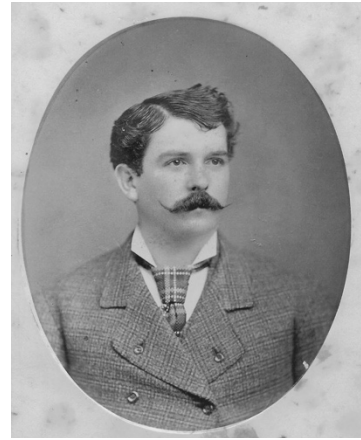


May Woodman

May Woodman was very unhappy with her live-in boyfriend, William “Billy” Kinsman. On February 23, 1883 Mary was armed with a nickel-plated .38 caliber revolver as she walked down Fifth toward Allen Street in Tombstone, Arizona Territory. Also on the street was her boyfriend Billy, and they met in front of the Oriental Saloon where Billy was a frequent gambler. The two stood talking for a while and the subject of the conversation will never be known. Maybe they even argued. A few minutes into the conversation and May raised her pistol and fired point blank into Billy’s abdomen. Billy (Photo at right) clutched his stomach as he fell to the boardwalk. The bullet entered his left side just below the rib cage. May was taking careful aim as she was about to shoot him again when Thomas Keefe, a witness, jarred her arm sending the bullet into the boardwalk. It really didn’t matter as the wound was fatal for Billy within a matter of a few hours.



May Woodman was born Mary McIntyre in 1855 in California. On the 1880 census she is shown as Mary Woodman, a married woman living at home with her parents, Henry and Ellen McIntyre.

May was twenty-seven-years-old years old and married to Lewis Woodman and the two had been estranged for quite some time. Trouble between May and her husband had been going on for a couple of years. May was a popular girl around Tombstone. The *Tombstone Republican* reported she was a “friend of the cowboys.” It was made obvious that her husband suspected, or even knew, that she was committing adultery when he published the following notice in the *Tombstone Epitaph*: “To Whom it May Concern. I hereby warn all persons against giving my wife, Mary R. Woodman, any credit on my account as I will not be responsible for any debts contracted by her, she having left my bed and board without just cause or provocation. Signed, LOUIS C. WOODMAN. (His name is sometimes spelled as Louis and sometimes as Lewis.)

Billy was born in England on December 20, 1854 to John and Catherine Kinsman. The family had moved to Virginia City, Nev before moving to Tombstone. Billy, his parents and sister were all living in Tombstone.

The reason for the killing is unknown, but two theories exist, and I would guess that both are also a possibility. The first is that it was a result of a practical joke played by a friend or friends of Billy.

First, a friend, or friends, played a practical joke on Kinsman by placing a notice in the newspaper announcing that the gambler was to marry May. Actually, the story in the December 22, 1881 edition of the *Tombstone Epitaph* announced the marriage of William Kinsman and Amy Holzman. The German word Holz is translated to wood, making it Woodman. On Christmas Day, the *Epitaph* printed a retraction, stating: “Some unprincipled person came into this office a few days ago and requested us to publish the announcement of a marriage between Wm. Kinsman and May Holzman, which we did. It has since been discovered that no such occurrence ever took place, the alleged bridegroom denounces the statement as an unmitigated falsehood.” May might have taken this as an outright rejection by her lover and the notice was certainly a huge embarrassment and made a fool of her.

The second reason which was not as wide spread as the first was that May was with child and that she was not real sure who the father might be. May had some knowledge that led her to believe that Kinsman might not be able to father a child. During the trial Dr. Daniel McSwegan, a defense witness, testified that May was indeed in family way. He told how May and Kinsman had summoned him to their home as they wanted him to determine if Kinsman was capable of procreating. The doctor assured them that he was perfectly capable even though he had only one testicle. May’s doubt as to his ability was a sure sign to Kinsman that he was not the only one enjoying May’s company. The doctor then testified that the couple asked him for a potion that would end the pregnancy. The

doctor refused. While May was in the hoosegow, Dr. George Goodfellow tended to May and delivered a four- to five-month-old miscarried fetus saw signs that she had been badly beaten, probably by Kinsman.

Charges were filed against May in the Cochise County 2nd Judicial District Court on March 16, 1883. May tried to use self-defense as her defense. She showed no remorse in the killing and on May 12 the case was handed to the jury who were told by the judge to decide the case on the facts as given. He gave more direction to the jury stating, "Although the jury may believe from the evidence that the deceased and the defendant lived together in open adultery, and although the jury may further believe from the evidence that the deceased got the defendant in a family way and the deceased tried to have the defendant take medicine for the purpose of procuring an abortion, still all this would not justify the defendant in taking the life of the deceased."

It only took the jury thirty minutes to return a guilty verdict. They did, however, find her guilty of manslaughter rather than the charge of murder. The judge sentenced May to five years in the Yuma Territorial Prison. When hearing the sentence May told judge Daniel Pinney, "May God curse you forever."

While languishing in her jail cell awaiting prison May attempted suicide. She was given doses of a mixture of chloride hydrate and morphine. Instead of taking it as prescribed she hoarded it and then attempted a massive overdose. Dr Goodfellow was able to prevent the episode from being fatal.

May arrived at the prison on June 8, 1883 and was the second female to be incarcerated in the Yuma Prison and her number was 168. The first was Lizzie Gallagher who entered on Sunday, November 17, 1878. She was the only female for most of her time served. She was again to be the center of a controversy as a rumor spread that she was once more in a family way. She was the first, but not the only, female prisoner to suffer from that rumor. It was rumored that Pearl Hart was paroled because she was pregnant and that was an embarrassment to the governor, the warden and the chaplain, the probable fathers if it was true. An *Arizona Sentinel* reporter, after interviewing warden and prison superintendent, declared that the separation between May and all males was such that intimate relations were impossible. The reporter declared the rumor was designed to slander Frank Ingalls, the prison superintendent, and the rumor died.

May's mother began a campaign to get May pardoned. Over 200 Tombstone residents, some of those were on her jury, signed the petition that was presented to the acting governor, H. M. Van Arman. On August 22, 1883, he granted her a pardon on condition that she leave the territory. The pardon was not to take place until May 15, 1884.

May accepted the conditions imposed upon her and there is no record that she ever returned to Tombstone. In fact, she completely disappeared from history.

Some interesting facts on the Yuma Territorial Prison.

- Of the 3,069 total prisoners, 29 were women
- Average sentence for women was 2 years and 4 months
- Average time served was 12.76 months
- Average female age was 26.31 years
- Oldest prisoner was 55
- Youngest was 16