

## BALDWIN, PROTESTING INNOCENCE, IS EXECUTED

*Tucson Citizen, Friday July 12, 1907 pages 1 & 8*

*Transcribed by Jean Walker, June 2025*

### TWO GIRLS WITNESS MAN'S DEATH THROES

Daughter and Niece of Murdered Mrs. Morris See Terrible Crime Avenged On Scaffold. —Murder Walks Coolly to the Gallows and Shouts "Good Bye," as Black Cap is Thrust Over his Head.

Solomonville, Ariz., July 12.—Special Dispatch.)—The execution of William Baldwin took place here this morning without any untoward incidents. The trap fell at 8:45 a.m. and the man's heart stopped beating seventeen minutes later, although death was probably instantaneous. The condemned man made no statement from the scaffold and spoke only two words, "Well good-bye," with a wave of his hand to an assembly of about two hundred men. He showed remarkable nerve and mounted the steps with as firm a tread as that of any of the of-{illegible}

{illegible} the Catholic faith, having been baptized by Father {illegible} on the gallows. If any confession {illegible} it was under the seal of the church to the priest {illegible} he protested his innocence to the last.

Baldwin left a letter for H. J. Groce, under sentence of death in Tucson saying that he died happy in the Catholic faith and recommending that religion to his friends.

An unusual feature of the affair was that the execution was witnessed by two young women, Eunice Morris and Mamie Nelson of Gila county, daughter and niece respectively of Mrs. Harvey Morris, one of Baldwin's two victims. The girls came here from Globe and induced the sheriff to permit them to view the entire proceedings from a guard room.

Baldwin was an Alabama negro, twenty-seven years old, and had been in Arizona about one year. He went to the gallows largely on the testimony of an Indian named Yesterday, who fastened the crime upon him by his native skill in reading the desert.

The condemned man was actually so indifferent to his fate that he had to be awakened this morning and then ate a hearty meal and enjoyed cigars and liquor, which were furnished him. This stoical attitude is regarded as the more remarkable considering that he was a man of considerable intelligence and fairly well educated.

### STORY OF BALDWIN'S BRUTAL CRIME

Baldwin was convicted of murder on purely circumstantial evidence. It was the testimony of one man, an Indian trailer, which sent the negro to the scaffold. This Indian, however, established a chain of circumstances so maning that when Baldin's colored friends desired to appeal the case to the Supreme Court they were informed by their attorneys "There is no use."

## A FIENDISH CRIME

On January 30 of this year Harvey Morris, a rancher near Roosevelt in Gila county returned to his home and found his wife and four-year-old daughter missing from the house. After some search the bodies of the mother and the child were found about 300 yards from the house. Both had been brutally murdered. Wounds on the woman showed the terrible fight which she had put up for her child, her life and her honor. The murderer has spared her in no particular.

Immediately a posse took up pursuit of the murderer. In the posse was the Indian trailer. Bent half double he went over every foot of the ground. At the end of his search he gave a satisfied grunt and pointed at tracks in the earth and then at his own feet. The tracks on the ground bore the undoubted imprint of hob nailed shoes.

## THE HOB NAILED SHOES

Further search by the Indian disclosed other tracks. They led from the scene of the crime to a mesquite bush nearly a mile distant, behind which the man with the hob nailed shoes has rested. There the tracks died out. The trail was lost.

Morris, the anguished husband, was then questioned by members of the posse as to who had been about his house on the day of the crime. Morris said that when he kissed his wife and child good-bye that morning, before he left for his trip to Roosevelt, a negro had come up and asked a drink of water which Mrs. Morris handed him. Then the posse branched out and began looking for a negro. They found one at a nearby ranch house where he was calmly eating his dinner. He was wearing a pair of hobnailed shoes.

## BALDWIN'S STORY

From the first Baldwin admitted that he had witnessed the murder. He stoutly contended, however, that the crime had been committed by two Mexicans and that he had fought with them in an effort to save the woman and child until he was knocked senseless.

In support of this story he exhibited a number of scratches on his face and body. His prosecutors contended that these wounds were inflicted by Mrs. Morris in her fight for life.

Pressed down to details Baldwin state that the two alleged Mexicans came to the Morris ranch riding a horse and a mule which they tied up at a certain spot which he claimed to be able to locate. He said that these men had met Mrs. Morris in the yard and pursued her and that he had followed them and finally put up the battle for Mrs. Morris and her daughter.

## INDIAN TRAILER'S SHREWDNESS

The Indian trailer upon having Baldwin's story translated to him simply took members of the posse to the scene and pointed out the footprints. The only ones discernable were those of Mrs. Morris, the child and the man with hob nailed shoes. Then the Indian took the party to the place where Baldwin said the two Mexicans had tied the horse and mule. There was not a hoof print at the place. On a nearby road, however there were

the regular hoof prints of passing horses, but they were not bunched and thick together, as would have been the case had the animals stood or been tied, there.

Finally, and as a clinching bit of evidence, the Indian stated that he could prove that Baldwin had pursued Mrs. Morris and her child and that the two had run in an effort to escape him. To make good this assertion he again indicated the footprints leading from the Morris house to the spot where the bodies of woman and child were found. He directed attention to the fact that the footprints of the hobnailed shoes were pressed down over the slender footprints of the woman and child. This, he said, proved that the man with the hobnailed shoes had followed them. Then he showed where the footprints of the child made dragging marks. And this, he said was due to the fact that the mother ran so hard that the little one could not keep up and had been dragged by its frantic mother in her effort to save it from the pursuing murderer and escape.

#### DANING EVIDENCE FOUND (sic)

Directly at the scene of the crime there was much trampling of the ground by the man with the hobnailed shoes as though he was engaged in a struggle. The only other footprints to be seen were those on the mother and the child. This practically completed the case of the Indian against the negro. It was on this evidence that William Baldwin was hanged today.

#### ATTEMPTED LYNCHING

The course of Arizona's laws following the arrest of Baldwin is one to which the people of this territory can always refer with pride. After Baldwin had been taken to prison at the county seat of Gila county, Globe, an attempt was made to lynch the man. A mob of the Morris family friends and neighbors surrounded the county jail and clamored for the prisoner, Juge Nave of the Supreme Court of the territory and Sheriff Thompson of Gila county appeared on the courthouse steps and warned the mob that they would kill the first man to attack the jail. Finally the mob dispersed and on the following day Baldwin was hurried to Tucson where he was kept in jail for many weeks. While here he formed a close acquaintance with Murderer Groce and he spent his last hours writing Groce a farewell letter.

Balwin was given a perfectly impartial trial and was defended by three eminent attorneys, but the strong evidence furnished by the Indian trailer, Yesterday, resulted in his conviction. Negro friends in Tucson raised funds with which to appeal Baldwin's case to the Supreme Court and engaged the local firm of Lovell and Richey to go over the evidence. The attorneys reported that there was no hope to obtain a reversal of the verdict of the lower court. This statement was later borne out when the Supreme Court affirmed the verdict.

The Gila County Grand Jury indicted some of the men engaged in the attempt to lynch Baldwin, but they were all acquitted in a jury trial.