

The Story of John Isaac West

On Noon, Monday, May 24, 1999; 120 year, 8 days, and 2 minutes after the event a tombstone was placed on the grave of John I. West. Upon reading of this event in the June 1, 1999 issue of The Record my curiosity was aroused. I wondered what was in the collective conscience of Boonville and Cooper County that motivated the placement of the tombstone on the grave of a man who by all accounts deserted his pregnant wife, stole, forged notes, gruesomely murdered a man, lied about the murder, falsified a confession in order to gain clemency, attempted jail break, a man whose entire life was filled with misdeeds. A man, that even today we would have little compassion.

But the story of John I. West is more than the misdeeds of a young wayward man; it is a poignant story. So let the story unfold around you as it did to our ancestors. If by now you haven't heard of the murder from your friends and neighbors you will soon learn about it from reading your Friday October 11, 1878 issue of the Boonville Weekly Advertiser:

Murder

The Victim a Stranger and the Culprit Unknown

On Saturday morning last as Mr. Joe Meredith's sons went out to work in the morning, they discovered the body of a murdered man under the flooring of a vacant house under the following circumstances. One of the young men went up to this house to get out of the wind to light his pipe, and seeing a lot of weeds on the floor inside as if some one had been sleeping on them went in, and finding a vest behind the door, called to his brother to assist him in further investigation. They then discovered a rock partly hidden by ashes in the fire-place and bloody on the corners. They next found a loose plank with spots of blood on it, and moving it to their astonishment found the corpse of a stranger who had been murdered such a short while that his body was still warm. This place is about three miles from Pilot Grove. They at once went for help, and Dr. Ross on examination expressed the belief that the man could not have been dead over an hour or so, his body still being warm and limber. It had rained during the night and the murderer had finished his fiendish work after the rain had stopped, as his tracks testified. The murdered man was a stranger supposed to be one of two men that passed through Pilot Grove on Friday evening and afterwards stopped at Mrs. Caton's house and inquired the way to Boonville. He was about twenty-eight or thirty years of age, and five feet six inches high, of dark complexion, had dark blue or gray eyes, word dark hair, cut short, and moustache and goatee; his clothes had been most of them taken off of him and his pockets turned inside out. On the floor was found a flask with a small quantity of some liquid in it, but it is not known what it is. He was also slightly pock-marked; had an old scar on fore finger of left hand; had mark of a ring on fore finger, as if one had been recently taken off; had in his pocket a broken seal ring, the top of which looked as if it had been made out of a gold dollar piece. Under the lapel of his coat he had a pin, the top of which was circular, enclosing a bunch of grapes and leaf. In the fence corner, a short distance from the house, was found the bloody shirt and pants of the murdered man. The man that was last seen with this one on the evening previous in Pilot Grove and supposed to be the murderer, was of about the following description as remembered by parties who happened to see them in the village. He was about six feet high; very stooped shouldered; light complexion; smooth shaved; wore a slick cap, dark gray cottonade pants and dark coat. It is not known in what direction he went. The murdered man was buried at Pilot Grove on Monday.

The news unfolds around you as you learn of the capture of a young man, John I. West, for the murder of the unknown man. Surely, now you believe you will learn the identity man buried in the Pilot Grove Cemetery; you will learn the story of what transpired. John West is indicated and the trial begins; but everything concerning the trial is strangely silent until the verdict is in. Now you learn the details from the Friday May 3, 1879 issue of the Boonville Weekly Advertiser.

The State vs. John West

The jury in the case of the State vs. West indicted for murder at the last November term of the Cooper County Circuit Court, came into court Monday morning at 10 o'clock, with a verdict of ----- murder in the first degree against the defendant. West is a young man of some 23 or 24 years of age, weighing about 140 pounds, and about 5 feet 7 inches high. He has but little education, and from the evidence in this case may safely be classified as a tramp. Heretofore because the trial was progressing, we refrained from publishing the evidence, although we have full

notes of the same. We do not propose to do so now, as it would take up too much of our space, and we do not think it is necessary, to enable our readers to understand the case as it was tried. About the 4th of October last, a farmer going to mill in his wagon, on the road to Sedalia, a few miles west of Pilot Grove, met two men who were walking, traveling east, one of the men had on a black, close-fitting railroad cap, and one of the other of them had a bundle and a hickory stick from which the bark had been cut in places in such a way as to attract attention.

These two men were afterwards met by other witnesses, as they traveled on toward Pilot Grove; all the witnesses giving, in substance, the same description of them. Subsequent to the murder, and the apprehension of West, he was identified, with more or less certainty, as being one of the travelers. After arriving in Pilot Grove, where he spent more time, they set out in a northern direction and were met by several persons as they journey on, the description given by the witnesses, agreeing in particulars, and the most of them identifying West afterwards as one of the men. Late in the evening they were seen near the residence of William Kaley. The next morning a couple of young men, named Meredith, went out to work in a field and one of them went into an old cabin that had been unoccupied for some time, only about a quarter of a mile from Kaley's house, to light his pipe, and seeing traces of a recent fire, a vest hanging up, straw on the floor, and that the planks in the floor had been recently raised, he looked under the loose plank and there discovered the body of a man, bloody and evidently dead. He gave the alarm, and several persons came in, and discovered the dead man's skin was yet warm, and that his skull had been crushed in just above the eye brows with some heavy substance; after more examination they found, in the fire-place, partly covered up by ashes, a large rock weight 20 or 30 pounds, full of blood, and indicating that the murdered man had been killed by a blow from this rock. The morning after the murder a Negro boy living with William Gentry, near the cabin where the body was found, saw between daybreak and sunrise, a man walking along a hog path, in the rear of Gentry's house, going towards the LaMine river. The boy identified the prisoner West as the same man he saw. The next seen of West he was on the other side of the LaMine traveling East, the witness identified him. He was next seen at Squire Allen's in Blackwater township where he took dinner. Thence he went to work in a coal mine, and where he was arrested about a week after the murdered man was found. The murdered man was brought back to Pilot Grove, was identified by several witnesses, as being the man that was with West on the 4th of October. There were many circumstances detailed in evidence, tending strongly to show that West and the murdered man had come to Pilot Grove together, and were last seen together at Kaley's late in the evening and near the cabin where the murdered man was found. Another prisoner in the jail testified that West told him in the jail, that he had killed the man. That they had gotten hold of a gold watch and the other fellow, acted like he would palm it exclusively, himself. That the man killed was a very bad man, and a thief, and that he West was afraid of him, --- afraid that the other man would kill him West if he West did not kill the other man.

West testified that he had crossed the river at Boonville the morning after the murder, and traveled west up to Squire Allen's in Blackwater Township, and that he was entirely innocent of the murder and did not know the murdered man. That he had never made the alleged revelations to his fellow prisoner. That he had told different stories from that he told on the stand, to Capt. Less Smith and Squire Sam Roe, but then he was excited. All the evidence seemed to point strongly towards the guilt of the prisoner. He was defended with signal ability by John Cosgrove and W. G. Pendleton, and prosecuted by Jas. H. Johnston, Esq., for the State, who managed his case, with a skill, sagacity, and faithfulness, that fully justify the important trust committed to his care. The trial lasted for four days. The court room during the whole time was thronged with interested spectators and auditors, many of whom were ladies. The argument before the jury was opened by Mr. Pendleton, in a maiden effort, which is the theme of commendation with all who were so fortunate as to hear him. He is a young gentleman of most promising talent, and in his habits and acquirements, he gives ever assurance, to numerous friends, of the brilliant professional future that awaits him. He was succeeded by Mr. Johnston in a brief address in which he stated the grounds on which he expected to convict the prisoner. Mr. Cosgrove followed in a powerful plea for the accused. He spoke for about two hours, with marked effect upon the feelings of the jury and large audience, and added laurels to his well earned reputation as an able and eloquent advocate. Mr. Johnston, in his closing address, reviewed the evidence in detail, and wove such a web around the unfortunate prisoner, that his escape seem impossible.

This has been one of the most interesting trials that ever took place in our county. The verdict of the jury is the severest known to the law, but does not disappoint the popular expectation. We understand that the faithful and indefatigable counsel for West will file a motion for a new trial.

[If you are not there, you can continue to follow the events by picking up your May 9, 1879 issue of the Boonville Weekly Advertiser.](#)

John I West

He is Interviewed by an "Advertiser" Reporter and Gives Him a Corrected and Last and Final Confession

He Gives up all Hopes of escape and is Making Peace with God and has Hopes for the Hereafter

He Admits Killing the Man While Asleep and gives a Brief History of His Life and Moral Admonitions to Mankind

He spends His Time Reading the Bible Furnished by the Ministers, and Speaks in Pleasant Terms of their Visit

Below we give several interviews that we have had with West, the doomed prisoner confined here awaiting his execution on May 16th. Also another confession made.

[The reader may not desire to read this rest of this issue of the Boonville Weekly Advertiser as it is repeated in entirety in a later issue of the Boonville Weekly Advertiser; and that issue will be faithfully repeated - James F. Thoma]

JAIL – WEDNESDAY 9:00 A.M.

Rep. – West have you anything more to tell me this morning.

West – "Well sir, not much, but if I had some paper, I would write something more."

Rep – "I will get you some."

Rep – "I believe you have admitted that you killed the man while asleep."

West – "Yes sir, that was the only thing not true in the other confession. The part about Boonville was so, only I was coming with him."

Rep. – "What did you kill him for?"

West – "I don't know, sir."

Rep. – "How much money did the fellow have?"

West – "Only about 35 or 40 cents, sir."

Rep. – "West you tried to get out yesterday?"

West – "Yes sir."

Rep. – "How did you cut that bolt and even if you had gotten out her, what would you have done then?"

West – "I took two sticks and the hook of an old chain and by wrenching and prying I succeeded in breaking on bolt. Then I intended to do the same to the other, after which I was going to push that frame (iron frame through which food, water, etc., are passed into the cage) up and spring the rods so that I could get out."

Rep. – "Well, how would you escape even then?"

West – "I meant to go down stairs and hide under the steps and stay there two or three days, and some time when they came into the jail I would slip out."

Rep. – "Can you get under the steps?"

West – "Yes sir. I had that all figured down close. This is not the first time I have tried it, the last time I had that frame off in my cell, but I did not get out and was waiting for the sheriff with the pump-handle, as was reported. Was I out Col.?"

Col. McC – "No, you were inside."

West – "The blacksmith that put the rivets back on there told me that if I ever got them off again, he would treat; guess he had better come and do so now. The easiest place to get out though would be that door; I could pry that off, but they would know it too soon."

Rep. – "West, did the boys next to you there know what you were doing?"

West – "Well, they kept asking me what I was doing, and I never told them exactly. But told them that they need not talk so loud and tell everybody down stairs."

Rep. – "Do you want the doctors to have your body?"

West – "No sir, I want to be buried. If there is only a hole dug and my body thrown in."

Rep. – "They will do you better than that. I see you mention in that letter to your father that you want to be buried by you mother, do you object to my mentioning it."

West – "No sir, I want to be buried beside my mother, if I can be."

Rep. – "Do you expect to see your wife?"

West – "Yes sir. I am looking for her on Friday morning. What did you think of my poetry for a first attempt?"

Rep. – "That is pretty good; did you write it?"

West – "Yes sir. You don't think my wife can take any offense at that?"

Rep. – "Oh no!"

West – "Will you please send your papers till I am dead, and any other papers that have anything about me in them to my mother, Mrs. Mary E. West, Chapin, Morgan Co., Ill?"

Rep. _ "Certainly. I will call again at about 5 o'clock this evening for that confession. Good morning!"

5 O'CLOCK P. M.

As the **Advertiser** reporter entered the jail, West handed him the following:

Second Confession:

"**Ladies and Gentlemen:** - This is the last confession that I shall make and if fact I have but little faith that you will believe what I have told you or am going to tell you in this, but that won't hurt me in the least. I shall leave it to you and let those that think it is untrue, give me their reasons for not believe in it.

When I first went astray, I never thought of jail, but now it is in my mind night and day. I only wish it had been this before I had entered on this life. How happy I would have been; as happy as a king. From the way I began, it led me in the mud to the mire and to die, and to live a liar and to lark around running from pillar to post and land me in jail here to hang and die. Take this to heart young man for I have experienced a wild and wicked life and I give my history in the column. When I made my start in the world, I was a member of the church and if I had not back-

slided, I never would have been here, but my mind ran from good to bad and in that way I always allowed myself to go. Young man stop and think where you stand; look at that which is right and love the same and hate evil. If you, one good step, chance to make, look at it good and see if another step as that can't be accomplished and a good end be the last. I have forged notes and stolen money. I have told lies and in fact been a tramp for the past four or five years and I have never regarded myself, let alone regard any one else. I never stole a horse from any one, but thought of it often, and in fact I would have done it if I had not been afraid I would have been arrested, and that is the reason I did not tell the truth in the first time for fear it would come to what it has. I will tell the truth: I never did tell L. L. Ewing that I killed that man; he told a lie on me, but I do admit now that I killed the man while he was asleep, and that I was wrong and no right to do it. In the other confession what I said about robbing houses was the truth. I helped rob part of them, not all. That in Sedalia, I spoke of I did not help to rob. In regard to coming to Boonville to kill the man was the truth, only that I was coming with him too and to help him do it, instead of refusing as I said before. I don't blame any one for my misdoing save myself. It was all my own fault. In the papers they had it that I said I worked in a woolen mill in Pittsburg, Ill.; it should have been Petersburg, Ill. In regard to the watch as there has been a great deal of talk about it. I will say that it's a fact that I don't know where it came from. The part in the other confession about the man's name that he went by, and about his killing a man near Jefferson City and shooting at the Sheriff or Constable was all so.

I shall write no more or tell no more if you don't believe this."

JOHN I. WEST

After the above was read, the reporter entered into conversation again with the prisoner as follows:

Rep. – "John, have the ministers been to see you?"

West – ""Yes sir, three or four times."

Rep. – "Have any ladies called on you?"

West – "Yes sir, four called today."

Rep. – I saw you reading as I came up; I suppose it was a bible; who gave it to you?"

West – "This one was sent me; the other one was – given me by a minister who has been visiting me."

The reporter opened it and found in the back "Presented to John I. West by Rev. G. W. Hyde"

Rep. – "John, do you ever think sincerely of the hereafter, and have you and indefinite idea of the next world?"

West – "Yes sir, I think that there is a hereafter, and I am not without hope."

Rep. – "Well, John, as there is no earthly hope of your escaping or being pardoned, you should devote your time to making your peace with your God. Did you ever kill anyone else, or try to?"

West – "I have tried to kill two men in difficulties. One when I was a boy; the other when I was you; I shot at him twice with a shot gun supposing he had shot at me."

Rep. – "Were you ever arrested before?"

West – " Yes sir, twice – once in a fight and once for pulling a turnip. I you don't believe me ask Mr. _____ at Dresden."

Rep. – "Is there anything you want?"

West – "No sir, I have everything I want – I am not out of tobacco and Mr. Johnston who came to see me today told me he would send me some. I wish you would say in the paper that I am much obliged to Mr. Baker of the City Hotel for the jelly and things he sent me."

Rep. – "Well, John if you want to see me at any time, send for me."

West – "I wish to see you in the morning, if you please by yourself. I may think of something tonight that you ought to know. Good night."

9:30 A. M. THURSDAY

Rep. – "Well West, how do you feel this morning."

West – "Very well in one sense and very bad in another. For some nights I have slept very badly but last night I slept so sound that I could not snore and knew nothing until the Col. Sprung the bolt this morning."

Rep. – "John, how did you feel the day Judge Miller sentenced you?"

West – "Well sir I felt more dead than alive I felt completely gone."

Rep. – "I noticed you very closely and you never changed countenance, was that put on?"

West – "Yes sir, I know my case was going to the Supreme Court and I nerved myself to stand it without flinching."

Rep. – "West suppose you were turned loose on the street now, do you think any one could out run you?"

West – "Well sir it would be more than one race horse could do; I would be running for my life you know?"

[\[New information begins here - James F. Thoma\]](#)

Maybe you were one of the 6,000 people, nearly half the population of Cooper County who witnessed the hanging of John West. If so, you know the details and have you own to add. Or maybe you weren't there and want to know what transpired. Your faithful paper has wrapped up the entire story from beginning to end. I am sure that the Boonville Weekly Advertiser went to press by 1:00 o'clock on Friday, May 16, 1879.

By S. W. Ravenel

Woeful West!

Is Whirled Into Eternity - - the Law Vindicated.

The Fatal Drop Sprung by the Sheriff Exactly at 11:58 A. M. And

He Plunges Through the Trap in the Presence of 6,000 Restless Spectators

His Crime From its Conception to its Enactment – His Ramblings From its
Perpetration to

His Arrest and Trial – Public Feeling in Regard to Same and His Death Sentence
by the Judge.

His Confinement in Jail – the Untiring Efforts of His Council to Free Him and the
Final and Last Judicial Decision that Sealed His Fate – Interviews, Confessions &
Poetical Attempts of the Prisoner

His Requests and Care for the Final Disposal of His Body – Scenes at the Jail & Scaffold – The Fatal Drop.

The name John Isaac West is too familiar to the readers of this paper to need say any introduction, either of the man or the horrible crime for which he was tried and found guilty. The history of the entire case and proceedings is as follows:

Young Lewis Meredith, living near Pilot Grove was tempted, it seems by providence, to go into an old log cabin near where he was at work in the cornfield, early on the morning of Saturday, October 5th to light his pipe, ostensibly, but really to astonish himself and the community by revealing this horrible crime for account of which we propose giving. To further protect his match from the wind after he went in, he closed the door which was open and back against the wall; as he did so he was somewhat surprised to find a vest hanging where he supposed no human had been until his entrance for a long time. This occurrence being strange, it occurred to him to further investigate, when he saw evident signs that some one had been occupying the building. He found that a quantity of weeds and straw was on the floor, bearing every sign of having been slept on; the young man though was more surprised when he discovered the straw had fresh blood sprinkled over it. This all was perplexing and astonishing to the young man, but his suspicions of foul play were at once thoroughly proven to himself, when in the fire place he found a large jagged rock, all besmeared with blood and hair. One revelation of foul play instigated search for others until the amazed young farmer discovered blood on the planks of the floor – almost afraid of the revelation its removal would make, he lifted it from its resting place to expose to view the mutilated and bloody body of a man with his head and forehead crushed and broken. He touched it – the corpse was still warm, showing evidently that the body had lain there only a few hours and that it's assassin could not be far distant. The alarm was soon given and the news spread over the neighborhood as only such news can. It was at once surmised to be a tramp as the victim of this foul assassin was known to be a stranger

At first no clue to the identity of the murderer was had, but providence had shown the hiding place of the victim and seemed to be guiding the footsteps of the detectives, alert for any incident that would led to his discovery. Of course the murder was the all absorbing talk of the community and everybody had some theory to advance. Finally, one story, however, stood investigation and that finally led to the arrest of the subject of this article.

On the evening previous to this occurrence two strangers susposably tramps were seen passing through Pilot Grove. One of them was a tall thick set man, with black moustache and gotee and face unshaven; the other taller and with light hair and fair complexion. They each carried a bundle and the small man a stick or rather a club. They were first noticed here when they called at a drug store and asked for two glasses of beer, the small man doing the talking, but when they were told that it was only kept by the bottle, they went on. They next went on to another store, where they were particularly noticed by the clerk Nat Harris, and where they made some trivial purchases. The next time the two were seen was in the neighborhood of the scene of the crime, when they called at a house for water and afterwards gathered some apples in an adjoining orchard. After this they went to a log cabin which only the small man left alive. About day break on the morning of the murder, this same thick set man was seen passing the house of Mr. Meredith, going towards the LaMine river. This time he wore a black felt hat, instead of the blue cap he wore the evening before in Pilot Grove. He also carried the cane but the bundle was not seen. He was heard of nor more until on the 11th day of October, when the small man, having been tracked to Haggerty's coal mine near Arrow Rock, was arrested and charged with this diabolical murder and gave his name as

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Some days after his arrest he was given a preliminary examination and was there identified as the same small one of the two tramps above described as having passed through Pilot Grove on the evening before the murder and by a little Negro boy as having been seen early on that morning near the log cabin.

Everything pointed towards him as the murderer, not withstanding his positive and persistent denials, and moreover he could not give a satisfactory account of himself for the six days intervening between Oct. 5th and 11th. He was consequently bound over to appear and answer the charge of murder in the first degree before the Cooper County Circuit County.

Most of the time of the January term of Court was taken up in the trial of the West case and the trial throughout was

attended by an overwhelming crowd, composed of men and women from all parts of the country. The jury took the case and after being out two days and a night, returned a verdict of *guilty* or murder in the first degree and he was sentenced by Judge G. W. Miller, (now dead), to be hung on the 28th day of March. West hoping for better results from the Supreme Court stood this sentence without changing countenance. His lawyers, Messrs. Cosgrove & Pendleton, stood by him as though he was a millionaire and gave his case every attention that money or love could have induced, and took it to the Supreme Court. On Saturday, April 20th however, West's hopes fell as he heard that the Supreme Court had affirmed the decision of this and that his execution would surely come off on May 16th, to which day the Governor had granted a stay of execution.

From that day to this his cell has been the rendezvous of visitors, some from a sense of duty, some for business motives and many from curiosity. The reporter of this paper in the natural following of his profession was always on hand when anything of interest was to be seen or heard and offers the following confessions, interviews, etc., which takes them to the hour of his execution and then as plain a picture of the scaffold scenes as his ability allowed.

The first thing of any interest gotten from the prisoner is the following confession made to a reporter of this paper:

First Confession

"I swear to the truth and nothing but the truth: Sir Mr. _____. The truth is better than a lie. When I left home I left with Gus Wood, the day the sun was in eclipse. Both of us went to Greenridge; then took the train for Texas. We went as far as Parsons, Kansas; there we left the M, K, & T. R. R. And went of the L. L. & G. R. R. – went to Kansas City, on around the "Knobs" (Knobknoster) eight miles west of Lamont; there he left me, then I went to the C. & A. R. R. To work; after about eight days I left there and started to Illinois where my father lived. I came to Huesville, Pettis county, where a man was, and as I came up to where he was sitting down on the platform. I passed the time of day to him and so did he to me. We commenced to talk and he asked me where I was going, also my title. I told that I was going to Illinois, and my title was John I. West. Then he was going to Illinois himself and I was glad to have his company on the way. Then I was going to stop at Huesville – he thought it not worth while to stop and he had no time to stop. So he went on and came to Georgetown and I went to barking saw logs. I don't know the name of the man we worked for. We then came to Sedalia and he and I got parted and was parted till near noon, when I started out of town. When I came out about a mile, he was sitting under the shade of a bush in the fence corner. I asked him his name which he wouldn't tell me for some time and then he said it was Frank, and the other name I can't think of at present. He told me that he changed his name as often as once a month and asked me if I ever changed mine. I told him, I never did, which is a fact, for I never did change my name, for it was my own name. I had no right to change it, and never will so long as life lasts. We passed on through some towns and the town beyond Pilot Grove and he had me to do the talking for he could not look at a man. He didn't say he couldn't look at anyone but I could see it. He got me to go and get the whiskey, and I didn't want to get it. I got a bottle of whiskey and I and Frank went on from there and stopped in a log house and got from the stable some hay and straw to make a bed to sleep on. I took about three drams out of this bottle and told Frank that I didn't want any more and he kept on till I got drum; and Frank didn't get as drunk as I did for I wasn't used to drinking very much at a time or very often. "Well, said Frank, John I want us to get to Boonville tomorrow." "Well," said I "Can't we get any further than there?" "Yes," then Frank studied for some time when he asked me if I ever was in Boonville, I told him I had and about the town. We went to sleep at last and about one o'clock he woke up and made a fire. When I awoke Frank had a good fire - we had a smoke - Frank had a large stick that he had for a walking stick. He though we could make a raise easy and not have to work for it, and I wanted to know how we could get it. "Well; if you will go to Boonville with me tomorrow we will look around there and see where some one lives that has some signs of a man that has a good deal of money. Would it suite you?" he said to me. "That wouldn't do us any good to see where he lived, he would not give it to us," I said: "Well, said Frank, we will break his neck and take the money from him. I told him, "Frank, you can do it, if you want to." I was sitting down and Frank was laying down. "Well, John," said Frank, "you can watch for me and I will do it." "No, I won't watch for you. You would kill him and then take his money and leave his wife and children to suffer for you - that won't pay." Then Frank told me that I shouldn't go any further. I told him that I didn't care for that - he told me that I shouldn't tell anybody and if I had said no I would have been all right, but I told him I would tell it. He told me that if I told it I never would tell anybody else. I told him that if he went to Boonville, I would have him arrested. At that he said he would see and made an attempt to get up at the same time; at this time I was standing up and grabbed the rock that was brought in to keep the door shut and threw it at him and hit him in the forehead just about the eyes; when I started to throw the rock at him he dodged hi head down on the floor. I didn't know anything about law, so I left frightened for I thought if I told it they would

hang me. I didn't know what to do and to get away was all that I thought of then. I thought they would find him and know by his coat and hat and his boots so I put them on. When I first got up and before Frank wanted to kill anyone at Boonville. I brought Frank a bottle of water and we had the doors fastened one with a rock and the other with a board. After I did it, I would rather it had been me for I didn't study about anything. But if I told it they would kill me and I was afraid of anyone so I went to work and had it in my head never to tramp and work the last of my life. Was I right or not? For he wanted to kill me because I wouldn't help kill some in Boonville, and we had a split and he started up to me before I stopped him. But it is had been me it would have been better.

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On the back of the confession West had written a note relative to this man stealing out of a house on the Sedalia and Boonville road in the east edge of Sedalia; he described the house as being on the left side of the road in the edge of the city of Sedalia, near the railroad; had a pasture running down the track; it was a small house; the fellow had just gotten a bucket full of provisions, he said, when the hackman drove him off. It was the day Forepaugh's circus was there.

Rep. - "John, what is the name of the man you killed?"

West - "I can't remember now, but it was Frank something; he wouldn't give me his real name."

Rep. - "Where did he live?"

West - "Frank said he lived near Jefferson city; said about ten years ago, before he was of age, he killed two men in a store, near Jefferson City over a girl; said he had also shot at the constable and sheriff, who tried to arrest him."

West - "Frank got two silver rings, one cup, one coat and a pocket knife from Sedalia the day Forepaugh's circus was there. One ring was oval; the other was made out of a dime; he also had a breastpin under his coat."

Rep. - "West, who gave you the coat you have on now?"

West - "Frank gave me this coat; he got it in Sedalia."

Rep. - "Who is Gus Wood, the man you spoke of?"

West - "He lives about five miles from Dresden."

Rep. - "Have you ever killed a man before?"

West - "No, sir a man shot at me once with a single barrel pistol, and I shot back at him."

Rep. - "Have you any brothers?"

West - "Yes, I have two brothers, but I don't know exactly where they are now."

Rep. - "Do you expect your father to come to see you?"

West - "No, sire, I don't think he will know it in time."

[Here he was informed by his attorney that he had written to his father, and he would know it in time]

Rep. - "West, can't you try and remember the name of the man you killed?"

West - "It is something like Ren; it is not his real name though; it's a name he went by."

Rep. - "Did he ever speak after you struck him?"

West - "He never spoke after he was hit."

Rep. - "Where were you going to?"

West - "We started to Illinois; were then on our way to Boonville."

Rep. - "West, I would rather have the name of the man than the whole confession, try to think of it."

West - (After studying some time.) "his name was Frank - - Shin - - that was the name he gave me, but it was not his right name."

Here the reporter handed West some cigars, bade him farewell and left advising him to give up hope here and to think of the hereafter. He then told the Sheriff again that he would be pleased to see any minister that would call on him, and asked the attorney and the reporter to call again.

The first confession being apparently manufactured the prisoner was visited again and the Rep. Succeeded in getting the following 2nd confession and interview, May 7th.

JAIL – WEDNESDAY 9:00 A.M.

Rep. – West have you anything more to tell me this morning.

West – "Well sir, not much, but if I had some paper, I would write something more."

Rep – "I will get you some."

Rep – "I believe you have admitted that you killed the man while asleep."

West – "Yes sir, that was the only thing not true in the other confession. The part about Boonville was so, only I was coming with him."

Rep. – "What did you kill him for?"

West – "I don't know, sir."

Rep. – "How much money did the fellow have?"

West – "Only about 35 or 40 cents, sir."

Rep. – "West you tried to get out yesterday?"

West – "Yes sir."

Rep. – "How did you cut that bolt and even if you had gotten out her, what would you have done then?"

West – "I took two sticks and the hook of an old chain and by wrenching and prying I succeeded in breaking on bolt. Then I intended to do the same to the other, after which I was going to push that frame (iron frame through which food, water, etc., are passed into the cage) up and spring the rods so that I could get out."

Rep. – "Well, how would you escape even then?"

West – "I meant to go down stairs and hide under the steps and stay there two or three days, and some time when they came into the jail I would slip out."

Rep. – "Can you get under the steps?"

West – "Yes sir. I had that all figured down close. This is not the first time I have tried it, the last time I had that frame off in my cell, but I did not get out and was waiting for the sheriff with the pump-handle, as was reported. Was I out Col.?"

Col. McC – "No, you were inside."

West – "The blacksmith that put the rivets back on there told me that if I ever got them off again, he would treat; guess he had better come and do so now. The easiest place to get out though would be that door; I could pry that off, but they would know it too soon."

Rep. – "West, did the boys next to you there know what you were doing?"

West – "Well, they kept asking me what I was doing, and I never told them exactly. But told them that they need not talk so loud and tell everybody down stairs."

Rep. – "Do you want the doctors to have your body?"

West – "No sir, I want to be buried. If there is only a hole dug and my body thrown in."

Rep. – "They will do you better than that. I see you mention in that letter to your father that you want to be buried by you mother, do you object to my mentioning it."

West – "No sir, I want to be buried beside my mother, if I can be."

Rep. – "Do you expect to see your wife?"

West – "Yes sir. I am looking for her on Friday morning. What did you think of my poetry for a first attempt?"

Rep. – "That is pretty good; did you write it?"

West – "Yes sir. You don't think my wife can take any offense at that?"

Rep. – "Oh no!"

West – "Will you please send your papers till I am dead, and any other papers that have anything about me in them to my mother, Mrs. Mary E. West, Chapin, Morgan Co., Ill?"

Rep. _ "Certainly. I will call again at about 5 o'clock this evening for that confession. Good morning!"

5 O'CLOCK P. M.

As the **Advertiser** reporter entered the jail, West handed him the following:

Second Confession:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: - This is the last confession that I shall make and if fact I have but little faith that you will believe what I have told you or am going to tell you in this, but that won't hurt me in the least. I shall leave it to you and let those that think it is untrue, give me their reasons for not believe in it.

When I first went astray, I never thought of jail, but now it is in my mind night and day. I only wish it had been this before I had entered on this life. How happy I would have been; as happy as a king. From the way I began, it led me in the mud to the mire and to die, and to live a liar and to lark around running form pillar to post and land me in jail here to hang and die. Take this to heart young man for I have experienced a wild and wicked life and I give my history in the column. When I made my start in the world, I was a member of the church and if I had not back-slided, I never would have been here, but my mind ran from good to bad and in that way I always allowed myself to go. Young man stop and think where you stand; look at that which is right and love the same and hate evil. If you, one good step, chance to make, look at it good and see if another step as that can't be accomplished and a good end be the last. I have forged notes and stolen money. I have told lies and in fact been a tramp for the past four or five years and I have never regarded myself, let alone regard any one else. I never stole a horse from any one, but thought of it often, and in fact I would have done it if I had not been afraid I would have been arrested, and that is the reason I did not tell the truth in the first time for fear it would come to what it has. I will tell the truth: I never did tell L. L. Ewing that I killed that man; he told a lie on me, but I do admit now that I killed the man while he was

asleep, and that I was wrong and no right to do it. In the other confession what I said about robbing houses was the truth. I helped rob part of them, not all. That in Sedalia, I spoke of I did not help to rob. In regard to coming to Boonville to kill the man was the truth, only that I was coming with him too and to help him do it, instead of refusing as I said before. I don't blame any one for my misdoing save myself. It was all my own fault. In the papers they had it that I said I worked in a woolen mill in Pittsburg, Ill.; it should have been Petersburg, Ill. In regard to the watch as there has been a great deal of talk about it. I will say that it's a fact that I don't know where it came from. The part in the other confession about the man's name that he went by, and about his killing a man near Jefferson City and shooting at the Sheriff or Constable was all so.

I shall write no more or tell no more if you don't believe this."

JOHN I. WEST

After the above was read, the reporter entered into conversation again with the prisoner as follows:

Rep. – "John, have the ministers been to see you?"

West – ""Yes sir, three or four times."

Rep. – "Have any ladies called on you?"

West – "Yes sir, four called today."

Rep. – I saw you reading as I came up; I suppose it was a bible; who gave it to you?"

West – "This one was sent me; the other one was – given me by a minister who has been visiting me."

The reporter opened it and found in the back "Presented to John I. West by Rev. G. W. Hyde"

Rep. – "John, do you ever think sincerely of the hereafter, and have you and indefinite idea of the next world?"

West – "Yes sir, I think that there is a hereafter, and I am not without hope."

Rep. – "Well, John, as there is no earthly hope of your escaping or being pardoned, you should devote your time to making your peace with your God. Did you ever kill anyone else, or try to?"

West – "I have tried to kill two men in difficulties. One when I was a boy; the other when I was you; I shot at him twice with a shot gun supposing he had shot at me."

Rep. – "Were you ever arrested before?"

West – " Yes sir, twice – once in a fight and once for pulling a turnip. I you don't believe me ask Mr. _____ at Dresden."

Rep. – "Is there anything you want?"

West – "No sir, I have everything I want – I am not out of tobacco and Mr. Johnston who came to see me today told me he would send me some. I wish you would say in the paper that I am much obliged to Mr. Baker of the City Hotel for the jelly and things he sent me."

Rep. – "Well, John if you want to see me at any time, send for me."

West – "I wish to see you in the morning, if you please by yourself. I may think of something tonight that you ought to know. Good night."

9:30 A. M. THURSDAY

Rep. – "Well West, how do you feel this morning."

West – "Very well in one sense and very bad in another. For some nights I have slept very badly but last night I slept so sound that I could not snore and knew nothing until the Col. Sprung the bolt this morning."

Rep. – "John, how did you feel the day Judge Miller sentenced you?"

West – "Well sir I felt more dead than alive I felt completely gone."

Rep. – "I noticed you very closely and you never changed countenance, was that put on?"

West – "Yes sir, I know my case was going to the Supreme Court and I nerved myself to stand it without flinching."

Rep. – "West suppose you were turned loose on the street now, do you think any one could out run you?"

West – "Well sir it would be more than one race horse could do; I would be running for my life you know?"

Here West handed the reporter a piece of poetry, which want of room prevents our publishing.

On Friday, May 9th, Mr. Goodwin of the *Bazoe* came over in company with the prisoner's wife. By the invitation of Mr. G. we were present when the following interview occurred, which Mr. Goodwin took down.

At meeting they embraced in silent sorrow, the wife handing the doomed man his three months infant and the two beheld in silence the Innocent sleep of the babe, until the following conversation occurred:

At length West broke the stillness of the prison cell by say, between his sobs:

"Rachel, don't take it to heart so much." And then he gazed, for the first time upon the face of his baby as he playfully pulled the little bonnet from over its face as it lay sleeping in its mother's arms, and again he broke the stillness by saying: "Rachel, don't take it to heart, it can't be helped - I feel just as bad as you do about it.

Baker - John, this is the first time you ever saw your child, is it not?

West - Yes sir.

Baker - Is it a boy or girl?

West - It is a boy.

Baker - What is its name?

Mrs. West - William Francis Marion West.

(Here West took the child in his arms and pressed his lips to his cheek.)

Baker - You will keep the name of West then will you?

Mrs. West - Yes, I can't do otherwise.

West - Rachel, did you come down on the train this morning?

Mrs. West - [sobbing] - I did.

West - Don't take it to heart - - it can't be helped.

Mrs. West - What did you do it for? (Meaning the murder - Rep.)

West - That is more than I can tell.

Baker - When did you see your wife last?

West - I have almost forgotten, but I think it was July 27, 1878.

Mrs. West - No, it was on the 30th of July.

Baker - Did you leave them for good then?

West - Yes, I left to stay.

Mrs. West - What did you leave for?

West - Because you told that I cut the bee tree and wanted me arrested for it.

Mrs. West - You know that ain't so. I never knew for certain that you cut the bee tree.

Baker - Did you ever have any trouble with John before?

Mrs. West - Only a few words occasionally, little quarrels.

West - [cheerfully] That was no much, was it Rachel?

Mrs. West - [countenance brightening up] No, not much.

The child became restless and awakened, when it's father said: "Had I not better take the shawl off the baby?"

Ravenel - No, its too damp here.

Baker - You had a stick secreted in your cell that they hunted for and could not find. You gave it up yesterday. Where did you hide it?

West - Yes, in the ventilator.

Mrs. West - [Looking him full in the face] John, you killed the man did you?

West - [Eyes down] I did.

Ravenel - John, make your wife feel as well as she can, and tell her what you did it for and all about it.

Mrs. West - You was not looking ahead to see that you would come to this?

West - I wish I had never come to Missouri.

Baker - [Addressing Mrs. West] Would you live with West if he were to get pardoned or get out of here?

Mrs. West - I would not if he was to walk out here now. I give no man but one chance to leave me.

Baker - Would you like to see him loose and out?

Mrs. West - [Determinedly] Yes, I would: but I don't want to live with him again.

West - I will be glad when the Colonel is through with me. [Meaning Sheriff McCullough]

Capt. Collins, Deputy Sheriff - You don't blame anybody for your trouble do you?

West - I blame Ewing for some of my trouble.

Ravenel - You should hold malice toward no one.

Capt. Collins - Do you want to see Ewing?

West - I don't care particularly. If he comes up I'll treat him well.

Ravenel - Is your father coming to see you?

West - Yes, he will be here Monday night next.

West - [Addressing reporter] I see by the papers, where a man killed his wife and three children while they were asleep. He claimed that he was not guilty of murder in the first degree. I think that is murder in the first degree if my crime was that.

Reporter - Have the preachers been to see you?

West - yes, some.

Bystander - How do you feel towards John?

Mrs. West - I can forgive him, but I never can forget the injury he did by leaving me.

West - I think it is best they caught me - I'll get out of this world.

Mrs. West - But it is not the right way to get out of it - the way you are going

Mrs. West was asked if she was ready to go as train time was approaching. She signified her readiness to go at any time.

West urged her to stay longer and was very pressing in his invitation for her to remain.

She declined and got up to go.

He presented her with a Bible and told her of a locket at the photographers for her to get.

He embraced his child, kissed it, then embraced his wife.

As Mrs. West walked out of the jail he broke completely down, crying aloud, so that he could be heard in the street.

It was a strange and painful meeting; but the parting was more painful still. Not withstanding his crime - not withstanding her wrongs - that woman realized in spite of her will that he was her husband, and that the ties that bound them were soon to be severed, leaving her free. Upon her breast she bore the innocent babe, whose first sight of its father was in a felon's cell. Happy it is for it, that some bright years will intervene before it realizes the stigma that will cling like a pall throughout the life before it. It was a sad sight. It was a mournful group. When it disappeared, his cries were those of dead despair.

After this interview the prisoner then handed the reporter of this paper the following history of his life which he had written by promise for the ADVERTISER.

History of John I. West

Written by Himself for the Advertiser

"The first part of my life, of from as early as I can remember, I always had a head of my own and never would mind my father when I was bid to do. I can remember the first whipping my father ever gave me; I had hid the fire shovel and father wanted me to get it, or tell him where it was, and I refused to do either and he gave me a good whipping before I gave up. In fact I did everything that was wrong. I would visit water melon patches and destroy them; I would tear up buggy rigs that didn't belong to me. I was stubborn all the time and never had regard for myself, or any one else, although I was taught right until I was about nine years old. You may say that I should have been taught right after that, but it was about that age that my dear mother died and left me with a wicked father, and if he *hadn't* been a wicked father it wouldn't have done me any good, for he was not with me all the time. My mother was religious and gave me good advice even to the last. My father is religious now or I trust he is at least. I was not religious, not by any means, but I trust that I may not die as I am. The fact of my going astray rests on myself, for I should have tried to do what was right, and that was to serve God, the first one that brought me to a step in the light

of truth was Rev. WW. M. Goldsby of Mernard County, Illinois. In fact he always took a hearty interest in my behalf and taught me what was right. Even when I was at work Mr. Goldsby would come and talk to me of the love of God, for he would rather for my soul to be saved than for his work to be done. The most of my life had been spent in bad company. Sometimes I would fall in with bad company, and then I would lead a good life for a while and think that I would remain that way for it was right that I should never go astray again - it is now too late to think of it. I had the Bible to read and the Sunday school and the gospel good before me - did I cultivate it? You may ask. No, God knows I did not but flee-eth from it.

"And when below I dwell no more,
Pray keep this relict still,
And let it bang behind the door,
Those aged hooks to ill.

For it has done it's share of toll,
Most strange, too, and bad,
In most scenes of sad turmoil,
Of which my history'll tell.

The papers say that I will make another confession but I have made my last and told all that I know. I have told you of my stealing money, and robbing houses, and of all the men I ever killed and of my fighting. I admit to leading a bad and wicked life and doing everything that was wrong. I was born at Spring River, Jasper County, Mo., I was seven years old when my father moved to Illinois, where we lived 14 years. I have lived in Mo. Three years. My age is 24 years. I was born in 1855 and just to think where I am now. On last Tuesday evening, May 6th after I tried to break jail arrangements were made to put a guard over me. Mr. B. B. Goodman, one of the jury in my case, is the guard over me night and day. You may say that I don't enjoy his company, but you are mistaken, for he has acted the gentleman with me all the time since he has been with me. He even gave me good advice, he always treats me with respect and gets for me everything that I want. He made me a present of some tobacco last night and I give many thanks to him; also to Mr. Baker for his kindness. And to many others whose names I don't know. I give both Mr. Cosgrove and Mr. Pendleton many thanks, and feel under ten thousand renewed obligations to them both. Read this and take a lesson you man. Never step aside; always shun evil. I respect all have visited me. With this I close good-bye.

In an interview Wednesday, May 14, West stated to his attorney, Mr. Cosgrove, and a reporter of this paper that he had told Mr. Baker that he could have his body to experiment on as to resuscitation on condition that he was to send it to Dresden if the attempt was not successful, but that no even were the Drs to have it for dissection.

West's Last Day on Earth.

"Time and tide wait for no man." This truth found the doomed prisoner as at last, and oh! How soon the fatal morning arrived. Think of it. What must have been his remorse, his anguish, his fear; his wretchedness, as he watched through the calm, stilly hours of the night, for the first gleaming of the dawn through his narrow prison window? What must have been to him the awful significance of the distant cock-crow, announcing the near advent of King of the day.

FATHER AND SON MEET

All things have their end. So did the last night which John I. West had on Earth. At an early hour in the morning, while the peaceful little city was yet wrapt in gloom and in slumber, and in dreams, a little party entered the jail yard and sought admittance to the prison. Of that party, the central and interesting figure was an old bent and tottering man. It was the prisoner's father. He had come all the way from the little village of Chapin, Ill., in response to a telegram from his doomed son to comfort and console as best he might.

HIS LAST HOURS ON EARTH

Oh! What a meeting! Clapsed in each others embrace, they stood as statues, now and then shaken by the convulsive sobs of the father. The two or three spectators of this solemn, sacred scene viewed it in silence, with bowed and

uncovered heads. After a while the hot scalding tears of sorrow and anguish in a measure ceased to flow, and in broken faltering tones, the aged father conversed with his son:

"MY BOY! MY BOY!"

I never thought to see you thus. Oh, it will break my heart; I can't stand it; I can't stand it."

Son - Never mind, father, don't cry it can't be helped now; I realize that I must die, and I am not uneasy; I am not afraid to die; I have brought this all on myself; I only am to blame and I ought to be punished; I only care for it on your account father

Father - Oh! My son, if I could only do something for you; but I have done everything that I can and it avails nothing. I care nothing for the disgrace to me, I care only for your well being.

Son - I care more on you account than anything else, father.

Father - My boy; I want to know one thing. Answer it in the presence of your God. Are you guilty?

Son - You have seen what I have stated in the papers, father; It is the truth.

Father - Oh! My God! My God! That my boy should ever come to this.

Son - You know why I left home, father?

Father - Yes, but it was not on my account, John.

Son - No father, not on your account. You are blameless.

And thus father and son continued their conversation continually interrupted by the heart rending sobs of the father. The prisoner appeared calm and resigned. No tear in his eye, no quiver in his voice, only an apparent deep solitude for his aged parent. He inquired tenderly after his health, asked if he had had breakfast and constantly endeavored to comfort and console him. He expressed himself willing and almost anxious to die and said he had no fears as to his future fate. That he bore malice to none, not even to the jury nor prosecuting attorney, nor sheriffs who were to execute him.

This interview ended. The father was conducted to a hotel and the son - ah, let the readers imagine the duties to which the son betook himself.

The sun arose in unwonted splendor. A real May day was upon the land. Soon the quiet, prosy little city was filled with a hurrying anxious looking crowd; dense throngs of people congregated to gratify morbid curiosity.

THE TERRIBLE HOUR APPROACHED

At 10:30 o'clock, the Sheriff formed his guard in front of the jail, forced the dense crowd back, and a wagon, conveying the wooden coffin was backed up to the jail yard gate. In a few moments, the baliff, in charge of the prisoner filed slowly out of the jail door; the doomed man, guarded by one on each side of him, walked erect and with firm step and calm though gloomy countenance.

He was placed in the wagon, took his seat on his coffin, and slowly the awful, the solemn procession commenced the march to the gallows. The guards surrounded the wagon, and in their rear followed an army of reporters, physicians and others who had privilege to occupy the area around the gallows, which had been encircled by ropes and set apart for them.

In due time the fatal spot was reached. The scaffold was erected in a little semi-circular valley, surrounded by a grassy hill, the place being what is known as the old Fair Ground.

The wagon drew up immediately under the gallows, the prisoner alighted, and bade farewell to his friends, in tears and convulsive hand shaking. Among others, he shook the hand of one of his faithful attorneys, Mr. Pendleton; the scene was very sad; for the first time after arriving, he was melted to tears and clung as if loath to part with as fine and faithful a friend as Mr. Pendleton had been. He ascended the gallows, where he was surrounded by reporters, ministers, the Sheriff and his deputies. He wore a bouquet of flowers upon the lappel of his coat, which he deliberately unpinned and tied to the railing. During this time the immense mass of people estimated at 6,000 crowded up as near to the scaffold as permitted by guards to do. The Rev. Mr. Gauss, of the Presbyterian church, this city, then read a passage from the scriptures, relating to the crucifixion of Christ and his promise to the malefactor that he should be with him in paradise.

Rev. G. W. Hyde of the Baptist Church, delivered the following fervent prayer to God for the salvation of the prisoner's soul:

THE PRAYER

Of Rev. G. W. Hyde at the scaffold immediately before the execution.

ALMIGHTY God Our Heavenly Father - we have met here to day under peculiarly sad and affecting circumstance. Thou who knowest the end from the Beginning knowest the object of our gathering together upon this mournful occasion. Thou hast said in the words, "that whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed" and that the magistrate beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him who doeth evil". An evil has been, oh Lord, Thou knowest murder has been committed; the person before Thee has violated the laws of the land and thereby sinned against society and Thee. And to day he, will pay the penalty due his crime. We acknowledge, O Lord, his guilt and shame and feel that he ought to die. And now in a few moments he will be ushered into Thine August presence.

We come to make prayer for him. Oh God, forgive him for his sins that are so dark and aggravated; Thou hast said, if we confess our sins Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He confessed his sins and guilt. Oh Lord, we plead they promises; - for Christ sake forgive him! Thou has said again, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, Thy son, cleanseth from all sin" and though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson; they shall be as wool." Oh that this poor man's guilt may to day be washed away by that all cleansing blood that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. O Thou, who didst pardon Peter, who denied Thee, and David the adulterer and murderer, and Saul of Tarsus the chief of all sinners, pardon we beseech Thee this dying man. Deliver him from blood guiltiness, O God, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies; blot out his transgressions! Create in him a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within him! May he truly, bitterly and heartily repent and to day exercise saving faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of sinners. Lord into thy hands we commit his spirit. Hear us we do beseech thee and accept our prayers for Christ sake! Amen.

These religious devotions finished, the doomed prisoner faced the crowd and spoke in substance as follows:

MY FRIENDS: You see my condition, I want to say a few words to you - I was brought up under religious parents, but have wandered far away from their teaching. I have been guilty of much wickedness. I have forged notes, I have stolen and I have committed murder. I repented of my last crime a moment after I had committed it. But it was too late. I never considered. I thought not of the hereafter when I did it. I was once religious but I went astray. I chose darkness rather than light, and this is my end. I trust to almighty God that it may be to you a warning.

My friends, I hope to meet you all in heaven; I feel the love of God in my soul. My friends, I am unworthy of your sympathy, but I rejoice that I have one friend in the Lord Jesus Christ. I trust you may all meet me in that better place where my blessed mother now rests in peace. My mother died fifteen years ago, and is, I believe no in heaven.

I HAVE SINNED

Against God and against society and if the Governor would now relieve my sentence I feel that I would not be satisfied to leave this scaffold. I took life and I ought to give my life for the one I have taken. I have made several confessions. The first was untrue. I made it hoping it might influence the Governor to clemency. But the last was true.

I do not expect to go to a world of punishment, but expect to be with my God tomorrow; my moments are fleeting; I look to God to save me. With regard to Samuel L. Ewing, I want to meet him in Heaven; he falsified, but I forgive him. I hope to meet my sheriffs, my attorneys, my relations, all of you in Heaven. I am unworthy to live, but am not unworthy of God's love.

The leaves are putting out, the flowers are blooming, everything is bright but I must go; I can't be with you much longer; my body will soon rest in the cold grave, but

MY SOUL WILL BE SAVED

It is hard to die, but I want to leave this world. I killed that man. His name was Frank Shinn; I know no other name for him; I took his watch and money, and I hate myself for that .

I bear malice to none. I think as much of Sheriff Smith and Deputy Williams, who arrested me, as of any one. I have been seven months in jail and have always received the best of treatment at the hands of Sheriff McCulloch and his deputies. My lawyers have my gratitude for their efforts in my behalf. May I meet them in heaven. My heart has been hard but not so now. I am unworthy. I don't ask you to believe my story, but it is true. God gave his only begotten son, that whoso believeth on him should not die, but have everlasting life. I trust you are all prepared to meet your God. I doubt not, I have had the prayers of many here. I must be hanged by the neck until I am dead. Think of it young men! But God has called away my earthly desires.

I ought to have staid at home, then I would not have been here. I learned this morning that one of my young companions and associates in Petersburg, Ill., has been sent to the penitentiary for life. I was with him six years, and we disregarded the law of God. My prayer is that none of you may follow in my footsteps. Look to God in heaven for salvation.

My friends, I do not confess my sin for your benefit, but for my own. I was lost in sin. I ask God to have mercy upon me, that he will take me home to day.

The prisoner here closed, and again the Rev. Dr. Hyde offered prayer to God.

Sheriff McCulloch then read the following note from West:

May 16th, 1879

"Mr. Robert McCulloch.

"I want you to see that my body is taken of right. Don't let the doctors have my body. I want it buried, if you please, is my last desire, and my you do it and meet me in heaven.

My best love and respects to all. So farewell my kind sheriff. No fault to find. Good bye to all.

John I. West

N. B. Read this out on the grounds, please."

The prisoner then said: Farewell ladies and gentlemen, I must go. I must die. It is a debt we all have to pay.

The black cap was here adjusted the prisoners arms and legs pinioned. At 11:58 o'clock the drop fell, and the dull thud seemed to announce that all was over. But to the horror of all present,

THE ROPE BROKE,

And the hooded form fell prone on the ground. Quickly he was drawn up again, the apparently lifeless form indicated that though the rope broke, it had done its duty well.

In fourteen minutes, respiration ceased, and in twenty minutes life was pronounced extinct and the body was cut down. Upon examination it was ascertained that the neck was not broken, the result, no doubt, of the breaking of the rope.

Thus ended the tragedy which for over seven months, been progressing in our midst; and once more the majesty of the law has been vindicated, and a terrible example set for all those who are inclined to disregard the most sacred and valuable of all the absolute rights of men, life.

The grave of John Isaac West was forgotten over the years. But "Mrs. Leonard (Annabel) Stretz's grandfather served on the jury that convicted West in 1879. Her father had ridden on the wagon with West on his way to the hanging, and both knew the location of his grave. They passed that information on to her." "West's grave is located just to the left of entrance of Sunset Hills Cemetery. Sunset Hills Cemetery is on South Street, just past the intersection of Third Street in Boonville."

Now I have a desire to learn the identity of the man that John West murdered. Surely, there are enough clues in all the statements that were given to be able to trace the identity. But more strangely, I have a desire to learn what became of the son of John Isaac West. Maybe, you also share in these desires.

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