

# Yesteryears

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## Aftermath of a tragic confrontation

### Ira Marlatt's constant brooding, explosive temper leads to disaster

The story up to now: Ira Marlatt had been brooding over the loss of his fruit orchard, and blamed two men, mill owner Louis Bell and farmer-landowner Barak Ashton, who had helped him make the purchase. Unable to pay the taxes on his 25 acres — he'd quit his paying job to work in his orchard, clearing and planting 400 apple and peach trees — the land was put on the auction block. The buyer was Ashton. Ira was determined to face his enemies and get damage money from them. Armed with a gun, he asked for a meeting.

#### Part III

By Lois Firestone

THE SHOOTING BEGAN about 10:15 and was over by 10:30 on the morning of May 7, 1890.

Kimsey Bell, Louis Bell's first cousin, was spading a hot bed in his field 60 rods south of the mill when he heard the echo of pistol shots. Seconds later, he saw a team of runaway horses careening down the road. Then three or four more shots in rapid succession, and then one or two more.

Rushing to the scene, he saw Louis Bell, wounded and bleeding, trying to hold the dying Barak Ashton in his arms. "Louis said Barak was shot, and I asked him who did it, and Bell said, 'that crazy Marlatt!'" Kimsey Bell said. "I took Mr. Ashton off of Louis' arm and held him myself; he was pale and couldn't speak, and soon began to gasp for breath. I don't think he was conscious when I got there. I think the Dutchman (hired man Albert Hunsicker) had gone for the doctor." A few minutes later, Barak Ashton, bleeding internally, died.

"Afterwards I went down to the mill," Kimsey Bell said. "Louis Bell was there

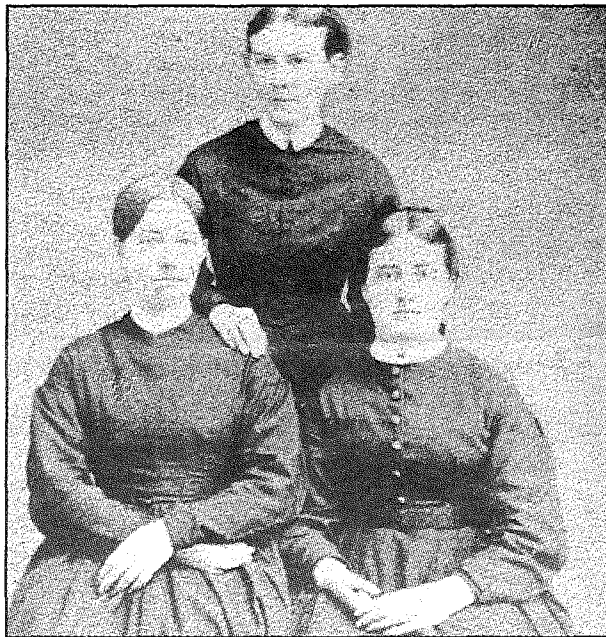
and perhaps others; I found a barrel of bran upset. I was at the mill only a short time, but I found some of the notes almost under two barrels that stood there. I picked two of those notes up. One blank note had blood on it."

Lou Bell's sister, Mrs. Mark Stooksberry, was nearby when the shooting started and had hurried down to the mill in time to see one of Ira's bullets barely miss Bell's 15-month-old daughter Ione. Mrs. Stooksberry was cradling the sobbing child whose hand was grazed with powder burns.

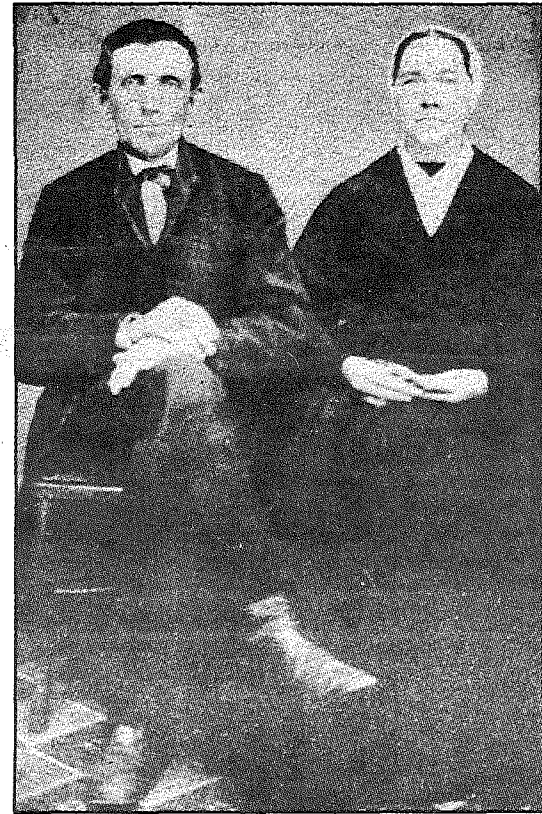
Cora Marlatt was sewing on a quilt when she heard her brother dash into the house about 11 o'clock and run upstairs to his second floor room. When he came downstairs as usual for the family's noon meal, he told his mother his life was "ruined" because he had "shot at" Barak Ashton and had "got into a row with Bell." "He looked wild and went upstairs, and I went with him," Louisa Marlatt said. "I asked him what he had done that for, and he said he wanted them to sign some papers and they wouldn't do it so he shot. If they had signed, he wouldn't have shot." She tried to calm him, but he darted down the stairs and up again, from one room to another, finally barricading himself in an upstairs bedroom.

"In war times," Ira told his mother, "people have the right to defend themselves, and this is war." Peering down at the crowd of men milling around the yard outside, he snatched up a can of nails and hammered the door shut, and pulled down the window blinds. Over 100 people were gathered quietly in the yard, awaiting the arri-

See Ira, page 4



The three Ashton sisters (above photo) Eliza, Phebe and Martha, the diary's author, pose for this photo taken by G. G. Webb in his South Main Street studio in Columbiana in 1873. At right are Quaker Barak Ashton and his wife, Jane in the 1880s. William Cope of Fairfield Township, an Ashton descendant, loaned Yesteryears the photos for this story.



## Diary notations tell a story

By Lois Firestone

MARTHA ASHTON Shaw kept a diary for most of her life, jotting down a few lines at the end of each day. She was 44 when she recounted her father, Ashton's murder in 1890.

The family was still grieving over the loss of the mother, Jane, who had passed away in 1888; and the daughter Lide who had died in 1889.

May 7. Beautiful day and one to be remembered while memory serves us. As Ira Marlatt shot our dear Father about 10, and he only lived about 20 minutes. Oh, words cannot convey our feelings as a messenger called, and told us that "Barak Ashton was shot." I asked who done it, he said Ira Marlatt. Seth put the horses to the spring wagon and we were soon at the side of the prostrate form of our dear parent. It did

seem too awful to be true but it was so. He could never speak to us again, neither could we minister to his wants. We soon had messages on the wires for the dear absent one to whom the dreadful news must be a terrible shock. The nabors (sic) were soon in and all seemed anxious to do something for us. They put Father in the wagon and Kimsey Bell held his head again (as he held him in his arms when he drew his last breath). The girls and I went in Daniel Blackburn's wagon. Got to the desolate home near noon where there were already some kind nabors to meet us, just fixed and laid the dear body on his bed he had left a few hours before after a good night's rest, not thinking of the enemy to so soon take his life.

Held an inquest in afternoon. A great many people about, both curious and sympathetic.

Phebe Ann and Sarah Jane came to us at the roadside and will not leave us for a while. Aylmer came down in the evening and said him and his mother would come down and stay a few days with us. The sheriff came out and took Ira from his mother's house after a desperate struggle and he was soon landed in jail to await his trial.

May 8. Nice morning, but oh, how sad we feel as we see we must take up our burdens and bear them without a kind Father's help or advice. Ells came out and embalmed the body of our dear one so as all might be right when the others come home. Brother William came last night, a great many good friends about today. Hope we may appreciate them. Tomy came a little after noon, glad to see them. We prepared

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Diary

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a coffin, then hurried down home as we heard there was to be a post mortem by Marquis & Previn of Lisbon. They were sent by the authorities and they found death was caused by the bullet from Ira's revolver. Several of our relatives were in to console and sympathize with us.

May 9. Wet and rainy. another day dawns upon us and we see and feel we are orphans indeed...Such a feast of kind friends and relatives but the occasion that has brought us together is so very sad but hope we may not give way to grief so immoderately that we cannot enjoy the good that has been given us abundantly and that we might humble ourselves before the Great Good Being who has done so much for us and try to remember our blessings.

May 11. Beautiful morning and continued so all day. Seth furnished the coffin and Nathan Blackburn attended as undertaker and all seemed to go off satisfactorily as far as I know or saw. Charles P. Hall, Daniel and Jont Blackburn, Mahlon Morris, Gilbert Williamson, and K.D. Bell carried the precious form of our Father out of the house and also attended to the last sad solemn rites at the meetinghouse, and seemed to be glad to do something for us. Hope we will appreciate the many kindnesses of our friends and nabors who have so willingly assisted us in this most dreadful trial of our lives. A very great concourse of people gathered to view for the last time the face of their friend and nabor.

May 12. Nice morning. Again we rise to realize the vacant place will be filled no more forever and the sad trial

of parting with our friends and relatives has begun.

May 13. Cloudy and rainy. Seth took the Aunties to Columbiana to the 9 o'clock train. William went to the midnight train. Got Phebe's things ready for her as she expects to leave us tomorrow. Just one week since that Awful Crime was committed that has saddened so many homes and made us Fatherless.

May 18....loneliness seems to pervade the homes of many of us and Oh, Dear Heavenly Parent, thou only knowest what is in our hearts and as thou hast seen fit to permit the removal of our dear Father in such a terrible way, bne to us more than earthly parents, grant us strength and ability to bear and do whatever is our duty to do. Subdue every self-ish feeling and let christian love fill our every heart for thy sake.

June 6. Will came up and stayed all night with us. They had been at Lisbon on business connected with our dear Father's affairs.

From 1893 to 1903, some 300 movies were shot at Thomas Edison's "Black Maria" studio in New Jersey. The building rotated on a central pivot and was pushed to follow the sun.

Ira

Continued from page 1

val of Sheriff John Wyman — there was no noise, no demonstrations. Some had shot guns, others rifles and revolvers, and several guns were leaning against the house.

Fred Heacock had known the Marlatts a long time and had worked alongside Ira in the fields off and on for 21 years. Heacock arrived about 12:30, tied his horse at the gate and saw Ira peering from the upstairs window. "Someone said not to tie the horse as it might get shot, but I did, and went up to the house and spoke to Ira at the window above. He was sitting in a natural position with his elbow on the window sill," Heacock remembered. "He had his overcoat and fur cap on.

"When the sheriff came into the yard, Mrs. Marlatt asked me to get the sheriff not to arrest him in the house as the furniture would get broken," Heacock continued. "I went up and pleaded with Ira to give himself up to the officer of the law. I was outside of his door, but he said to his mother, 'I won't come out.' He said it was war time and he had to defend himself.

"I insisted on him coming out and I said I would

insure him protection but he said he wouldn't and, he said, 'I will shoot the first man who comes into the room.' I told him the sheriff was there and he repeated, 'I will shoot the first man who comes near me.' "

Through it all, Ira insisted that he would go to New Lisbon for a hearing any time but he refused to be taken there forcibly. "I will defend myself and lose the last drop of blood in my veins before I am taken," he repeated over and over.

Nearby neighbor Lemuel Lyder arrived at the Marlatt house and accompanied Heacock and Sheriff Wyman upstairs. "Sheriff Wyman spoke a few words to Marlatt. Heacock pleaded with Marlatt to give himself up like a man and he wouldn't be hurt. Marlatt was standing close to the door with a revolver in his right hand," Lyder said. "Sheriff Wyman kicked open the door and Marlatt shut it."

The sheriff again kicked open the door and went in. Marlatt shot at the sheriff and was grappled, then thrown to the floor and his revolver taken from him. Lyder helped the sheriff to handcuff and disarm Ira and he was taken to the Columbiana County jail at New Lisbon.

# Indian cultures challenged

HISTORY MAY BE RE-written if archaeologists successfully challenge the existence of two Ohio Valley Indian cultures. There is little evidence to show that the Hopewell and Adena cultures existed in terms of political, economic and physical contact, says Ohio State University archaeologist William Dancy.

Over the years archaeologists have debated whether the Hopewell and Adena Indians had common ancestors or whether the Hopewell moved into the Ohio Valley from Mexico and drove the Adena out.

Since the early 1900s a number of prehistoric Indian sites in Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia and Indiana have been classified as those of the Adena culture.

Others have been classified as those of the Hopewell period from 100 B.C. to 500 A.D. The Hopewell name came from an owner of a Ross County farm where the first mound of its type was excavated during the 1890s. It has since been applied to peoples of that period living between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico.

Dancy said the Adena and Hopewell names should be replaced.

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