

Murder of J.I. Hornsby-Part 1

By Kathryn Dodd

We continue the Krum Robberies, Murder, Mischief & Mayhem series with a murder on July 25, 1928 of J.I. Hornsby of Krum on the Krum-Fort Worth highway. The newspaper accounts below tell the story.

Denton Record Chronicle-July 26, 1928

J.I. Hornsby Is Found Shot To Death

Body Found at Gas Station West of Denton; Murder Charge Filed.

J.I. Hornsby, about 55, operator of a combined filling station and cold drink stand on the Krum-Fort Worth highway, eight miles west of Denton, was killed late Wednesday by a shotgun charge which entered his right side just above the waist. His body was found about 6:40 p.m. Wednesday afternoon by three Ponder youths who notified Denton officers of the tragedy.

About half an hour after reaching the scene Deputy Sheriff A.C. Howerton arrested John Rippey, 64, a member of a pioneer Denton County family and brought him to Denton and filed a charge of murder against him. No eyewitness to the shooting has been found by officers thus far, however.

Denies Killing

In a signed statement made to County Attorney Elbert Hooper late Wednesday night Rippey denied any knowledge of the shooting, declared he was not at the stand where Hornsby was killed or near that time and that he was innocent of the charge filed against him.

Hornsby's body was seen on the ground in front of his place of business by J.B. Riney, D.C. Cullum and John Lee of Ponder who were driving to Denton. Riney said they commented on the possibility of Hornsby being asleep and after driving towards Denton a few hundred feet decided to turn back to the station to learn if the man was hurt. They found him dead and at once notified officers of their discovery.

When officers reached the scene the body was lying where it had been found. The feet were pointing west and the man was lying on his back in a pool of blood. At his feet was found an empty 12 gauge shotgun shell and it was found that a charge of shot had passed thru the door of the filling station.

Body Brought Here

The body was brought to Denton by the Schmitz Undertaking Company ambulance and an examination revealed a gaping wound between the first and second ribs on the right side. Several minor wounds were found on the left forearm and it is believed that the charge of shots which made these wounds passed thru the door of the station.

A watch taken from Hornsby's watch-pocket was not entirely out of the line of fire and its back was dented by shot. The hands of the watch, which was not running, pointed to 6:09 o'clock and officers believe the man was shot at that hour.

In discussing the death of Hornsby, Rippey late Wednesday evening declared he and the dead man had been friends.

"He was a good old man and we never had a cross word," Rippey said. "I don't know anything about the killing and everybody will tell you that we never had any trouble." He further declared he had not heard any shots fired.

Nation's Statement

In sworn statement made to the county attorney Tom Nation, driver of a Krum-Fort Worth service car, said he saw Hornsby leaning against an automobile standing in the driveway at the station shortly after 6 o'clock and he told also of seeing a man carrying a shot gun walking away from the station.

James Evans 14, and Howard Harvey, 13, both of Krum also made sworn statements to Hooper. They said they stopped at the stand late Wednesday to buy drinks and had ridden their bicycles towards Krum but a short distance when they heard a shot fired. A few moments after hearing the second shot the boys said Tom Nation stopped and talked to them for a few minutes.

Sherman Men Find Body

W.P. Savage and W.D. Johnson of Sherman were driving to Haslet and about 7:30 stopped at the stand finding the body of Hornsby lying in the driveway. They telephoned officers of finding the body and were told that a report of the affair had been made by J.B. Riney and his companions. The two Sherman men said no one was about the stand when they arrived but that the three Ponder youths returned to the scene shortly afterwards.

Hornsby had for many years in Denton County. In 1922 he was a candidate for county treasurer and had served as public weigher at Krum for a number of years.

He had been operating the filling station and drink stand for three or four months before his death having leased the place from Rippy, who said that the lease was to expire Aug 1.

Long Resident of Krum

Hornsby had lived in and near Krum for about 24 years. For many years he was public weigher there. Surviving are his widow, who before their marriage at Valley View in 1901 was Miss Hattie Overshiner; a daughter Juanita; four sons, Coy Hornsby of Dallas, Jim, Foy and Hubert; a sister, Mrs. Viola Daughtery of Lubbock, and three brothers, C.C. Hornsby of Corpus Christi, Mills Hornsby of George West and B.B. Hornsby, living in Oklahoma. He was a member of the Church of Christ.