

THE GREATEST SINGLE HANDED FIGHT IN AMERICAN HISTORY—FORMER LO- CAL MAN HERO OF THRILLING STORY

Thrilling Tale of Old Frontier Days Gives Way
Under Rigid Investigation.

LOCAL CITIZEN ADDS INTEREST TO STORY OF THE OLD WEST

The following story taken from the Dearborn Independent and written by Walter Noble Burns is timely and good reading in view of the fact that a touch of local color is added to the story from an interview with W. L. Bryan, Esquire of Boone, who remembers McCaules well, having cast his first vote for him when he was running for sheriff of Watauga when Mr. Bryan was a young man. We are giving out the following information from Mr. Bryan's talk, which will add more than a little interest to the story as published in the Ford journal:

D. C. McCaules was the son of Jim McCaules, who formerly lived on the Watauga River near what is now Shulls Mills. He was elected sheriff of Watauga county the first term in 1855. Mr. Bryan represents McCaules as having been a man of Herculean stature, a fine business man and a very capable officer. He made his second race against John Horton well remembered by the older people of the county in 1857, and was again elected. He was married to a daughter of Mr. Joe Green who resided near where the old German Reform Church now stands near Blowing Rock, and had either three or four children when he left the county, which was in 1859. He collected a considerable amount of money on taxes, as big money went in those days, and had placed \$1,000 in the care of Mr. Bryan, who was conducting a store in Boone for Jacob Rendels, of Charlotte, it being left in his care to exchange for silver and gold, with which to pay off some "specie" obligations. However the money was withdrawn before the exchange was made. The Sheriff then purchased from the store two pistols and a new saddle and left for Wilkes county, as he said, to pay off some liabilities. But instead of going there he made his way to the Watauga River, took with him Miss Kate Shull, a dashing young mountain beauty. From there the couple made their way on horseback to Johnson City, Tenn., where McCaules sold his horses to the late Dr. Dyer of Watauga, and boarded the train for the west. The same Miss Shull is living now at Shulls Mills, she being 92 years old. The story as published in the "Independent" follows:

Wild Bill Hickock's fight with the McCaules gang is one of the classic stories of the West. It has been printed countless times. As the fabric of many a penny dreadful, it has been read by thousands of boys of an older generation under their desks at school or in the sanctuary of the hayloft far from stern parental eyes. It has been printed in books of a more pretentious nature by authors of reputation and become familiar to everyone interested in the history of the old frontier. So thrilling is this tale of desperate heroism so picturesque in its quick, vivid drama, that it seems little short of sacrilege at this late day to impugn its veracity. But as it has been handed down by tradition and in type for more than sixty years, it is merely fiction with little more than a basis of truth.

The old story runs in this way: Ten members of the "McCaules gang" bound on a horse stealing foray, swooped down on the relay station of the Overland Stage Company at "Rock Springs, Kansas," at the outbreak of the Civil War. They were led by "Bill McCaules," horse thief, murderer, terror of the border. Wild Bill was alone. He barricaded himself in the cabin and when the bandits broke down the door and stormed the house he emptied his rifle and six-shooter and then fought on with his bowie knife. Some stories say he killed ten men, some eight. None credits him with having killed fewer than seven. He himself is said to have been so desperately wounded that it was a year before he recovered.

The facts are: Only three men were killed. They were, Dave McCaules, James Woods and James Gordon. Wild Bill killed McCaules—there is no doubt of that. He shot Woods and Gordon. It is probable that Woods died from the wound that Wild Bill gave him, though this is not certain. Gordon, according to reliable evidence, was killed by a shot from another man. Instead of having killed ten men, or eight or seven, Wild

Bill may be credited with absolute certainty with having killed only one. The fight did not occur at "Rock Springs, Kansas" usually located in the stories as "fifty miles west of Topeka," nor in Kansas at all, but at Rock Creek, Nebraska "Bill McCaules" of tradition became David Colbert McCaules of fact, neither horse thief or murderer or criminal. The McCaules gang simmers down to McCaules, Woods, his cousin, Gordon his employee, and Munroe McCaules his twelve year old son.

Wild Bill was alone. There were also present in the house Horace Wellman the station agent; Mrs. Wellman, Sarah Kelsey, afterward Mrs. Sarah Billings and possibly Kate Schell for whose favor McCaules and Wild Bill were rivals and who is regarded by some as at least an indirect cause of the tragedy. At the stables a short distance away were several others in the employ of the stage company. Far from being desperately wounded Wild Bill was unhurt.

My antiquarian adventure began at Beatrice, Nebraska, where a fragment of the documentary evidence of Wild Bill's trial remains. Twenty five miles west in the cemetery at Fairbury is the corpus delicti of the old case in the graves of McCaules and Woods. On the gray granite marker set up by Munroe McCaules in 1880 is inscribed "D. C. McCaules, James Woods, July 12, 1861." The inscription gives the authentic date of the fight and the authentic spelling of the McCaules name.

I found Clingman McCaules and Lizzie McCaules, children of Dave McCaules, on the farm of Mrs. Wm. Compton near the village of Endicott seven miles southeast of Fairbury. Mrs. Compton is a daughter of "Irish John" Hughes and Dave McCaules' widow, who were married in 1865. "Irish John" is generally credited with having fired the shot that killed Gordon. Their tragic heritage still embitters the memories of these old people. Lizzie McCaules recalled with tears the "murder" of her father Clingman McCaules said: "Wild Bill's act was cold blooded murder. He had no more right to kill my father than I have to kill you."

Other children of Dave McCaules are still living. Munroe McCaules, now 75 years old, lives in Kansas City where he practiced law for several years. Julius McCaules lives in Florence, Colorado. Charles McCaules is a grocer in Denver. Leroy McCaules a brother of Dave McCaules and associated with him in business at Rock Creek, died two years ago at Florence, Colorado, where he was a wealthy banker. Mrs. Dave McCaules died at the home of her son Charles in Denver in 1904.

The site of the old Rock Creek Station, four miles southeast of Endicott is still plainly marked by large red stones, known locally as niggerheads which formed the foundations of the house. Close to the west end is the old well, forty feet deep, lined with niggerheads and empty of water. No trace of the stables remains. Near by Rock Creek flows under oaks, box elders and cottonwoods. Deep indentations on its bank show where Dave McCaules' toll bridge stood. Rutted outlines of the old Oregon trail are discernible on a neighboring slope. Express trains now flash by the scene where once the Overland stage changed horses and the endless caravans of covered wagons went by. All about is the stillness of wooded hills and rolling farmlands.

Standing by the skeleton foundations it is easy to orientate the old tragedy and to say with approximate accuracy, "There stood Wild Bill when the fight began." On this spot McCaules fell; "There Woods stumbled to his death;" and "Yonder toward the old bridge, the doomed and wounded Gordon staggered in flight." Easy too, with the aid of old descriptions, to reconstruct in fancy the old stage station, built of hewn logs, 36 feet long, sixteen feet wide, eight feet high at the eaves, with puncheon floor, open stone fireplace, stone chimney on the outside and a clapboard roof sloping both ways from a ridge pole. It was a house of a single room with an attic entered through a window in the east end by an outside ladder. Seventy five feet to the northwest stood the barn, 80 feet long, twenty wide and constructed of perpendicular logs.

Bound for Pike's Peak during the gold excitement and accompanied by

James Woods, his cousin, Dave McCaules arrived at Rock Creek from North Carolina in 1859. Seeing good business prospects in selling supplies to Pike's Peak argonauts and emigrants swarming westward over the Oregon trail he bought Newton Glenn ranch on the west bank of the creek and built a store. This became known as West Rock Creek station to distinguish it from East Rock Creek station which he built later directly across the stream. This latter place was sometimes known as Elkhorn station from a pair of antlers nailed above the door and was the scene of the Wild Bill-McCaules fight.

McCaules used the West Side Station as a depot for freighters and emigrants and the east side station as a relay station for the Overland stage and the pony express. His toll bridge, which he built across Rock Creek between the two stations and for crossing which he charged from ten cents to a dollar and a half for each team outfit, brought him in a large revenue, as emigrant traffic was heavy. He employed from ten to twenty men at the two stations to tend store, take care of the horses and stock, give service to the stages and freight in supplies for the emigrant trade from Atchison, Nebraska City and Fort Leavenworth. His business is said to have netted him from \$500 to \$1,000 a month. There is a tradition that shortly before his death he buried \$10,000 in gold in iron kettles at Rock Creek and marked the spot with two boulders. This story may be purely apocryphal but certain it is that many men have dug industriously in an effort to unearth the hidden treasure.

McCaules' wife and children joined him a few months after his arrival and made their home at East Rock Creek station. The domestic situation was a complicated one afterward by the arrival of Kate Schell with whom McCaules had had an affair in North Carolina and whom he established as mistress of the west side house. Kate Schell was twenty years old. Some stories represent her as a gay, dashing, devil-may-care young woman who sometimes sat in at a card game with men and was not averse to a toady. Others picture her as a quiet girl of some education and refinement. All agree that with her dark hair and eyes and trim figure, she was unusually pretty. Why, with Rock Creek dividing domesticity from romance Mrs. McCaules who was an intrepid woman, did not take matters into her own hands and visit summary vengeance on her rival, was a question often debated among the settlers. The bitterness between the two women, however, never reached the point of open vendetta and the reason doubtless lay in the submission of both to the iron will of McCaules. Kate Schell remains a mystery figure in the Rock Creek drama stepping abruptly into view out of the unknown two years before the tragedy and immediately disappearing into oblivion.

McCaules, who was twenty eight years old when he arrived at Rock Creek, was six feet in height, weighed two hundred pounds and was of extraordinary strength. The daguerre type photographs of him still in possession of his family show a bearded man with a merry eye and the robust look of a jovial buccaner. His character and psychology are difficult to gauge even by the canons of his own wild times. He was a shrewd business man and became the richest man of his part of the frontier. He was dynamic, aggressive, belligerent, domineering, with an egotism that amounted almost, if not quite, to megalomania; yet he was generous, hospitable, unquestionably courageous, full of boisterous, roistering fun, played the fiddle and banjo and played a rousing song. He was the champion wrestler of the countryside and revelled in a good fist fight. In a country without law, he arrogated himself the right to punish cruelly and mercilessly anyone who violated his personal code of right and justice. He was a hard drinker, an inveterate gambler, immoral if not un moral, and a bully, but there is no record that he ever killed anyone or was guilty of any grave crime. Viewed through the perspective of the years, he seems to have been a jovial ruffian and though bad enough, not half so bad as he had been painted. If he had enemies he also had many friends.

Here are some anecdotes of this complex frontier character narrated over McCaules' grave in the cemetery at Fairbury by Ross Helvey who had located the spot for me. Helvey had the stories from his father Tom Helvey who on the day after the fight at Rock Creek, assisted in the burial of the three dead men.

"Harry Goff, who worked for McCaules about the station was a great fellow to get drunk," said Helvey. "McCaules had done everything to keep him sober but it wasn't any use. McCaules found Goff lying under a tree one day, dead drunk. He filled Goff's hair and beard with powder and laying a train of powder along the ground, called his men about to watch the fun. He set a match to

the train and in a moment there was an explosion that left Goff hairless and beardless and came near putting out his eyes. Goff jumped up in a rage and wanted to fight. McCaules knocked him down, tied him on an enrooken horse and turned the animal loose. The horse bucked all over the landscape until it was worn out. That cured Goff of drunkenness. The best man in the country in a wrestle or a fist fight. He wasn't far wrong either. A big powerful fellow was sitting with a gang of workmen on my father's porch when McCaules dropped in on a little neighborly visit. He went up to the big man and said 'Get up. You'd orter be a good fighter.' The man stood up and McCaules felt his muscles. 'Yes,' he declared, 'you're a powerful good man but I can lick you. Step out here in the yard and we'll fight it out.' The big fellow was game, and as McCaules had said, was a powerful good man. They fought for nearly an hour. McCaules won but he used to say it was the hardest fight he ever had in his life.

Making of a Bad Man

When the Civil War broke out McCaules determined to turn his properties into cash, go back to the south and fight for the Confederacy. Having disposed of West Rock Creek station, he sold the Elkhorn station to Ben Holliday, owner of the Overland Stage Company in May 1861, and moved his family to a ranch four miles away at a point where Rock Creek empties into the little Blue River, near the present village of Endicott. He received a sum down and the remainder was to be paid in monthly installments over a short period to be agreed upon. Holliday placed Horace Wellman at the station as agent and Wellman was to deliver the monthly payments to McCaules.

At this juncture Wild Bill Hickock steps into the story. He was not Wild Bill then; the McCaules fight conferred that title upon him. His name was James Butler Hickock but he was known as Bill Hickock.

Wild Bill Hickock in later years was said to be the handsomest man of his day on the frontier. Kate Schell it is said fell in love with him at first sight. The budding romance reached the ears of McCaules and made him furiously jealous. But he threw no barbs about Hickock's neck nor did he drag him by way of punishment at his horse's heels. The youthful Apollo, who with a bullet from his six-shooter could hit a tomato can tossed into the air and who was as dynamic and fiery a personality as McCaules himself, was not a man to be trifled with and was looked upon even then as dangerous.

When the first month's rent on the station fell due, Wellman failed to pay. He told McCaules the money had not come from company headquarters. McCaules was skeptical but waited another month. Wellman failed to pay the second installment. This angered McCaules.

At four o'clock in the afternoon,

July twelfth, McCaules, accompanied by Gordon, Woods and Munroe McCaules, rode to the Rock Creek stage station.

The four riders dismounted at the barn. It is presumed that Woods and Gordon remained at the barn to prevent interference by the stable hands in case McCaules got into trouble. McCaules met Wellman at the south door of the cabin. He charged him with stealing the money due him and demanded immediate payment or possession of the premises.

"I'll get your money in time Mac" Wellman said, "but I haven't been able to get it yet."

"You're a liar," McCaules hurled at him "and a thief to boot."

Mrs. Wellman crowded to the door as her husband retreated to the house. She was a courageous woman, noted for her sharpness of tongue and she volleyed vituperation upon the lowering giant facing her.

"My business," said McCaules contemptuously, "is with men, not with a woman."

Wild Bill Hickock thereupon brushed Mrs. Wellman aside and confronted McCaules.

"I'm a man," he said.

"I've come to have the thing out with Wellman," McCaules replied, "This ain't no affair of yours, Bill."

"Perhaps 'tis or 'tain't," snapped back Hickock.

"We are friends, Bill ain't we?" asked McCaules.

Wild Bill did not answer.

"You send Wellman out here so I can settle with him or I'll come in and get him," McCaules threatened.

Wild Bill stepped back into the house as if to comply. As Wellman did not reappear, McCaules walked inside. He was just in time to see Wild Bill disappearing behind a blanket which curtained off the east end of the house as a bedroom.

"Come out from behind that curtain Bill," McCaules roared.

Wild Bill stepped out with a rifle in his hands—it was McCaules' own rifle left behind when he had sold the station—and shot McCaules through the heart. McCaules staggered back through the door and fell dead on the ground at the feet of his little son.

Hearing the shot, Woods and Gordon ran to the house. Woods rushed in at the West end door as Gordon entered the front. Wild Bill shot Woods twice with a six-shooter and Gordon once. Both turned and ran. Woods ran around the house and fell in some weeds at the east end. Gordon staggered towards the Rock Creek bridge and Wild Bill, stepping out the front door, emptied his revolver at him, wounding him again in the back.

Death of Wild Bill

Wild Bill subsequently became the most famous of the frontier's long roll of bad men. He was scout and spy in the Union army during the Civil War, scout in later Indian campaigns and marshal of Hays City, Abilene, and Ellsworth, the toughest

towns on the border in old cattle trail and railroad building days. He is generally rated as the quickest man on the draw and the deadliest marksman with a six-shooter the West ever knew. How many men he killed is a dubious question. Buffalo Bill who was associated with him in Indian wars and knew him intimately once told me that the dead men who slept in Wild Bill's "private graveyard" numbered more than thirty.

Wild Bill was killed in Deadwood in 1876. While playing poker he was shot in the back of the head by Jack McCall who was hanged for the crime at Yanktown. Though Wild Bill's death was instantaneous his hands dashed to his guns and drew them halfway from their scabbards as he fell lifeless across the card table. When tried before a "miner's court" McCall was asked why he had not shot his victim in front and given him a fair show. His laconic answer was a tribute to Wild Bill's deadly facility with a revolver. "I don't want to commit suicide," said McCall.

Woman Gets \$3,000 as "Extra Rib" Plea Fails

Philadelphia.—After a brief deliberation, a jury before Judge Audenried in the personal damage suit of Lizzie Wessels against Barthold Rosenberger, returned a verdict of \$3,000 for the plaintiff.

As to whether she possesses the proverbial extra rib of women, or had one of the regular number split into two sections by the accident in which she was hurt, was an interesting and unusual topic of the testimony. She was knocked down by the defendant's automobile. The rib condition was the bone of contention in the medical testimony.

Counsel for the defense sought to prove by the doctor who had examined the injured woman that the so-called fracture or divided rib was in reality the much-discussed extra rib of woman. The physician replied in the negative.

Judge Audenried restricted the controversy over the extra rib, remarking dryly: "Most of us know a rib was taken from Adam to make Eve."

Rich New York Woman Leaves Driver \$17,000

New York.—Mary E. B. Foote of Larchmont, prominent member of the New York Sorosis club, in her will filed for probate at White Plains recently, left to her chauffeur, Peter Weiss, and his wife, real estate worth more than \$10,000, her \$8,000 limousine and the contents of her garage. Weiss had been in her employ 15 years.

Mrs. Foote's estate is valued at \$150,000. To her niece, Elsie Winchester Coolidge and Mary Rosemond Coolidge, said to be distant relatives of President Coolidge, of Watertown, Mass., was left her jewelry and furniture.

The residue is left equally to the niece and a nephew, Joshua Warren Coolidge.

Subscribe For Your
County Paper.




\$295 F.O.B. DETROIT

An Exceptional Value!

It requires no technical knowledge of automobiles to appreciate the outstanding value of the Ford Touring Car.

Not only is it the lowest priced five-passenger car on the market, but it is also a car that costs little to operate, little to keep in condition and has an unusually high resale value after years of service.

All Ford Cars are sold on convenient deferred terms, or may be purchased under the Ford Weekly Purchase Plan.

Ford Motor Company
Detroit, Michigan

SEE THE NEAREST AUTHORIZED FORD DEALER



CARS · TRUCKS · TRACTORS