By Parties Unknown'

arpy Hanged From a Tree

"The verdict rendered by the coroner was, that Tarpy Mrs. Nicholson, O'Neil and the a buggy for Salinas, being joined was on the 17th day of March hanged by the neck to a tree farm boy fled in terror back to en route by sheriff Wasson. three miles from Monterey by parties unknown."

The succinct final paragraph from the files of the Pajaronian for March 20, 1873, wrote the end to four days

of terror and mob violence unsurpassed in the history of the Pa- had any right to the land. The jaro valley.

In those four days a woman own property on San Juan road. was slain and a man was lynched. A mass meeting, called for punin Watsonville. The sheriff of Monterey county was overwhelmed by a mob and tied up, and his jail doors battered down.

The drama started on the San Juan road, seven miles out of March 13, 1873.

Matt Tarpy had moved a frame house onto a corner of land claimed by Murdock Nicholson. Tarpy had gone farther, and leased the land to a German named Peter-

Micholson was away at time. His wife Sarah was advis- road from the little frame house. ed by attorney J. A. Burham to possession of the house, since neither Tarpy nor Peterson shots

disputed corner adjoined Tarpy's

So that Thursday, Mrs. Nicholson moved into the house, along ishment of the slayer, was held with the farm boy and a young friend named O'Neil.

in the day, he naturally demanded to know what Mrs. Nicholson Watsonville on the evening of between him and Tarpy. This was killed instantly. Nicholson land.

When he heard about it, Tarpy strapped on his six-shooter, grabbed his rifle and on the way out of town picked up a shotgun. Shade. By the early hours of Friday morning he had barricaded him-

Tarpy sent a half-dozen rifle the Nicholson house, a quarter of a mile away.

At dawn Mrs. Nicholson led the others back to the frame house to see what damage had been done. Then she was going into town to get some protection.

They never made it. As they neared his ambush, Tarpy rose and took aim with his shotgun. It misfired twice, while Mrs. When Peterson showed up later Nicholson pleaded with Tarpy not to shoot. As she turned and ran, Tarpy fired again. The gun roared. was doing in his house. She told Mrs. Nicholson screamed, and fell him. The matter, she said, was with 11 slugs in her body. She was

> Tarpy sent another shot after the fleeing farm boy and O'Neil, then walked into town and gave himself up to Pajaro constable

time about locking Tarpy up. Acself behind a huge log across the counts state the constable and At one point in his lonely vigil, the six-shooter still on Tarpy's hip, to a barber shop, where Tarcrashing into the home. py got a shave. Then they left in

A crowd followed the buggy out of town to see that Tarpy did not escape.

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The town boiled. Saturday night there was a mass meeting, attended by many of the leading They citizens. vigorously condemned the killing and resolved to see that Tarpy was brought to justice.

Tarpy meanwhile had waived examination in Salinas, and was taken to jail in Monterey.

Throughout the crisis, Tarpy maintained O'Neil had "applied abusive language" to him on that fatal morning, and that O'Neil had drawn a pistol. Tarpy claimed he fired in self defense, and shot Mrs. Nicholson by mistake.

Word got around Monday that he was to be returned to Salinas Shade seems to have taken his and that town filled up ominously, lathered and dusty horses from as far away as Gilroy show-Tarpy walked down Main street, ing up and the crowd gathering in front of the telegraph office to catch any late word.

Meanwhile, rumors had also started that Tarpy was to be spirited away from Monterey until public feeling died down. A crowd of Watsonville men took off for Monterey, where they were joined by others.

A picket line of sheriff's deputies stopped the cavalcade of riders outside town. One man was sent in to dicker with Wasson. The messenger said the group would offer no violence, in fact would help Wasson guard his prisoner if the sheriff would guarantee Tarpy would be delivered to Salinas for trial.

Wasson was willing but Monterey judges kept changing their minds throughout the day. Word began to circulate that soldiers were coming down from San Francisco and a warship headed for Monterey bay to keep

The crowds demanded action from Wasson. Unable to keep his agreement that Tarpy would be taken to Salinas, unable to match the force of the crowd, the sher-

iff gave in. But Wasson had secretly given his jail keys to deputy Mike Noon. The baffled mob stormed down the street to a blacksmith's shop, seized all the available hammers, and returned to

action. Wasson was tied up. The mob battered its way through three doors in the Monterey jail and dragged out Tarpy. The prisoner said goodbye to his wife and child outside the jail. The mob headed out of town, more than 400 horses, wagons and thrill seekers kicking up a dust cloud that halt-

ed and settled three miles out. Under a tree that arched over the road Tarpy talked and prayed for over an hour. Witnesses said he showed no cowardice, and made no pleas for mercy. He made an oral will — including \$1,000 to Nicholson for 400 cords of wood Tarpy admitted cutting off his property more than a year before.

This "will" was later declared illegal. Tarpy's estate was valued at \$65,000 when his real will was filed for probate ten days later.

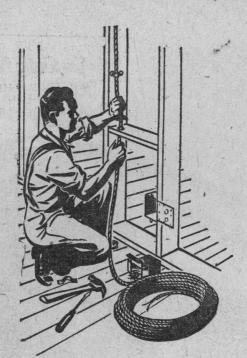
At Tarpy's request, Nicholson placed his hands on the murderer's head and forgave him.

Then Tarpy's eyes were bandaged. The blindfold was loosened while he made a last request, that his body be taken to Monte-

Then he was hanged.

"The verdict rendered by the Coroner was, that Tarpy was on the 17th day of March hanged by the neck to a tree three miles from Monterey by parties unknown."





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