

Time moves on, no stopping that. When I started writing this column for your newspaper, "The Estill Tribune" over a year ago, the thought of "Time Marches On" was in my thoughts. I just never knew how long, time would march before the readers in Estill County realized, this is your column, not mine. That time has arrived. I am starting to get stories from the county, about their hunting adventures.

My friend, Greenville Estes and his hunting buddy, Marie Robinson, sent me this story. We will start with Greenville. Last week, we had wind gust of 50 miles per hour. Not the kind of weather you would be out in the woods hunting, right? Greenville was up and in the woods well before day break; his hunting buddy, Marie Robinson, thinking better just hung in. With winds at hurricane strength, and the sun starting to go down in the West, Greenville was a man on a mission. Greenville had seen several deer, that just about any other hunter would have taken, and got out of the wind, heading home to a warm house and a chance to warm up. But Greenville had seen one deer in days gone past, and he was after it. He would settle



Marie Robinson

for nothing less. Thirty minutes left in legal shooting hours, and here came the deer of a life time, the deer Greenville had watched for all day. The "Big Boy", a 15 point, went straight down. Greenville never knew just how big this deer was, until he stood over it. He left it laying, heading to get help to get it out of the woods.

His hunting buddy, Marie Robinson, was ready to roll before sunup the next morning. This was Marie's second year of deer hunting, and she loves it. I have written before, women starting to hunt has saved our sport. As male hunters decreased, female hunters took up the



Greenville Estes

challenge and saved our hunting. Marie saw her buck around 9:30 that morning a steady pull of the trigger, and 'game over.' Although her buck wasn't as big as Greenville's, she was happy with it; and always remember, a trophy is in the eye of the beholder.

Tip of my hat to the both of you, for a job well done. More deer stories from Estill County next week. Thank you for your stories, and have a safe happy Thanksgiving.

You can email Steve Brewer at <Steve@EstillTribune.com> and message is automatically forwarded.

The Confession of Edward Hawkins

This the story of Edward Hawkins, one of two men legally hanged in Estill County, as told by Jess D. Wilson who published a column for many years called "It Happened Here," in the rural electric magazine mailed to customers by the Jackson County Electric Cooperative (now Jackson Energy). The original copy is courtesy of Kathy Stone.

Probably no other man ever played the role of "The Gladiator" at his hanging with greater finesse than did Edward Hawkins in Estill County, Kentucky, May 29, 1857. He was young, good looking and highly talented. His list of crimes was impressive for one so young, and he had written them all out in his dungeon cell as he awaited, probably with secret anticipation, the fateful day when every eye would see him and every ear would be listening for the words he would say.

Edward Hawkins was born on Woodward's Creek, Estill County, Kentucky, July 11, 1836. His father, John Hawkins, had in all 37 children. Edward was one of the set of triplets, one boy and two girls, born to wife number one. She had a total of 22 children. Wife number two did not do quite as well, she had only 15. Both families lived as neighbors on the same farm on Woodward's Creek and by all reports, got along well with each other.

Edward Hawkins grew into a handsome young man. He was probably a genius in intellect and he had acquired a relatively good education when he "went to school to see the girls."

During his childhood, he learned to avoid punishment for petty crimes. His mother was overprotective. He was always wilful in getting his own way. His training as a criminal began at an early age. At 13 years of age, he went to Lexington where he was trained by a "Fagan," in the gentle arts of pick-pocket, passing counterfeit money, and other crimes.

He was almost 19 years old when he left home and began a career of crime that within two years was to bring him to a "dungeon cell" in the Irvine jail and the hanging that was to be the climax of his life.

Within six weeks of leaving home, he married Elizabeth Gabbard in Madison County. This was the first of six marriages he was to contract without getting a divorce from the previous ones. He left most of his "wives" within a month, some he left in less than a week. He remained with Elizabeth one month and two days and then joined the army for service in the Kansas Territory. He deserted after seven months.

When he met a new girl he usually changed his name and his profession. He married number two as an army recruiter, number three as an army officer, and number four, a 13-year-old girl, as a lawyer. He said the best wedding he had was to number five. He met, courted and married her within a nine-day period, masquerading as a dentist.

His first murder was executed in as deliberate a manner as courtships. A friend had been indicted for a crime. There was an eyewitness. Hawkins, to oblige his friend, sought out the witness and killed him in cold blood, shooting him in the left eye (Little Edward was a stickler for detail). To cover up the fact that the man had been shot, he ran the man's wagon over his head to make it appear that the man had died accidentally. His friend thought he was awful clever to think of that.

After committing a long list of crimes of every description, he left the Kansas-Missouri area to return

home. In Shelby County, Kentucky, he married number six. They were very happy until a chance acquaintance recognized him and let "the cat out of the bag."

He followed the chance acquaintance to Dayton, Ohio, got him drunk, deliberately provoked a fight in front of witnesses and killed him. The court ruled self-defense and released him.

When he returned to number six, she hanged herself in an apple tree. She was 15 years old.

When he got home he found the only news that ever really seemed to touch him, his mother had died during his absence. His father had moved to Ohio.

He left Estill County, November 10, 1856, and was soon engaged to number seven. The date for the wedding was set for August 25, 1857. Until then, his engagements had been short. It is ominous that this engagement was set so far in the future, a day that Edward Hawkins would never see.

He went to Ohio to visit his father. On Christmas Day he met and became engaged to number eight, if I have kept proper count. He says in his CONFESSION, that there were others but he didn't want to appear boastful.

On New Year's Day, he began a courtship with number nine. The next day, they set the date of the proposed marriage for the 15th. After a visit with number eight and number seven, he returned to Estill County but left for fear of being arrested. He told everyone he was going to England.

He went to Madison County and tried to make it up with number one. She "broke his heart" by not taking him back.

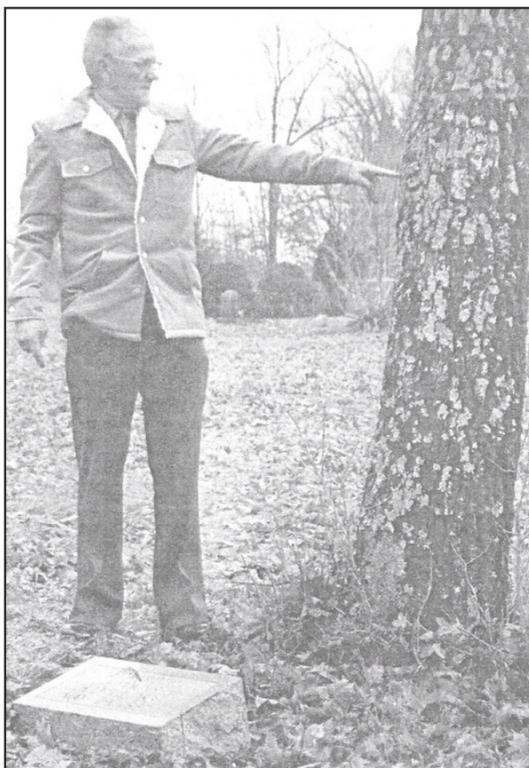
By March 9th, 1857, he had returned to Estill County riding a fine horse he had stolen in Madison County. All his old friends greatly admired his fine mount.

In a few days, he was at Proctor (then Owsley County) passing himself off as an army recruiter. One of his "recruits" had a pretty sister. He began a campaign to make her number ten. By Sunday morning, March 25, 1857, he had talked her into going to Kansas with him. Luckily for her, he was arrested that morning at the home of Benjamin McGuire by Sheriff James M. Land and his deputy, Jesse Arvin, for the theft of the horse he had stolen in Madison County.

Later that afternoon, as Land and Arvin were taking him to Irvine, he killed them both between the top of Contrary Hill and the Winding Stairs. Arvin and Hawkins had been riding double when Arvin got down and was walking to rest his horse. Hawkins had discovered that Land, on the other horse, had a pistol in his left breast pocket. Hawkins steered his horse close to the right side of Land's horse. He caught Land's right hand in his lift, grabbed the gun with his right and shot Arvin who was walking behind. At the same time, he pulled Land and himself to the ground. Land attempted to escape on all fours but when he saw it was useless, lay on his side and "implored for mercy."

Hawkins was to write in his confession, "But, O, horrid to tell, instead of extending mercy to a helpless, unoffending fellow, I fired on hem; the ball took effect in right eye, passing through the brain, and he died without a struggle -- I could not bring myself -- to robbing him, a man I thought as much of as I did James M. Land. (He) had treated me with so much kindness -- you may think -- this is a strange-feeling (toward a man) I had just murdered in cold blood; yet it is true."

He hid in a cave, then under a tool shed. In a few days



The late Willie Allen points to the initials "E.H." on a persimmon tree that marked the grave of Edward Hawkins until a grave stone was set to mark the place. Willie, his brothers and sisters, and their Uncle Hargett Allen, had the marker place in 1966, one hundred and nine years after Edward Hawkins was hanged. The old Hawkins house once stood about three hundred feet from this cemetery off the Cressy Road in Estill County. Jess adds, "Willie and I were classmates in Berea Foundation School about 45 years ago. I next met him about thirty years ago while living in Mr. Bush's Hotel in Irvine while I staked lines all over Estill County. He was foreman of the right-of-way crew for the Cooperative at that time.

he made his way toward Ohio. He crossed the Ohio River on Monday, a week and a day after the murders. As he was traveling the road to Manchester, Ohio, he became aware that armed men on horseback were following him. He saw them too late to run. He crossed a rail fence and began laying up some rails that were there. As the posse rode by, one man pointed at him and said, "The man we are chasing looks a lot like that farmer."

His pursuers had rightly guessed that he would try to reach his father's house in Ohio.

He was arrested April 5th and returned to Irvine for an examining trial on the 11th. He was tried forthwith and sentenced to be hanged. While awaiting that fateful day he wrote his confession in his "dungeon cell."

His execution must have been a day to remember. His last words were something between a good political speech and a sermon. His last speech has been preserved and printed in the little book titled, **THE CONFESSION OF EDWARD HAWKINS.**

He was hanged May 29, 1957, two months and four days after he had murdered Land and Arvin and forty-three days before his 21st birthday.