



the **Prairie Tales** podcast

www.PrairieTales.US

Compiled by Darren McMannis

SOURCE ARTICLES

1871-10 – NO END OF TEARS

A Saintly Town

NEWTON - Attempt to Burn Newton - There was an organized attempt to blot out Newton from the map of Kansas last evening. A large stack of hay well within the suburbs of town and contiguous to some of the largest buildings was set fire to by incendiaries. There was a fierce wind blowing at the time, and the flames leaped madly toward the very heart of the city. The cry of fire called out every able-bodied male citizen, and the threatened conflagration was subdued with no loss save that of the hay stack. While general attention was directed to the fire, some thieves profited by it to steal two valuable horses from a neighboring camp. There is much feeling on the subject, and loud demands for the detection and punishment of the offenders. No effort is made, however, to trace them out, owing to the want of detectives" *The Topeka Commonwealth, Topeka Kansas. Tuesday, October 10, 1871. Page 2.*

TOPEKA – A Counterfeiter. A large, stout man, of sandy complexion, with a light moustache and goatee, wearing a heavy gold chain and a U.S. belt, came in on the A.T. & S.Fe train yesterday and passed east. He succeeded in Newton in convincing Perry Tuttle that a counterfeit \$50 greenback was genuine. Sometime afterward Perry discovered that he had been victimized, and left on the same train with the counterfeiter for Emporia, intending to have him arrested. But before the proper documents could be made out, the train left, bearing away the law breaker. *The Kansas Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas. Friday, October 6, 1871. Page 4.*

TOPEKA – Judge Muse, of Newton, is in Topeka. He reports that matters are quiet and prosperous in the saintly town of Newton. *The Kansas Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas. Sunday, October 8, 1871. Page 4.*

WICHITA – On Thursday last we stopped long enough at Newton to do the town and found everything quiet. Not a single body for the improvised cemetery for the last five days. And from this fact we presume that Newton is becoming a moral town.

The grass has been burned off thousands of acres around here and that makes it bad for Texas cattle. One man on horseback was seen in the act of setting fire to the prairie grass and followed by a troop of fleet horsemen, but the incendiary was mounted on the faster nag and escaped. It is the general impression that these firemen are employed to carry on this work of devastation. *The Kansas Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas. Wednesday, October 11, 1871. Page 3.*

James Beam

October 30, 1871 - Case # 1871-HM15

NEWTON - Suspected Murder. A man named James Beam, of Upper Sandusky, Ohio, is missing at Newton. He sallied forth, desirous of seeing the sights in a frontier town, and brought up at a place called the Gold Room. He has not been seen since, and as several shots and a cry of “murder” was heard the night of his disappearance, it is feared he was foully dealt with, he having on his person about \$2,500. *The Leavenworth Call. Reprinted in The Lawrence Daily Journal, Lawrence, KS. Friday, November 3, 1871. Page 2.*

NEWTON - James Beam and friend, from Upper Sandusky, Ohio, arrived in Newton several days ago. Being desirous of “seeing the sights” in a frontier town. James wandered forth, and about the midnight hour brought up in the Gold Room. He has never been seen since. His friend has his baggage in charge at the hotel, and is certain that he had at least \$1,500 on his person. Three shots and the cry of “Murder” were heard on the night of Beam’s disappearance, but no causes have yet been assigned.” *The Topeka Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas. Reprinted in the Junction City Weekly Union, Junction City, Kansas. Saturday, November 11, 1871. Page 2.*

Apparently, James Beam wasn’t murdered after all, but had gone west to homestead west of Hutchinson and, apparently, forgot to tell his traveling companion...

HUTCHINSON – The first house below the river was built by “Jim” Beam in the Fall of 1871 on his claim. Mrs. Emma Beam and her son, Frank M. Beam, who live at 101 Sixth Avenue West, Hutchinson, were among the earliest settlers of the country, “across the river.” They arrived in Hutchinson from their former home near Upper Sandusky, Ohio, on February 17, 1872, coming by stage from Newton. They were met there by her husband, James M. Beam (who died in 1916), but who came to Reno County in October 1871. J.M. Beam brought lumber with him, by wagon, from Newton, and with it erected the first house on the west side of the Arkansas river,

just west of South Hutchinson. He had prepared the way for the family to come later. *The Hutchinson News, Hutchinson, Kansas. Thursday, July 4, 1922. Page 7.*

County Court Is Quiet

“Constable Tom Carson resigned, and J.A. Johnston was hired, on November 4, 1871.” *Santa Fe and the Chisholm Trail in Newton by William Moran (1971). Page 56.*

NEWTON – Newton is the best advertised town in Kansas. Why don’t some good man with plenty of grit and revolvers start a newspaper there? *The Walnut Valley Times, El Dorado, Kansas. Friday, October 27, 1871. Page 3.*

“During all this period, civil authority was powerless before the mob, and law, if any existed, was inoperative and a dead-letter. The roughs were all-powerful, and in many instances were sympathized with and upheld by the business men of the city, who sought to curry favor with them and obtain their trade.” “With shame, and for truth’s sake, we are compelled to state that we never heard, or knew of an indictment or information having been filed in the County Court, against one of these notorious and red-handed murderers; many of whom are today running at large in Texas, with the blood of their victims still fresh upon their garments.” *1882 Harvey County Atlas. Introduction by Judge R.W.P. Muse.*

Charles Bowman

November 9, 1871 - Case # 1871-HM16

NEWTON - Newton must be a nice, lively place for items. They have a murder about once a week. On Thursday night, according to “Allegro,” of the Topeka Commonwealth, the following shooting affray took place: Night policeman Charles Bowman, while attempting to arrest a couple of men who were disorderly and discharging their pistols at random, was shot through the left hip and right thumb. Jonas Tedstode, a passer-by, was also shot through the hand. A day policeman who saw the same parties previous to the affray, declined to interfere. The town is in an uproar, but nothing will in all probability be done. Officer Bowman may probably recover.” *The Fort Scott Monitor, Fort Scott, Kansas. Sunday, November 12, 1871. Page 1.*

According to Judge Muse, “Deputy Marshall Charles Bowman was shot and severely wounded by Jim Manning, whom he was attempting to arrest, for firing a pistol on the street. Manning was arrested and taken to Wichita, to be held in jail, but was soon released as there no person found who witnessed the shooting. Although there were many present when it occurred, and

saw the crime committed, yet such was the terror inspired by these ruffians, that no one dared testified." *1882 Harvey County Atlas. Introduction by Judge R.W.P. Muse.*

LEAVENWORTH – Another recent row has been reported at Newton. *The Daily Times. Leavenworth, Kansas. Tuesday, November 14, 1871. Page 4.*

Newton At Year's End

NEWTON – There is greater bustle, a keener hum of the business wheel, and a more pointed activity in legitimate trade just now in Newton than there has been for weeks past, and the cause is simply that some forty or more teams, in obedience to a call from a railroad contractor, have made Newton a rendezvous prior to formally ratifying their engagements to work. But forty teams are a manifest influx to both the human and animal population of a place like this, and though the air is keen, the snow crisp and cutting, and the earth icily inimical to comfortable locomotion, the streets are merrily alive with the rumble of wagon wheels, the clatter of hoofs and the shouts and animated talk of the out-fitters as they bustle in and out of the stores and shops in search of the necessary paraphernalia for the winters' campaign on the great line of rail to the west. More will follow them as the ground softens up and the spade and plough find readier entrance into the bosom of the earth, and Newton in consequence will grow more muscular in both its physical and social systems, for honest labor of this class brings with it not only improvement and profit in a material sense of the word, but infuses into a cew country a healthy, vigorous spirit of Christianity that asserts its benefits the moment it makes its appearance. Just now railroading is the absorbing topic of discussion with everybody living in the country contiguous to the lines of railroads now building, and those mapped out for future construction, and the subject becomes more and more interesting as the glimmer of belief warms into the blaze of conviction that the future of the great west hinges largely, almost wholly, on the opening up of such highways, as shall not only induce immigration but render the channels for it facile and rapid. – Allegro. *The Kansas Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas. Friday, December 29, 1871. Page 2.*

JUSTICE AT THE GALLOWES

APRIL 3, 1873

He who has stood by a gallows tree can alone tell the nature of the moment that follows when, the clergymen gone, the imminence of death seizes one with enthralling awe. The seconds to the onlooker seem whole minutes; but to the condemned, what are they? All is done as expeditiously as possible to shorten the misery – that is, to shorten the life, for life then is a

misery almost too deep to bear. The black cap is pulled over the face. A tremor runs through the miserable creature's tottering clay. One second's pause in perfect silence, a handkerchief waved, the sharp sound of a falling axe, and the criminal's body leaps into the air. In the first half minute following there are distinct nervous writhing motions of the body. After these there is no sign of struggle. After hanging five minutes the body is lowered that the doctors might examine for signs of life. In 30 minutes, it is confirmed that the heart has stopped beating, as confirmed by physicians' reports as they stand taking turns in listening at the breast of the thing of clay. The crowd is wild with excitement. Necks are craned to catch a glimpse of the sight of shame, a life given for a life taken - Justice has exacted the full penalty for murder. The Newton Kansan, Newton, Kansas. Thursday, April 3, 1873. Page 1.

Tom Collins was a desperado who murdered 11 old women, and drank their blood as medicine for his liver complaint. After being hunted for miles and miles, he at length was captured at Lansing, cut in pieces by the infuriated populace, and then left hanging to a tree. The tree was near the depot. People stopped by to look at the tree where they hung him, and asked the train boys if they had a pamphlet on the life of Tom Collins with further particulars. The Newton Kansan, Newton, Kansas. Thursday, October 22, 1874. Page 4.

1872 – A NEW START

"The Quakers have started a town thirty miles west of Hutchinson, and call it Peace City. It ought to be at least that far from Newton." The White Cloud Chief. January 18, 1872.

Newton by 1872 had already developed a very strongly expressed reputation for violence and vice. Every attempt was made by Judge Muse and others attempting to build the town to downplay such reports, while competing towns reveled in exaggerating Newton's evils. There was no doubt, however, that Newton had earned its reputation as a rough town on the Kansas frontier.

NEWTON - At Their Old Tricks. The Emporia News, of last week, takes pleasure in noticing that a man of that city had his pockets picked in Newton recently. It doesn't say whether he was drunk or sober at the time, or with what kind of company, and he might have received the same kind of treatment in that city. It is apparently a matter of much relief and satisfaction to that paper as well as some others to make such notices without explanation, and to slander Newton as often and as much as occasion will permit." The Newton Kansan, Newton Kansas. Thursday, September 19, 1872.

NEWTON - As we strolled the streets of Newton memory reverted to our first visit there. It was in the spring of 1872. It was soon after the city cemetery was forcibly inaugurated, so to speak, when thirty-odd men died with their boots on. It was evening. A wild, drunken crowd had

formed a circle in the street in the midst of which they had corralled another drunken wretch, with whom they were having "a high old time." Such howling and hooting, interspersed with an occasional "bang" from a promiscuous pistol, we never heard before or since. It was all in front of our hotel, and we didn't enjoy it to any very great extent. So we retired to our room very early, and hastened next morning to shake the dust of the town from our brogans lest we might prematurely become a part of it. - E. H. Hoch, Editor. The Marion Record. Reprinted in The Newton Kansan, Newton, Kansas. Thursday, April 2, 1891. Page 1.

NEWTON - Twenty men have been buried at Newton, Kansas, since August last, who died before they took sick." The Kansas Weekly Commonwealth, Topeka, Kansas. Thursday, March 21, 1872. Page 1.

"During this bloody epoch there was still another class of lawless characters still more despicable if possible, who infested Newton – we allude to fakirs, monte men and sneak thieves, who plied their professions by day and night, without let or hindrance. They went around from place to place swindling and robbing the unsuspecting, or inducing them to enter their infamous dens for that purpose." Harvey County Atlas. Introduction by Judge R.W.P. Muse. Page 27.

NEWTON - Drunk. Some fellow having mustered up courage enough to get drunk last Friday, allowed his countenance to shine in upon the 100* in the shade calaboose, and that precinct had music. It may be deserving justice, and fun for thermometers, but nearly death to suffering humanity. The terrors of the law in the shape of a sweat in that place in this weather, would deter the devil from ways that are dark and tricks that count not for game. The Newton Kansan, Newton Kansas. Thursday, August 29, 1872. Page 3.

NEWTON - Sam Wood came down on the train last Saturday night, and made as big a fool of himself as he usually does. A newsboy took pity on the passengers, who through a sense of disgust would hardly notice him, and shut the clap-trap up. The Newton Kansan, Newton Kansas. Thursday, September 19, 1872. Page 3.

CALDWELL - "Wholesale Hanging. We learn that about three weeks ago a party of men went to a ranch southwest of Caldwell, occupied by four women who kept it as a place of secret rendezvous for the horse thieves who ply their trade along the south border of the State. At the ranch they found seven men, who were recognized as old offenders; these and the women they took a short distance from the ranch to a piece of timber, and hung the whole gang. It appears that the folks down that way know the best way to get rid of such persons.

A little determination on the part of the people in this latitude, of a similar character if adopted long ago, would have saved Newton such condemnation. The Newton Kansan, Newton Kansas. Thursday, September 5, 1872. Page 3.

NEWTON - Upstairs, Downstairs. There was a sensational item in town last Thursday afternoon. One man went for two others; the two in order to avoid a collision between their physical selves and the one man's muscle, passed through the knot hole of a partition, descended a flight of stairs a la kangaroo, ran over a drug store, and escaped. We endeavored to gather some facts from the parties but like the boy that got his mother's bed in a fix, they have nothing to say." The Newton Kansan, Newton Kansas. Thursday, September 26, 1872. Page 3.

NEWTON - Business at Newton is improving, and the town is gradually outgrowing the evil reputation of its early days. The morals of the place are improving most decidedly, and in consequence good families are locating in and around the city. – The Wichita Eagle. And nearly all of the hard cases have migrated to Wichita. Fact." The Newton Kansan, Newton Kansas. Thursday, October 31, 1872. Page 3.