

## **Dr. Barkley**

“...As the wind blows on January 6th, so will it blow for 40 days, never being out of its course for more than 24 hours at any time during the 40 days.”

The saying regarding the weather for a 40-day period following January 6th emanated from Dr. H.B. Barkley, a pioneer physician and weather prognosticator. The Sixth of January sometimes even today among the old-timers is referred to as “Barkley Day.”

It is said that only one time during his lifetime in the mountains of Montana did Dr. Barkley's prophecy fail. Upon this occasion, January 6th was a fine, clear day, giving promise of beautiful, open weather for the ensuing 40 days. However, the weatherman upset all precedents, and on the following day, January 7th, a bitter cold wind came down from the north and the thermometer dropped and for the following month hovered generally around 40 degrees below zero.

Dr. Barkley was a Kentuckian who served for three years as a surgeon in the Confederate Army. In the 60s, about the close of the Civil War, he came to Montana and located at Radersburg where he practiced his profession and engaged in placer mining. He frequently made prophecies regarding the weather, many of which were published in the few newspapers, to which prophecies he signed TICA—Radersburg. By this signature he became generally known through this section of the state.

On April 21, 1884, Dr. Barkley was murdered while at work on his mining ditch at the head of Indian Creek. He had gone out alone for the purpose of repairing the ditch and while thus engaged was shot down, his murderer was never apprehended, although several persons whose enmity he had aroused were under suspicion.

His death was productive of considerable newspaper controversy at the time. One Helena newspaper, taking the position in a most unusual

controversial article, that his passing might be considered a blessing to the community. Following a brief account of the murder, the *Helena Daily Independent*, April 23, 1884, commented as follows:

"Dr. Barkley was an old citizen of Montana, having come to the Territory from Missouri in 1865. He was a good physician and a gentleman of more than an ordinary intelligence. For several years passed he has attracted much attention through the Territory by reason of his weather predictions, some of which were singularly accurate. These were given to the public under the *non de plume* of TICA—Radersburg. He was a man of strong prejudices and convictions which often led him into antagonisms. Honest in the assertion of his rights, he was unyielding in the maintenance. Years ago, he acquired certain valuable water rights in Indian Creek, Jefferson County, but he found much difficulty in securing their recognition and was involved in litigation with miners in that vicinity. He met death at last we presumed, in the very ditch over which he has so long disputed and litigated. While a bitter, unyielding foe, entirely devoid of any sense of fear, he was a true friend, faithful and devoted to those who once secured his confidence and esteem. He had no family and no kindred in Montana, but leaves a married daughter now residing in Missouri and Kentucky of which latter state he was a native."

The *Helena Daily Herald*, of corresponding date, places the murdered man in a vastly different light, saying:

"The violent death of H.B. Barkley of Jefferson county at the head of Indian Creek on April 21 will least surprise those who intimately knew the man. The doctor was an old resident, a physician of considerable practice in the northern part of the county. With some redeeming qualities, he was a neighbor greatly disliked. His friends were few, his enemies many. He was headstrong, contentious and mischief making. His tongue was unbridled and his temper irascible. Desperate in passion, the victims of his anger were as likely to be shot or knifed, as lashed by a torrent of profanity and anathema.

Dr. Barkley's headstone at the Radersburg Cemetery:



"A fruitful theme of dispute was the Indian Creek water right in which the doctor claimed interests, and about which he quarreled and litigated incessantly. A year or so ago, in a Radersburg saloon he accosted a neighbor as if friendly, the next moment whipping out a knife and cutting him to kill. In his cups he was abrasive and not infrequently desperate and dangerous.

"Where he was, says a neighbor, was 'Hell with the devil present and wagging his tail.' To a Helena acquaintance, the doctor, in the presence of a Radersburg man once said, 'My enemies are snakes. I do not fear them. If I could insult them, I would open their jaws and spit in their mouth!'

"He died of a rifle shot spread by the ambushed foe who waylaid and ended his life when the victim least looked for it. It was a cowardly murder, but there will be those who will say that the bullet of Barkley's assassin removed from Jefferson County a blight, and to a long suffering community, a blessing."

From *Broadwater Bygones*:

"He was a familiar figure in early history known for his readiness to help the sick and deliver the new babies and even carried dental tools in the saddle bag to pull a tooth or help in any way he could. He had strong convictions and was determined in fighting his rights over water usages and again working for 12 months in the courts to procure the townsite for the people of Springville."