

Chapter 19 - The Lightning-Swift Blade

Cornelius Jones Murdered by Henry Durham 1872

On an icy Wednesday January 24, 1872, in a field on the Rev. Riley Jones' place near Black Oak in eastern Washington County, two young men set about the task of feeding livestock, Riley's 21-year-old son James Cornelius 'Nealy' Jones and Henry Durham, age unknown. Durham had been taken in by the Jones family and lived there as part of the family.

As young men often do, the two exchanged jokes, lies, and dares as they pitched hay off the wagon. According to later accounts, Jones was ribbing Durham pretty hard about some trivial matter.¹ Before either of them realized how or when, the mood changed. The jokes became insults and the dares became threats. Biting cold set their teeth on edge as they faced each other. Tempers ignited and before anyone paused to think, Durham charged Jones with the pitchfork. One of the tines pierced his coat and went straight to his heart.

Suddenly young 'Nealy' Jones lay dying on the field as Henry stood over him watching in disbelief.

Despite Durham's efforts to resuscitate him, Jones did not revive. Roused by Durham's shouts, Riley Jones came running to his dying son. But it was too late. They carried the body inside while someone went for the township constable...

¹ *Fayetteville Democrat* January 27, 1872