

The creditors were paid pro rata, as there was not enough money to pay anyone in full. Abb and Posey received an inheritance. J. W. Watts was paid \$1 for making the coffin.

The lack of a stone for George Cearley in Dallas Cemetery is not surprising, given the circumstances, but we would hope that he and Permilia did at one time have some kind of markers. Julia Frances Lindley Swaim Cearley Sanders has a nice stone, engraved simply “Julia Sanders.” Bless her, she picked a fine time to become a Cearley!

The Harmon Brothers: wrong place wrong time

It’s easy to visit brothers **William and Evans Harmon** as they share a headstone, each having been in the wrong place at the wrong time trying to do the right thing.

Now they rest for eternity side by side.

W. S. “Husband of Mattie” and J. E. “Husband of Mollie” were men in the prime of their lives when they were shot and killed in Louis Latham’s store in Dallas in January 1884 while intervening in a heated argument that was part of a long feud between **Dock Bishop** and his brother-in-law Bob Lamar against **Abb Wesley Cearley**.

There are multiple versions of the Bishop saga. In Abb’s version – from an interview with him in 1936 – he was first shot by Dock at a dance. A week later at Latham’s store, Bob shot Abb in the leg. In Abb’s telling of the next moments, William and Evans Harmon tried to make peace, but instead made Bishop and Lamar angrier and they shot the brothers. Evans Harmon died almost immediately and William Harmon within 24 hours, leaving widows and children.

The Harmons’ murders put them in the center of the Dock Bishop legend. Dock and Bob Lamar rode away and hid for a month or two, and long story short, they killed a Texas detective named Wise who found them, and they buried him in a shallow grave that was soon discovered. Wise’s brother from Texas showed up in Dallas and, in Abb’s telling, that if Dock and Bob didn’t surrender, he was “going to kill everybody in Dallas.” Dock and Bob surrendered in Oxford, spent time in jail where they played banjo and guitar for the other prisoners, and in 1886 Dock was tried in Calhoun County and hanged there for killing detective Wise. Dock’s final statement was that he was plenty guilty, his “blood lies on four men.” But, he swore, he did not kill Wise. Indeed, another man confessed on his death bed to the Wise killing, and the story is still debated.

In other versions of the Dallas Feud of 1884-1886, Abb is not blameless. An inebriated Abb is said to have provoked Dock at the dance by spitting tobacco juice on Dock’s boots. The fight continued outside, with family and friends of each man taking sides.

There is more agreement about the day in Latham’s Dry Goods when the Harmons were killed, and other locals were wounded. The families of Dallas would never feel entirely safe again. Nor, sadly, would the reputation of Dallas recover.

Want to visit Abb Wesley Cearley? He is buried in the Oxford Memorial Cemetery in Oxford, where he moved when he retired from farming, and where he served as jailor for 4 years – proving the cliché, “you can’t make this stuff up.”

