

Houston S. Gill
b. 6 January 1858 – d. 18 September 1910
s/o Thomas Jefferson Gill & Melissa M. “Aunt Puss” Exum
and Frances Rosentrant Smith
Both Buried: Gill Cemetery, DeKalb Co., TN
Located in hollow above Mrs. Ida Gills’ house,
across the road from Wolf Creek Baptist Church,
on Hwy. 141.
*See Family Sheet for Preston Stewart Gill
See Chapters 2 & 7: www.ajlambert.com

H.S. Gill is Murdered By McConnell Moss

1910 – Vol. XXIII, No. 37 – Cookeville Press

Former sheriff H. S. Gill, of DeKalb county was waylaid last Sunday morning by McConnell Moss, one and one-half miles from Silver Point, and murdered. Moss used a double-barreled shotgun, firing two charges of buckshot from the effect of which Gill died four hours later.

The killing came as a result of a family feud that has been waged between Gill and the Mosses for more than three years and although the killing of Gill did not come as a surprise to people who have kept informed with reference to the feelings that have existed between the two men, yet the cowardly method of the assassination has shocked and enraged the friends of Mr. Gill and they are organized in their efforts to take Moss, either dead or alive. All day Sunday and throughout Sunday night and Monday, dozens of posses, consisting of from five to fifteen men each, patrolled the hills around Silver Point and searched through the canebrakes near Laurel Hill in a vain effort to apprehend the murderer and had he been taken within twenty-four hours after the assassination, there is little doubt that he would have been shot on the spot.

Gill was one of the most prominent citizens of DeKalb county, and during the past fifteen years had accumulated quite a comfortable livelihood. He was twice elected sheriff of the county, and has many friends who felt the killing was brutal, coldblooded and cowardly.

Nearly three years ago Gill shot and killed Quess Moss, a brother to McConnell. The killing in this instance also came as a result of ill feelings that had existed for several months, both Moss and Gill being prepared for the fatal encounter. This killing occurred in December either two or three years ago, within one hundred yards of where the killing occurred last Sunday. Upon that occasion Gill was on his way to Silver Point, but met up with Quess Moss, John Moss, Van Presley and others. Quess asserted his intention of cutting Gill according to evidence that developed in the trial, and advanced toward him with open knife. Gill backed off several steps, then drew his revolver and shot Moss dead. Whether he was justified in the killing has been a disputed question. For the offense he twice stood trial at Cookeville, the first trial resulting in a disagreement among

the jurors. At the second hearing he was cleared, and immediately returned to his home near Laurel Hill.

At the time Quess Moss was killed McConnell was serving a term in the penitentiary for the killing of his first cousin, Frank Mitchell, this killing, also, having been characterize by many as coldblooded murder. Upon being released from the penitentiary McConnell is said to have sworn eternal vengeance against Gill for the killing of his brother, and at one time became so demonstrative that Gill had him placed under a peace bond at Buffalo Valley. Mutual friends then interceded and secured a promise from each that all differences be dropped. However Moss did not forgive nor forget the killing of his brother, and according to a statement made by Gill to a friend, endeavored to bushwhack him at a later time, but was prevented.

Indictments are said to be pending both the Putnam and DeKalb county courts, and for several weeks Moss has been in hiding. It is believed that he spent Saturday night at the home of his father-in-law, Mr. Henry Jones, who lives one and a half miles from Silver Point on the Laurel Hill road, and within a few hundred feet of where the killing occurred. Gill went to Silver Point on Sunday morning, and in doing so passed along the public road which is within plain view of the home of Henry Jones. He returned half an hour later, and was shot. Before death came, he made the following statement.

State of Tennessee, Putnam County

Personally appeared before me, Walter Jones, a justice of the peace for said state and county, H. S. Gill, and makes the following statement:

“I was shot by one McConnell Moss from the bushes on the 18 day of September at about nine o'clock in the morning. I was riding the public road that leads from Silver Point to Laurel Hill. I was on my way home from Silver Point. The shooting occurred a short distance from where H. P. Jones now lives. He the said McConnell Moss, was standing on the right of the public road behind some chestnut bushes. They were on my right going home inside of the field near the public road. He first shot my horse that I was riding. She then fell and as I rose up from the ground where my horse fell in the road, he the said McConnell Moss, shot the second shot with a shotgun, and the shot took effect in my right shoulder, arm and side. I had not spoken to him, the said McConnell Moss, at all upon this occasion. I saw him and well knew him to be the said McConnell Moss that shot me at the time and place aforesaid, and after shooting the second shot he, the said McConnell Moss, ran off in the direction of J.B. Lafever. J.B. who lives about a quarter mile from where the shooting occurred. I make this statement under the belief that I cannot recover from the effects of the gunshot wounds inflicted by the said McConnell Moss, and that I will die from the effects of the said wounds.”

George Fisher was coming up the public road and heard the gunshots and also heard Gill fall. He is positive that three shots were fired. Going up to Gill; he found him unconscious, and it was not until after the wounded man was taken to the home of Esq. LaFever that consciousness returned.

Although Gill had knowledge of only two shots, indications are that three were fired. Gill was shot in the right side, while the horse was shot in the left side of the neck, buckshot being used. The horse's neck was broken. Physical conditions indicate that a second man was standing on the left side of the road, who shot the horse.

Moss was seen by four creditable witnesses, who, it is said, will testify that he left the scene of crime a few seconds after the shots were fired. His brother-in-law, Shelah Jones, whose gun is said to have been used by Moss, disappeared at the same time, or rather it was reported that he could not be found Sunday. It was reported that they had disappeared together, both heavily armed with shotguns and revolvers.

Ex-Sheriff G. W. Alcorn went to the scene of the killing, and assisted by deputies R.L. Rash and H.M. Hughes - - two of the best officers in Middle Tennessee - - laid plans for the capture of Moss. Sheriff Weeks also went.

It is expected that Moss will be captured within a few days.



Houston Stewart Gill & his wife, Francis Rosentrant/Rosencyrance Smith "Trant"
Houston, former sheriff of DeKalb Co., TN was ambushed and killed on the road to Silver Point from his farm. The story goes he was shot by a revengeful brother. Houston shot and killed the ambusher's brother over a gambling argument which ended when the brother produced a knife and Houston shot and killed him. The brother killed Houston after he got out of prison. It was also rumored Houston was fooling around with the brothers sister. Houston and Francis (Smith) Gill had 13 children. Their son Preston Stewart Gill was the 2nd youngest.

Source: A close friend of Houston S. Gill's had the original newspaper clipping in his truck and upon his death about 1970 it was found. A photo copy of the original newspaper clipping was sent to Louis H. Gill by Durrell Foster a first cousin. Houston S. Gill was the father of Preston Gill, father of Louis H. Gill.

Houston S. Gill is Murdered by McConnell Moss – by Louis Huston Gill

The following is reconstructed from two copies of the same newspaper article about the ambush of my grandfather, Huston S. Gill, near Silver Pointe, TN, in Putnam County on 18 September 1910. I received one copy from a cousin, Durrell "Babe" Foster in the 1970's. A close friend of his had the clipping in his trunk when he died in 1970. I received the second copy from another cousin, Bob Medley on 13 February 1993, who had in turn received it from Durrell's sister Mrs. Jodie Medley, both his cousin & aunt. Bob wondered if I had a better copy. I didn't, but after scrutinizing both copies, I was able to reconstruct it.

I don't know the name of the paper, which ended "Press", but I'm sure others do?

I understand that my grandmother, Rosentrant/Rosencyrance Smith "Trant" Gill, spent about \$25,000.00 to prosecute Moss and there was at least one mistrial. I don't know if he was convicted. He made a deathbed confession some years later. If copies of the old newspaper exist, they would make interesting reading.

Notes:

H. S. Gill, my grandfather, ambushed 1 ½ miles from Silver Point.

McConnell Moss, son-in-law of Henry Jones. McConnell murderer of H. S. Gill.

Quess Moss, brother of McConnell Moss, killed by H.S. Gill.

Henry Jones, Gill was shot within view of his house.

Walter Jones, Justice of the Peace who took Gill's statement after he was shot.

John Moss, Van Presley & others, witnesses to the killing of Quess Moss.

Frank Mitchell, 1st cousin to Mosses & killed by McConnell.

J. B. Lafever, his house was ¼ mile from shooting and where H. S. Gill was taken after being shot and where he made his statement.

George Fisher, on the road at time of shooting but out of sight, he heard three shots and found H. S. Gill unconscious.

2nd man: probably shot horse, possibly Shelah Jones.

4 creditable witnesses that McConnell left scene a few seconds after shooting.

Shelah Jones whose gun was used by Moss and who could be found Sunday and reportedly disappeared Sunday with McConnell.

G.W. Alcorn, ex-sheriff.

R. L. Rash, H.M. Hughs & deputies laid plans to capture Moss.

Weeks, Sheriff

To be continued.....

Love's Valley by Jolee Love
pg. 379
Reference to H. S. Gill –
Houston Stewart Gill, former Sheriff of DeKalb Co., TN
father of Preston Stewart Gill

*See Chapter 2 and the Family Sheet of Preston Stewart Gill

A digression is made to present as full a list as can now be made of the county officers from the organization of the county to 1914: DeKalb Co., TN.

County court clerks: P. M. Wade, William Lawrence, Wash Isbell, M. T. Martin, G. W. Eastman, P. G. Magness, E. J. Evans, Z. P. Lee, H. K. Allen, J. E. Conger, W. B. Foster, John E. Conger.

Circuit court clerks: David Fite, W. J. Givan, J. B. Gibbs, J. T. Hallum, John P. Robertson, W. W. Wade, M. A. Crowley, J. B. Moore, Sam Foster.

Sheriffs: P. M. Thomason, James McGuire, E. W. Taylor, J. L. Dearman, J. Y. Stewart, John Hallum, W. L. Hathaway, Charles Hill, Henry Blackburn, M. F. Doss, C. S. Frazier, B. M. Merritt, **H. S. Gill (Houston Stewart Gill)**, W. H. C. Lassiter, **Silas Anderson**, Ben Merritt, Louis Merrite, John Odum, B. B. Taylor, Everett Love, George Puckett, A. Frazier.

Registers: Daniel Coggin, Wash Isbell, David Fite, J. Y. Haynes, John k. Bain, W. H. McNamer, Judson Dale, J. C. Kennedy, J. B. Atwell, John Harrison, B. M. Cantrell, E. W. Taylor, John G. Evans, Dabner Lickhart, Dave Worley, E. G. Pedigo, W. H. Hays.

County trustees: Rev. Joseph Banks, Aaron Botts, W. A. Nesmith (1861 – 62), Bluford Foster, Eli Vick, Brackett Estes Sr., W. P. Smith, James Fite, James Fuson, H. C. Eastham, W. G. Evans, Pope Potter, Lee Overall, J. W. Crips, Matt Batten.

Source: <http://www.tngenweb.org/dekalb/>

DeKalb County is located in Middle Tennessee, one of the state's three "grand divisions." DeKalb county was formed by acts of the Legislature passed on Dec. 2, 1837, from portions of Smith, Warren, White and Cannon Counties.

Source: Putnam County Herald Newspaper, Cookeville, TN

GILL, H. S.: H. S. Gill was shot and killed last Sunday morning near Silver Point, two charges of heavy shot being fired into his body. He was riding and his horse was shot first About two years ago Gill killed Quess Moss near the same place and it is supposed that Connell Moss, a brother of Quess, killed Gill. He has not been captured. [Date 9/22/1910, Vol. VIII, No. 38, Page 7]

Source: DeKalb County Cemeteries by Doris Garrison Gilbert – pg. 122
Gill Cemetery (70)

Walter Lee Shanks – b. 25 December 1910 – d. 27 December 1910

Toy Houston Gill – b. 21 March 1909 – d. 11 October 1910

Frances Gill – b. 3 October 1862 – d. 29 June 1942

(Frances Rosentrant Smith, w/o Houston Stewart Gill)

Kate Leftwich – b. 23 February 1889 – d. 6 July 1908

H.S. Gill (Houston Stewart Gill) – b. 6 January 1858 – d. 18 September 1910 – *Located in hollow above Mrs. Ida Gill's house, across the road from Wolf Creek Baptist Church, on Hwy. 141. Copied by Mitch Jones, December 1962. Houston Stewart Gill was the son of Thomas Jefferson Gill & Melissa M. "Aunt Puss" Exum*

Source: I was told by Louis H. Gill, grandson of Houston Stewart Gill that his grandfather had a farm located on Wolf Creek, DeKalb Co., Putnam Co., TN. The farm consisted of enough acres to form 5 good size farms that the family lived, grew crops and raised stock. H. S. Gill my Frances Rosentrant Smith and they had 13 children. H.S. Gill was a sheriff for DeKalb Co. TN and was murdered by McConnell Moss.

In 28 July 1920 Stewart Preston Gill married Addie Anderson, d/o Lewis Monroe Anderson & Matilda Isabelle Wallace. Preston & Addie Gill lived on his father's farm in a log cabin. Louis Huston Gill there first son was born in this cabin. When he was born the doctor said he might not live. His aunts, Audra Camilla (Anderson) Denny, Ollie Lamby (Anderson) Julian & Eldra (Anderson) Shanks were there. When my mother, Addie started her delivery everyone waited in anticipation. I was told that my mother, Addie (Anderson) Gill passed out during the delivery. The doctor thought that the baby was dead. I showed no apparent signs of life. The aunts took charge and cleared out my throat and I started to move. 'He is gonna be alright now', they said to the doctor. They all decided that I needed a name right away, so they named me after my grandfather, Lewis Monroe Anderson and my grandfather Houston Stewart Gill. The name stuck! Mom must of agreed because that is my name."

Frances Rosentrant "Trant" Smith Gill continued to live on the family farm on Wolf Creek after the death of her husband. Frances spent a lot of money on the murder trial of H. S. Gill. I am not sure if McConnell Moss served any time for the murder of H.S. Gill. I was told that he spent some time in jail but not necessary for killing H. S. Gill. But on the death bed of McConnell Moss he admitted to shooting in cold blood H.S. Gill.

Stewart Preston and Addie Gill moved to Detroit, MI and had two more children, Jerry & Reba Gill. In their later years Stewart and Addie Gill moved back to Tennessee, last Residence: 38501 Cookeville, Putnam Co. Their children and grandchildren remained in Michigan.

Story told to Audrey J. (Denny) Lambert: February 2004.

Source: It Happened Here Abouts: by Gary Denton Norris, pg. 77

Putnam County Murder Trial Moving Along:
Fentress County Gazette, June 4, 1914

The prosecution concluded the introduction of its proof in chief for the case of the State of Tennessee verses **McConnell Moss**, who is on trial charged with the murder of former **Sheriff Houston S. Gill** near Silver Point in Putnam County about three years ago. While riding his mare along the public road, both Gill and the mare were shot and riddled with buckshot. The mare was killed instantly and Gill mortally wounded, died soon afterwards, making a statement before his death in which he declared that McConnell Moss had killed him.

Source: DeKalb County, Tennessee Chancery Court Records 1844-1892 compiled by Thomas E. Partlow, 2000.

PREFACE: Chancery Court records are of great value because they contain estate settlements of people who have died intestate. Oftentimes, such information cannot be found elsewhere. In addition to estate settlements, these records also include divorces, and after 1865, some Civil War information.

Minutes Book 1885-1887: pg. 81:

H. S. GILL vs. DEKALB COUNTY. The County is to pay the costs. 19 August 1887. (P. 368).

Source: Upper Cumberland Genealogical Association, Inc., Vol. XVII, No. 3, Fall 1992: pg: 118 – 16th District Road Tax Payers, 1906/1907, DeKalb Co., TN:

Contributed by D. Mitchell Jones, 3025 Kline Road, Jacksonville, FL 32248

“The old 16th District of DeKalb County consisted of the present Wolf Creek Community which runs from Center Hill Dam east towards Silver Point. Highway 141 runs through the Wolf Creek Community. At one time, Wolf Creek had a post office, Laurel Hill, which served the surroundings area including Buffalo Valley. The first list must be for 1906 as the page identifying them has been torn out, but the next list is 1907. It is interesting that the majority of taxes were paid by the taxes individuals working on the roads. (Book is in the possession of the submitter).

First page reads – “Notice”

Please preserve this book and return to this office by July 1st 1907. W. B. Foster, Clerk.

Second page reads – Silver Point, TN

| Name: | Amount in Work: | Amount in Cash: | Total: |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Gill, M. L. Mrs. | .72 | | 1.08 |
| Gill, H. S. | 2.00 | | 3.00 |

<http://www.ajlambert.com>