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MARGARET ANN CALDWELL

The Assassination of Senator Charles Caldwell

Testimony to the Select Senate Committee

JACKSON, MISS., June 20, 1876.

Mrs. MARGARET ANN CALDWELL (colored) sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN:

THE WIDOW OF SENATOR CALDWELL.

Question. What is your name? —Answer. Margaret Ann Caldwell.

Q. Where do you live? —A. In Clinton, Hinds County.

Q. Was Mr. Caldwell, formerly senator, your husband? —A. Yes, sir.

Q. What was his first name? —A. Charles.

Q. When did he die? —A. Thursday night, in the Christmas. Him and his brother was killed.

Q. You may state to the committee what you know of his death. —A. I know when he left the house on the Thursday evening, in the Christmas, between dark and sundown. In the beginning of the day he was out on his fox-chase all day. The first commencement was an insult passed on his nephew, and he came out home.

STORY OF HIS ASSASSINATION.

Q. Who was that? —A. David Washington; he is in Washington City now. He is there in business; watchman in the Treasury Department now; has been ever since October, I think. So they picked a fuss; Waddy Rice, in George Washington's blacksmith shop, in Clinton. They commenced talking this way: I think David said they asked, "How many did he kill on the day of the Moss Hill riot? Who did he shoot?" David said that he did not know as he shot anybody; said he didn't know that he shot anybody. They told him, he said, "he came there to kill the white people, and if he did, to do his work in the day, and not to be seeking their lives at night." David came

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immediately back to my house. His uncle was at the fox-chase. I said, "Don't go out any more. Probably they are trying to get up a fuss here."

His uncle sent him down town for something. He staid in the house until he came.

That was about four o'clock in the evening, and some one had told about the fuss picked with his nephew, and he walked down town to see about it, I suppose. He was down town a half hour, and came back and eat his dinner, and just between dark and sundown he goes back down town again. He went down town knocking about down there. I do not know what he was doing down there, until just nearly dusk, and a man, Madison Bell, a colored man, came and says, "Mrs. Caldwell you had better go down and see about Mr. Caldwell, I think the white folks will kill him; they are getting their guns and pistols, and you had better go and get your husband away from town."

I did not go myself; I did not want to go myself, but went to Professor Bell and said would he go and get him. Mr. Bell went, and he never came back at all until he came back under arrest.

I was at my room until just nearly dark.

The moon was quite young, and the chapel bell rang.

We live right by it. I knew the minute the bell tolled what it all meant.

And the young men that lived right across the street, when the bell tolled, they rushed right out; they went through the door and some slid down the window and over they sprang; some went over the fence. They all ran to the chapel and got their guns. There was 150 guns there to my own knowing; had been there since the riot, at the Baptist chapel. They all got their guns.

I went down town, and then all got ahead everywhere I went; and some of them wanted to know who I was, but I hid my face as well as I could. I just said "woman" and did not tell who I was.

As I got to town I went to go into Mr. Chilton's store and every store was closed just that quick, for it was early, about 6 o'clock. All the other stores were closed. Chilton's was lit up by a big chandelier, and as I went over the lumber-yard I saw

a dead man. I stumbled over him, and I looked at him, but I did not know who it was, and I went into Chilton's, and as I put my foot up on the store steps, standing as close, maybe a few feet, (everything was engaged in it that day,) there was Judge Cabinis, who was a particular friend of my husband; a particular friend to him. He was standing in the center with a gun with a blue strap, in the center of the jam; and as I went to go in they cussed me and threatened to hurt me, and "make it damned hot for me," and the judge among the balance; but he said he didn't know me afterward. And they all stood; nobody would let me go in; they all stood there with their guns.

I know there was two dead men there, but I did not think it was my husband at the time.

I stood right there, and as I stood they said to me, "If you don't go away they would make it very damned hot for me;" and I did not say anything, and walked off, and walked right over the dead man. He was right in my path where I found the body. He was lying broadside on the street. I did not know who he was. I then stooped and tried to see who he was, and they were cursing at me to get out of the town, to get out.

Then I went up, and there was Mrs. Bates across the street, my next-door neighbor. I seed her little girl come up by us and she said, "Aunt Ann, did you see my uncle here?" I said, "I did not. I saw a dead body on the street; I did not see who he was." She said, "What in the world is going on down town?" Says I, "I don't know, only killing people there." She says, "Aaron Bates's hand is shot all to pieces, and Dr. Bangs is killed." He was not killed, but was shot in the leg; nobody killed but my husband and brother.

I went on over to the house, and went up stairs and back to my room and laid down a widow.

After I had been home I reckon three-quarters of an hour, nearly an hour, Parson Nelson came up—Preacher Nelson—and he called me. I was away up-stairs. He called several times, and I heard him call each time. He called three or four times, and says: "Answer; don't be afraid; nobody will hurt you." He says "Don't be afraid; answer me;" and after I had made up my mind to answer, I answered him what he wanted, and he said, "I have come to tell you the news, and it is sad

news to you. Nobody told me to come, but I come up to tell you." I didn't say anything. "Your husband is dead," he said; "he is killed, and your brother, too, Sam."

I never said anything for a good while. He told me nobody would hurt me then; and when I did speak, says I, "Mr. Nelson, why did they kill him?" He says, "I don't know anything about it." He said just those words: "I don't know anything about it." He says, after that, "Have you any men folks about the place?" I says, "No." He says: "You shan't be hurt; don't be afraid of us; you shan't be hurt."

I never said anything whatever. He went off.

Sam's wife was there at the same time with three little children. Of course it raised great excitement.

After a length of time, Professor Hillman, of the Institute, the young ladies' school or college, he brought the bodies to the house; brought up my husband, him and Frank Martin. Professor Hillman and Mr. Nelson had charge of the dead bodies, and they brought them to the house; and when they brought them, they carried them in the bed-room, both of them, and put them there; they seed to having them laid out, and fixed up, and all that.

Mr. Nelson said in my presence, I listened at him, he said, "A braver life never had died than Charley Caldwell. He never saw a man died with a manlier spirit in his life."

He told me he had brought him out of the cellar.

You see when they had shot Sam, his brother, it was him who was lying there on the street. They shot him right through his head, off of his horse, when he was coming in from the country, and he fell on the street. He was the man I stumbled over twice. I did not know who he was. When they shot him, they said that they shot him for fear he would go out of town and bring in other people and raise a fuss. He found out, I suppose, that they had his brother in the cellar, so he just lay there dead; he that was never known to shoot a gun or pistol in his life—never knew how.

Mr. Nelson said that Buck Cabell carried him into the cellar; persuaded him to go out and drink; insisted upon his taking a drink with him, and him and Buck Cabell never knowed anything against each other in his life; never had no hard words. My husband told him no, he didn't want any Christmas. He

said, "You must take a drink with me," and entreated him, and said, "You must take a drink." He then took him by the arm and told him to drink for a Christmas treat; that he must drink, and carried him into Chilton's cellar, and they jingled the glasses, and at the tap of the glasses, and while each one held the glass, while they were taking the glasses, somebody shot right through the back from the outside of the gate window, and he fell to the ground.

As they struck their glasses, that was the signal to shoot. They had him in the cellar, and shot him right there, and he fell on the ground.

When he was first shot, he called for Judge Cabinis, and called for Mr. Chilton; I don't know who else. They were all around, and nobody went to his relief; all them men standing around with their guns. Nobody went to the cellar, and he called for Preacher Nelson, called for him, and Preacher Nelson said that when he went to the cellar door he was afraid to go in, and called to him two or three times, "Don't shoot me," and Charles said, "Come in," he wouldn't hurt him, and "take him out of the cellar;" that he wanted to die in the open air, and did not want to die like a dog closed up.

When they taken him out, he was in a manner dead, just from that one shot; and they brings him out then, and he only asked one question, so Parson Nelson told me—to take him home and let him see his wife before he died; that he could not live long.

It was only a few steps to my house, and they would not do it, and some said this.

Nelson carried him to the middle of the street, and the men all hallooed, "we will save him while we've got him; dead men tell no tales." Preacher Nelson told me so. That is what they all cried, "We'll save him while we got him; dead men tell no tales."

Whether he stood up right there in the street while they riddled him with thirty or forty of their loads, of course, I do not know, but they shot him all that many times when he was in a manner dead. All those balls went in him.

I understood that a young gentleman told that they shot him as he lay on the ground until they turned him over. He said so. I did not hear him.

Mr. Nelson said when he asked them to let him see me they told him no, and he then said, taking both sides of his coat and bringing them up this way so, he said, "Remember when you kill me you kill a gentleman and a brave man. Never say you killed a coward. I want you to remember it when I am gone."

Nelson told me that, and he said that he never begged them, and that he never told them, but to see how a brave man could die.

They can find no cause; but some said they killed him because he carried the militia to Edwards, and they meant to kill him for that. The time the guns were sent there he was captain under Governor Ames, and they said they killed him for that; for obeying Governor Ames.

After the bodies were brought to my house, Professor Hillman and Martin all staid until one o'clock, and then at one o'clock the train came from Vicksburgh with the "Murdocs." They all marched up to my house and went into where the two dead bodies laid, and they cursed them, those dead bodies, there, and they danced and threw open the window, and sung all their songs, and challenged the dead body to get up and meet them, and they carried on there like a parcel of wild Indians over those dead bodies, these Vicksburgh "Murdocs." Just one or two colored folks were setting up in the room, and they carried on all that in my presence, danced and sung and done anything they could. Some said they even struck them; but I heard them curse and challenge them to get up and fight. The Vicksburgh Murdocs done that that night. Then they said they could not stay any longer.

Then the day after that Judge Cabinis asked me was there anything he could do, and I told him, I said, "Judge, you have already done too much for me." I told him he had murdered my husband, and I didn't want any of his friendship. Those were the words I told him the next day, and he swore he did not know me that time; but I saw Judge Cabinis with this crowd that killed my husband. I saw him right in the midst, and then he made his excuse. He said he did everything he could for Charles, and that he was crazy. Well, they could not tell anything he had done.

They said Aaron Page was shot during the fuss.

In the league that was held here in that town, that day my husband was buried, they all said that he did not shoot him.

They said that Aaron Page was shot accidentally; that my husband did not kill him. All started up from picking a fuss with his nephew.

As for any other cause I never knew; but only they intended to kill him because for carrying the militia to Edwards; for obeying Governor Ames; and that was all they had against him.

THE MODOCS AFTER THE CLINTON RIOT.

At the same time, when they had the Moss Hill riot, the day of the dinner in September, when they came over that day, they telegraphed for the Vicksburgh "Murdocs" to come out, and they came out at dark, and when they did come, about fifty came out to my house that night; and they were breaking the locks open on doors and trunks; whenever they would find it closed they would break the locks. And they taken from the house what guns they could find, and plundered and robbed the house. The captain of the Vicksburgh "Murdocs," his name is Tinney.

Q. What day was that? —A. The day of the Moss Hill riot, in September.

THREATS AGAINST MR. CALDWELL AFTER THE CLINTON RIOT.

Q. When; the Clinton riot? —A. The 4th day of September. They came out, and Tinney staid there, and at daybreak they commenced to go, and he, among others, told me to tell my husband that the Clinton people sent for him to kill him, and he named them who they were to kill—all the leaders especially, and he says, "Tell him when I saw him"—he was gone that night; he fled to Jackson that evening with all the rest—"we are going to kill him if it is two years, or one year, or six; no difference; we are going to kill him anyhow. We have orders to kill him, and we are going to do it, because he belongs to this republican party, and sticks up for these negroes." Says he, "We are going to have the South back in our own charge, and no man that sticks by the republican party, and any man that sticks by the republican party, and is a leader, he has got to die." He told me that; and that the southern people are going to have the South back to ourselves, and no damned northern people and no republican party; and if your husband don't join

us he has got to die. Tell him I said so." I told him what he said. I did not know Tinney at the time; and when I saw my husband enter I told him, and he knew him from what I said, and he saw him afterward and told him what I said. He just said that he said it for devilment. They carried on there until the next morning, one crowd after another. I had two wounded men. I brought them off the Moss Hill battle-field, and these men treated me very cruelly, and threatened to kill them, but they did not happen to kill them.

CLINTON RIOT.

Next morning, before sun up, they went to a house where there was an old black man, a feeble old man, named Bob Beasly, and they shot him all to pieces. And they went to Mr. Willis's and took out a man, named Gamaliel Brown, and shot him all to pieces. It was early in the morning; and they goes out to Sam. Jackson's, president of the club, and they shot him all to pieces. He hadn't even time to put on his clothes. And they went out to Alfred Hasting; Alfred saw them coming. And this was before sun up.

Q. This morning after the Clinton riot? —A. On the morning of the 5th, and they shot Alfred Hastings all to pieces, another man named Ben. Jackson, and then they goes out and shoots one or two further up on the Madison road; I don't know exactly; the name of one was Lewis Russell. He was shot, and Moses Hill. They were around that morning killing people before breakfast. I saw a young man from Vicksburgh that I knew, and I asked him what it all meant.

Q. Who was he? —A. Dr. Hardesty's son; and I asked him what did it mean, their killing black people that day? He says, "You all had a big dinner yesterday, and paraded around with your drums and flags. That was impudence to the white people. You have no right to do it. You have got to leave these damned negroes; leave them and come on to our side. You have got to join the democratic party. We are going to kill all the negroes. The negro men shall not live." And they didn't live; for every man they found they killed that morning, and did not allow any one to escape them, so he said. So he told me all they intended to do about the colored people for having

their dinner and parading there, and having their banners; and intended to kill the white republicans the same. Didn't intend to leave any one alive they could catch, and they did try to get hold of them, and went down on Monday morning to kill the school-teacher down there, Haffa, but he escaped. Jo Stevens and his son Albert Stevens, I believe, was his name—they just murdered them right on through. These people staid there at the store and plundered it, and talked that they intended to kill them until they got satisfaction for three white people that was killed in that battle here. I can show who was the first white man that started the riot; and I can show you I have got his coat and pants, and I can show you how they shot him. They blamed all on my husband; and I asked what they killed Sam for; asked Dr. Alexander. They said they killed him because they were afraid he would tell about killing his brother. They killed my husband for obeying Governor Ames's orders, and they cannot find anything he did. He didn't do anything to be killed for. Then they have got his pistols there and they won't give them to me. I have asked I don't know how many times.

June 21, 1876