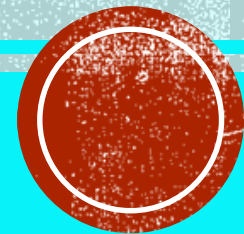


THORNTOWN COLORED CEMETERY

Genealogy Club

June 2019





WHERE

- Just over the Montgomery County/Boone County line and past Sugar Plain Friends Church
- Located on the west side of County Road 825 West in Boone County, one-half mile north of State Road 47 on the way to the Old Mill Run Park entrance.



WHY THIS AREA

- When the Civil War ended in early 1865, many Blacks, newly freed from slavery, migrated to northern states to settle in cities and towns to begin a new life.
- Two Boone County communities, Lebanon and Thorntown, attracted many of these emancipated slaves due to the widespread Quaker presence.
- Quakers' reputations for friendship and assistance with Black fugitives was well known.



THORNTOWN BLACK COMMUNITY

- Built four important structures for its residents; a school, a church, a Black Masonic Lodge and a cemetery.
- On Lot 10 at the west end of West Bow Street, the community built a small frame African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, later adding a three-room frame parsonage. The AME congregation flourished until about the turn-of-the-century, then faded away. The AME Church building was razed in the early 1920's.



THORNTOWN BLACK COMMUNITY

- By 1866, the school stood at the northwest corner of the intersection of Vine and Franklin Streets.
- In 1868, a Black Masonic Lodge opened its doors.
- Sometime in early 1869, Black leaders in Thorntown decided the Black community should have a cemetery of its own since Black and Mulatto residents were not allowed burial in other Thorntown cemeteries.



THE COLORED CEMETERY

- On 15 June 1869, Quakers Elias C. Barker, and his wife, Hannah, sold a part of their property on the west side of what is now County Road 825 West to the trustees of the Colored Cemetery Committee for \$25.00. The deed clearly stated that the land was to be used as burying grounds for the Black people of the vicinity.
- In 1975, a marker with gold letters in a royal blue background was placed in the cemetery by the Society for the Preservation of Our Indian Heritage.
- That sign disappeared, and a simple, small black and white marker replaced it.



THE COLORED CEMETERY

- Only four small weathered-granite stones, barely legible, still stand scattered throughout the cemetery.



THE COLORED CEMETERY

- Evidence of other graves include cement bases and sunken spots.
- The first burial was possibly 1878, although death records in the Boone County Health Department's office only go back to 1882. Prior to that time, deaths were not officially recorded.
- In obituaries, instead of naming the Colored Cemetery as the place of burial, most records simply stated: "Buried in Thorntown".



SINCE THEN...

- The once large settlement of Blacks living in the Thorntown area and the surrounding community has disappeared.
- Time has erased much more than just the names on the graves; it has erased most details about the people who lived, worked, and came to be buried in the little cemetery, some with Montgomery County connections.
- Eventually the land became part of a hog farm. Now it is surrounded by crops and carefully maintained.
- Pastor Larry Truitt of Sugar Plain Friends Church and the Thorntown Library have extensively researched the names of those thought to be buried in the Colored Cemetery.



INDIANA HISTORICAL GRANT AND UPCOMING DEDICATION

- Reese Thompson, Eagle Scout from Boone County, adopted the cemetery in 2017 as his project ensuring this area will not be forgotten
- Committee applied for and was awarded an Indiana Historical grant in 2017
- Land has been surveyed, fenced, a new sign installed, ground penetrating radar used to determine grave sites, and is now on the Indiana Cemetery and Burial Grounds Registry of the DNR





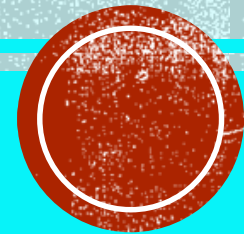
COLORED CEMETERY

ESTABLISHED 1869

A HISTORIC CEMETERY LISTED IN
INDIANA'S CEMETERY AND BURIAL GROUNDS
REGISTRY OF THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

INSTALLED 2017 INDIANA HISTORICAL BUREAU
AND REECE THOMPSON, EAGLE SCOUT - BOY SCOUT TROOP 350

SO, WHO'S THERE?



Unknowns

<u>Name</u>	<u>Stone Inscription</u>	<u>Basic life and death information</u>	<u>Where Born</u>
* Mitchell, Daniel		50 years/22 October 1887	
* Mitchell, Daniel		53 years/9 months/ 22 September 1887	
* Rogers, Mary		53 years/1898	
* Unknown, James I		The last name is illegible	
* White, Jane		d. 18 August 1935 approx. 100 years at her death	
*Seawright, Emma Jane	Wife of J P	b. 18 March 1843 d. 21 June 1905	
*Smith, Nancy		80 years/d. 6 December 1892	



BLAIR FAMILY

Abram Blair

Abram Blair, Black, was born about 1835 in Tennessee where both his parents were born. His home by 1880 was in Sugar Creek Township, Boone County, where he was working as a farm laborer. He married Anna Blair and had three children.

Andrew Blair

Andrew Blair, Black, worked on a farm in Sugar Creek Township, Boone County. Born about 1869 in Tennessee, he was the son of Abram and Anna Blair. He died in 1903 at the age of 34.

Anna Blair

Anna Blair, Black, was born about 1848 in Tennessee. In the 1880 census, she listed her profession as keeping house. She was wife to Abram and mother to Andrew, Jess W, and Leone. She died in 1884 at the age of 44.



BLAIR FAMILY

Hazel Blair

Hazel Blair, Black, was born in 1899. Her parents were Andrew Blair, born in Tennessee, and Matilda Bell, born in Indiana. On 13 August 1903, at just four years and 24 days of age, she died of tuberculosis.

Mary J. Rogers Blair

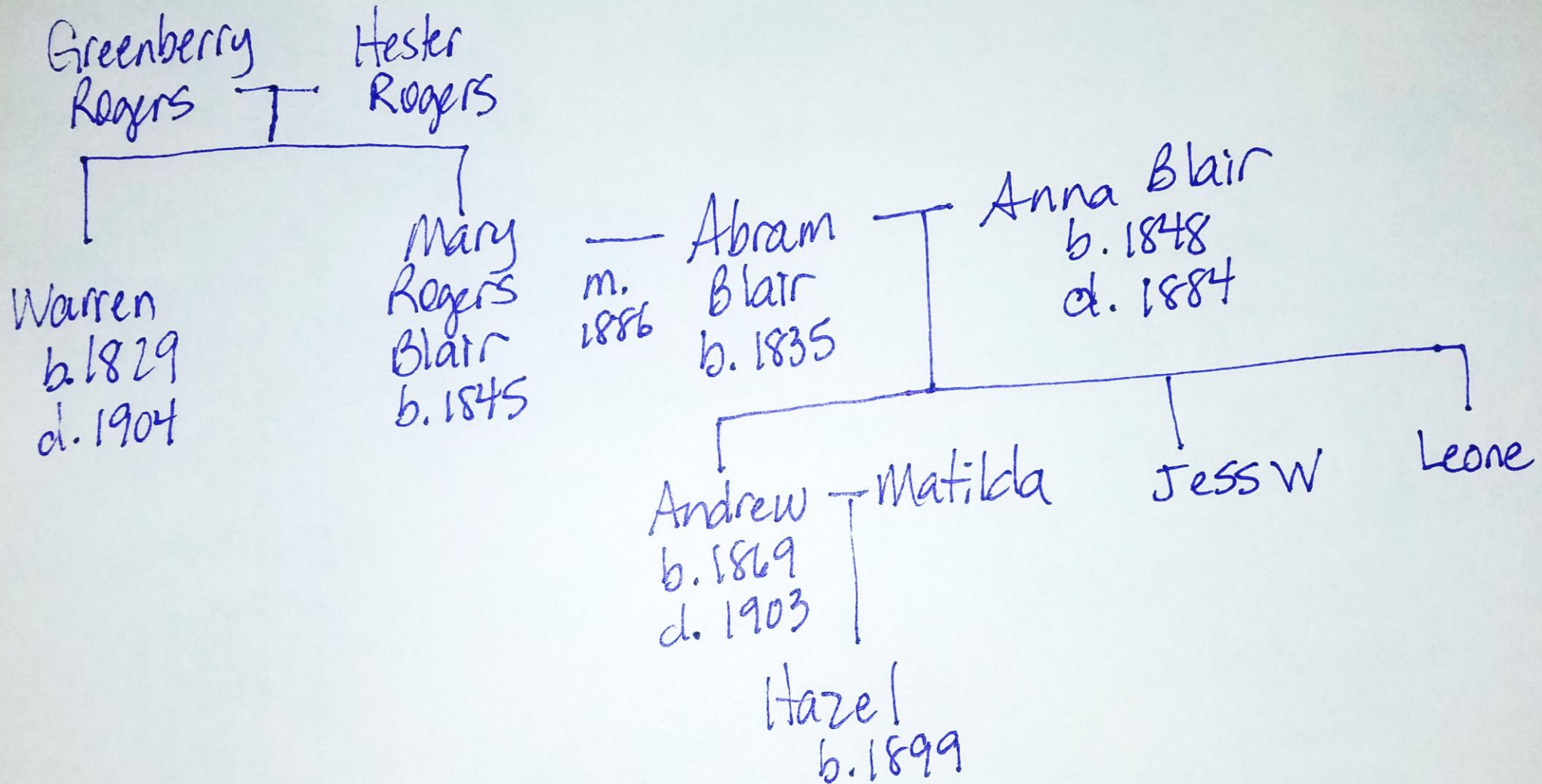
Mary J. Rogers Blair, Black, was born about 1845 in Kentucky. The 1860 census listed her living with her father Greenberry Rogers and her mother Hester Rogers. She married Abraham Blair 26 August 1886 in Boone County. Local newspapers documented that she died 1 February 1894 in Crawfordsville and was brought to Thorntown Colored Cemetery for burial.

Warren Rogers

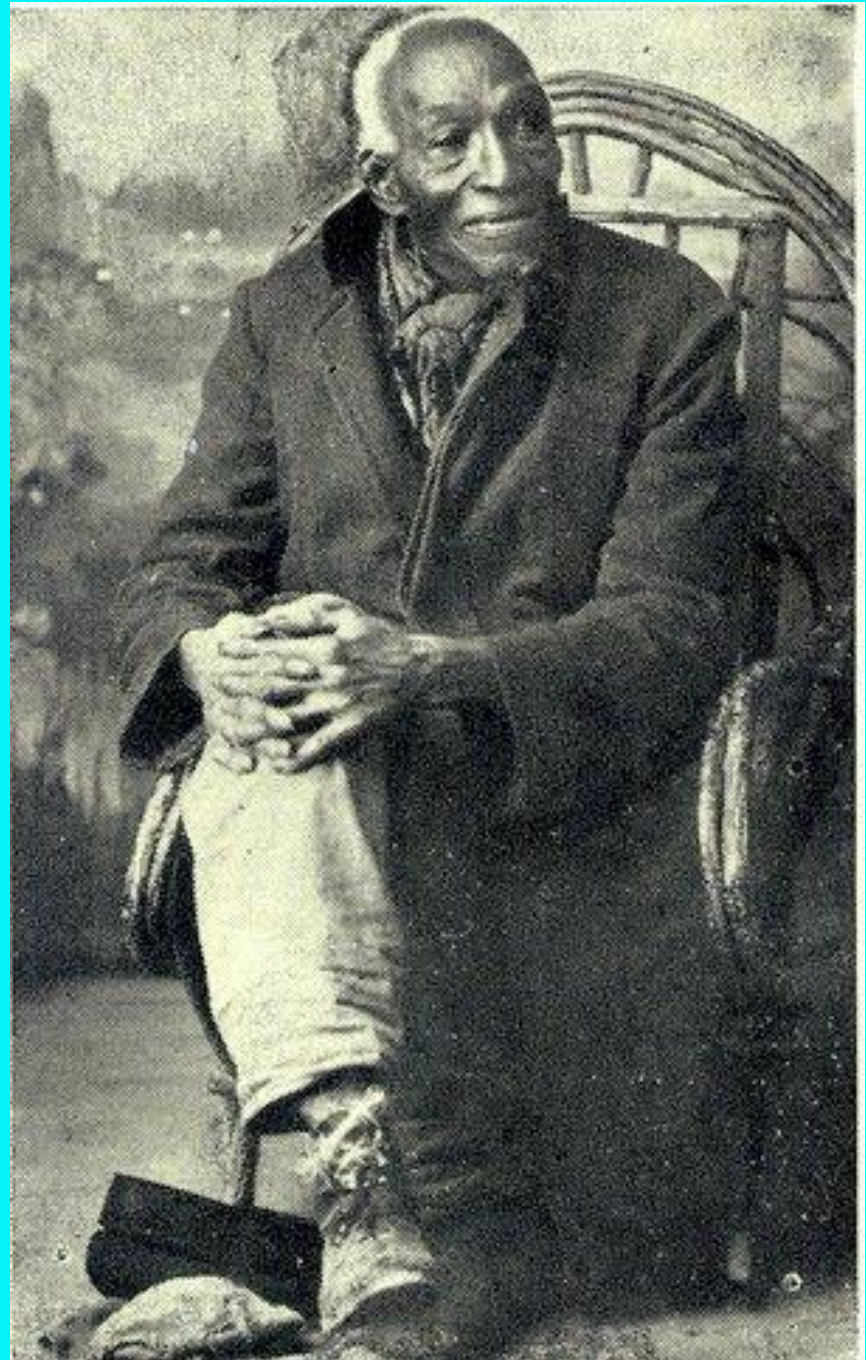
Warren Rogers, Black, was born about 1829 in Kentucky. He lived in Sugar Creek Township, Boone County. His father was Greenberry Rogers, also born in Kentucky, and his mother Hester Rogers. He died 18 September 1904 from scrofula, a type of tuberculosis, and complications of bowel and kidney trouble.



BLAIR FAMILY TREE



CHARLES DERRICKSON



CHARLES DERRICKSON

- Very popular- known to everyone as Uncle Charlie
- Famous for his song and dance
- Worked all his life to get his wife free and to Indiana; succeeded
- Cut wood for railroads to earn money
- He and wife lived to be over 100 years old
- He lived on a small farm outside of town but he would hitch up "old Dobbin" nearly every day and come into Thorntown.



CHARLES DERRICKSON

- He was born into slavery on the plantation of a Mr. Derrickson, in Nicolas Co., KY. He bought his freedom by faithfully working and came to this part of the country in the late 1840's. He appeared in Darlington one day in 1850.
- The Quakers took him in, fed and clothed him, and found him work with farmers
- Before coming here he had fallen in love with a slave girl named Tillie Stout Thomas, who lived on the nearby plantation Nickolas County, KY. Her owner was demanding \$450 for her sale.



CHARLES DERRICKSON

- Alf Burk, Crawfordsville, became interested in the story and advanced Charley \$450 with which to buy her freedom.
- Eventually a deal was struck and Tillie was delivered to the railroad station at Madison, Indiana. Charley sent Tillie travelling money to Indianapolis, where they were officially married sometime in 1838-1839
- They came to Darlington where he worked on the farm of William Cox to repay the \$450 loan. This he finally accomplished by chopping and hauling wood to be used as fuel by the Big Four railroad, to run the locomotive engines.



CHARLES DERRICKSON'S TILLIE

- Tillie was born December 26, 1816 to slave parents, Benjamin and Allie Stout, buy by custom, ended up with the name of her first owner by the last name of Thomas
- Married 60 years before she died March 26, 1906
- He died November 7, 1912 at about 106 years old at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Levi Hall
- In his obituary, listed 12 living children (they had 16 total)
- 4 white men were pall bearers



CHARLES DERRICKSON CLAIM TO FAME

- In 1905, John James, Pennel Bickner and Charley were in the woods near Darlington (for reasons unknown). John tried to kill Charley- for reasons unknown. However, it was Bickner who was killed during the “incident”.
- James was found guilty of the murder of Bickner, shooting Derrickson, and given a life sentence in Michigan City Prison
- Charley said at that time that the only reason James did not kill him when he shot at him at close range with a shot gun was because the "Good Lord saved me".
- His testimony proved to be the “richest intellectual feast ever provided in the Montgomery County Courthouse”



CHARLES DERRICKSON

- By 1878 he owned land in Sugar Creek Township
- Said to be a real Calypson singer
- Charley used to pat his cane and sing along. According to all accounts, it was more rhythm than melody
- He was a self-ordained preacher and he is one of the best entertainers because of his naive way of putting things.
- A white woman taught him how to read the Bible when he was 40 years old.



CHARLES DERRICKSON

- According to legend, Kenneth Bradshaw, Montgomery County resident, he (Bradshaw) wrote an “orchestration” of Charley’s singing and dancing and gave it to Bill Robinson, the greatest tap dancer that ever lived.
- Robinson then originated his famous stairway dance to that tune and he and little Shirley Temple did the dance up the steps of the mansion in “The Little Colonel”





CHARLES DERRICKSON

- He was always surrounded by a group of youths to whom he sang the songs of the old days in Kentucky
- It was a familiar sight to see him walk down the middle of Main St., singing a hymn, his dog following closely behind, as witnessed by 2 or 3 generations of Darlington and Thorntown citizens.



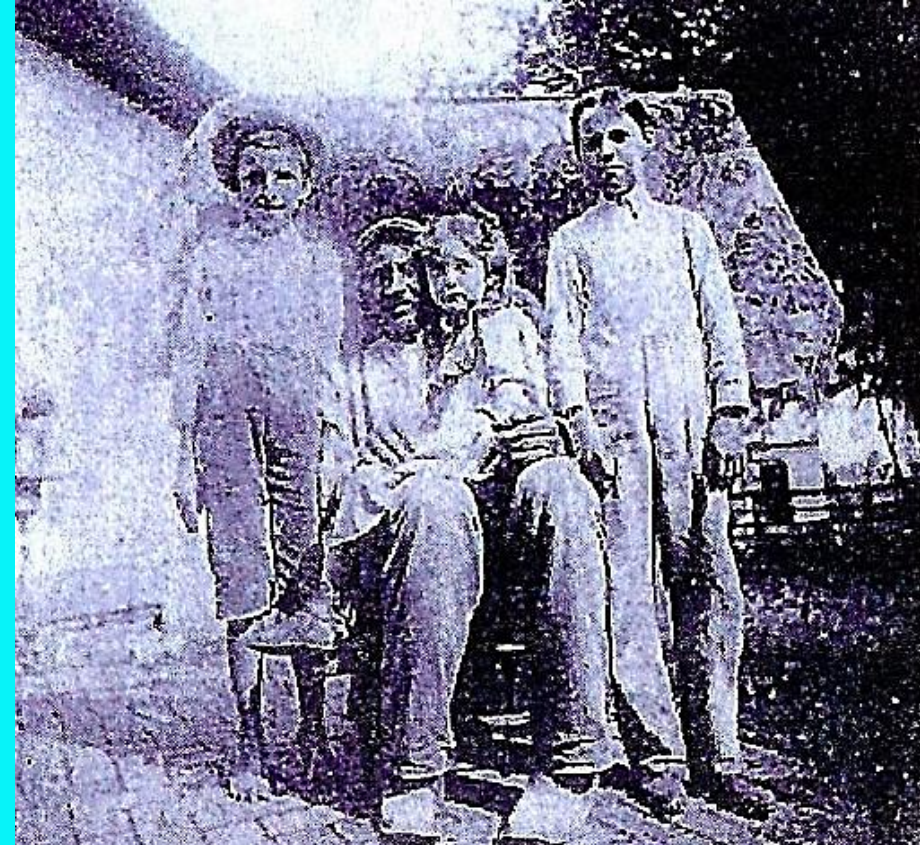
ELISHA DEREK/DERRICK (ELIJAH JEFFERSON DERIXON/DERRICKSON)- CHARLES' BROTHER

- Elijah Jefferson Derrickson was born in 1827 in Carlisle, Nicholas County, Kentucky.
- In 1845, he married Mary Elizabeth Bromlett, eventually having four children.
- Between 1854 and 1860, he moved to Sugar Creek Township, Boone County.
- He enlisted as a Civil War soldier, serving in the 55th Regiment, Massachusetts Colored Infantry. He was injured at Honey Hill, 30 November 1864. After his recovery, he was attached to Hospital Beaufort, South Carolina.
- He died around 1880-1883.



THOMAS RULE

- Born August 1851 in Cobb County, Tennessee to parents Carson Hayes and Lizzie Rule, both of Tennessee.
- By the 1910 census, he lived on Darlington Road.
- He married Elizabeth (Bettie), who had been born in Missouri.
- He listed his profession as farmer, served as lay preacher in the Black community, and worked as a farm hired hand.
- He died 21 December 1914 of heart disease.



SHAD(D) FAMILY

Elias Shad(d)

Born about 1834 in North Carolina. In the 1860 census, he lived with his wife Mary J. Shad in Sugar Creek Township, Boone County. He was a farmer and became the first Black man placed on the petit (trial) jury in Boone County, Indiana.

James (Jas) L. Shad

Born 18/26 October 1860 in Boone County, Indiana. He died 16 January 1878.

John Shad

Born about 1830 in North Carolina to parents Eli Shad and Clara Steward(t) Shad. In different censuses, he listed himself as either Black or Mulatto. In the 1860 census, he lived near Otter Creek Township, Vigo County, Indiana, with his wife Jane and growing family. Civil War draft registration records indicated he served in the Civil War, enlisting at Otter Creek Township, but no information about where he served was found. By 1870, he lived in Sugar Creek Township, Boone County, working as a farm laborer. In 1880, the family lived in Jefferson Township and worked as a farmer. By 1900, the family had moved back to Sugar Creek Township. John died 25 May 1905 of chronic nephritis (kidney trouble) at the age of 74.



CELIA SMITH

- In the census entries, there are two Celia Smiths that died at age 23 on exactly the same day, 27 September 1893.
- In one listing, Celia listed herself as White. In the other, Celia was buried in the Colored Cemetery.



ALICE (ANNISE) MITCHEL(L)

I SAVED THE BEST FOR LAST

- Alice Mitchell was born April 1863 in Indiana. She was murdered by a gunshot wound to the neck and succumbed to her injuries 1 July 1886.
- Four main players
 - William H. Harris, Black, was born about 1847 in Indiana to parents also born in Indiana, was a barber, had served in the Civil War in the United States Colored Troops, Regiment 116, Company B from July 1863 to March 1864.
 - William's wife, Margaret L., Mulatto, was born 1859 in Illinois to a mother born in North Carolina and father born in Kentucky.
 - David Mitchel(l), Mulatto, was born in 1861 in Indiana to parents born in Virginia. David had barbered in William's shop for eight years.
 - Alice Rose Mitchel(l), Black, was David's wife. David and Alice married approximately 1881 and had one child.



ALICE (ANNISE) MITCHEL(L)

- On 30 June 1886, Alice Mitchell was murdered about 9 pm on North Pearl Street, Thorntown.
- Alice's husband, David, arrived home from work barbering at William H. Harris' shop. He had heard gunshots fired on his way home. David could not locate Alice, so he asked his next-door neighbor, Margaret Harris, the wife of his employer, for information regarding Alice's whereabouts, but Margaret refused to help.
- David began his search in his backyard when he heard groans coming from Harris' backyard. David found his wife lying in a pool of blood with the entire right side of her neck missing. David took Alice into their home and called for help.
- Oddly enough, both William and Margaret Harris refused to help.



ALICE (ANNISE) MITCHEL(L)

- According to neighbors, the Mitchells and the Harrises had not developed a friendly relationship, so police arrested William after learning he had made threats against the Mitchel(l)s.
- William flatly denied any wrongdoing, remaining calm throughout his interrogation, even daring to sharpen his razors while awaiting his interview.
- William declared he was home sick when the shooting occurred.
- Local residents knew that William had been in Thorntown for 10-12 years before the incident and had been a model citizen.



ALICE (ANNISE) MITCHEL(L)

- **Meanwhile, Alice somehow stayed alive long enough to pronounce William her murderer. In her deathbed statement, she stated that William had called her to the backyard, shot her from behind, and then returned to his home.**
- **The gunshot had torn away the entire right side of Alice's neck, severed the jugular vein, all the nerves and ligaments, and had torn open the carotid artery.**
- **Police did find the suspected Zulu gun in William's' home, the bullets having been sold to William's son, Melkesedeck, just the day before.**



ZULU GUN



ALICE (ANNISE) MITCHEL(L)

- Scuttlebutt about town centered on the “intimacy” between William and Alice, although that intimacy took on two very different descriptions. Some stated that William had attempted to become familiar with Alice and she refused his advances. Others reported that William and Alice had begun an illicit affair and Margaret discovered the tryst.
- Over the next three months, William’s trial had not begun and the town’s people threatened mob action if a guilty verdict were not returned. However, the local police convinced the people otherwise and peace reigned throughout Thorntown.



ALICE (ANNISE) MITCHEL(L)

- In late October 1886, the circuit court judge found William guilty and sentenced him to life in prison. Throughout the process, William adamantly maintained his innocence.
- After the trial, William was placed on a train bound for the Michigan City Prison. Guards had carefully searched him. During the trip, William asked to use the restroom. While there, William tried to slit his throat just above his Adam's Apple. While William's suicide attempt failed because the cut was too high, he did manage to sever 2/3 of his windpipe which rendered him speechless for the rest of his life.



ALICE (ANNISE) MITCHEL(L)

- Authorities determined that William had hidden a knife inside his bushy hair, did the deed, and tossed the knife out the train bathroom window. During his recovery, William “told” authorities to read his suicide note he had placed inside his coat pocket. Because William could not write, authorities learned this letter was written by Charles Gibbs, a Frankfort Black man who served time for theft. In William’s manifesto, he begged a Christian minister attend to his last rites and to be buried back in Crawfordsville. He also implicated his wife in the killing, insisting she pulled the trigger because Alice told William of his wife’s “meanness”. No record was found of his wife’s response to this accusation.
- Eventually William was granted a pension based on an illness caused by his lungs hemorrhaging. He returned to a Lebanon jail and was cared for by a Mrs. Titus.

