

William Long of Dumfries

It was 1865, and the war was over. Franklin Taylor, William Long, Albert Keys, and others had been drinking all day at Annis' tavern in Dumfries. The tavern on Main Street across from Cockrell's Place was a favorite of most of the local trade.

Annis was trying to close the bar as he had to get to Alexandria; however, with everybody wanting to stay, it was difficult for him to get them out. Franklin Taylor was well known for his temper and seemed to be in trouble most of the time. This day would not be different. Taylor kept repeating that Annis owed him a dollar, and he wanted it in merchandise before he left.

Annis had already mounted his horse with carpet sacks when Taylor started up again about the money. Annis said that if he owed him money, which he doubted, he would give it to him when he returned. Taylor was not going to take no for an answer and took one of the carpet-sacks off the horse and said he was going to keep it until he was paid. Annis said, according to later testimony, what must have been a big insult of the time period, "Franklin you're a dammed rascal and no gentleman." Annis got off the horse and demanded his sack only to be kicked by Taylor a couple of times.

At this point, William Long and others intervened between the two. Long said to Taylor, "Franklin, Annis is a gentleman and should be treated like a gentleman; just give him the sack back."

Taylor replied "make me, make me." With this statement, the argument turned violent.

The fight took place in the street and continued until Taylor and Long fell into the cellar of Cockrell's place across the street. The fight was broken-up by bystanders only to have the two start up again with knives. This would end with the death of William Long and a citizen's arrest of Franklin Taylor.

A jury of inquest was immediately convened at the house of William Long, in Dumfries. Most of the members selected were witnesses to the death. During the inquest, however, while R. W. Wheat, the coroner, was getting statements from witnesses, the process was interrupted and ended by military authorities. They demanded the prisoner and left with him for Alexandria.

The exact time the military returned Taylor to the Prince William County authorities is not known, but he is shown as incarcerated in the Brentsville jail September 20, 1865. This would be the first major jury case for the county since the end of the Civil War.

From the beginning, Taylor and his lawyers didn't want the trial in Brentsville. A. H. Keys and Robert Clarke, two witnesses to the killing, both testified at the change of venue hearing. They stated that owing to the great prejudice in the minds of the people of the county against Taylor and the excitement and hostility against him for the killing of Long, that justice would require the trial be moved to a neighboring county. Eppa Hunton, the lawyer for Taylor, said that "the heated controversies between the public and Taylor was only made worse, with the killing of the likeable William Long." After countless court continuances, bail denials, witnesses' having to post bond, the case was finally heard in Brentsville. Not even General Hunton could persuade the jury that it was self defense as they sentenced Franklin Taylor to nine years in the penitentiary.

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