

The following newspaper articles are taken from The Detroit Free Press, unless otherwise noted.

In 1880, Eugene Fecht was tried for conspiracy to defraud the government, involving Civil War soldiers' pensions. He was acquitted in 1881.

July 13, 1880:

ALLEGED CONSPIRACY.

Ex-Justice Eugene Fecht Arrested and Jailed.

HE IS CHARGED WITH CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD THE GOVERNMENT.

Proxy-Selling Delegate J. C. Richardson and Two Others in the Same Boat.

There was a lively stir in the undercurrent of Federal circles in Detroit, yesterday, but it did not come to the surface until about 7 o'clock in the evening, when Deputy Marshals Mathews and Cash P. Taylor swooped down upon and lodged in Wayne County Jail Eugene Fecht, ex-Justice of the Peace and a well-known resident of Detroit for over twenty years, James C. Richardson, the patriotic colored man whose sales of his proxy for the recent Republican State Convention rendered him both notorious and odious, Frederick E. Bowman, alias White, of 101 Wilkins street, and David Foster, a floating citizen.

These were arrested on complaint of Francis A. Wardell, Special Agent of the United States Pension Bureau, who charges that they and a colored woman named Azzline Price, alias Pegram (who has disappeared), did, on December 6, 1877, conspire to defraud the United States by presenting and causing to be presented to the Pension Bureau a certain false and fraudulent claim for pension made by Azzline Price, representing herself to be one Azzline Pegram, widow of Edward Pegram, late private of Company H, Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteers.

The specific acts charged are that Eugene Fecht prepared the application and the affidavits in support of the claim and forwarded them to the Commissioner of Pensions; that Richardson procured parties to sign the affidavits knowing them to be false; that Bowman (or White) and Foster signed and swore to the affidavits knowing them to be false; and that the woman Price falsely represented herself to be the widow of Pegram and as such made claim for a pension.

There is also another case against Fecht and Richardson for preparing certain other false affidavits in connection with the same claim. All the persons named except the woman are now in jail, the arrests having been made too late to enable them to give bail at the time. They will be arraigned before United States Commissioner Graves this morning. The special agent has been a long time quietly at work on this case.

July 14, 1880:

SAYINGS AND DOINGS.

The remodeling of the Mabley stores on Woodward avenue will cost \$15,000.

An excursion will be given to-day on the steamer City of Detroit to Toledo and return.

The Poor Commissioners will finish their inspection of the City Hospitals this week.

The Detroit City Guard (colored) will attend the Emancipation Day celebration in Grand Rapids.

The Wheaton-Deecher libel suit will be tried in the Superior Court to-day, commencing at 9 a. m.

The worst ventilated and most uncomfortable public room in the city is the Superior Court room.

Eugene Fecht, arrested for conspiracy, asks that public judgment be withheld until his case is investigated.

Charles Krause, aged 77 years, who has been ill

August 4, 1880:

Those Fraudulent Pension Claims.

The examination of Eugene Fecht, James C. Richardson, Frederick E. Bowman alias White, and David Foster on a charge of attempting to defraud the United States Government by means of bogus pension claims was commenced before United States Commissioner John Graves yesterday. Special Detective Wardell was the first witness on the stand and he produced the original papers in the case of the widow of Edward Pogram, whose name appears in the fraudulent documents. Other witnesses swore to the fact that those documents were made out by the defendant Fecht, engineered by Richardson chiefly. The examination will be resumed at 2 o'clock this afternoon.

August 5, 1880:

HELD FOR TRIAL.—The examination of Eugene Fecht, James C. Richardson, Frederick E. Bowman, alias White, David Foster and Azalia Price, charged with defrauding the Pension Bureau, was concluded as to all but Fecht, before United States Commissioner Graves last evening. Richardson, Bowman, Foster and Azalia Price were held for trial at the November term, and the examination of Fecht was continued until this afternoon at 2 o'clock.

August 6, 1880:

United States Commissioner Graves has not yet reached his decision as to Eugene Fecht, one of the persons accused of defrauding the United States Government by means of bogus pension papers. It is an open secret, however, that he will be held for trial, and that the delay is merely to allow the accused to procure bail.

August 7, 1880:

Eugene Fecht, who is accused of conspiring to defraud the government by means of bogus pension claims, was held for trial yesterday by Commissioner Graves. In default of \$2,000 bail he was remanded to the custody of the Marshal.

August 8, 1880:

AUGUST 8, 1880--SIXTEEN

SAYINGS AND DOINGS.

License Collector Meserve's receipts last week were \$1,028.

James Dunphy is said to be the person who put a pistol bullet through Wm. Farrel's arm on Friday night. He has not yet been arrested.

Eugene Fecht, who is accused of conspiracy to defraud the United States gave bail Saturday and was released from jail. His sureties are Benjamin Rudolph Eggerman and J. T. Lowry,

September 25, 1880:

reception for ninety days.

Eugene Fecht has been again arrested for alleged complicity in pension frauds, and is now in jail. Frauds were carried on on a big scale in Detroit, and the bureau is correspondingly exercised over them.

Station Master William Clark of the Mich.

October 19, 1880:

Ex-Justice Eugene Fecht, charged with defrauding under the Pension act, is still in the County Jail, being unable to procure bail.

October 28, 1880:

Eugene Fecht et al.

The examination of Eugene Fecht, James C. Richardson, Kate Ross, alias Catharine Ogden, John Smith, Samuel Foster and Henry Washington, on a charge of attempting to defraud the United States Government by means of bogus claims for pensions, was begun before United States Commissioner D. J. Davison yesterday. The woman Ross, alias Ogden, and Henry Washington waived examination and were remanded for trial at the November term of the District Court. The examination of the other defendants was proceeded with, several witnesses for the government being sworn, and a document purporting to be Catharine Ogden's application for a pension in the handwriting of the defendant Fecht was introduced. Several witnesses testified that they had known Robert Ogden (whose widow Catharine claimed to be) when he belonged to the One Hundred and Second Regiment of Colored Volunteers, but had never known of his marriage to this woman. One of the witnesses remembered that while the regiment was in recruit camp she visited the camp occasionally, and was there called Ogden.

The examination will be resumed at 10 o'clock a. m. November 4.

November 28, 1880:

THE COURTS.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT.

United States vs. Eugene Fecht, James C. Richardson, Mary Jane Hamilton, alias Mary Jane, Mary A. Gibson, alias Mary Hill, and Catharine Ross, alias Ogden. On indictment for conspiracy to defraud the government by fraudulent pension papers. Defendants Fecht, Richardson and Gibson pleaded not guilty, and defendants Hamilton and Ogden pleaded guilty.

December 8, 1881:

The trial of Eugene Fecht, James C. Richardson and Mary Jane Hamilton, alias Fulks, was begun in the United States District Court yesterday. They are accused of having conspired to defraud the Pension Bureau by means of bogus claims. About a dozen witnesses were sworn, but nothing essentially different from the facts already printed in *THE FREE PRESS* was elicited. The quaint answers of some of the ingenuous colored witnesses provoked a good many smiles in court, and the trial was in general quite entertaining to spectators. Other witnesses for the government are to be examined this morning.

December 11, 1880 (The Baltimore Sun):

News Notes.

James C. Richardson, a one-legged colored man, has been convicted at Detroit, Mich., of frauds on the government by procuring various colored women to personate widows of dead soldiers and thus obtain pensions. Eugene Fecht, the pension agent, was tried for complicity but acquitted.

December 11, 1880 (The Burlington Free Press, Burlington, VT):

WESTERN NEWS.

ALLEGED PENSION FRAUDS.

DETROIT, Mich., Dec. 11.—The United States court in this city has been engaged the last three days in the trial of Eugene Fecht, pension agent, and James C. Richardson, a one-legged colored man, on a charge of conspiracy to defraud the government, through bogus pension claims. It was clearly proved that Richardson secured various colored women to represent themselves as widows of colored soldiers, whose sworn applications were passed through successive stages of proof and were allowed. The women were ignorant and knew little of the real nature of the business. Richardson seems to have received the largest share of the proceeds. Fecht claimed to have acted entirely in good faith and to have been ignorant of the fraudulent nature of the claims for which he made out the papers. The jury gave him the benefit of the doubt and acquitted him but convicted Richardson.

December 22, 1880:

UNITED STATES DISTRICT.

The United States vs. Eugene Fecht, impleaded with others. On indictment for conspiracy to defraud the United States. Trial in progress. This is one of the pension fraud cases which have occupied so large a share of the attention of the court this term. Implicated with the prisoner, Fecht, are James C. Richardson and Catharine Ross, alias Ogden. The last named is in jail awaiting sentence on a plea of guilty, and Richardson was lately found guilty in this particular case in which Fecht is now being tried. The principal item of interest in the trial yesterday was the prisoner Richardson's testimony that he and Fecht were partners in the pension claims business. A card of "J. C. Richardson & Co." was introduced by the government and identified by the witness as a card used by him in the partnership.

The printer employed by Richardson testified that still another lot of cards were printed, the firm name being either "Fecht & Richardson" or "Richardson & Fecht." He was not certain which form was used. No copy of that card was produced in court. The trial will be resumed at 10 o'clock this morning.

W. V. CROFT

January 1, 1881:

-THE COURTS.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT.

John Boyd vs. John P. Clark and Walter O. Ashley. On libel for damages. Trial in progress.

Frank Lee et al. vs. the tug Crusader and schooner Empire State. Discontinued without costs to either party.

John R. Gillett vs. the schooner Home. February 1 designated as day of hearing for all libels not heretofore fixed for hearing.

The trial of Eugene Fecht on a charge of conspiring with Jas. A. Richardson and Catharine Ross, alias Ogden, to defraud the United States by means of fraudulent pension claims, was ended in the United States District Court last night. Judge Brown charged the jury in the morning and at 11:30 they retired for consultation. They remained

in the jury room until 8 p. m., and being quite unable to agree, they were discharged from further consideration of the case.

March 15, 1881:

Annie Day, James C. Richardson and Eugene Fecht were arraigned before United States Commissioner Graves yesterday on a new charge of conspiracy in the matter of alleged fraudulent pension claims. Richardson pleaded guilty and was remanded to jail. The other defendants had an examination and were bound over for trial in the District Court. Bail was fixed at \$1,500, but neither furnished it.

May 13, 1881:

days to allow appeal to be perfected.
UNITED STATES DISTRICT.
The United States against Eugene Fecht, Im-
pleaded with James C. Richardson and another.
The testimony closed and case submitted to the
jury under charge of the court, without argument
by counsel for either party. Verdict of acquittal.

Also May 13, 1881:

ACQUITTED.--Eugene Fecht's third trial for alleged
crookedness in connection with fraudulent pension
claims, resulted in his acquittal yesterday. The
jury went out at 8:15 p. m. and returned at 9 p. m.

May 19, 1881:

Complaint filed.
UNITED STATES DISTRICT.
The United States vs. James C. Richardson, Im-
pleaded with Eugene Fecht and Mary Jane Fulks.
Defendent sentenced to two years at hard labor in
the Detroit House of Correction, and to pay to the
United States a fine of \$1,000.
The United States vs. James C. Richardson, im-
pleaded with Eugene Fecht and Catharine Ogden.
Defendent sentenced to two years at hard labor in
the Detroit House of Correction, said term to com-
mence at the expiration of the two years' of im-
prisonment imposed in the first case, and to pay to
the United States a fine of \$1,000.
In two other cases of the United States vs. said
Richardson, impleaded with others, sentence was
suspended.
In the case of Henry McMahon vs. the schooner

November 27, 1881:

Eugene Fecht had a partial examination before
United States Commissioner Graves on Saturday,
on another of those numerous charges of fraud in
the matter of procuring pensions.

APPENDIX

The special agent who brought charges against Eugene was Francis Wordell
(see first article, above). He soon suffered his own charges for fraud.

December 14, 1882:

Francis A. Wordell occupies in Wayne County
Jail the identical quarters formerly assigned to
Eugene Fecht (whom he arrested) and Dr. James
N. Hollywood; and Sheriff Clippert says that he
receives exactly the same treatment that other
well-behaved prisoners in his custody receive.
The Police Commissioners have denied the as-

November 29, 1882 (The Leavenworth Times):

WOMEN AND WINE.

A TRUSTED OFFICIAL RUINED.

An Agent of the Pension Department
Arrested for Forgery — His Lordly
Sprees Accompanied by Fast Women
—Sheriff Bush Shot—Crime Notes.

DETROIT, November 28.—Francis A. Wordell, special agent of the pension department, has been detected in a series of audacious forgeries, which culminated today in the issuing of warrants for his arrest, but up to this hour the officers have been unable to find him. Wordell was one of the keenest and shrewdest detectives in the employ of the government, and during the past year or two that he has paid particular attention to this district he has won the highest approval from the government officials and all connected with the cases which he has ferretted out and prosecuted. For some time past, however, he has been in the habit of going on lordly sprees out of working hours, his boon companion being a noted woman of the town. He ranked among the very best agents in the employ of the department. His forgeries, which have been going on for six months, consisted in the use of Pension Agent Samuel Post's name as an endorsement for individual notes amounting to \$1,875, which he discounted at one of the city banks, with whose cashier Wordell was on intimate terms and who passed the paper without close scrutiny, which would certainly have disclosed the spurious nature of the endorsement. Such was the implicit confidence placed in him. Besides these \$650 were borrowed of private individuals, and Pension Agent Post was induced some time ago to sign a note with him for \$300. The bank officials refused to complain against Wordell, and Pension Agent Post finally did so, at the same time apprising the department at Washington of the state of affairs. Wordell is about forty years old, and has a wife and family at New Bedford, Massachusetts.

LATER.—Special Agent Wordell was arrested this evening, and is now in jail.

November 29, 1882 (The Chicago Tribune):

A DETECTIVE'S DOWNFALL.

A Special Agent of the Government
Detected in a Series of Au-
dacious Forgeries.

Special Dispatch to The Chicago Tribune.

DETROIT, Mich., Nov. 28.—Four warrants were issued today against Francis A. Wordell, Special Agent of the United States Pension Bureau, on complaint of the Hon. Samuel Post, United States Pension Agent for Michigan. The allegation is the forgery of Mr. Post's name to five promissory notes. Mr. Wordell came to this city over two years ago under the direction of the Government, and has been engaged here since in ferretting out and working up cases against fraudulent pension claimants. He has shown remarkable skill, great zeal, and acute knowledge of the duties of his position. Not only was he an uncommonly successful agent, but he was a genial man and jolly companion. These last qualities carried him into a society where the pace was too fast for a man with a salary of only \$2,500 a year. Brought into intimate contact with Pension-Agent Post, he became perfectly familiar with his handwriting, means, and methods of doing business. Last Friday it came to the knowledge of Mr. Post that Wordell had borrowed large sums from time to time at the Second National Bank on notes bearing his (Post's) indorsement. Somewhat astonished and incredulous, he visited the bank and found

that Wordell had actually used his name as indorser on four notes aggregating \$1,875. Wordell had borrowed money of him several times lately, and is still owing a note for \$300, which Mr. Post considers a dead loss. These four notes are with the Second National Bank, the first being dated July 25 last, the others being dated with about a month's interval between them. The confidence in Wordell was so great that one of the notes was allowed to pass maturity without being protested. Another note is in the hands of Sigmund Rothschild, a prominent tobacconist here, and is drawn for \$650. The total amount of the alleged forgeries is about \$2,800. Wordell was at a suburban resort late this afternoon when news that warrants were out reached him. He drove in immediately and gave himself up. He was under the influence of liquor at the time and is now locked up in the Central Station.

To the Western Associated Press.

DETROIT, Mich., Nov. 28.—Francis A. Wordell, Special Agent of the Pension Department, has been detected in a series of audacious forgeries, which culminated today in the issuing of warrants for his arrest, but up to this writing the officers have been unable to find him. Wordell was one of the keenest and shrewdest pension detectives in the employ of the Government, and during the past year or two he has paid particular attention to this district, and he has won the highest approval from Government officials and all connected with cases which he has ferretted out and prosecuted. For some time past, however, he has been in the habit of going on lordly sprees out of working hours, his boon companions being noted women of the town, and his fall comes as a matter of course. He ranked among the very best agents in the employ of the Pension Department, and received a salary of something over \$8 a day. His forgeries, which have been going on for some six months past, consisted in the use of Pension Agent Samuel Post's name as an indorsement to four individual notes amounting to \$1,875, which was discounted by one of the city banks, with whose cashier Wordell was on intimate terms, and who passed the paper without close scrutiny, which would certainly have disclosed the spurious nature of the indorsement, such was the implicit confidence placed in him. Besides these \$650 was borrowed of a private individual, and Pension-Agent Post was induced some time ago to sign a note with him for \$300, which, from present appearances, he will be obliged to pay at maturity. The bank officials refused to complain against Wordell, and Pension-Agent Post finally did so, at the same time apprising the department at Washington of the state of affairs. Wordell is about 40 years old, and has a wife and family at New Bedford, Mass.