



The headstone of William L. Mudd marks his final resting place in the Greensburg Cemetery.

The murder of W. L. Mudd



Green County Public Library Genealogy
Laura Johnson

Greensburg was shaken late Tuesday night, August 6, 1901, when gunfire rang out around 11:30 p.m. followed by shouts and screams. Residents rushed toward Main Cross Street (Court Street), where they found former Sheriff William Leonard Mudd lying mortally wounded in the gutter opposite J. J. Taylor's carpenter shop. He was moved to the nearby jail where he received medical treatment but died the next morning. Jake escaped the scene and was taken care of at the home of G. W. Towles.

Town Marshal James E. Cantrell admitted firing the shots but claimed he acted in self defense. Mudd, age 61, had been struck four times, with wounds to the right side, left side, knee, and a devastating abdominal shot. All but the last passed clean through. His son, Jake Mudd, was also wounded, struck in the upper right chest. Doctors removed the bullet lodged near his backbone and Jake survived though his recovery took several weeks.

The violence stemmed from an earlier altercation between Jake Mudd and brothers James and Joe Cantrell. Warrants were issued for the Cantrells, reportedly in retaliation for previous arrests involving the Mudds. Before the papers could be served, W. L. Mudd urged his son to avoid further trouble by leaving town, and the two mounted their horses to head home. Mudd had reached the gate of Mrs. L. Foster's residence and was speaking with her family when the marshal appeared "startlingly close to the horsemen" in the bright moonlight.

Mudd quickly dismounted and stated they were going home. Marshal Cantrell claimed that Mudd advanced on him in a threatening manner, prompting him to fire. Yet the dying man con-

tradicted this account, telling bystanders that "they did it" and specifically blaming Joe Cantrell for the shooting. This discrepancy would fuel months of legal proceedings.

William Leonard Mudd was described at the time of his death as a courageous and purposeful man who discharged his duties in a fearless and exemplary manner. He had been a Confederate soldier during the Civil War, wounded once in the right hip. He served Green County as Deputy Sheriff from 1872 to 1876 and as Sheriff in 1877-78. He was twice widowed and left behind three grown children. His funeral was held in the Greensburg Cemetery.

In the days following the shooting, warrants were issued against Joe E. Cantrell for wounding Jake Mudd. Soon after, charges were expanded to include both Cantrell brothers in the killing of W. L. Mudd. Throughout that year, and into the following year, the case wound through the courts. An examining trial in October 1901 heard testimony from all prosecution witnesses, followed by the defense.

The Commonwealth brought both Cantrells to trial in March 1902, but the jury failed to reach a verdict. Reports indicated a wide split between jurors. The court then elected to try the defendants separately.

In November 1902, on a Tuesday morning, the case against James E. Cantrell was set to be heard; however, the local jury pool was quickly depleted. On Wednesday morning, potential jurors were brought from Campbellsville on the morning train. After lengthy testimony and arguments extending into the night, the jury ultimately acquitted him. The charge against Joe E. Cantrell, accused of being an accessory, was dismissed shortly thereafter.

By the end of 1902, the criminal cases were concluded. Although the courts had rendered their verdicts, the death of W. L. Mudd remained a source of loss and controversy in Greensburg.

Greensburg-Green County
A proud past — A promising future

Way Back When

1986- Attorney Sam Moore II has been selected to provide legal services for the city as the city attorney

BY CAROL DIAL
SPECIAL TO THE R-H

March 8, 2006
Fire consumes 40 acres - Firefighters worked four hours to contain a grass and woods fire that burned forty acres on Little Barren Road.

Dragons win district - Max DeSpain, Clint Henderson and Mickie Ray were chosen for the 18th District All Tournament Team after the Green County Dragons won the district title.

Horses cause accident - Five horses roaming free on Hwy. 61 near Bloyd's Crossing were the cause of an accident when two were struck by an automobile. The driver of the car was not seriously injured.

Students named to USAA - Green County High School students, Andrew Bennett and Megan Bale, were named to the United States Achievement Academy.

March 6, 1996
Fire department construction begins - Volunteers have started construction for the Exie Volunteer Fire Department building.

Lewis auction - Durrett Realty Company auctioned the inventory and fixtures of the Woodson Lewis Store. The business had been in operation for 168 years.

Birthday - Ruth Dowell, the Mell Ridge correspondent to the Record-Herald, celebrated her 87th birthday.

Two injured - Rhonda Marcum and Jay Moore were injured when their vehicle slid off a rain-slick highway and hit a utility pole.

March 6, 1986
Steeple for church - Oak Forest Cumberland Presbyterian Church was topped by a steeple constructed by Aluminum Fabricators.

Moore appointed city attorney - Attorney Sam Moore II has been selected to provide legal services for the city.

Heart recipient returns home - Davis Keltner was welcomed home by family and friends after receiving a heart transplant at a Louisville hospital.

Homecoming Queen - Tammy Cox was named the 1986 GCHS Homecoming Queen.

March 11, 1976
Band marches at Mardi Gras - Members of the GCHS marching band participated in the Mardi Gras Parade performing fifty-four songs and marching six miles.

Car fund reaches \$3,000 - Donations to replace Rev. George K. Bowling's wrecked car reached \$3,000.

Church history - The Greensburg Second Baptist Church was organized sometime prior to 1865. The church was located south of town on Green River. Early pastors were John Harding, G. Moore, A. R. Graves, D. A. Rice, Willis Cowherd, W. G. Howard and W. M. Harris.

Between Newt and Pierce, Nellie Coomer - The weather has been pretty and the farmers are fencing and plowing. The women are finishing their winter quilting.

March 10, 1966
Our Men in Service - Airman 3rd Class Kenneth W. Keltner graduated at Amarillo, Texas for US Air Force Personnel Specialist. Roy Wayne Milby is undergoing training at Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas.

Little Barren, Mrs. Robert Clark - Old Man Winter isn't finished yet. We have cold wind and snow flurries with one inch of snow on the ground.

Featured at the Franklin - Elvis stars in "Girl Happy". "The Cincinnati Kid" features Steve McQueen and Edward G. Robinson.

Shaikun's Department Store ad - Blankets, \$3.88; bath towels, 3/\$1; drapes and curtains, \$1.50 pr.; plastic drapes, 39 cents; oilcloth, 49 cents per yard; piece goods, 4 yards \$1.

Auction

BIDDING ENDS
MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026
AT APPROXIMATELY 6:00 P.M.

Susan Pendleton Estate & The Late Raymond Pendleton
ONLINE BIDDING ONLY
PERSONAL PROPERTY

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GUN - CHERRY & MODERN FURNITURE - GLASSWARE - ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES -
HOUSEHOLD ITEMS - SHEAR - SCALES - SHOP TOOLS & MISC. ITEMS

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Green County History Museum

Second floor of Longhunters Coffee & Tea - Greensburg Square

Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. - Fridays and Saturdays

Admission: \$3

"The museum is a 501(c)3 educationally chartered history museum and all donations are tax deductible!"