

A Double Murder in Clay County, Texas

Dallas Weekly Herald, 13 January 1881

Henrietta, Texas, Jan. 5, 1881 - Last night at 8:30 o'clock one of those misfortunes that startle a community occurred at Cambridge, three miles from here. James Curtis, a prominent cattle man, was shot and killed by Van Rice, in Slykle's saloon. Rice worked for Curtis' brother some years ago, and because Rice was discharged



Texans of the 1870's

he has held a grudge ever since. Last night Curtis and others were throwing dice for the drinks, when Rice entered. He was invited to join in the game. This he refused to do, but proposed to treat. They all drank. When Curtis treated, Rice refused to drink. A few words were exchanged when both parties drew pistols and began shooting. Curtis fell forward, struck with three balls, and died in ten minutes. Rice received three shots and was badly wounded. Just as he was placed in a chair in the doctor's room, a ball was fired through the window into his breast by some unknown person, probably a friend of Curtis, inflicting a mortal wound. He cannot live through the night.

James Curtis was of the firm Curtis Bros., ranchmen, who owned a herd of not less than twenty-five thousand head of cattle, situated in the Panhandle. He was a man universally liked, and his death startles

the whole community. He leaves a wife and one child. Rice was an unmarried man of dissolute habits, and leaves friends in.....and some other parts of the north.

This article was submitted by The Curtis/s Family Society's DNA Coordinator Al Fields who adds: James Curtis was the son of John Warren Curtis. John Warren was born December 25, 1819 in Jackson County, Tennessee and died July 27, 1882 in Mineral Wells, Texas. He was the first sheriff of Parker County, Texas, and many of his descendants are buried in the Curtis Cemetery in Weatherford, Texas. John Warren Curtis was the son of Benjamin Browning Curtis (1801-1865) and the grandson of James W. Curtis (1770-1849). Researchers are seeking a direct male descendant of this family to participate in the Curtis/s DNA Project. For more information, contact Al Field (field@msn.com).