

65 Years Ago on the Border

BY PROF. J. F. BATES

One of the most stirring events on the border was the murder of the Wright family on the 15th of June 1839, a short distance from Cane Hill. Robbery was the motive for the deed. The victims were William Wright, the father, Martha Wright the daughter and an infant child. Jacob Wright was struck on the head with a blunt instrument, fracturing the skull in such manner as caused a portion of his brains to issue from the wound. He was left for dead.

Mrs. Wright and daughter, Mary Wright escaped, one by the door, the other at a window while the others were being murdered. Two children, Willis and Maurice Wright were sleeping in a trundle bed and were not discovered. The murderers set fire to the house upon leaving the premises. The smoke awakened Willis and Maurice Wright who were about the ages of 12 and 14. They removed their brother Jacob who had partly revived from the blow he had received a short distance from the building, and then manfully set to work to remove their sister Mahala, who was in the house, also to remove their father who was lying at the door, away from the building; but they were too weak to get them removed any great distance as their bodies were badly scorched by the fire, Jacob Wright recovered from his wound all right, both mentally and physically.

In a short time after the murder a vigilance committee of the best men in the country was formed and took the law into their own hands. In a few weeks after the murder John Richmond was arrested on suspicion. He finally confessed that he, together with Jim Barnes, Jack Turner, William Baily and Jack Nicholson committed the murder. On the 31st day of July after the murder John Richmond, Jim Barnes and Jack Turner were hung by the committee. Barnes and Turner protested their innocence to the last. William Bailey was caught in south Arkansas the following December and hung on the same gallows at Cane Hill. Nicholson never was arrested. Some good honest men living at that time in the vicinity of the crime believed that Jim Barnes and Jack Turner were innocent men.

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