

OUR PAST BY MICHELLE STECHMULLER

Only Legal Hanging in McHenry County Was That of James Dacy of Chicago, Fifty Years Ago

The picture shows the gallows from which James Dacy, convicted Chicago killer, was hung in the court house yard at Woodstock, on Friday July 16, 1886.

The gallows were loaned to McHenry County by Cook County and were erected on the court house grounds, to the north of the courthouse. They were erected by Simon Brink, assisted by his two sons, Fred S. Brink and Charles S. Brink. The latter did the painting.

The men standing on the gallows, from RIGHT to LEFT are Asad Uwell, Sheriff; a Mr., Harper, Deputy Sheriff from Cook County; Simon Brink, who constructed the scaffold; Fred S. Brink, his assistant; Charles S. Brink, who painted it; and another Deputy Sheriff from Chicago, who is leaning against the scaffold.

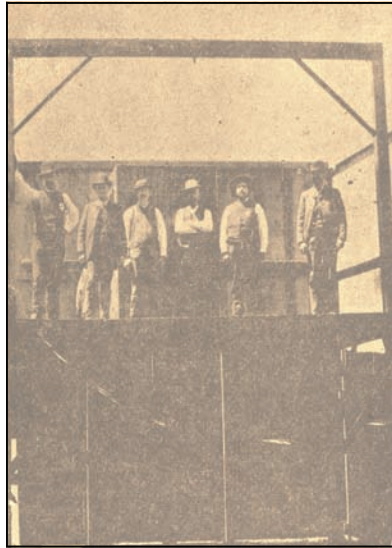
Dacy paid the penalty for the murder of Alderman Gaynor of Chicago, May 13, 1884.

There was excitement in Chicago over this killing, which occurred if our memory serves us right, in a saloon quarrel. Dacy was brought to McHenry County for trial on a charge [sic] of venue.

There were two trials as we remember it, the last being on the question of sanity. The whole thing was a long drawn out affair. Luther Laflin Mills, state's attorney of Cook County, prosecuted the case, while Attorney T. D. Murphy of Woodstock had charge of the defense. The hanging was postponed once or twice.

The story of the hanging as it ap-

peared in the Sentinel, on July 22, 1886, is as follows: "DACY EXECUTED! Paying the penalty for the murder of Alderman Gaynor of Chicago, May 13, 1884."



Only Legal Hanging in McHenry County July 16, 1886

Dacey's Last Night James Dacey's last night on earth was passed in a quiet manner comparatively speaking. He slept, or feigned the sleep, a greater part of the time, but when he awoke in the morning was as boisterous and profane as ever, carrying out to the last, the threat that he made just after his insanity trial, that he would make it as uncomfortable for Sheriff Udell and his attendants as he could, until the day of his execution. He refused to take any breakfast and his guards were unable to get him to make a change of his clothing until Father Clancy arrived about 8 o'clock, when he became quiet and did as requested.

Sheriff Udell took great care in making all necessary arrangements and

they were as near perfect as possible. The doomed man was taken from his cell about 12:30, and on arriving at the scaffold, ascended the stairs with a firm step, never flinched as Sheriff Udell bound his legs, arms and adjusted the noose, but met his fate manfully and without a murmur, his last words being: "This is the happiest day since I came into Udell's hands." After everything had been made secure, the fatal drop occurred and James Dacey was dead without a struggle.

In fifteen minutes the jury, composed of the following gentleman, reported life extinct: C.E. Cook, M.D.; P.W. Blanchard, M.D.; M.D.; Leo Galitzki; W. W. Cook, M.D.; R. M. Curtis, M.D.; Ed L. Herrick, M.D.; M. W. Thompson, M.D.; R. I. Piper, M.D.; Wm. B. Hart, M.D.; E. O. Gratton, M.D.; John S. Cummings and P. S. Martin.

The execution was witnessed by about 150 spectators. The day was bright and beautiful, but the event caused no excitement whatever, there not being as many people in town as usual on Saturdays. Sheriff Udell used every precaution, in case of an emergency, and had 67 deputies sworn in for the occasion, but under the circumstances one good person with a broom-stick would have filled the bill just as well, as our city was never more quiet or orderly on that day.

The body was immediately lowered into the coffin and turned over to Patrick Dacey, a brother, who took it to Chicago on the 4:52 train.

This article transcribe from the March 13, 1937, issue of the Woodstock Daily Sentinel special 80th Anniversary edition.

We are looking for past photos, articles, stories etc. on the History of McHenry County Sheriff's Office. Please contact Sergeant Ken Neilsen extension 4730 or Michael Stechmuller extension 4700