Although there were other children in the family, Mary Thaw's favorite was Harry and she sheltered Harry throughout his life. William Thaw tried to discipline his pampered son but he died in 1889 leaving a fortune estimated at \$35 million. As a graduate of the Western University of Pennsylvania (*the forerunner of the University of Pittsburgh*), Harry left his hometown upon turning 21 and spent most of his time in New York and Europe befitting to his wealth. Thanks to his inheritance of between \$3 and \$5 million, Thaw spent his money lavishly to entertain New York chorus girls causing many to label him "**Broadway's First Playboy.**"

This was the beginning of the story that led Harry Kendall Thaw to be the central figure in one of the nation's most famous murder cases—the slaying of Architect Stanford White on June 25, 1906 at Madison Square Garden in New York.



The relationship of Evelyn Nesbit and Harry Thaw culminated into a tumultuous and world-famous romance and scandal. The woman destined to become the true propellant of the murder was born **Evelyn Florence Nesbit** in Pittsburgh on Christmas Day 1884. The daughter of a lawyer, she lived in Shadyside until the age of 12, when her father died. At that time her mother moved to Philadelphia where Evelyn found work as an artist's model. Later in New York, her modeling career continued. Her beauty, even as a 16 year old, led her into a scandal involving a wealthy married man. Evelyn was named as correspondent in his divorce.

In August 1901, Evelyn met **Stanford White**, a leading architect in the United States. He designed many New York City landmarks such as Madison Square Garden where he ultimately came to his death. His interests included theater and young women, which is how Evelyn landed a role in "**Floradora.**" She then met **Harry Thaw** who joined the ranks of her many admirers and a romance began. The showgirl was seeing both White and Thaw through 1902.

Harry proposed to Evelyn in June 1903. She refused stating that Stanford White ruined her when he lured her to his apartment with a dinner invitation and then assaulted her. Evelyn said that the affair ended, but this disclosure heightened Thaw's hatred for the architect. Harry and Evelyn eventually married on April 4, 1905 at the Third Presbyterian Church in Shadyside and soon returned to New York. White again began his pursuit of Evelyn to win her back. Filled with a fanatical hatred for White, Harry decided to strike back. On June 25, 1906 Harry and Evelyn Thaw attended the premiere of "**Mademoiselle Champagne**" at the Madison Square Garden roof theater. After the show began, White entered and sat alone at a table in view of the Thaws. Seeing Harry's anger, Evelyn suggested that they leave. As they were leaving, Thaw suddenly walked up to White, pulled out a pistol and shot him three times in the head. Stanford White was killed instantly, when one bullet hit him in the eye.

Harry Thaw's first trial ended in a hung jury and less than a year later he was acquitted at a second trial but declared insane. As his attorneys exhausted four attempts to seek his freedom, Thaw fled from a mental institution in 1913 and was recaptured in Canada. He won his sanity fight the next year. Evelyn spent this time in Europe and returned with a son named Russell K. Thaw. She said the child, born in Germany in 1910, was the result of her meetings in the hospital with Harry. Thaw denied this and divorced Evelyn in 1913 and later won the paternity suit that Evelyn had filed against him.

When the news flashed that Harry Kendall Thaw died in 1946, an Atlantic city newspaper received a call from Evelyn Nesbit (61 years old) to confirm the report. Thaw and Nesbit had not been in contact for years but Harry still left her \$10,000. If his later life had been rocky, the records state that the former Gibson girl's life was pitiful. She eventually remarried, had numerous stage failures and tried to commit suicide twice while under the influence of drugs. She became a nightclub hostess, moved on to sculpture and finally she was paid to furnish material for the 1955 movie "**Girl on the Red Velvet Swing.**" Back in the public eye, Evelyn told one interviewer, "To use an old phrase, I rocked New York."

Evelyn Nesbit, the victim of several strokes and old-age infirmities, died January 18, 1967 at age 82 in a San Diego nursing home.