

Early Law Enforcement in Bryan – 1887-1888

Compiled by Bill Page

Bryan ... At the municipal election held here today the following officers were voted for: Mayor, city marshal, five aldermen, assessor and collector and treasurer. A larger vote than usual was polled, and much interest was manifested, but all passed off very quietly. Galveston Daily News, 6 April 1887, p. 2.

Bryan, Tex., May 14 – A species of grave robbery has this week been discovered in the City Cemetery here and the facts given The News reporter by Marshal WILCOX. Some three or four graves have been recently dug into, and in two cases coffins opened and the remains turned over or disturbed, but in on instance yet found carried away. The object of the ghouls is not apparent, but an impression prevails that probably some one has been on the hunt for a good specimen of skeleton. No clew. Dallas Morning News, 15 May 1887, p.14

Isaac GRAY v. The State.

No. 2432

Court of Appeals of Texas

24 Tex. Ct. App. 611; 7 S.W. 339; 1888 Tex. Crim. App. Lexis 19

February 1, 1888, Opinion Delivered

Appeal from the District Court of Brazos. Tried below before the Hon. John N. HENDERSON. The conviction in this case was for the felonious theft of money, and the penalty assessed against the appellant was a term of two years in the penitentiary.

Otto OLDHAM was the first witness for the State. He testified that he lived in Burleson county, Texas. On or about December 20, 1886, he went to the town of Bryan, in Brazos County, taking with him four bales of cotton, which he sold. The money he received for the cotton he placed in his pocket book, and he placed his pocket book in the side pocket of his coat. He did this, he thought, in Mr. KOPPE's store. The money, together with some his brother gave him to take home, amounted to one hundred and thirty dollars in U.S. currency, the bills being of the denominations of five, ten and twenty dollars. Having placed his pocket book and money in his pocket, the witness got on his horse at KOPPE's store and started home. When he had traveled a mile or a mile and a half on his way home, the witness missed his pocket book and money, and went back to town to look for it. He inquired for it at KOPPE's store, and, aided by others, looked for it about those premises. Failing to find his property at KOPPE's, he went to Garth's gin and warehouse, where he thought he might have dropped it, but he failed to find it at either of those places. Witness then went home, and returned to Bryan on the next day, when he reported his loss to City Marshal CARR and Policeman BISHOP, who, during the course of the day, returned to the witness ninety dollars in U.S. bills of denominations corresponding with some of those lost by witness. Those bills looked like some of the bills lost by witness, but witness could not positively identify them as the same. The money returned to the witness by the police officers was taken by them from the defendant. Policeman

BISHOP was the officer who returned the ninety dollars to witness. Witness could neither read nor write, but could tell the value of a U.S. currency bill by the figures on the same.

Cliff HARRIS testified, for the State, that he lived in the town of Bryan, and was a clerk in Mr. KOPPE's store. He knew Otto OLDHAM, who, on or about December 15, 1886, in KOPPE's store, showed him some U.S. currency notes or bills. Witness saw OLDHAM put that money in his pocket book, and, according to his recollection, OLDHAM then placed the pocket book in the right hand side pocket of his coat. About an hour after he left the store he, OLDHAM, returned and said that he had lost his pocket book and money. Witness helped OLDHAM hunt for the money about the store, but they failed to find it, and OLDHAM left. He returned the next morning, and witness advised him to consult the police about his loss. The defendant, on the day of OLDHAM's loss, was working about KOPPE's store. Shortly after OLDHAM left, after returning to the store and reporting his loss, the defendant left, going out at the back door. Witness told the porter to call him back, which the porter did, but defendant did not stop, nor did he ever come back to get his pay.

A. B. CARR, city marshal of Bryan, in December, 1886, testified, for the State, that some time during that month the prosecuting witness, OLDHAM, reported to him that he had lost a pocket book containing some money. Witness then learned that the defendant was seen to have a five dollar bill on the evening before, and he sent Policeman BISHOP after him. BISHOP brought the defendant to witness, and witness had a talk with him about OLDHAM's money. Witness thought that defendant admitted that he found some money on the evening before. Witness told defendant that he had better go and get the money, and that he thought it would be all right if he would produce the money. Defendant and BISHOP then went off and soon returned together, bringing ninety dollars in U.S. currency. Defendant then told witness that he had spent a part of the money he found. The sum he claimed to have spent, added to the ninety dollars he returned, amounted to within eight or ten dollars of the amount OLDHAM claimed to have lost. Witness was not sure that defendant claimed to have found the money, but such was his impression.

J. M. BISHOP testified, for the State, that, in December, 1886, he was a member of the police force of the town of Bryan. During that month he was called upon to assist Mr. OLDHAM in his search for his lost pocket book and money. Witness took the defendant to Marshal CARR, and, after CARR's interview with defendant, he took defendant to the house of his mother, one Nancy GRAY. Nancy was not at home, but was soon found at the house of a neighbor. Before Nancy was called, the defendant looked in a trunk, but failed to find the money. Nancy was then brought to the house, and defendant told her to get the money he had given her. Thereupon Nancy thrust her hand into a pocket in her underskirt and produced ninety dollars, which she handed to witness. The witness after counting the money asked the defendant where the pocket book and papers were. Defendant made no reply to this question, but his mother, the said Nancy, replied either that she had burned them or that she had advised the defendant to burn them, witness could not remember which. Defendant at that time was not in arrest, but had accompanied the witness to Nancy's house of his own free will and accord. Defendant surrendered the ninety dollars willingly, and told witness that he found it on one of the streets of Bryan.

The case of WILSON vs. WILCOX, city marshal, for false imprisonment, occupied the attention of the district court today. Galveston Daily News, 12 Sept. 1888, p.7, col.5

*Bryan ... Earl KNOX killed Bryan city marshal M.M. WILCOX, Galveston Daily News, 4 Dec. 1888, p. 3

*Bryan ... Earl KNOX surrenders; Galveston Daily News, 5 Dec. 1888, p. 2.

*Party who killed M.M. WILCOX, Bryan's city marshal, captured; Fort Worth Daily Gazette, 5 Dec. 1888, p. 5.