Leonidas Triplett's Death
11 December 1881

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How, the Arthur Davis and "Lon" Triplett scrap there in the road in Orlean about 1878 (?) marketing their turkeys for Thanksgiving. Both Triplett and Davis had little stores there in Orlean. By some means they fell out there in the road over some turkey deal.

As I recall, probably one farmer had promised the turkeys to one, and then didn't tell the other, and tried to sell to the other at higher price. Anyway, it was a genuine falling out, and the legend went like this:

Davis grabbed Triplett and put his arm around his neck and squeezed the arm tight. Triplett's head came under Davis's chin and Davis had him held tight there. Davis pulled out his revolver and rubbed it on Triplett' s head. The story went that people from a good distance away could hear Triplett plead and, in a little while, Davis pulled the trigger and that was the end of Triplett.

I cannot recall them ever saying what Davis said to Triplett after he grabbed him, if anything, but I imagine that in the interval he must have said something; since he didn't pull the trigger until after Triplett had made his pleading for a while.

At that time the Sheriff of Fauquier County was Sheriff Whitaker (Who soon afterward went to West Virginia as the story went) who lived over here at what used to be the hamlet of Landmark. One of the Parr's was "Squire" there (at Orlean) then. Considering the importance of the persons involved and the excitement created in the community (as you know the people took sides) and with alcohol plentiful then, Squire Parr decided not to do anything except put Davis under the care of a Constable and sent for the Sheriff.

I don't recall what the Davis family did, but I expect that they had a hand in the delay of the trial. I have just forgotten the details of why the trial was delayed.

Anyway, the trial wasn't held until after dark,- of course at that time of year it got dark early. I think the Davises had a lawyer there to represent Arthur as it later turned out it was a ruse. It was in the Orlean Hall as I understood it, the building that is now the Methodist Church. They were all up there in the Hall, with all the kerosene (then Coal Oil) lamps lighted. The place was packed with the public to hear the "trial" little expecting what was going to happen.

They had the wood-burning stoves going full blast and they had the prisoner on the bench that was closest to the stove. At the end of the bench was one of the windows and the lower window sash was up as far as it could go. Mind you, on a cold night at Thanksgiving time.

A prisoner accused of murder,- sitting on the bench close to the open window. Everything was just getting set to start the proceedings, when instantaneous darkness came over everything. When they got the lights on again, there was no prisoner to be found. The law enforcement officers that were there started to look for the prisoner but his confederates were on the job.

Hardly had the officers got out of the building up one road, than a crowd was running and hollering “Here he goes,” and the officers took out in that direction. About the time they had gotten a little piece up the road another crowd was off on another road in another direction, let out another yell "Here he goes". After a little while on another road the same system of running and yelling was repeated and the officers had to change direction.

That same plan was carried out a couple more times at least. I don't know whether the people ever knew how many times this plan was carried out, but it completely thwarted the law and had the officers completely befuddled. They accomplished nothing.

You see the “Plan” now for holding the hearing at night. The "Squire" did not have to postpone the trial until night for the arrival of the Sheriff who had to travel from Landmark to Orlean. Besides, a messenger had to be sent to the Sheriffs residence at Landmark to find him, if he was home. If he wasn't, someone had to find him. Then the Sheriff would have to ride all the way back to Orlean. The magistrate could have committed the accused to the jail until a Grand Jury could have impaneled to indict him or release him.

The excitement and tension was something there, that night in Orlean after the escape, and the crowds running and hollering up all the roads. My Father wasn't but nine years and nine months old then. *(Probably nearer 13.)*

I was surprised that his father allowed him out there that night, at that age, for a murder trial. Anyway my father got so excited, scared and “shookup” that he ran all the way from Orlean to his home on Prospect Hill Farm. (The main dwelling since burned and rebuilt by the Doellar family). It was quite a step.

The law enforcement officers didn't get anything in the way of leads to get Davis. What happened to the lights was that, on a given signal, a man at each light just blew it out. They went out all at once, - like the act had been rehearsed to exact perfection. I will bet that there was pandemonium in that place when those lights went out, - with the eerie feeling of murder having been done that morning and the alleged perpetrator on the loose, and all of that yelling. It was a scary time, from what they used to say.

That is how Mr. Lewis *(William Henry Lewis, 1st cousin of Leonidas Triplett)*, who used to have the store at Rectortown, got to Orlean and then on to Rectortown. He was kin to the Triplett’s, through the Montgomery’s, and also probably through the Childs'.

His father got him the job clerking in the store at Orlean, helping out the other Triplett that was at the store. I believe his name was Philip Triplett. You probably knew his son who used to be out there at Hume. Isn't Phillip Triplett's sister the wife of Lucien Moss at Markham? It is my recollection that she is.

Mr. Lewis lacked only a month or so of being fourteen years of age *(born 22 February 1865, he was nearly 17)*, when he was taken out of school and sent up there to clerk in the store. Only a short while before he passed 'away he got me to drive his auto one Sunday to Orlean. He had me go down to the railroad station at Marshall and we started from there.

He told me the name of the mail carrier that he rode to Orlean with. All along the road he'd tell me what the mail carrier said and made comments about the road as it was in those days as we'd go along. And he remembered the spots and instances. I didn't drive fast so that it would give him time to think and talk about everything. Of course

there were sections where the road had been changed but, don' t you know, I cannot recall a thing Mr. Lewis said about the road except that it was very cold, and lots of snow in the road. I also forgot how long it took them to go from Marshall to Orlean then, but it wasn't long before dark when they arrived.

Some years after the escape a noted detective agency (for the life of me I cannot recall the name. I think it is still going; it got its start in the Civil War doing espionage work for the northern army (probably Pinkerton) wrote back here that they had found Davis in that part of western Canada called British Columbia, you know it was wild out there then. They wanted $200 cash down before they would bring Davis back, but the Triplett clan was trying to get started on their way up and cash was scarce then.

They said no, that it wouldn't bring "Lon" back to life and it would just stir up hard feelings again in the community. They believed it best to let things slide on by. Sometime in the thirties Arthur Davis turned up back here but, as I understand it, nobody relished it. Davis had a brother who was in British Columbia before he was. This brother became very wealthy, I understand, and late in life married a young girl.

He was very old when he married, thus there is no record of any of the estate coming back here. In fact, I believe that he outlived some of his nieces and nephews. My father and Golder Davis, and his brother Henry Davis, were great friends. Henry was connected with the *Baltimore American* newspaper for quite a while.

That is why my father used to subscribe to it until after Henry died. Henry never seemed to have any transportation. He would get in touch with my father and get him to take him where he was supposed to go. He spent many nights at our house and was a real talker. I have heard my father and Mr. Lewis talking about him and Mr. Lewis wondered if he talked to keep people from asking questions about himself.

Henry was rather mysterious and all they knew about him was that he was not a moneymaker like Golder.

I was chicken-hearted when I was young and when people started talking about it (the murder) I'd get up and leave as I didn't like the ordeal of listening to it and having it recurring in my mind for several days after. When some of my father's boyhood chums from the Orlean neighborhood would come up to spend the night such as the Constable and the tax assessor in particular, they'd sit up way late in the night and talk. I believe that when they wanted to talk about something they didn't want me to hear, he would open up on the affair and I'd get up and go to bed.