

## TRAGEDY IN RICHLAND

## CITY MARSHAL KILLED BY PRISONER

By James B. King, Jr.  
July 27, 1906, brought tragedy to the small Ozark town of Richland, Missouri. The city marshal, William C. Manes, laid dead of a gunshot wound and armed citizens searched the woods for his killer.

As darkness fell, United States Deputy Marshal, W. W. Conner, of Aurora boarded a train in Springfield, Missouri, with a bloodhound and headed for Richland area to assist in the manhunt.

The sequence of events that resulted in the death of Marshal Manes began June 28, 1906, when James C. Pritchett enlisted in the United States Army at Muskogee in the Indian Territory. Pritchett arrived at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, July 1, 1906, and was assigned to Company C for basic training. He deserted from the Army nine days later.

Pritchett had listed his home town as Richland, Missouri, upon his enlistment. After his desertion the commanding officer at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, sent an official desertion notice to Richland Marshal William C. Manes requesting that Manes arrest and hold Pritchett for military authority.

On July 24, 1906, Manes was able to locate Pritchett

and arrested him for desertion. However, on the way back to Richland Pritchett escaped.

Warren Pritchett of Waynesville, a second cousin of James C. Pritchett states that James Pritchett made his escape by requesting a chance to say goodbye to his grandparents. Marshal Manes allowed Pritchett to enter the grandparents' home alone and Pritchett escaped out the back door.

Pritchett was then able to elude Manes until the afternoon of July 27, 1906, when Manes discovered Pritchett working in a hay field some three of four miles north of Richland in Camden County.

Manes again placed Pritchett under arrest and handcuffed Pritchett's right hand to his own left hand. The pair then began the long walk back to Richland.

About 5:00 p.m. July 27, 1906, Miss Cora Newberry was on her way home from Richland and had reached a point inside Camden County about 200 yards north of the Richland city limits, when she met the lawman and his prisoner.

Miss Newberry later testified that as she watched the pair, Pritchett suddenly struck Manes a terrific blow and knocked him to the ground. Pritchett fell on

Manes and a struggle for the officer's pistol began.

Marshal Manes saw Newberry nearby and appealed to her for aid. When she replied that she was afraid Manes shouted for her to "get somebody to come, then. This boy is going to kill me." Within seconds of Manes' plea for help, Pritchett secured possession of the revolver and shot Manes through the head.

Miss Newberry testified that immediately after the shooting, Pritchett came up to her and told her, "You go home. If you don't I will kill you. Don't you start back to town. You go home as quick as you can." Pritchett then fled into the woods leaving behind his hat and the body of William Manes.

When news of the killing reached Richland, a group of armed citizens went to the scene and removed the body to the Richland City Hall where a coroner's inquest was immediately held. Following Miss Newberry's testimony at the inquest, the father of the slain marshal, S. J. Manes, offered a reward of \$500.00 for the arrest of James Pritchett.

Later that evening Jesse Barfield of Richland sent a telegram to U.S. Deputy Marshal Sheldon at Springfield requesting aid.

By midnight Deputy Marshal Conner and

bloodhound were on the killer's trail. The lawmen reported steady progress until the early morning hours of July 28 when a light rain began to fall and the bloodhound lost the trail.

With the sunrise when citizens began to assemble a posse to aid in the search, tragedy again struck Richland. A shotgun accidentally discharged and a load of pellets struck posseman Walter Lingsweller of Richland in the thigh, tearing away about three inches of bone from the youth's leg.

Despite this setback, the morning and afternoon hours of Saturday, July 28, saw search parties continuing their hunt for Pritchett.

About noon Saturday Eb Oliver, who lived near Richland, came to town and was told of the murder and \$500.00 reward offered. Oliver stated that he had seen Pritchett that morning and would try to bring him in for the reward.

Oliver found Pritchett and talked him into giving himself up to police officers at nearby Stoutland, Missouri, at 6:00 p.m., July 28, 1906. Lawmen immediately transported Pritchett to the Laclede County Jail in Lebanon to avoid any possible lynch mob violence in Richland. Upon his arrival at the jail a Lebanon blacksmith, J. F. England, sawed off the remaining handcuff from Pritchett's right hand.

Pritchett was placed on trial for murder in the Circuit Court, Camden County. His first trial ended in a hung jury and during the August term of 1907, a second jury found him guilty of murder in the second degree.

Testifying in his own behalf at the trial, Pritchett stated that Manes had repeatedly threatened to kill him as they walked toward Richland if he tried to escape again.

Pritchett testified that he became tired during the walk and stopped to rest, but Marshal Manes pointed a pistol at his breast and threatened to shoot. Pritchett stated he grabbed the revolver and during the struggle the weapon accidentally fired, killing Manes. Pritchett said that during the struggle the handcuffs came apart and he fled the scene.

Fred Manes, of Richland, a nephew of Marshal Manes, says he was near the spot where his uncle was killed and, "I heard the shot but didn't know what it was. Later on I saw people moving that way and so I went over there and found Uncle Billy lying under the line fence. One of his legs was hung up in the barbed wire."

"Uncle Billy heard that Pritchett was working in the hay up in Camden County and caught him there. But Uncle Billy made one mistake, he handcuffed Pritchett to himself instead of cuffing Pritchett's arms behind him. You see, Pritchett was a hefty and he hit Uncle Billy on the jaw, knocked him down and took the gun away and shot him."

"Afterwards, they lawed around quite a while and they finally gave Pritchett 10 years in the penitentiary."

Following his conviction in Camden County Circuit Court, where Judge Argus Cox assessed Pritchett 10 years confinement in the state penitentiary, Pritchett appealed his conviction to the Missouri Supreme Court

citing legal reasons why his conviction should be overturned. One of his main legal points raised the question of the authority of Marshal Manes, a Richland city constable who was also a Pulaski County Deputy Sheriff, to arrest Pritchett for military desertion inside Camden County.

On May 18, 1909, the Supreme Court of Missouri, division No. 2, considered the appeal and Justice Gavon D. Burgess in writing the opinion of the Missouri Supreme Court held that: an act of the United States Congress, June 18, 1898, authorized any civil officer, having authority under the laws of any state, to summarily arrest a deserter from the United States Army and return him to military control.

Justice Burgess stated that in making the arrest Manes was not acting as a Richland City Marshal or as a Pulaski County Deputy Sheriff, but that Manes was an agent of the United States Government and under the act of Congress could have arrested Pritchett in any part of Missouri.

Pritchett's conviction was upheld and he was taken to the Missouri State Penitentiary where he was confined until his sentence was commuted May 8, 1914.

Pritchett's conviction and the accompanying question of the legal authority of a civil officer to arrest a military deserter set the precedent for all future cases. When a police officer of today arrests a military deserter he acts under the same authority of the United States Congress Act of 1898, which was upheld in the test case of Missouri vs. Pritchett.

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## PINEY MASS MURDER

Judge W. L. Hitt of Texas County and a companion were fishing on the Piney River above the Platter's Mill Dam on the weekend of October 13 and 14, 1906, when they made a discovery that would lead to the arrest of a young man who had just killed five members of a well-known Texas County family. Their discovery of the bodies of a five-year-old child and an infant of about a year-old in the river prompted an investigation into the deaths of Carney Parsons, his wife, and their three young children, which took place October 12th of that year.

The murder suspect who later confessed to the crime, Joseph Hamilton, a resident of the Platter's Mill area was in church with his sweetheart when he learned of the two fishermen's

discovery. Upon hearing the news, he hastily said goodbye to his girlfriend and started for Houston on a mule belonging to the murdered farmer. From there, he hired a rig to drive to Cabool, which had the nearest railroad station.

Someone, however, recognized the mule as belonging to Parsons; and Deputy Sheriff John Upton, of Simmons, was wired to intercept the suspect, who was taken into custody about an hour later.

When placed in jail, Hamilton confessed to the crime and told the full story. According to his confession, he had traded some stolen property to Parsons for a horse. But he later feared he would get into trouble and started back to the Parsons' home. He met the farmer,

his wife, and the children riding in a spring wagon on the road. Hamilton and Parsons got into an argument and Hamilton shot Parsons dead before the farmer's wife and children.

Hamilton confessed he then clubbed Mrs. Parsons to death with the butt of his gun and seized the children one by one and cut their throats. The bodies were dumped into the Piney River.

The confessed murderer had to be taken to Springfield to prevent being lynched by an angry mob at Houston. But a lynch mob gathered at the jail in Springfield, and Hamilton was then removed to the jail in Carthage, where he was kept under heavy guard until his trial and conviction.