

One of Estill County's three 'hangings' was actually a lynching

Estill County is steeped in history and tradition no less rich than any other area of this state. From Indian tales and stories of the American Revolution to modern events of history, he have our heroes, criminals and our humorous characters. Estill County's history, though not always accurately recorded, makes for an interesting story.

The three hangings in Estill County are the most publicized events of our history, due mainly to the accurate record of the life of Edward Hawkins who was hanged in 1857. Hawkins, though an outlaw, may seem somewhat of a hero now due to the mystique we have found for flashy, young outlaws.

William Puckett of Estill County was one of three that were legally hanged on the same day in Kentucky in 1892. Also hanged at the same time was Simpson Bush in neighboring Powell County.

Another of the three "so-called" hangings in Estill County was that of Jesse Crow who was actually lynched on November 13, 1870, not by court-appointed hanging, but by a mob. Little is written about Jesse Crow except for a short line in Collins' History of Kentucky that tells the exact date of the event with most of the rest of the story being handed down by family over the years.

Crow died not as a young man, as had Hawkins, but as an old man nearly 70 years of age. He died not at a court-appointed gallows in front of sightseers, but at the hands of a revengeful mob who took his life by darkness of night.

Jesse Crowe began his life about 1810 in Clark County, Kentucky, the son of Richard Crowe and Elizabeth Burgess. Jesse's grandfather, Daniel reportedly came to America to escape the wrath of a nobleman of England, following a dispute over a dog. Traditions carried down in the family say that Daniel hid in a casket until he was aboard ship for America.

Daniel worked in America for about five years; and then he returned to England where he married Anne, a former sweetheart. He brought her to America where they settled in Virginia. In the late 1700's they left their home there and brought their family to Clark County, Kentucky.

They came here from Orange County, Virginia with about 40 other families who were members of the Log Lick Baptist Church. The entire church membership had left Virginia because of religious persecution. They came to Kentucky where they established a

new church at present-day Log Lick. The church would eventually become known as the Log Lick Church of Christ and remains solvent today.

Daniel and Anne Crow settled near Log Lick on a ridge which today is known as Crowe Ridge. The only children that had which we know about were three sons. John Crow and Richard Crow settled in Clark County while the younger of the three sons, Job, settled in Estill County.

Jesse Crow spent the early part of his life in Clark County but came to Estill County after marrying his first cousin, Elizabeth Crow, a daughter of Job Crow.

Jesse and Elizabeth Crowe lived in the Tipton Ridge area where her father owned 300 acres of land. They raised their family there which consisted of at least eight children of which six left descendants who still live in Estill and surrounding counties.

Jesse earned a meager living by farming and collecting bounties on wolves that roamed the area.

He reportedly showed little respect for the property of others and was said to have been found occasionally in his neighbors' chicken coops. This penchant for interfering with the property of others led him to be the defendant in many lawsuits involving his neighbors and even members of his own family.

Charges of trespassing and theft were brought by members of the Niblack family who were members of his sister's family. Many of these lawsuits involved land owned by heirs of Job Crow, Jesse's father-in-law. All of this bad blood toward Jesse might have been part of what led to the eventual lynching of Jesse Crow.

The furnace operation run by the Red River Iron Manufacturing Company at Fitchburg had expanded, and during this expansion, several negroes were hired at lower wages than would normally be paid to white workers.

The negroes lived near the thriving town of Fitchburg in a slum area which became known as Needmore. The little community could be easily reached by foot from Tipton Ridge through the Needmore Hollow or through Crowe Hollow. Dances and merriment were said to be a regular feature at Needmore, and people from miles around were attracted to the place. The dances had also become an attraction for Jesse Crowe's children and some of his older grandchildren. They could easily walk over the hill to the merriment at Need-

more.

The story which has been told by members of the family is that Richard Crow, a son of Jesse, and Elizabeth Crow, a granddaughter belonging to James Ira Crow, were attending one of the dances at Needmore. During the dance, a fight broke out between Richard and a young man named Lyon Titus. Titus was getting the best end of the fight, and Elizabeth ran back home, thinking that Richard would be killed.

Jesse, thinking that his son's life was in danger, ran down to Needmore where he found Lyon Titus. He knifed Titus, thinking that Richard was dead. Titus died later of his wounds; however, Richard had not been harmed. Jesse then hid out to escape punishment for the murder. Titus was buried at the Mount Tabor Cemetery at Millers Creek.

Jesse hid in a cave near the Cottage Furnace, overlooking the McIntosh Hollow at Pitts. (The cave is known as Ira Cave.) Jesse's son, Ira, brought food to him and there was sufficient water near the cave. He stayed in the cave for quite some time until law officers followed Ira as he was taking food to Jesse. When they found out where he was hidden, they arrested him and brought him to Irvine where he was lodged in the jail. That same night, a mob came to the jail and demanded that Jesse be released to them. The law officers yielded to the mob with little or no resistance. Jesse was taken from the jail and hanged. Many of the members of the mob had reportedly been involved in previous disagreements with Jesse and saw a chance to be rid of him. No trial was ever conducted, and no investigation was made into the lynching. Jesse was buried near his son Samuel in what would become the Crowe Family Cemetery at Tipton Ridge.

Jesse's widow, Elizabeth, lived for several years afterward. She applied for pension from the Army using her son Samuel's service during the Civil War. During hearings to determine her eligibility as a Civil War pensioner, friends and neighbors stated that Jesse Crow was a poor farmer who lived a humble life, raising his family on the meager income produce by his farm. They stated that Jesse never had much but that he provided for his family until the time of his death. Witnesses testified that near the end of his days, Jesse Crow was nearly blind and at times was so crippled he could walk only with great pain. He died leaving Elizabeth with no means

of support. Elizabeth was able to receive a pension from her son Samuel.

At her death, she was buried in the Crowe Family Cemetery near the grave of Jesse. Both graves remained unmarked until Memorial Day of 1982 when a stone was placed showing the final resting place of Jesse Crow. Donations had been taken for the purpose by Barbara Wells of Frenchburg and Mabel Pitts of Somerset. With money left over after purchasing his stone, they were able to collect enough more to buy a stone for Elizabeth. Some years later a cenotaph was placed in downtown Irvine by one of Jesse Crowe's descendants to commemorate the life of a man who was unjustly lynched.

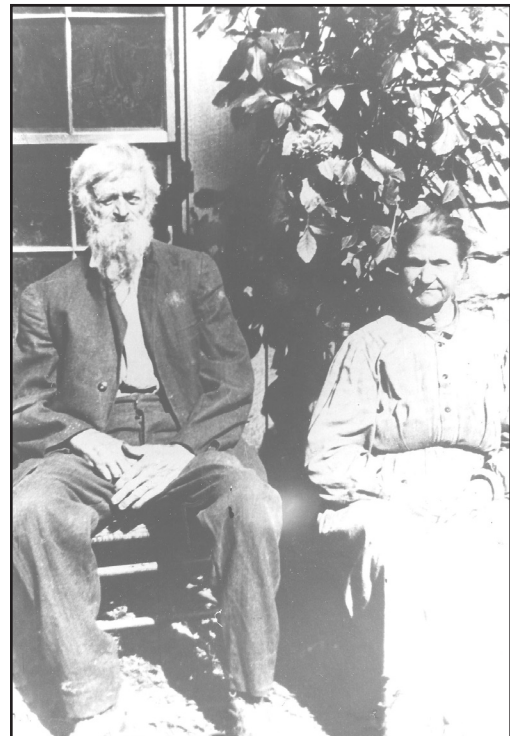
Jesse and Elizabeth Crow have several descendants in Estill County and the surrounding area. Their son, James Ira, married Leania Adams and second to Rachel Mullins. He had at least 10 children by the two wives.

Nancy Ann Crow married a Stephens and second to George Washington Pitts. Most of the Pitts family in the area are her descendants.

Martha Crow married Ansil D. Puckett and had a large family.

Sarah Crow married James Fitzgerald and second to George Moreland. There were three Fitzgerald children, and most of the Morelands of Estill County are her descendants.

Richard Crow and Henry Clay "Babe" Crowe also left several descendants in Estill County.



George Moreland and his wife, Sarah Ellen, one of the daughters of Jesse Crow and Elizabeth.



FURNACE SCHOOL - 1927

Left to right, top row: Everett Barnes (1913-2000), Crystal Seay Billings Spencer (1915-2005), Nannie Mae Billings Winburn (1911-1946), Courtney Rogers, Glynn Mervyn Miller (1911-1979), Earnest D. Billings (1913-1993), Earl Lewis Dragoo (1916-1987), Lawrence Chaney (1913-1993). Second row: Minnie May Blythe Clifton (1915-1992), Buferd C. Tipton Newton (1916-1973), Beulah Gladys Shouse (1917-2009), Bertie Tipton Abney Means (1916-1991), Ethel Frances Dragoo Black (1918-2006), Nettie Mae Tipton Nead (1918-2000), Jerry Ray Norris (1917-1993), William H. Chaney (1918-2006). Third row: Elizabeth "Lizzy" Tipton McMaine (1920-2006), Edna E. Billings Dawes (1917-2009), Nettie Barnes Johnson, Dorothy Horn, Edith Wasson, Grover Clay Townsend (1917-1936), Ray Newton Arthur (1921-2011), Troy Victor Parks (1918-1984), Earl Clifton Tipton (1918-1949). Front row: Mary Chaney (King) (1920-2013), Daniel Boone Mapel (1920-1993), Walter Glenn Parks, (1921-2006), Morgan Lyle Bellamy (1920-1989), Shelby Tipton (1919-1990), Ralph Dragoo, Ardana Riffe. (Photos courtesy of Estill County Memories, Rita Rogers Chaney) (Name and date additions from Ancestry.com)

