

A Tragedy in Radersburg

Over the years Radersburg has seen its share of murders, suicides and hangings; but one incident seems particularly tragic.

In 1938 George Holling and his wife Myrtle had a major quarrel and George apparently beat his wife pretty severely with a tire iron. Mr. Holling then went to bed and fell fast asleep.

Mrs. Holling retrieved an axe and struck her husband with the double bit axe full in the face putting a deep gash through the bridge of his nose and through his upper jaw.

Upon receiving the blow, Mr. Holling jumped from the bed and ran across the street to his Mother's home where she immediately summoned Dr. Nash and Sheriff Norman Bruce. George Holling was transported to the Carroll hospital in Townsend where he was in critical condition following surgery.

After striking Mr. Holling with the axe Mrs. Holling vanished into the night. An all night search was made by Sheriff Bruce for the missing woman. Around day break they found her body slumped beneath a cotton wood tree about a half-mile from Radersburg on land leased by her husband.

The evidence showed that Mrs. Holling walked down the middle of the highway leading out of Radersburg and then straight across the space to the large cotton wood tree. She then stepped into the fork of the tree, tied an electric cord around her neck and a limb of the tree and stepped out of the tree.

The examiners reported that she apparently hung from the tree for two to three hours before slipping free and Mrs. Holling falling to the ground. The investigators said that she apparently died instantly after stepping from the tree.

Myrtle Holling was the mother of three boys aged 5, 4 and 2. According to Sheriff Bruce and probation officer Mrs. E.H. Goodman, for several years Mrs. Holling suffered from "periods of despondency" although the greater part of the time she seemed normal.

One does have to wonder if Mrs. Holling was suffering from “periods of despondency” due to periodic beatings from her husband. There are no mentions of Mr. Holling regularly beating his wife but it seems to me unlikely that this incident was a one time event.

A woman taking her life and leaving 3 small children homeless seems like a tragedy that could have been avoided.

The information in this article came from Harla Gillespie’s book “Hidden Tales Well Told” and from information in the Townsend Star newspaper. “Hidden Tales Well Told” is available at the Broadwater County Museum.