

INDIAN DEPREDACTIONS IN TEXAS

by J.W. Wilbarger

Ref: Rev. Jonas Dancer & Matilda Friend

The following is a chapter recorded in a book written by a Texas Ranger, J.W. Wilbarger, using his notes, his accounts and accounts of other Rangers and citizens from the era of the settling and pioneering of the Republic, and later, the state of Texas. This book is on file with the The Texas Ranger Museum in Waco, Texas and is also on file at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

I have only recorded this chapter as it contains accounts of the only Dancer ancestors that I know of. I think my Aunt found other accounts of Matilda Friend, but this is the only one I actually found in a historical recording.

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1858 Murders and Battles In San Saba and Llano Counties

1858 Chancy Couch moved to San Saba County in about the year 1858 and resided there until his death. We think it was in the year 1860 that he left his house one morning to go into the woods for board timber. He requested his son to follow him in an hour or so, and by the time he arrived he would have the timber ready for sawing. The son, in obedience to his father's instructions, had started out to join him, and when two or three miles from home he came across the wagon and oxen but his father was not with them. After searching well nigh all the day for his father he discovered late in the afternoon some buzzards collecting at a certain point. Cautiously approaching the spot where the ill omened birds were congregating, his worst fears were realized when he discovered his father's dead body pierced with arrows and so mutilated as to be almost beyond recognition. During the year 1862 the Indians killed Ben F. Linn. Linn was a young man who belonged to the ranging service. In 1862 he, with Tom Sloan, Ash Feazle, Bill York and two or three others, were out cow hunting on Deer creek, in San Saba county. They discovered a body of about ten Indians. The cow hunters immediately charged upon the Indians, who fled precipitately. A running fight was kept up for several miles, the cowboys firing into the Indians with their six shooters and the savages shooting back with their bows and arrows. During the chase young Linn was shot in the lower part of the body and died a few hours afterward.

During the same year a party of Indians surprised and killed Tom Cabinass, on Cherokee creek. In the fall of 1862, Captain Williams, with a young man whose name was King, and two other young men, started from Bluffton with a drove of beeves to take them to Williams's ranch, in San Saba county.

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When not far from Baby Head Mountain, in the southern part of San Saba County, Captain Williams left the herd in charge of the three young men and rode off in the direction of a spring, saying that he would overtake them in a short time. After driving the beeves a few hundred yards the young men were startled by wild and savage yells and the clatter of horses' feet in their rear, and upon looking back they saw eight or ten Indians charging down upon them. King, who was riding a mule, was on the left of the herd, the other two young men were a little to the right, and ran off to the right of the cattle as fast as their horses could carry them. The last time they saw King he was vainly trying to get his mule to run. The next day his dead body was found a few hundred yards from where they last saw him. Nearly one half mile further on, the searching party found the body of Captain Williams. He had been shot with arrows, and after falling from his horse the savages had crushed his head with stones and scalped him. The tracks of Captain Williams's horse showed that he had got nearly to the spring and then turned and loped back in the direction of the cattle, and passed in a few feet of where King's mule was standing when last seen, and on for about a half mile where his body was found. It is supposed that Williams heard the yelling of the Indians and rushed back to see what was happening, and that seeing King in danger, he charged upon the Indians, thinking he might frighten them away, and depending upon the swiftness of his horse (which was a very fine one) for his safety. Captain Williams was a truly brave man, and had been of great service to the frontier in protecting it from the raids of the savage. When killed he was unarmed, and his death was due, no doubt, to that fact. The father of young King still lives in San Saba county. For several years after the close of the war, the Indians continued their depredations in San Saba county. They killed Beardy Hall and Boze Woods in the western part of the county, and a man by the name of Merryman, on Jerry's Branch, about two miles north of the town of San Saba. The particulars are not at hand. C. C. Carter resided on the head waters of the Lampasas river, about sixteen miles north of Lampasas springs. Some time in 1865, he made an appointment to visit the house of his son-in-law, distant about four miles.



HE KEEPS HIS APPOINTMENT BUT DROPS DEAD AT THE GATE

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When he had arrived within about a mile of his destination, he was fired upon by a party of Indians, who were in ambuscade, awaiting his approach. Although mortally wounded, he put spurs to his horse and fled as fast as possible. The Indians endeavored to intercept him, but failed. He succeeded in reaching his son-in-law's house, but dropped dead at the gate. The daughter ran to his assistance, but too late, as the Indians had accomplished their deadly mission, and Mr. Carter expired in a few moments afterwards. In the spring of 1867 Miller and Morell loaded their wagon with corn and went to a mill about thirty miles distant to get it ground. On their way back, when crossing the valley of a small creek called Brady, they were attacked by a party of Indians on foot, who suddenly rushed out upon them from a dense thicket near the roadside. The two men in the wagon, seeing the great odds against them, and having no arms but six shooters, put the lash to their horses and dashed down a steep, rocky hill. The jolting of the wagon caused Miller's six shooter to fall out of the scabbard, and one of the foremost

Indians snatched it up and emptied its contents at him, but without effect. They then rushed furiously upon the wagon, using their bows, arrows and spears, as they had no fire arms. Miller and Morell used their pistol with deadly effect. Whilst some of the Indians were trying to spear them or shoot them with arrows, others endeavored to stop the wagon by throwing large stones in front of the wheels. In this manner the fight continued for some time, until Morell succeeded in killing another Indian with the last cartridge in his six shooter, which caused them to fall back temporarily once more. Seizing the opportunity, the men cut loose one of the best horses from the harness, mounted him and fled to a dense thicket near by. Finding it was impossible to enter it on horseback, they dismounted and went in on foot, and secreted themselves in the thickest brush they could find. The Indians came up, took the horse, but did not venture in the thicket. During the fight Miller received twenty-seven, and Morell twenty-one wounds. That none of these wounds were fatal can only be accounted for by the fact that when the Indians attacked the wagon a drizzling rain was falling, which slackened their bowstrings, rendering it impossible to send the arrows with much force.

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The Indians returned to the wagon, emptied the corn meal in the road, took all the horses and left for parts unknown. The two wounded men suffered terribly for want of water, and as soon as they were satisfied the Indians had gone, Morell, who was not quite so badly hurt as his companion, crawled to a creek near by, and after he had slaked his own thirst, he pulled off one of his boots, filled it with water, and with great difficulty managed to carry it back to where he had left Miller, thereby, no doubt, saving his life. Miller and Morell not reaching home at the time they were expected, a party went out to look for them. When found they were in a terrible condition. They were unable to walk, and their clothes were stiffened with clotted blood. They were taken home, and both eventually recovered from their numerous wounds. These men lived in McCulloch County.

Reverend Jonas Dancer resided in Llano County, and so far as we know, was the first man killed in that county by the Indians. The author first became acquainted with him in Travis county, where he lived in the year 1850. Some two years later, attracted by the mineral resources of Llano, he moved to that county. At the time Mr. Dancer moved into Llano there was but one other American settler in the county. After prospecting a couple of years, Mr. Dancer finally settled in a romantic little spot called "Honey Creek Cove."

Llano County has long since been celebrated for its mineral resources, mountain scenery, fertile valleys, rippling streams and nutritious grasses. The spot selected by Mr. Dancer was one of the most picturesque in the county. Here game of all kinds and wild honey abounded in the greatest quantity. All of these combined attractions soon drew others to that section, and it was not long until the sound of the ax and hammer of the pioneer could be heard in many directions as the settlers began to construct their rude log cabins. Mr. Dancer was of the Methodist creed, and he soon succeeded in building up quite a large church. He was the first man to introduce the blessed gospel in that wilderness country. For several years these hardy pioneers lived in peace and happiness, pursuing their various avocations, but their dark day came at last. On the twenty-third day of May, 1859, if we have not been misinformed, Mr. Dancer and others were to meet at a certain point to cut out a new road from Llano to the city of Austin.

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Always punctual in his appointments, Mr. Dancer, with tools in hand, repaired to the spot. From some cause the others failed to come. Dancer had a couple of horses which he hopped, and thinking the balance of the party would soon arrive, began work by himself. Whilst thus engaged he was attacked by a party of five or six Indians. Being unarmed, Dancer fled to a deep ravine, closely pursued by the savages, who it seems attempted to rope him, but failed. Dancer, having reached the bed of the ravine, the Indians rushed up to the bluffs overlooking the same and poured a volley of arrows into the body of the unfortunate man. Finally overcome with loss of blood from his wounds, he walked around in front of a projecting rock in the bluff, deliberately sat down on a rock bench and there expired. The savages then came upon him, scalped him and otherwise mutilated his body. Such was the condition in which his body was found the following day by a searching party, who delivered it to his sorrowing widow, and now, fatherless children. The loss of this good man, who was looked upon as the father of the county, spread profound grief throughout that section. As a minister of the gospel, he was faithful to his charge; as a Christian, he was faithful to duty, and as a neighbor, he was kind and obliging. The frontier suffered an irreparable loss in his death. In May, 1862, Mr. Denyer went unarmed to look for stock. When a half a mile from home, a party of Indians attacked him. He fled, the Indians pursuing and shooting at him. None of the arrows brought him down, and as he neared home he called to his family. Mrs. Denyer ran to

him with his gun; as she did so the savages fled. Denyer was wounded fatally, and died the next day. A wife and several children mourned his loss. In the fall of 1863, Harrison Miller, who had a sheep ranch on a small stream in Llano County, while eating dinner at his house, was suddenly surrounded by a party of Indians, and the first intimation he had of their presence was the whizzing of arrows through the door and windows. Springing up quickly, Miller seized his shotgun, which he presented, and in this way kept the Indians at bay.

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Watching his opportunity when all the Indians had congregated in front of the door, Miller sprang out of a back window, ran down the bluff into a little creek and made his escape. After plundering the house the Indians left, and within about one mile came upon Barzilla Payne, an old man, some sixty years of age, who also had a sheep ranch. Payne had gone out in search of his flock, which was being herded by a Negro boy, and, after finding it, sent the boy to the house. The boy had scarcely gotten out of sight when he heard the firing of guns, and soon thereafter heard the old man cry out: "You can have me now." It was this same party, we believe, who killed Beardy Hall in San Saba County. These Indians, after killing Payne, were pursued, overtaken, and one Indian was killed and the balance dispersed. Soon afterwards the whites came across a lone Indian, by him himself, mounted upon a superb horse. The defiant rascal would canter along ahead of them, shaking his bow and lance, slapping his thighs and making all manner of contemptuous gestures. At first the Texans thought he was leading them into an ambuscade, but finally concluded to give him a chase. In going over rough ground the Indian's horse disabled himself in some way, whereupon the Texans rushed upon the Indian and slew him.

Near the line of Gillespie and Llano counties, but in the latter, lived Mrs. Martha Youngblood, a widow with several children. In January, 1865, while two of her children, a boy about six years old, and a girl of four, were playing some distance from the house, a party of Indians crawled up near them, killed the boy and proceeded to the house. Mrs. Youngblood, seeing them coming, barred the doors. Denying the savages admittance, they tore off a plank from the walls of the room. The little girl, who had followed

the Indians unobserved to the house, was standing near. The Indians attempted to rush in, but were met by the muzzle of a gun in the hands of Mrs. Youngblood. This caused them to fall back, and the little girl slipped in through the aperture made by the Indians. Thus, through the bravery of this lady was her own life and that of her children saved. A period of three years elapses, during which time, no doubt, many murders occurred, but we have no account of them.

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The last we have to record is the bloodiest tragedy ever enacted in Llano County. The name of Matilda S. Friend, even to this day, produces a thrill of horror in the breasts of those who are familiar with the history of the sad event which we are about to relate. The Rev. Jonas Dancer, whose cruel death has been recorded in the preceding pages, was the father of the ill fated woman who, upon arriving at the age of womanhood, had married John S. Friend. The home of Mrs. Friend was situated in Legion Valley, some fifteen miles south of Llano, a small town containing at that time about one hundred inhabitants. Legion Valley is surrounded on all sides by mountains, with the beautiful Hond Creek meandering through it, finally emptying into the Sandy, a tributary of the Colorado river. On the fifth of February, 1868, while Mrs. Friend, in company with two or three ladies and a lot of children, were at the cow pen, situated about one hundred yards distant from her house, they were startled at the sight of some fifteen Indians passing by. The women, with the children, fled to the house and barred the door. The Indians, upon discovering that there was no man about the premises, turned their course towards the house also. At the time the attack was made upon the house, accounts vary as to the number of inmates, one placing it at six and two at eight. From them all we will try and give what seems to be the most reliable data. The names of the unfortunate inmates, as near as we can ascertain, are as follows: Mrs. Friend, Mrs. Samantha Johnson, Mrs. Rebecca Johnson, Miss Amanda Townsend (sister of one of the Mrs. Johnsons), a little girl named Malinda Cordle, Lee Temple Friend, stepson of Mrs. Friend, (a mere lad about eight years old), and two baby children, one being the child of Rebecca and the other of Samantha Johnson. The house was made of pickets, and when the Indians found that the door had been barred, they pulled out a couple of pickets. The only resistance made was by Mrs. Friend, who insisted upon the other ladies joining her in the

defense, but they counseled conservatism, thinking probably the Indians would not harm them if they submitted quietly.

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There were two guns in the house, and Mrs. Friend, seeing an Indian about to enter through the aperture made by pulling out the pickets, seized one of the weapons and attempted to shoot, but the gun was wrested from her hands by an Indian buck, who doubtless would have shot her had not another Indian (possibly fearing an alarm being given from the report of the gun) snatched the gun from his hands. The Indian who had attempted to shoot was then struck by Mrs. Friend with a smoothing iron, which came near knocking him down. He recovered himself, drew an arrow from his quiver, and shot Mrs. Friend in the side. The arrow, striking a rib, glanced around the breast bone and came out on the opposite side. A second arrow passed through her arm, while the third struck her in the breast. After receiving the third wound, being unable to make further resistance, she calmly took her seat upon a bed, and leaned her head against a bed post. Thinking she was dead, one of the barbarous wretches commenced scalping her. This gave her so much pain she threw up her hand and caught hold of the knife. The Indian, in pulling the knife through her hand, cut it severely. In attempting to seize the knife the second time, the savage dealt her three blows, which completely disabled her. The brute then finished the operation of scalping at his leisure, and left the poor woman for dead. One of these devils incarnate, thinking there was possibly life remaining in his victim, returned, and gave the arrow sticking in her breast several severe jerks backward and forward, to see if she would flinch. Mrs. Friend, noticing the Indian returning, placed herself in exactly the same position she was while being scalped, and remained as if lifeless during all this painful torture. Satisfying himself that she was dead, the Indian left. The ladies and children, who were in the house when the attack was made, were all taken prisoners. Hearing their departing cries, Mrs. Friend arose and attempted to walk to the window, but was so weak from loss of blood, was unable to stand. However, she managed to crawl to an opening in the side of the house, through which, with a sorrowful heart, she took the last look at her captured friends. When the Indians were out of sight, Mrs. Friend bound a cloth over her head, and, wounded as she was, went out and gathered up what few things the Indians had left and put them back in the house and shut the door. She then started on foot for a neighbor's house, a Mr. Bradford's, about a mile and a half distant.

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It was about sunset when she started, and she reached there about eight o'clock. On her way she slaked her thirst with snow, which had fallen that day sufficiently to cover the ground. As she approached the house, her presence was made known to the family by the fierce barking of the dogs. Bradford came out of the house and met her. A terrible sight she was, wounded, scalped and bleeding. Not knowing who it was in the dark, Bradford ran back into the house. She called to him, told him who she was, and he then came to her relief. He took her in, and at her request he proceeded to extract the arrows from her body. Bradford and all his family then fled from the house (fearing the Indians would attack it), and left Mrs. Friend all night alone, not even taking time to dress her wounds, or remove her bloody clothes. They merely made a little fire, set a bucket of water by her, and left the poor woman by herself, two miles from any other house.

About eight o'clock next morning two widow ladies came to her relief. The cloth on her head had dried and stuck so fast to the wound that it could only be removed by the use of hot water. Her whole body was so swollen from her wounds that it was with great difficulty her clothes were taken off. These benevolent ladies did all they could for her relief, but it was nearly eight o'clock in the evening before a physician arrived to dress her wounds. It was nearly a year before Mrs. Friend recovered, but she finally got well, and when heard from last, we have been informed, was living in the State of Kansas.

Let us now return to the scene of the bloody massacre, and follow the unfortunate prisoners. During the night of the same day a runner arrived in the town of Llano announcing the sad tragedy. Early the next morning ten or twelve citizens were in the saddle, and off for Legion Valley. Arriving upon the ground, it was ascertained that the Indians had gone off in a southerly direction. "When about one mile and a half from the house (says Mr. Luce, now of Burnet county, but then a resident of Llano, and whose account of the pursuit we substantially adopt) we found on a large rock, six or eight feet high, Mrs. Johnson's babe, with its brains knocked out. Four miles further on the trail, on top of a mountain, we found where they had stopped, built a fire, roasted their meat, and from impressions on the ground, we judged they had stopped here for awhile.

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At this place a trail or foot path was discovered leading out from the camp to a thicket about one hundred yards distant. Following the trail to this point, we found the mangled body of Mrs. Johnson's eighteen year old sister. She had been tied down upon the cold ground, which was covered with snow, and from all appearances, had been outraged in the most brutal manner. She was then killed, and her body mutilated almost beyond recognition. Continuing the pursuit some three miles further, off the mountains and down into the valley, not far from the J. C. Talley place, we found the body of Mrs. Johnson, stripped of nearly all her clothing, and the body nearly eaten up by the hogs. At this point our party divided, a portion continuing the pursuit, while the balance remained behind to bury the dead. I, with six or seven others, pursued the trail. Among those whose names I can now recall, were George Miller, Orville Oatman and Frank Holden; the names of the others I do not now remember. The Indians, after winding through the mountains, and collecting about thirty head of horses, turned due west. We followed them five days, often traveling in the night when the trail could be seen. From the little tracks we had seen around the water holes on the trail, we knew that the red devils had the eight year old son of Mrs. Friend, and we continued the pursuit to near Devil's River, and were but a short distance behind them, when, for want of food, our horses gave out and left us afoot." In the account given us by Mr. Luce, he says there were three women and three children in the house when the attack was made. We think it more than likely there were seven or eight, as another account have states that the little girl, Malinda Cordle, was carried off a captive with Mrs. Friend's little boy, remained a captive about eight months, when she was recovered by a body of United States dragoons and sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; from there to Fort Arbuckle, and then returned to her relatives in Texas. The little boy remained a prisoner nearly five years, but was finally recovered by his grandfather, Rev. Leonard S. Friend. The little fellow, at the time of his reclamation, could speak nothing but the Indian dialect.

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It will be remembered that we mention two ladies by the name of Johnson, each with a young babe. The account which gives their names states that they met a fate similar to the account Mr. Luce gives. In 1870 Mr. Whitlock was killed. He was a cabinet maker, but this business not proving remunerative, he engaged in farming and stock raising. While at work on his farm, he heard an unusual noise at his house, where he had left his wife and two children, his little son being with him. Upon looking up, he discovered a party of Indians surrounding his house. Though unarmed, he rushed to the rescue of his wife and children, but was killed in the attempt to reach them. The wife and two children were then murdered and the little boy taken prisoner. The following incident did not occur in this section of the State, but Colonel Dalrymple being so well known in Llano, we have concluded that this would be an appropriate place for its insertion. In 1869 Colonel Dalrymple went with Colonel Snively and a number of others from Georgetown on a gold hunting expedition to the Wichita mountains. After reaching that dangerous and unsettled region of country they were attacked by a large party of Indians, who fought them for some time at long taw, and finding they could not effect much in that way, suddenly charged upon the gold hunters, and a hand to hand conflict ensued. Every one fought for his own life, and "upon his own hook." One huge Indian rushed at Colonel Dalrymple and endeavored to thrust his spear through him. But he missed his aim, and only succeeded in sending it through he Colonel's arm. Colonel Dalrymple, being a man of great strength, seized the handle of the spear and broke it in the middle. The order to retreat was given at that moment, and the Colonel rode off, carrying the spear and broken handle in his arm until he reached a place of safety where it was extracted with great difficulty. He came very near bleeding to death before his wound could be attended to properly. These Indians had good fire arms, and they wounded a number of the gold hunters and killed some of their horses in the fight. They paid pretty dearly, however, for their victory, as they were seen carrying off a number of their dead and wounded. Colonel Dalrymple still resides at Georgetown.

