

# Williams County Murders

The other night some friends and I had a conversation about local murders that have taken place in our county. Because we are a rural county, murders here are few and far between. A resident city council member who is also a local historian gives a yearly presentation, usually on Halloween, detailing the murders in Williams County, Ohio. Because many people know everyone else, he doesn't cover anything past the 1950's, but I was able to find some information on my own. For the incidents that did take place a long time ago, many of the circumstances are interesting as they reflect the moods and cultural attitudes of times past. Being both a researcher of local history and a true crime buff, I've attended several of these presentations and decided to share the notes I've taken for those who are interested:

## Williams County Murders

6/20/1847 – W. Unity – David Schamp murdered by Andrew F. Tyler and Daniel Heckerthorne. Buried in German cemetery on Cty Rd. K. Botched ransom kidnapping – family farm is 1/2 mi. W of US127. 4 pg article in Bryan Times on 150th anniversary. In 1939, Ralph Gall wrote several articles in Inside Detective Magazine (June, July, Aug) about the crime.

3/23/1865 – Bryan – Conrad Rutman murdered by unknown – found hung in outhouse

12/1/1868 – West Jefferson – Unknown female infant by unknown

12/3/1873 – Bryan – Peter Himes by Ben Evarts

4/8/1875 – Bryan N. Main St. – unknown infant found in cigar box just N of RR trks

5/17/1877 – Denmark – unknown male infant

2/21/1878 – Bryan – unknown male infant

7/25/1878 – W Unity – Infant Loveless by mother, Lucy Loveless. Father of infant was mother's brother in law.

4/7/1880 – Edgerton – Unknown f infant

6/3/1880 – Edgerton – James Marshall by unknown

9/11/1880 – Bryan, dwntwn, N side of square – John Burchell, Jr. by William Everett – gut cut in fight

5/2/1883 – Melbern – Jacob Nihart killed with ax by mentally ill wife, Saloma Nihart. Both buried in Brown cemetery.

7/21/1889 – Edgerton – Sarah Hoadley (71) and Christian Newman (72) by Hiram Hoadley, Jr. (45). Murder / Suicide – in process of divorce, didn't want to pay \$2,000. Divorce announcement in same issue of newspaper as the murders.

8/26/1891 – Montpelier – Milton Hogue by Perry Yoder

1/11/1892 – W. Unity – Infant Hayes – female, by Dr. Frank O. Hart

2/20/1892 – Bryan, SW corner of Beech and High. Tom Murphy age 63 by unknown

5/4/1892 – Bryan. Alley next to Christmas Manor went thru to High St. before Central School building was there. Arthur Brown, about 22 yrs old, was at a saloon bragging about having a lot of money. He was murdered by George and Michael Burchell, Walter Plummer, and William Elkins. Witnessed by little girl from window of her house on W Butler. Story featured in "Native Sons Gone Wrong" booklet. Victim buried in Old Pulaski cemetery across from Winery.

5/8/1898 – Florence – Unknown Male infant

7/2/1904 – Bryan, just N of overpass. Noah Schartzner shot by unknown. Buried in Brown cemetery. Case of mistaken identity. Stopped and checked every train between S Bend and Toledo.

6/7/1905 – Montpelier – unknown infant

9/21/1905 – Montpelier, E of Bryan on RR trks – August Julius by unknown

2/7/1914 – Bryan, W side of Portland St. 2nd blk. Portland and Mulberry – murder/suicide – Blanche Stauffer by Charles Stauffer. 12 pg suicide letter – "She was a hard person to live with."

11/10/1914 – Pioneer – Joe Varada by Joe Dohon. argument over wheelbarrow, shovel over head, both Hungarians.

3/14/16 – W. Unity – Mrs. Andre by Wilson Andre

6/12/18 – Montpelier – Alex Grant by James Morgan. Morgan

(Afrcn/Amer.) wanted to get from Chicago to Detroit, didn't have any \$, so he hid in the btrm on a train where Grant was conductor. Morgan was executed in Columbus, picture from OH Dept. of Prisons

9/29/27 – Montpelier – James Andrews (Afrcn/Amer.) by unknown

12/11/27 – Stryker – Celina Huber by Camiel Clark who was fined \$125 for liquor violations. Huber, age 39, was cut during fight, went to lay down, bled to death.

1/4/32 – Bryan – Fred Wonser, Jr. and Margaret Wonser by Lewis Wonser

12/28/36 – Bryan – Frank Lewis by William White

12/1/38 – Edgerton – Vern Eck, age 42 by Nona Goeltzenluchter. Murder-suicide. Having an affair, though both married to other people. She was accusing him of seeing yet another woman.

6/14/45 – Pioneer – Murder/Suicide. Mary Jane, Earl, Alice May, Betty Lou, Alva Stoner by their father, Alfred Stoner, age 38, just gotten back from WWII, distant cousin of Mark Kelly (murders in Wms Cty speaker). Drove himself and kids into gravel pit S of Pioneer while wife was in hospital giving birth to baby 6. Over 1,000 people showed up to watch the search for the bodies.

9/19/46 – Bryan – Emily Abernathy, age 30 by James Engle, age 21. Jim was drinking a coke across the street at the bowling alley when the body of his victim was found in the library – rumor has it he watched them secure the crime scene as he was sipping his coke. She had been strangled, beaten, and cut with a pen knife, died from strangulation. Jim confessed – said he wanted to see what it was like to kill someone. Paroled in 1974, moved to Bryan in 1989, currently resides in local nursing home. Crime was chronicled in tv show "The Big Story", but the show upset Bryanites.

5/5/1948 – Bryan – John (age 56) and Pearl (age 63) Gabriel by Ervin "Bud" Ingle, age 14, "King of 8th grade". They were his neighbors, and he wanted to borrow their car. There is a rumor that Mrs. Gabriel liked young boys, and John did the killing. Years later, Bud was a chauffer for the governor,

and the governor thought highly of him and wrote a book.  
There was a photo of Pearl's body in the newspaper.

1/2/50 – Edgerton – Helen Bigger by Vernon O. Bigger – father  
in law of victim, possible molestation.

5/5/50 – Melbern – George and Evalina Fisher by their  
grandson, Jack Hartman.

9/12/51 – West Unity – Celia Walters by Edwin Walters

8/18/59 – Pioneer – James W. Elliott by unknown

9/11/59 – Blakeslee – William Bigger by Harold H. Bostater

12/29/61 – Blakeslee – Howard Tanner by Ned Eugene Tanner

8/18/63 – Montpelier – Dean Allen Nichols by David W. Nichols

6/22/64 – Pioneer – Dr. William Crall by Frank Patalon

5/21/66 – Montpelier – John McCamis by Raymond Burgess

8/31/68 – Stryker – Eben Henry Harney by William O. Bolster

10/12/71 – Stryker – John F. Meisner by Thomas E. Elliott

9/30/72 – Stryker – Judi Hagerman by Jon Garber

4/28/76 – Edgerton – Deborah Unger by Jeffrey Ailiff

3/15/77 – Bryan – Danny Hanisko by Lawrence E. Finn

6/19/90 – West Unity – Genieve Willene and Orlo E. Ansley by  
William Ansley

2/2/91 – Montpelier – Travis Pospeshil by Timothy Kelley.

Invol. mansltr. released from prison 9/11/06

2/7/92 – Montpelier – Torilyn Contreras by Jonathon Leggett –  
Invol. Mansltr.

9/30/96 – Melbern – Brenda Sue Kafai by Rocky W. Kafai –  
invol. mansltr. released 9/23/06

2/15/98 – Edgerton – Beth Garber by Shane Frisbie

12/6/98 – Edgerton – Terri D. Swearengin by William M.  
Swearengin

12/7/00 – Holiday City – Mary Kosier by Jason Crawford and  
James Jones Jr. – they kidnapped Mary who was an employee of  
Econolodge near toll road for robbery, killed her near covered  
bridge

6/30/01 – Bryan – Thomas G. Flint by Linda Ames (\*\*NOTE\*\* – a  
reader left a comment below containing additional info about  
this event. I have not verified the source and am still in  
the process of research)

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# Terrorizing Tangents

After the drive-through animal safari (see [my previous post](#)). We were **SO** ready for dinner, but instead, we headed to [Ghostly Manor](#) in Sandusky, Ohio, hoping to beat the Saturday night crowds. It's weird because it's a haunted house that's open year-round, and it's in the middle of a roller skating rink / arcade. You pay your admission, and then you wait in line for your doom (insert evil laugh here). Someone raps at the door to signal your turn in the haunted house, and let's be honest – it's **so** much better than we could ever do at the haunted house (or haunted tour, as we are calling it) that is planned for October's weekends in Williams County Ohio. But, we have a teeny-weeny budget, so how can we possibly compare? Also, we cannot have narrow corridors (nor the "birth canal hallway"; something they had that I was not thrilled with, but would be a very scary tool if we could work with it. But I wouldn't want to really try because it totally seemed like a lawsuit waiting to happen...), so that makes it a different type of haunted house to begin with. But anyway... they say it's the 4th scariest in the nation and I believe them. Although I have to admit to being curious about the top 3 haunted houses on that list... what is so scary? Let me know which haunted houses are rated the scariest; as soon as you find out. I do know that while traipsing through Ghostly Manor, I grabbed my husband's shirt (he was in front of me), and I didn't let go... I let him lead me through the birth canal, past the skeletons and falling maggots, and I actually *pushed* him (hard!) past the vibrating floor boards (another something we can't do because of low budget). He ventured through the lair several times after that without me, and I don't know what his experience in the Ghostly Manor was like without my pushing, shoving, and screaming, but he *said* it was better with me

along...

Either way, it was a really fun day, and we came home with lots of ideas for our haunted tour. Ours will be touring in October, so check it out on October 10-11, 17-18, 24-25, and 31-Nov. 1 in Bryan Ohio. See ya then!!!!