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SHERIFF POLK MURDERED BY WM. AND ARTHUR SPAUGH!

Their Flight, Pursuit and Capture.



SHERIFF JOHN W. POLK.

Last Thursday afternoon, about 6:45 o'clock, was perpetrated the most horrible crime that disgraces the annals of the county—the murder of Sheriff Polk in the Spaugh residence, occupied by William Spaugh, Sr., his wife, daughter, and two sons, William and Arthur. The events leading to the murder are these: About 4:30 o'clock, Roy Snyder and Jack Semands went up to the station in "The Leader" delivery wagon after goods expected on the local. On their way they passed Wm. R. Edgar, Jr., and at their request he joined them. At the station it was learned that the local would not arrive for twenty-five minutes, and the proposition was made that they go over to Rasche's restaurant, near by, and while away the time listening to his graphophone, which they did. A few minutes later William Spaugh came in, and stood around amusing himself by flipping peanut shells into the face of those present. Then he caught Edgar by the legs and pulled him from the table on which he was seated and danced about the floor. He was induced to desist, after a time, and Edgar seated himself in a chair. A few minutes later he came to young Edgar again, saying, "I have been looking at your face, and the more I see of it the worse I hate it!" at the same time striking him over the eye (from the coat unbuttoned, presumably with brass knucks), and catching him by the foot jerked him to the floor. Here Rasche interceded and grasped Spaugh round the body, pinioned his arms to his sides, and put him out of the restaurant. Spaugh then went home. The station agent, when informed of the outrage, telephoned the authorities, and Sheriff Polk went up to see what was the trouble. Upon being informed of what had taken place he walked to the Spaugh residence, stopping at the gate. The residence has three rooms in the lower story, one fronting the street, which runs north and south, another in the rear of it, and a kitchen forming an L to the south of the rear room, with a porch in front. William Spaugh was sitting on this porch, and with him was his brother, Arthur, and a young man named Wm. Brown. According to young Brown's testimony, Wm. Spaugh, when he saw the sheriff coming, said, "There he comes after me now, but I don't know whether I'll let him take me or not." And Arthur Spaugh got up and went into the house. The sheriff said, at the gate, "I want to see you." "Have you a warrant for me?" answered Spaugh. "It doesn't matter whether I have or not," was the reply, "I want to see you." Spaugh made no response, but he too, arose and went into the kitchen. Thereupon Mr. Polk went through the gate and stepped upon the porch. He opened the door leading into the kitchen and stepped across the threshold when four or five shots rang out and he fell to the floor with three wounds, either of which would have caused his death. One charge, from a shotgun heavily loaded, entered

his left side under the arm, making an opening into which one might thrust his hand, and from which was taken the wadding of the cartridge and the buckle of the suspender worn by the victim. A ball from a Winchester or large revolver entered about three inches below the right shoulder blade, passed through the heart and lungs, and lodged two inches below the left nipple. Another ball of the same size crashed through the head entering two inches above the right ear, and, passing directly through the brain, lodged against the skull on the opposite side. Evidently all the shots were fired almost simultaneously, before the body fell to the floor, and were discharged from opposite sides. Another wound, evidently made with a sharp instrument and dealt as he lay prone upon the floor, laid open his scalp from the base of the skull upward for three inches. It is hardly possible to conceive of the devilish malice and brutal hatred that inflicted this wound upon the dead. A butcher-knife, ground to the fineness of a razor's edge, with the handle newly varnished, was found in the search that succeeded, and it is thought that this instrument was used to inflict the cut.

When neighbors ran in directly after, they found the victim's body lying face down in the kitchen with his head against the facing of the door leading to the north rear room. When Brown saw the sheriff entering the gate he retired to the rear of the house, fearing trouble, and he testifies that the shooting was nearly instantaneous with the sound of Mr. Polk's tread upon the porch. Immediately succeeding the murder, the two Spaughs left the house by the rear and ran up a ravine on the side of Shepherd Mountain. Len Arnett, colored, who lives near by on the mountain side, had heard of the shooting and was running toward the house when they came out. They called to him to stop, and he says Arthur said, "Bill, give him a shot!" which Bill did, and Len hastily retraced his steps. He was the last person to see them. These are the main facts developed before a coroner's jury. That body was summoned by Coroner Clarkson immediately upon his arrival here from Annapolis. The members were: H. W. Adolph, Robert Hill, Isaac Sutton, Chas. Sutton, J. D. Moore and John Stricklin. Their verdict was as follows:

"We, the jury, summoned by the Coroner of Iron county, Mo., do find that John W. Polk came to his death from guns and pistols, shot, held and fired by Arthur Spaugh and Wm. Spaugh, Jr., on the 25th day of May, 1905, in the County of Iron and State of Missouri.

H. ADOLPH, Foreman.
JOHN STRICKLIN.
J. D. MOORE.
CHAS. SUTTON.
ROBERT HILL.
ISAAC T. SUTTON."

Never in the history of this county was public sentiment so completely aroused as by this deplorable murder—this sacrifice of so good a man as John W. Polk to the devilry of two law-breakers whose lives since their boyhood have been a trouble and a menace to the community.

As soon as the people recovered from the shock of the outrage, posess were formed and armed and started in pursuit of the murderers. But the latter had over an

hour's start, and the pursuit was slow and difficult because of the heavy foliage and thick undergrowth on the mountains. Next morning a public meeting was held and the necessary committees were appointed. Money was subscribed toward the capture of the fugitives, and bloodhounds at Charleston telegraphed for, together with a special train to bring them here at the earliest possible moment. At 2 o'clock the train arrived, and assembled at the station to meet it were not less than six hundred people. The dogs were taken to the Spaugh place and placed upon the trail, but it was too old and the scent did not lie. After considerable time on Shepherd Mountain they were recalled and taken on Pilot Knob, and for some time it was thought the fugitives had crossed the valley in the night and taken refuge in one of the abandoned mines. But here, too, the chase was abandoned next day after the closest search failed to discover them.

Saturday and Sunday posess were sent to various points, but nothing resulted. Tuesday night, however, a party of sixteen well armed men secretly congregated in the Shut-In, about three miles southeast of town, and, under the direction of John I. Marshall, the newly appointed sheriff, went thence to the Walker farm, some ten miles below here, and in squads of four at different places on or near the farm began their watch.

The members of this posse were: John I. Marshall, Dr. E. L. Barnhouse, Ben Blanton, Fred Delano, Andy Barnhouse, John Tesrow, Louis Schultz, John Leonard, Geff. Marshall, Alex. Tesrow, Jesse Pease, Joe Aterbury, John Robbs, Ben. Left, Ed. Leonard, Phillip Couch.

The county court had assembled Monday and offered a reward of \$500 for the apprehension and conviction of the murderers. The Governor had been appealed to and had offered a reward of \$800. This, together with the amount subscribed by the citizens, made a total of over \$1250.

The posse proceeded from the Shut-In about 11 o'clock to the Walker place. The Spaugh family had been cultivating a piece of ground on the farm, but had returned to the home place in Ironton about two weeks prior to the murder. While farming they had occupied a log house, and it was believed they would resort to it or the vicinity while in hiding, and the result justified the supposition. Long before daylight they had this and other houses surrounded and quietly awaited developments. The four under the immediate charge of the sheriff bided their time until daylight and then searched the house they had been watching, but found nothing and were about to give up their quest. Passing through the woods they came across another log house, apparently deserted. The Sheriff and Tesrow went inside. There were two rooms on the ground floor and the usual loft above, with an opening into it about four by six feet, but no steps or ladder. After looking through the lower rooms, they started to climb to the loft. The Spaughs had evidently been asleep and been awakened by the



THE HOUSE IN WHICH SHERIFF POLK WAS MURDERED.

them. The prisoners were in a hurry, with Marshall and Dr. Barnhouse and a driver, Jesse Pease. They came at a rapid gait by the road leading to Arcadia, and were quickly driven to the jail where the prisoners were placed in security for the time being.

The assemblage was orderly, its make-up being of the best people of the community, but the sentiment halted between obedience to law and acting on the biblical injunction of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The prisoners were utterly unnerved, and not without cause, for deep and bitter was the feeling against them. They flew into the jail as if it were the one haven of rest and safety. In that morning's ride they had tasted of the bitterness of death, and they "were sorry they had killed Sheriff Polk!"

Immediately after the murder, the other members of the Spaugh family—the father, mother and sister—were arrested, but next morning were released. So with Wm. Brown; but Saturday Mrs. Spaugh and Brown were re-arrested, and the former is still held, charged with being an accomplice before and after the fact. Brown was again released and is now at large. The evidence in the case showed that neither the sister nor the father were present when the

murder was perpetrated, the latter being in the barn attending his horses, and the sister at a neighbor's house.

Carroll Trammell, also, was taken up and held for a short time, on the suspicion that he had aided the Spaughs to escape, or at least endeavored to communicate with them after the murder; but it was "a flash in the pan" and he was released. The fact is, the community was so aroused and so excited that suspicion need be but lightly fed to grow into belief, and action quickly followed.

Since their arrest the Spaughs claim that they were on the mountain back of Arthur Huff's residence while the bloodhounds were on Pilot Knob, and that they could plainly hear the baying of the dogs. When captured, we are told by one of the posse, the fugitives had in their possession a package of cayenne pepper which article it is claimed will, if placed in the shoes, destroy the scent, or, scattered upon the trail, make the hounds of no avail. Where did the Spaughs get the pepper, or who conveyed it to them?

I am rejoiced that the law has been so far vindicated without the shedding of other blood. Now let justice have her own! 'Tis not a boon, but a right, we ask of the State.

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Ever Seen in Iron County.

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We also have Splendid Values in Clothing, Underwear, Shoes, Hats, Caps, Toilet Articles, Notions, Etc., Etc.

B. N. Brown,

(Successor to Mullin & Brown.)

Ironton, - - - Missouri.

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