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 cemetary 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 cemetary.
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 Schartzer 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)