

Accused Rough Riders freed in Wheeler death

The second part to last week's article includes testimonies of witnesses and the results of the trial.

Warrants were issued

The "Cowboys" were, according to the statements of all parties, members of the show that did the shooting, and when a discharged employee of the show was found who could give the names of the cowboys, warrants were issued for several of them. The warrants were taken to the sheriff of Caldwell County and he arrested four of them; the fourth, Jimmie Terrel, a mere boy is short

sopped in Princeton just long enough to get their wounds dressed.

It is stated that a man of very small stature was the last seen to leave Wheeler after he had been shot and clubbed, and was



Brenda Underdown
County Historian

Forgotten Passages

breeches, was kept at the hotel under the charge of a special bailiff.

Sunday some of the citizens thought that there was some danger of mob violence and advised and urged the county judge to send the three men to the Princeton jail. The three men, M. Heffener, Eli McGregor and Claude Morton, were sent to Princeton, where they will be kept until Thursday, when they will be brought back for the examining trial.

One of the managers of the show was here Monday and employed James & James and A. C. Moore to defend the men. We understand that the men arrested claim that they will have no trouble in proving that they were not engaged in the shooting.

They claim that the two wounded men did the shooting, and these two

heard to say as he turned away, "We fixed him." The man with the wound in the neck was the small man and his name is reported as Kinney McDonald

The Trial

Eli McGregor, M. Heffener and Claude Morton were brought back here Sunday morning, charged with the murder of Claude Wheeler. These men were connected with Buckskin Bill's Wild West Show. They were three of a company of 15 or 20 cowboys, or rough riders, and were with the show on the night Claude Wheeler was killed. Jimmie Terrel, a 15-year-old boy, was also arrested and brought here, charged with the same offense, but was released without going to jail.

The trial was held Friday and Saturday before Judge Rochester. A large number of witnesses were brought up by the prosecution. No witnesses were introduced for the defense.

Testimonies from the trial

A. J. Sweat - I was down at the depot. Saw six or seven of the "rough riders." They came from towards the show grounds. I heard a pis-

tol shot. Some time after they passed, I heard a racket. It was near the baggage room. When they began shooting I saw a man run under a wagon. I went down the street behind the wagon, I saw the men, they looked like cowboys. I could hear the licks, one of the men said; "Kill the d-- s--b--." He was a cowboy, I could not identify him. I left after the shooting took place. One fellow took me by the arm and said: "What are you doing here? You get back up town." I started up the street and found him lying by the sidewalk. I asked, "Who is this?" he said; "it is Claud Wheeler."

Cross-Examined - No sir, I could not say these men are the ones who did the shooting.

Jim Wilborn - I was down at the depot at the time of Claud Wheeler's death; I saw a number of cowboys; they were walking fast, and my attention was first called to them by the rattling of spurs; they were gone a quarter of an hour; I could not say how many there were, but there were two Indians and the others were cowboys; I saw them going back in about a quarter of an hour - were going back when I last saw them; I could not say where they went, but it was up the railroad; it was cowboys shooting, but could not tell who they were shooting at. There must have been three or four cowboys at first but there were more afterwards. It must have been about 15 feet from the platform. They were firing very rapidly but I could not tell whom they were shooting at. I heard a striking as with a club; they ran around the wag-

on to head him off; I did not hear any licks before the shooting; I don't know how many licks were given.

Cross-Examined - I could not tell who fired the first shot; the first shot sounded like the ones fired in the show but could not tell whether they were fired from the ground or not. I was just crossing the track from them; I could not say there was anybody else, they looked like cowboys.

Thomas Morgan - I was down at the depot when the trouble occurred, or just south of the depot. There was a big crowd there; I saw cowboys after the shooting was over, three or four; one of them said he was shot in the neck; he was telling a fellow dressed in cowboy robes. There were three or four cowboys standing around; I stayed about five minutes after it was over. I had been down there about half an hour before the shooting took place. I saw some cowboys going towards the mill, eight or nine in the crowd; it was about three-quarters of an hour before the shooting occurred. They came back to the depot; it had not been over five minutes, I suppose, then one Indian went north of the railroad. there were three or four down at the other end. I could not tell how many were in the shooting or how many shots were fired; I did not hear any licks struck. I was at the show that night. The shots that killed Claud Wheeler sounded like the ones I heard in the show; I did not hear any threats, I did not see any Indians about the wagon. I saw the flash of a pistol, but do not know who was

shooting them and do not know whether they were cowboys or not.

Cross-Examined - I do not recognize these men as being the ones who were there that night.

Mr. Burch - I live in the town of Marion; was at the depot on the night Claud Wheeler was killed. I saw the shooting, could not say who was shot, could not tell how many were taking part in the shooting. There were several there who had on white hats. I did not see Claud Wheeler and did not see any licks.

I went down there about 20 minutes after the show performances were over, saw a crowd of six cowboys and one Indian. They walked past me; that was about 30 minutes after the killing. I stayed down there until after the show train pulled out.

I saw cowboys pass back; yes, I could identify the cowboy that passed back. They passed me walking rapidly going down the railroad. I heard a conversation about the cartridges; he was speaking to about 25 persons; I do not remember to have seen these prisoners in the crowd. He had on a black coat and carried a cane; he got out of the light to issue the ammunition. I could not identify the man and do not know whether he was connected with the shooting or not, but I suppose he was.

Cross-Examined - I could not say these men (the prisoners) are the ones who did the shooting; the first time I saw them they were walking south toward the show ground. It was about 30 minutes before the shoot-

ing occurred.

Cowboy's Acquitted

After hearing the evidence, Judge Rochester ruled that "as no witness could be identified, the prisoners as participants in the killing," the prisoners were discharged, due to lack of evidence.

(note: Claud Wheeler is buried in the Wheeler family plot at Maplevue. (Brenda Underdown is chair of Crittenden County Historical Society and a member of Crittenden County Genealogical Society. Much more local history can be found at OurForgottenPassages.blogspot.com.)

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Ag Tag donations highest ever

Total to be divided among 4-H, FFA, KDA

Crittenden County farmers donated a near record amount to the state's Ag Tag Program in 2025, helping set a statewide record of \$978,260 that aids local 4-H and FFA organizations.

Last year, \$2,900 was collected in Crittenden County Clerk's Office through the voluntary \$10 donation made when farmers buy new or renew farm license plates. Since 2013 when the program began, 2024-25 reflects the second-highest total donated from county farmers, second only to 2023-24 when 314 donations were made.

"March is when farm tags and commercial truck fees come due, making this month the busiest of the year for our office," said County Clerk Daryl Tabor. "And amid the hectic days, farmers have been so generous in giving to help state and local 4-H and FFA organizations that are so important to youth and the future of agriculture."

Crittenden County High School sophomore Caden Penn was one of two students who designed



Crittenden County Clerk Daryl Tabor was at CCHS recently to celebrate the ag tag's success. Pictured are (front from left) Emme Lynch, Marlee Sosh, Tabor, Madison Walker, Gracie Orr, (second row) Aliza Maraman, Aerie Suggs, Ella Whitney, Emory Orr, (back) Cabot Sutton, Caroline Martin, Abby Korzenborn and Landon Starkey.

the tag. The other student was from Henderson County.

The voluntary gifts are divided equally among Kentucky 4-H, Kentucky FFA and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA). And \$1.67 of each contribution comes back to both the 4-H and FFA programs in the county of origin.

That means Crittenden County 4-H and FFA each received a boost of \$483.33 last year from the Ag Tag Program. Since

2012-13, the individual groups have each received \$3,908.33 through the giving of local farmers.

"We know every dollar counts in the pockets of farmers, but we are hoping our they can exceed last year's generosity," said Tabor. "But it is up to each customer. That's why we ask before the donation is added to the

total fees."

Also starting this month, there is a Friends of Agriculture license plate available for use on any passenger vehicle. The \$44 plate includes a similar \$10 donation to be split between 4-H, FFA and Kentucky Proud.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Crittenden County Board of Elections will meet at 4 p.m. Thursday, May 7 in the Office of Crittenden County Clerk, 200 Industrial Dr., Marion, to process excused, mail-in absentee ballots returned for the primary election. Ballots will not be scanned until Election Day, May 19, and results of absentee balloting will not be released until after polls close at 6 p.m. that day.

This notice given pursuant to Kentucky statutes

GoVote.ky.gov

To find out where you may vote on May 19 and to find a sample ballot for your voting precinct

PUBLIC NOTICE

Crittenden County's automatic tabulating equipment for use in the primary election will be inspected by Crittenden County Board of Elections beginning at 3:30 p.m. Monday, April 20 in the Office of Crittenden County Clerk, 200 Industrial Dr., Marion. This is done each year prior to votes being tabulated by the scanning of marked ballots.

This notice given pursuant to Kentucky statutes

GoVote.ky.gov

To register to vote or update your registration name and/or address by April 20. It is too late for a party change.

CITY OF MARION
AN ALL KENTUCKY CITY

SOLICITATION FOR SEALED BIDS AND PROPOSALS

The City of Marion, 217 South Main Street, Marion, KY, 42064, hereby solicits and advertises for a nonexclusive three (3) year franchise for the service, towing, and storage of motor vehicles requested by the City as described and specified in the bid packet entitled City of Marion Nonexclusive Motor Vehicle Towing and Storage Service Franchise Bid, copies of which are available at the City of Marion Office, 217 South Main Street, Marion, KY 42062.

All bids and proposals in response to this advertisement and solicitation must be received by the Marion City Administrator on or before 2 p.m. on Friday, April 17, 2026, with time being of the essence, on a form provided by the Marion City Administrator and completed according to the Bid Instructions provided thereby, including all required attachments; and enclosed within a sealed envelope, with the words "City of Marion Towing and Storage Bid" written, typed or otherwise indicated on the outside of the envelope.

The City of Marion reserves the right to not only reject any and all bids and proposals submitted in response to this advertisement and solicitation, for any reason or no reason; but especially those that are not in conformity with either the bid instructions or the specifications provided by the City, but also to accept bids and proposals submitted in response to this advertisement and solicitation that do not conform to those bid instructions and specifications.