

# The De Soto Press

December 18, 1897

## MURDERED WHILE ON DUTY

### OFFICER WILLIS DEARING SHOT TO DEATH

Ross Martin was Painting the Town, and While  
in an Intoxicated Condition Resisted Arrest.

Made Good His Escape and Officers With  
Bloodhounds are Now on His Trail Will  
Doubtless be Captured.

Thursday night Ross Martin, a laborer in the Iron Mountain Shops at this place, visited several saloons and drank copiously of bad whiskey, with the result that at about 11:30 o'clock he became boisterously intoxicated, and thoroughly convinced that he was the only person in De Soto who was entitled to any privilege or consideration. After intimidating all persons in the neighborhood of the freight depot he applied at Brainard's restaurant for a lunch, and was told that unless he had the money to pay cash for what he ate, he could get nothing there.

The knowledge that a person had been found who had the temerity to refuse to credit him, so angered Martin that he drew a heavy revolver, and walking to the door of the restaurant, fired a shot into the dark street. Officer Willis Dearing, who was seated near the stove, and had witnessed the conversation in the building, hastened to the street and asked Martin to go with him, not saying whether to the holdover or to Martin's home. Without answering the officer's demand Martin turned the revolver upon him and pulled the trigger. The first shot took effect in the officer's throat, above the trichia, plowing its way into and severing the jugular vein. The second entered just above and to the right of the left nipple. Either of the wounds would have proven fatal, and the wonder is that after receiving them Dearing walked a distance of twenty feet. When the firing began on the outside Fred Brainard hurried out and reached the door just as the officer fell to the pavement.

Brainard ran to his assistance, and seeing that he was mortally injured, he hastily summoned Dr. T. A. James, who pronounced Dearing dead, and called the coroner and E. S. Coxwell to take charge of the body. After viewing the body on the pavement Dr. Brickey ordered it removed to Coxwell & Son's undertaking establishment where it remained until after the inquest, when it was turned over to the family for burial.

The inquest was held in the office of Dr. Brickey, on South Main Street at 1 o'clock Friday, before a jury composed of G. W. Byrd, H. Polite, J. E. Powekk, F. H. Blackman, M. F. Harrington and Joseph Lorenz. After only a few minutes deliberation they returned a verdict of finding that "Willis Dearing, a regular appointed officer of the peace for and within the city of De Soto, came to his death at about 11: 45 o'clock p.m. of Thursday, December 16, 1897, while in the performance of his legally constituted duties, from gun shot wounds inflicted by the hand of one Robert Martin, and said Robert Martin is guilty of murder in the first degree."

Willis Dearing was an old citizen of De Soto and is well known throughout the county. For a number of years past he has been associated with Chas. Waldron in quarrying rock west of this city, but a few weeks ago circulated a petition among our citizens which was subscribed to liberally in payment for his services as night watchman, and the council, paid the remainder of his salary and clothed him with official authority and he has since been on duty and our citizens say he has made a watchful and efficient officer, and all deplore his unfortunate ending, which came because he was brave enough to do his duty at the risk of his life.

Willis Dearing had many friends and was known as a man willing to do his duty, and brave and fearless enough to carry out any undertaking. If he had faults, they were more to his personal detriment than otherwise. He was big hearted and liberal to a fault.

He leaves a widow and three children to mourn his sudden and unfortunate demise. His two older boys, Frank, aged 16 years, and Willie, aged 11, are by his first wife, who died eight years ago. Frank is now employed in Scott County and Willie is making his home with his aunt, Mrs. Wm. Hearst, in this city. He was married to his second wife in 1892, and they have a son aged 3 years, which is left with its mother in almost destitute circumstances.

The funeral arrangements have not been completed at this writing, Friday night.

Ross Martin, the man who murdered Officer Dearing, is a young man 28 or 30 years old, about 5 feet 6 or 8 inches high, weighs about 135 pounds; small dark eyes, sallow complexion, bridge of nose sunk and end nose turned up. He has lived in De Soto for a number of years, making his home with his mother on the hill on the east side, and has recently been working as a painter's helper in the paint department of the Iron Mountain shops, and is considered as generally worthless by those who know him. When he had money he frequented the saloons and drank until it was gone, but was never considered dangerous or obstreperous, and was never in serious trouble before. The officers were after him in a short time and put bloodhounds on his trail, but he was not captured at 6 p.m. Friday. Martin went home and changed his socks and went to the home of Charley Stroup, about half a mile northwest of town, and told Stroup that he had killed Willis Dearing and wanted to stay all night, but Stroup,

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knowing he had been in the habit of getting wine out in that neighborhood, though he was drunk and would not keep him.

Prosecuting Attorney Bean came down, early yesterday morning and is using every effort to get evidence in the case, and Martin will speedily go to the gallows if caught.

LATER - It has been discovered that Dearing was shot three times, the last time in the back, just below the belt, which shot was doubtless fired after he started back into the house mortally wounded.

Prosecuting Attorney Bean has written to Gov. Stephens asking that he offer a \$200 reward for the capture of the murderer, and it is believed the Governor will do it. A \$50 reward has been offered for his capture by the relatives.

W.A. Welch	\$ 2.00
Alex Veitch	\$ 1.00
V. B. Cunningham	\$ 1.00

Total to Friday evening.....\$70.00

The above popular subscription was gotten up on the spur of the moment, just before going to press, not giving our charitable and public spirited citizens a chance to enroll their names this week, but no doubt next week they will respond in large numbers to THE PRESS' appeal for aid for the benefit of the sorrowing widow and the three orphaned children brave Officer Dearing left behind him.

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## POPULAR SUBSCRIPTION.

"The Press" Starts a Popular Subscription for the Reward and the Needy Family.

THE PRESS heads a subscription list with \$10 for the reward of \$50.00 and for the benefit of the needy mother and child.

THE PRESS, like many of De Soto's citizens, feels that a large sum can be raised, and starts the movement.

Subscriptions will be received at THE PRESS office or at the People's Bank.

This brave man was killed while faithfully doing his duty as an officer to preserve the peace and dignity of this city, and we hope to be able to raise several hundred dollars for the benefit, as his family are left with absolutely nothing. THE PRESS will publish from week to week all the donations received, and will promptly turn them over to the bank. After paying the \$50 reward offered by the relatives of the deceased, the remainder of the money will be given to the family of the officer, which is left without anything, and are in need. Let the chivalry of the De sotoans come forth liberally and donate a comfortable sum to the need of those dependent upon this brave and fearless officer.

The following voluntary subscriptions  
HAVE BEEN RECEIVED

De Soto Press	\$10.00
People's Bank	\$10.00
E. J. Bean, prosecuting attorney	\$10.00
Dr. T. A. James	\$ 5.00
Jeptha L. Farley	\$ 5.00
Cunningham & Hamel	\$ 5.00
Knorpp-Walther Mercantile Co.	\$ 5.00
P.J. Lovett	\$ 5.00
George Mahn	\$ 5.00
John Frech	\$ 3.00
W.T. Huskey	\$ 3.00