

# Verdict doesn't end murder trial story

In the murder trial of Hiram Bland in September of 1850, John Wesley Walker, the victim's son and a witness, was treated with consideration by the court, because of "his tender years." Great care was taken by the prosecutor to make sure the boy knew right from wrong and understood what the word "perjury" meant.

It was the boy who provided some interesting details of the moments immediately before Bland stabbed Walker. The son told the court that when Bland approached the tobacco patch, he (Bland) ordered Walker to stop working and "meet him half way." Walker declined, and Bland took out his knife and began "harvesting" some of the tobacco plants.

The boy's 12-year-old sister, Polly, also a witness, was called to testify. She did not add much new information and corroborated her brother's testimony.

The defense was not sitting on its hands. They produced Cynthia Bland, a relative of the defendant, who attempted to make it appear that the death was a manslaughter, instead of deliberate murder.

The woman testified that she was at the home of her husband, approximately a quarter of a mile from that of the Walkers. She told the court "that she



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stood before her house; that she saw the defendant and deceased meet face to face; that the deceased had a club or stick in his hand with which he struck a blow at the head or shoulder of the defendant . . ."

Another defense witness was Warren Bland, a neighbor of the Walkers and a relative of the defendant. He testified that earlier on the day of the murder, Hiram Bland had stopped by and was well on his way to being drunk. In fact, Warren Bland testified about his relative, "that he was intoxicated; that he brought a pint of whiskey with him and continued to drink; that he tore his clothes and hair and tried to vomit; that the defendant hallowed to the deceased who was at his own house which was two or three hundred yards off that of the witness . . ."

According to Bland, the defendant continued to drink for an hour or two and at intervals hallowed for the deceased . . ."

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