

Tragic Ending of Barret Scott

Holt Official's Generosity Leads to Undoing;
Mob Hangs Him on Bridge

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Editor-in-Chief, Diamond Jubilee Edition

Scotty was mounted on a fleet pinto, I on a bay cow pony no less fleet in bounding over the prairie. That day we were in pursuit of a gray prairie wolf. Others on slower horses were bringing up the rear. Barret and I rode close on the heels of two grey hounds that were pressing hard upon the wolf, which suddenly stopped, turned upon his adversaries and bared his teeth in defiance.

The picture today lingers of a magnificent specimen of the wild challenging dogs and men to do their worst. And I think Barret Scott's generous nature felt something of the emotions of that moment that, after all, maybe we should let that noble creature of the wild go.

Scotty was a leader of men, impetuous, generous and nothing that I recall revealed his character so much as in that moment of victory when he must have felt a little humiliated in the presence of a lone wolf making a stand ready to defend or sacrifice its life. Scotty was in middle life, I about to step over the threshold and embark on life's uncertain course. The shame of that hour in the presence of a lone wolf standing there in defiance of six brave horsemen and two dogs still haunts me, though it may have lingered with Scotty but for a moment.

Some periods of local history touched the heroics. Others emerge out of memory's mists wrapped in sullen bitterness that lead away on the trail of tragedy. Factions, unworthy the dignity of being classed as political, were more blighting to the county than hot winds, raging blizzards or any mood of the elements of nature.

Barret Scott, of Scottville, was elected county treasurer in 1889 with all other Republican nominees, serving two terms or so much of the second term as he could hang onto after the shortage in his office was made a factional football and community scandal. The county board was composed of men lacking in both experience and ability to supervise the affairs of the county but richly endowed with factional bias. Had there been watchfulness in the interests of the county and less blind hatred of Republicans, Scott and his bondsmen would have made good the \$32,000 a jury in district court on September 15, 1894, found to be the sum Scott was short.

Generosity Leads to Undoing

Scotty—what was the matter with him? Too big of heart, generosity with no sense of curtailment in the interests of public welfare. Something of the FDR lavish hand tossing out public funds. Scotty's father was a little concerned over his election as county treasurer. He was heard to say: "It wouldn't do to put Barret on a bread wagon in time of famine." And '93 and '94 were famine years. County funds went, not to enrich Scotty but to help some needy settlers as well as this weakness of Barret being taken advantage of by unscrupulous friends.

On July 19, 1894, the county

board in session, Scott offered to turn over securities to the amount of \$50,000 and Joe Bartley \$5,000 in cash to reimburse the county. Mr. Harrington advised the board against this and the offer was rejected. These securities were considered shaky, mostly "promises to pay" executed by various individuals who had obtained money from Scott.

Court Action Not Very Clear

The record is a little hazy as to the legal steps taken against Scott and his bondsmen. In one court action the presiding judge ruled that the bond of Scott had been invalidated by the county board authorizing additional signers, released the bondsmen and entered judgment in the sum of \$76,000 against Scott. And then on September 15 the jury sitting on the case in the trial of Scott for embezzlement brought in a verdict of guilty, setting the amount of the shortage at \$32,000.

Scott, who had left the county and state, was picked up by a sheriff in New Mexico and brought back to O'Neill by Frank Campbell, special agent of Holt county. He did not like to see things all one sided so he brought suit against Sheriff Cunningham, of New Mexico, for false imprisonment. Cunningham had come to O'Neill to collect the reward hung up by the county board for the apprehension of Scott. This was one instance when the board rejected the advice of Mr. Harrington to let Scott go and acted upon the clamoring of Judge McCutcheon and other emotional citizens and went the limit to catch the fugitive.

It Was Goodbye, Scotty

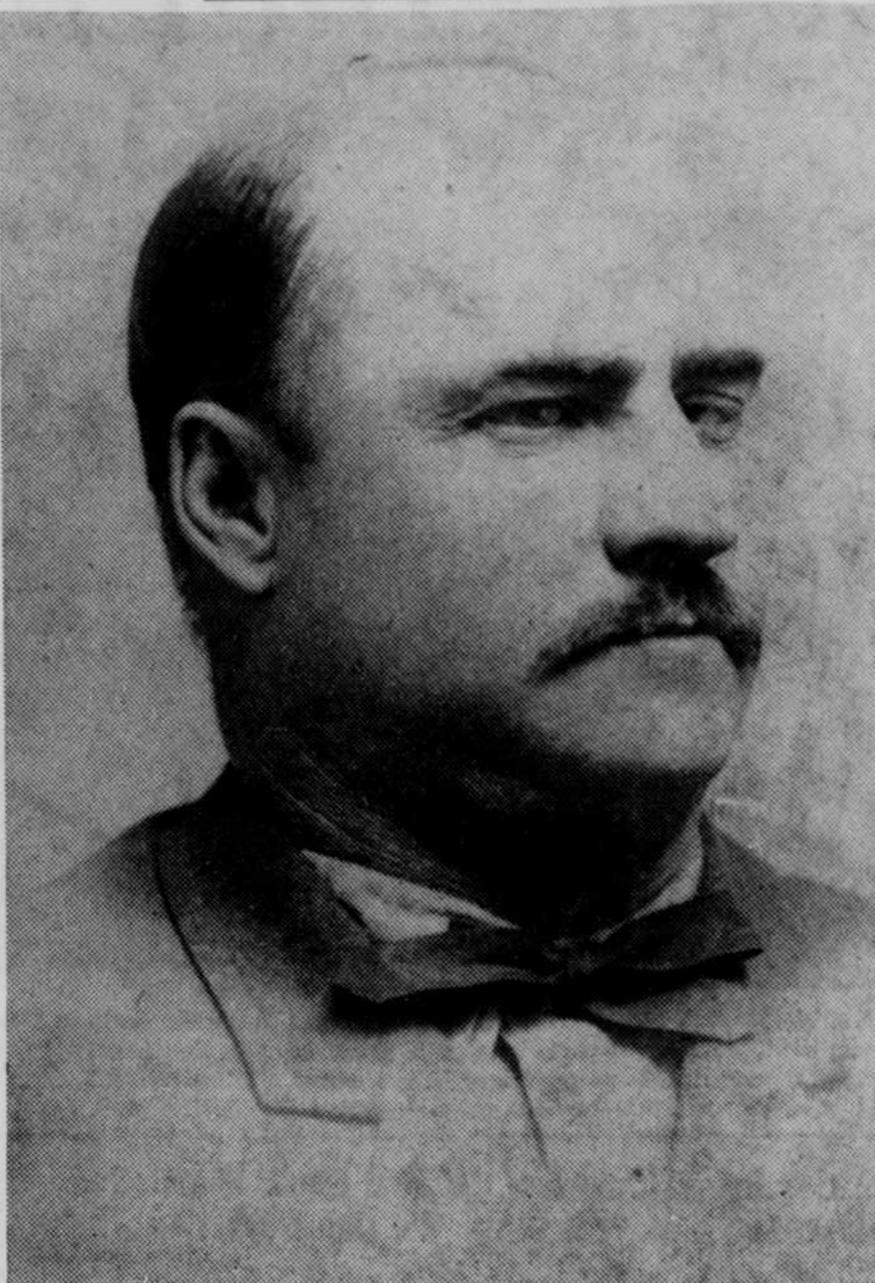
Nearing the midnight hour of the dying year of 1894, Mrs. Scott arrived in town to tell the story of her husband being taken from her side by masked men and doubtless led to his doom. Mr. and Mrs. Scott, with their little daughter and a niece, Miss McWhorter, and Henry Schmidt, were driving in from the Scottville community when they were held up by masked men lying in wait behind sod walls at a point known as Parker, some 12 miles Northeast of town.

Shots were fired, the Scott team was killed and a bullet struck the steel stay of Miss McWhorter's corset. Barret was dragged from the buggy, loaded into a wagon and bound securely with ropes.

This occurred at 2 p. m. Alarmed, with heavy hearts the others of the party made their weary way into town.

Scott was hung from the Whiting bridge over the Niobrara, the troubled waters of that stream closing over his lifeless body. The debt of Scotty to Holt county had been liquidated.

Body Recovered
And those troubled waters gave up their dead 19 days later.



BARRET SCOTT . . . As a Holt county treasurer he was a leader of men, impetuous, generous. His death became a legend. (Photograph above as he appeared as Holt official.)

er. On January 19, at 9:15 p. m., a searching party from O'Neill was rewarded by recovering the body of Scotty through a hole in the ice, 120 feet below the bridge and 10 feet from the North shore. A few feet of rope clung to the broken neck, arms and legs bound about with ropes and fully clothed the body of Barret Scott was laid out on the ice while brave men sat down on the bank of the river and wept and the silent stars looked down upon the scene.

For half a century Summer bloom and Winter snows have left their tribute over a little mound up on the hill where repose the bones of a once active, warm hearted citizen whose misguided generosity made him the victim of unrestrained passion.

A coroner's jury was selected from the young county of Boyd composed of the following: J. F. Wood, J. C. Harvey, Cal Moffit, Wm. Powell, B. F. Loucks and R. P. Stearns. Indictments were brought against George D. Mullihan, Mose Elliot, Mert Roy "and others". Mullihan was the only one to be brought to trial. Attorneys and other attaches of the court were armed with six-shooters during the trial, which resulted in acquittal of Mullihan.

A committee of the Rebekah lodge was appointed and drafted resolutions of sympathy for Mrs. Scott and daughter. Alberta Utley, Cora Meredith and Maybelle Corbett composed this committee. J. P. Gilligan, E. E. Evans and E. M. Grady were the committee of the Knights of Pythias to write the resolution of that order.

Searching Party

The strangest New Year gathering ever held anywhere was at the midnight hour of December 31, 1894. At that hour a nine-year-old boy was awakened in his room upstairs by voices in the room below in earnest conversation. That was at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Meredith. The boy was their son, Owen, who got out of bed and went down stairs clad in his night gown to find Mrs. Scott with her daughter, Fanny, there, his father and mother and all under high tension. Mrs. Scott had come at that midnight hour to tell what had happened to them. Mr. Meredith left the house before daylight, aroused several citizens and the searching party left town. The Meredith family did not see Mr. Meredith again until he came in with the party that brought the body of Scott.

Henry Tomlinson supplies us with the following concerning the recovery of Scott's body. In addition to those he mentions Clyde King and Jake Hershiser were with the searching party.

"The body of Scott was found by Bill Hudson, who was a member of the old Mineola ball team. He was directed in his search by S. J. Weekes. Bill was kneeling down on the ice and had a long iron rod with a hook on the end. Weekes told Bill to explore over in the edge of an eddy, which had not frozen over. Bill fished there and his hook caught something. He gave a good hard jerk and Scott's body came right up in his face. I saw him two days later and he looked like he had been through a sick spell. I think Sanford Parker was there too for the Odd Fellows had offered a two hundred dollar reward. Hudson brought suit against the lodge for the reward money. The lodge claimed it on the grounds that Parker, one of the lodge members, had found him."

Modern sealing wax contains no wax.

Local Artisans Builders of City

Houses, barns, store buildings, churches, banks, mills and shops that went to make up the collection of habitations and business places of a primitive O'Neill were the work of local artisans. Some of these are here called to mind:

Mullen Brothers, Alex. Boyd, George Triggs, Owen Davidson, John McBride, Sam Wolf and a dark-haired slight-built man whose name I have forgotten, who lived in a house that was moved away to make room for the Short Line on the Southwest edge of town, were among the early day carpenters.

The brick masons and plasterers included George Clark, who was also a printer, John Triggs, John and Den Hunt and a patriot holding down a claim out on Dry Creek by the name of Mason.

John Haloran, of Inman, and George Cross painted the town. Interior decorations were omitted or put on by the homefolks.

Judicial Convention of Fusionists Held

The fusion judicial convention was held at Valentine Tuesday, 47 years ago, Judge W. H. Westover, of Crawford, and Judge J. J. Harrington, of O'Neill, being renominated without opposition. The delegation attending from Holt county was composed of: A. F. Mullen, John Fisher, F. C. Gatz, M. R. Sullivan, M. M. Sullivan, J. M. Morgan, Frank Campbell, S. M. Wagers, T. V. Golden, E. H. Whelan, Tom Coyne, P. J. and J. F. O'Donnell, O. F. Biglin, S. F. McNichols, Steve McGinnis and Pat Kelly, all of O'Neill; Frank Reiburg, of Atkinson, Levi v a n Valkenburg, of Inman, James Mullen, of Page.

Rancher Shot Down

An 1899 tragedy was thus briefly told: H. Blenkiron, a cattle man owning a ranch down near Amelia, was shot and instantly killed at Belden last Sunday evening by C. S. Harris editor of the Belden News. An article appeared in the News to which Blenkiron took exceptions and he called upon Harris in the latter's office for the purpose of getting him to retract it. The argument waxed warm and Harris says Blenkiron started for him to do him up when he shot him, claiming to have done so in self defense. Self defense was the verdict of the coroner's jury.

A Stag Party

A half-century ago R. R. Dickson entertained a number of young friends at his residence Tuesday evening by giving a Halloween party. Those who attended enjoyed the event very much. The rooms were tastefully decorated with chrysanthemums, fragrant roses and waving ferns, and lighted only by candles and Chinese lanterns. A bountiful lunch was served and the whole evening's joy reflected much credit to the ability of the host to plan and entertain.

A Marriage Recorded

Calmer Simonson, of Agee, and Miss Gertrude Leeper, of Omaha, were married by Judge Selah yesterday morning, said The Frontier some 50 years ago. Mr. Simonson is a son of Thomas Simonson, of Agee, and is one of the prosperous young farmers of Shields township. The bride is a daughter of J. W. Leeper, who removed from Agee to Omaha last Spring, and is a young lady esteemed and beloved by all her acquaintances. The Frontier extends congratulations.

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of the Pioneers.

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IN THE ERA



of McCafferty's
Opry House and
a "Wild Evening"
of Parchesi...

... insurance was something that few people carried, and the policies were very limited in their coverage.

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