

African American Deaths, 1857-1869

11 April 2010

compiled by Bill Page

A Negro boy and horse, belonging to John Millican, Esqr., were drowned in the Brazos, a little below the mouth of the Navasota, on Saturday evening last. The water at the ford is scarce three feet deep, but the boy becoming frightened, it seems, forced the horse out of the track and into the channel. Washington American, 14 April 1857, p.2

Another Homicide – About 9 o'clock last evening a freedman was shot on Tremont Street under singular circumstances. A pistol shot was heard, and the first person showed up found Thomas Skinner, formerly belonging to a Mr. Hutchis, of Brazos County, lying dying from a wound through the breast. He was too weak to give any account of the manner in which he received the wound, or by whom it was inflicted. Up to the hour in which we write, nothing further has been elicited tending to criminate any one or explain the cause of his assassination. He worked at (illegible) washing, and was club-footed, and is reported to have been a peaceably disposed man. Flake's Bulletin (Galveston), 6 July 1866, p.5

From the *Millican News Letter* of the 10th ... Saturday night seems to have been eventful with the freed folks. At a ball in their town on Saturday night, a general row was raised, and the ball broken up. Some of the freedmen got bruised heads and smashed noses, but none were seriously injured ... On Saturday night we learn that a Negro was killed by one of his own color. His throat was cut with a knife, and he died Sunday night; the murderer succeeded in making temporary escape, but was arrested a few days since, placed in the hands of the military, and after having an examination, was placed in jail to await a trial at the next term of court. Galveston Daily News, 13 August 1867, p.1

The following additional names of those who have died of the fever at Millican, and not heretofore published has been handed us. The mortality in proportion to the inhabitants has been as great at that place as anywhere the fever has visited this season. The total number of whites who have died up to the 25th of October was 61, and of blacks, 20. Mrs. CAREVON and son, Alex McKEIG, Miss JACKSON, Claiborne HAYS, Michael MONAGHAN. Galveston Daily News, 8 Nov. 1867, p.2

Fast Place – We learn from parties who came down on the Central train yesterday that a colored man was found dead in the streets of Bryan on Sunday morning, and that a white man by the name of Robinson was killed in a gambling saloon at that place on Saturday evening. Another colored man was also found dead on Monday morning. A pleasant place that Bryan to live in? Flake's Bulletin (Galveston), 16 Jan. 1868, page 6

*African American murdered in Bryan. (Marshall) Texas Republican, 14 March 1868, p.2

The *Houston Telegraph* learns that twelve Negroes drowned, a few days since, about fifteen miles from Bryan, on the Brazos, by the overflow of that river. They were farming between the river and a small creek, and before they were aware of danger, both had overflowed and made it impossible for the Negroes to get out. The Brazos is out of its banks for miles, completely inundating a large number of farms.

Galveston Daily News, 17 March 1868, p.2, col.3

We understand that Mr. Gray, a well known citizen of Robertson County, was killed on Friday last by a Negro employed on his farm ... The Negro fled and was followed by a number of citizens to Bryan, where he was captured on Saturday morning and executed. Galveston Daily News, 27 May 1868, p.2, col.4

We are informed, that a Negro, known as Capt. Wilson, formerly of some board of registrars, and distinguished among his dusky peers as a Democrat, was murdered on the Brazos River, about thirteen miles from here, last Monday night. The deed is attributed to his African brothers. We are informed by a gentleman from Caldwell that he was a polite, intelligent and worthy freedman. *Bryan News Letter*, June 27. Flake's Bulletin, 28 June 1868, p.5

Rev. Anthony Bewley has a companion in martyrdom. In the "Lone Star" State, another Methodist preacher has been hung. Texas claims the proto-martyr of our Church since its reorganization in the Southwest. In the winter of 1865, an intelligent, courageous, powerfully built colored man, twenty-five years old, entered the Thomson Biblical Institute, to prepare for the Christian ministry. He was Edwin Brooks. A machinist by trade, he commanded four dollars per day; but he left all to follow Christ. A faithful student, he advanced rapidly in his studies, and after a year's tuition, joined the Texas Conference, and was sent by Bishop Simpson to Millican, Texas, and at the succeeding Conference was reappointed by Bishop Ames. He soon became a leading man among his people, who looked up to him for religious advice and political counsel. In August last a white man entered the cabin of a freedman and threatened his life; but the man fled to the woods - the old place of refuge. From this incident occurred what was called the "Millican riot," which resulted so fatally to the blacks. In the troubles that followed, Rev. Edwin Brooks was the recognized leader of his brethren. After the excitement had subsided, Brooks was ordered to Austin to report to General Reynolds. On his way he found himself pursued by a band of armed men, from whom he fled and took refuge in the "Brazos river bottoms." But the blood-hounds were soon upon his path and uncovered his retreat to his bloody pursuers. Having secured their victim, they demanded that he should disclose the object of his mission to Austin, and that he should recant his Republican principles. Refusing to do either, they began to torture him in the most cruel manner. They stripped the flesh from his body, but he refused to recant; they broke his legs, but he declined to foreswear his honor and his faith; they then hung him by the neck till he died a martyr for his Church and country. After the horrid murder, the colored people were permitted to take the body of their pastor down and give it a decent burial. Thus a former student and fellow laborer, ended a life in which he had suffered as a slave, fought as a Union soldier, and which he crowned with martyrdom. New Orleans Advocate, 24 October 1868, p.5, col.1

From Bryan - A Negro man was found hanging to a tree, about one mile east of Bryan, on Tuesday morning. The perpetrators have not been discovered and none suspected. The murdered Negro's wife says that a party of white men, with painted faces, came to his house on Monday night and took him away. The coroner went out and held an inquest, and it is said, that he must have been killed before being hung to the limb. He is said to have been a good peaceable freedman. Houston Daily Times, 9 October 1868, p.1, col.6

The *Navasota Ranger*, a slave-driving Blair and Seymour hebdomadal, prints the following, the italics being ours: Mr. J. M. Duke, a planter of Brazos County, undertook to *correct a disobedient Negro* on his place, when he was attacked by two Negro men who held him while the Negro woman inflicted some heavy blows on him with a club. He afterwards procured a gun and shot one of the Negro fellows that had threatened his life, from the effects of which he died. Although Mr. Drake [sic] is considered justifiable, and is willing to surrender to the civil authorities, he has temporarily left his home to avoid military arrest, believing he will not get an impartial trial before a military tribunal New York Tribune, 13 November 1868, page 2.

Bryan Items ... A colored man was killed at the Brazos ferry, some twenty miles from this city, last week, and the military have gone to make arrests. Houston Union, 28 June 1869, page 1

The [Houston] *Union* says a rumor prevailed in Houston last evening that a white fiddler named Jimmy Dunn and a colored man named Scott, were killed in Bryan on the 19th, and adds: These parties are well known in Houston, where they have resided for the past year or two. They were rather hard cases, largely addicted to drink. Galveston Daily News, 22 July 1869, p. 2.