

# HEIRS CONTEST PROBATING OF NEW DOCUMENT

## Disposition of C. J. Pryor Estate May Terminate In Bitter Litigation

Petition to probate a recent will of the late Mrs. Charlotte J. Pryor, prominent and wealthy Chicago socialite, appeared this week to have touched off an impending series of litigations that may result in exhumation of the woman's body and the placing of fraud charges against her widower, George W. Pryor, 4611 Calumet avenue.

The petition, filed by Pryor, seeks to have this recent document recognized by the courts as being the last will and testament of the petitioner's wife who died, allegedly under questionable circumstances, October 19, 1939.

Value of the estate at time of the socialite's death was estimated at \$75,000 in real estate and \$25,000 personal properties including a large amount of jewelry and diamonds.

### Hearing February 2

Hearing on the petition has been set for February 2 before Judge John O'Connell in Probate court. If probated, the new document, dated February 18, 1938, will supersede an earlier will which Mrs. Pryor caused to be drawn October 11, 1935.

Indication of a long and bitter court battle was seen Monday after heirs and beneficiaries named in the first will retained Sheridan A. Bruseaux, special investigator, and Atty. Levi H. Morris to halt probating of what they term a document obtained either under duress or through fraud. It has also been hinted that this latest will is a false testament bearing a forged signature of Mrs. Pryor.

The most recent document names Pryor as sole executor of the estate and provides that Shady Rest, the Pryors' summer residence in Idlewild, Mich., is to pass to Mrs. Ernestine Postle, of Ypsilanti, Mich., a distant relative of the deceased, after the widower's death.

### Pryor Beneficiary

Except for this provision and stipulation that two other relatives are to receive bequests of one dollar each, Pryor is designated as the sole beneficiary of the will. Principal difference between this and the first document is that in the latter, Mrs. Mary Guthrie Byrd, of Ypsilanti, is named as co-beneficiary along with Pryor. Mrs. Byrd's name, however, fails to appear in the later will.

Besides Mrs. Byrd, other heirs who seek to check probating of the new document are William Washington, brother of the deceased, and Mrs. Evelyn Singleton, Omaha, Neb., Mrs. Pryor's niece.

Threats to exhume the body were made last week after Bruseaux uncovered circumstances in connection with Mrs. Pryor's death which, according to relatives, indicate the woman's demise was due to other than natural causes.

The investigator revealed that he submitted signatures on the documents to hand-writing experts last week, and had been informed there are grounds for believing two different persons had signed the wills.

Considerable doubt as to the authenticity of the recent document was seen, according to Attorney Morris, when Bruseaux's investigation also disclosed that Mrs. Pryor had retained counsel to institute divorce proceedings shortly before her death.

### Three Witness Will

Mrs. Byrd was named as a beneficiary in the first will shortly after she came to Chicago from Ypsilanti, at the age of 15, and made her home with the Pryors. Pryor, according to Bruseaux, well understood his wife's desire to provide for the child's future, and readily consented to the stipulations of the first will.

Witnesses who allegedly testified to the authenticity of the later document, and who face prosecution if the will is found to be a fake, are Mrs. Ruby M. Howard, of 3607 South Parkway; Mrs. Mattie Lee Taylor, 3263 Michigan avenue, and Mrs. Bessie Graham, 4630 Michigan avenue.

Heirs other than Pryor are said to have been totally unaware of the existence of a second will until the widower mentioned the document New Year's day when Mrs. Postle and her mother, Mrs. Evelyn Singleton, visited him after they stopped off in Chicago while en route to Omaha. Mrs. Postle later received court notice of the probate petition before she left Chicago for her home.