

Visit in the night Maple Grove mystery

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the house, near a grove of locusts, he could distinctly see a man holding four horses."

If Houston had any idea who his night visitors were, the article in the *Progress* gives no inkling of it. One of the visitors was supposed to have called, "Hello. Is that you Houston — come on out, I want to see you!" As the night callers were unwilling to identify themselves or state their business, Houston warned them that he would shoot.

Continued the *Progress*, "Still there was no response, and taking aim at the right leg of the man who wore the long duster, (the other man having come up close to the house) Houston fired. The man jumped and ran, and just then revolvers were fired in the direction of the window by a man at each side, and they ran."

Houston later reported that out in the locust grove there was a little delay in the men getting away, due to the fact that one of the horses got loose. Before their departure more shots were fired.

Though Houston ran from the house and fired at the fleeing night visitors, they were appar-

ently already out of range. According to the *Progress*, Houston had little other information to offer, except that his family, too, witnessed the incident.

In speaking to the sheriff, Houston had elaborated somewhat on the scene, and supplied details furnished by his grown daughter, Emma, who "was sleeping upstairs, and so got a better view of the attacking party than her father." She said, "One of the horses was a light gray, one of them (the one that got away) a bay with dark tail."

Philosophized the *Progress*, "These are all the facts as given by Mr. Houston, and as the matter will be investigated, it is not proper to make comments or indicate any suspicions. (The editor's fastidiousness in such cases are rare, indeed, since there were plenty of other instances when he could have suffered a broken arm from falling off a limb.)

Perhaps the editor sensed that there was something not quite right about Houston's story, despite the corroboration of his children and the bullet holes in the front of his house. In any case, the whole affair took a curious turn in the weeks ahead.

Next week: Houston's curious behavior