

# The Death of Calvin S. Crozier

Excerpt taken from "The State", July 24, 1904

Calvin Crozier was brutally murdered September 8, 1865, by negro soldiers of the Thirty-third United States colored regiment, under command of Col. Charles T. Trowbridge. He died in defending a young woman from insult. When he could have escaped death by flight or evasion, or even by silence, he stood his ground and spoke the truth and took the consequences, facing his fate like a man.

The war was over, and he had recovered from a long spell of sickness, going home in anticipation of meeting loved ones he had not seen for four years. When the Civil war began he became a member of Good's battery of light artillery, but in 1862 was transferred to the Third Kentucky cavalry, in General John H. Morgan's command. He had been detained by sickness and was on his way home.

Cozier and two companions, Armead and Clem Price, had gone from Charlotte by rail toward Columbia until they came to some point where the road had been torn up by Sherman's army and was not yet repaired. They walked to Alston, and there took a train going west, reaching Newberry the night of the September 7th. Here his train was met by another from Anderson, conveying a negro regiment, the Thirty-third. The regiment was not a garrison here - Newberry, with all her afflictions, was spared the disgrace of a negro garrison. The regiment had only bivouacked here for the night, making camp about 300 yards from the depot.

An inquest was held over the body of Crozier on the 8th of September 1865, with Silas Johnstone, intendant of Newberry, acting as coroner: Jacob S. Bowers testified: Witness has charge of repairs on the first division of the G. & C. railroad. Train having run off track, I came from shops at Helena to put it on - about 1 or 2 o'clock. When we came to cars, having seen condition of train, I took the hands to the back end of cars and there saw two men engaged in a fight. After a while one of them ran past me and the other went in the opposite direction, calling out that he was cut. Presently some three or four colored soldiers passed by me in pursuit of the one who first passed me, and the fourth in passing caught hold of me and cried out, "Here is is," and took me up on platform of depot, where there was some 50 or more colored troops. The privates threatened to kill me, but the sergeant interfered, and for a time prevented them until they brought up the man who body this is. The deceased said he was the man who cut the colored soldier. The sergeant, a colored man, gave me his name as Prince Rivers, provost guard, company A., Thirty-third colored troops.

James B. Brown, Solomon P. Kinard, Willis R. Phillips, testified to what they had seen and heard regarding the murder. Dr. George W. Garmany did the post-mortem examination. The coroner jury consisted of: Silas Johnston, Burr J. Ramage, John O. Peoples, M. W. Miller ? Rodelsperger, Thomas P. Slider, John C. Martin, Dr. W. A. Williams, Edward S. Bailey, John W. Grierson, William C. Johnson, N. B. Knox, H. M. Kinard, R. S. Whaley and S. Montgomery.

Ben Price of Oxford, Miss., was a companion of Crozier when he was killed. The following extracts are from a letter written by him to the mayor of Newberry in May, 1890. Price was a lad of 15 at the close of the war, living with an uncle in North Carolina. He says that his brother Armead Price and Crozier were paroled soldiers. They stopped in North Carolina on their way to their homes. "When these two men left Raleigh in September, 1865, for their respective homes I joined them, and our trip was uneventful until we reached the interior of South Carolina. The railroads were torn up in places and were sometimes had to walk from one point to another. On the night before Crozier was killed we had marched all night long from some point, the name of which I do not recollect, to a little place on Broad river called Alston. There we found transportation, and the depot agent or the man in charge asked Crozier if he would not take charge of a lady as far as they traveled together. We all left Alston the same evening.:

"Crozier was tried, condemned and shot without the sanction of law, and it all transpired in the night. We were powerless to help him, with this regiment of negro soldiers under the direction of a federal colonel as brutal in his instincts as the horde at his command. The infuriated creatures - men and women - after Crozier's death crowded about the depot cursing and vowing that they had some white blood that morning and they were going to have more.?

"Crozier, after his identification as the man who cut the negro's throat, was hurried away. Some town official was notified, and an attempt was made, but a feeble one, of course, under the condition of affairs then, to give Crozier a proper and legal trial, but before anything could be done he was shot."

"Crozier had an uncle who lived at Galveston, Texas, and relatives in other parts of the State. While at his grave, just before he was shot, he wrote Armead Price a note, giving his uncle's address, and asking him to write his uncle the cause of his death. He stated in this note that it was hardly day yet and he could scarcely see to write. I have searched in vain among my brother's papers for this note and for the three letters he received from the lady, one of the witnesses of the beginning of this horrible tragedy."

The Newberry Herald wrote following Crozier's death:

"Mr. Crozier was just returning to his home in Texas and arrived at this place some time in the night of Thursday, having two young ladies under his care. Leaving the car for a short time and returning, Mr. Crozier found a negro soldier in such close proximity to the ladies that he ordered him out, but he refused to go. An altercation ensued, in which the negro was cut on the neck. He then left. Some time after, and while the cars were being righted, a squad of negro soldiers came up under a sergeant in search of Crozier, and seizing by mistake Mr. Jake Bowers, in charge of the hands, threatened to shoot him. The right man, however, promptly appeared and declaring Bowers innocent, gave himself up. A part of the squad were for instantly shooting him, but others objected and insisted on taking him to headquarters. He was taken before the colonel and acknowledged what he had done, and that he would do the same again. He was then told that he must die. He was taken from camp a few years and a hole being dug he was ordered to kneel. The deceased is said to have been a most estimable young man, brave and generous, as was shown by his giving himself up when he might have escaped. During the morning of Friday our citizens had the body taken from the hole where it was only partially covered and placed in a neat coffin preparatory to final interment, which was done in the afternoon, a very large, respectable and sympathizing procession of ladies and gentlemen following it to its final resting place in the graveyard."

On the 24th of April, 1890, the Newberry Observer, after recounting the story of the tragedy, made the following call: "Now, fellow citizens, let's do what ought to have been done long ago, and put a marble headstone at the grave of this brave Texan to preserve his name and memory. There is no need for a costly monument. All subscriptions for this purpose will be acknowledged under the head of the "Crozier Fund."

The object was to get a small popular subscription, but the responses were so quick and so liberal that it was soon decided to remove the body from the abandoned old graveyard to Rosemont cemetery and erect a handsome monument over it. This was done and on every Memorial day this monument is given special honor and distinction by the women of Newberry.

"The State" - May 16, 1906

Newberry Herald and News - Though hallowed by as heroic blood as was ever spilled on Southern soil, it is probable that very few people in Newberry have an idea of the exact spot within the city limits where Calvin Crozier fell, murdered by negro soldiers from the North because he had sought to protect a Southern woman from their brutal insults.

The remains of the Texan private now rest in Rosemont, and his memory is as fresh as the wealth of wreaths and garlands borne today by the marble shaft that marks the spot.

His first grave was a ditch, not far from the building of the Southern cotton oil mill, into which he fell when shot, his remains being covered over with leaves, ruthlessly raked upon his body by the negro soldiers with their feet. There he remained for only a short time, however, the body being reverently borne by those of his own race to the top of the hill nearby, and prepared for Christian burial, which was had in the old village graveyard. Later the remains of Crozier were removed to Rosemont and the monument erected whereupon are recorded his deeds of heroism, and the loving appreciation of the people of Newberry.

There was one eye witness to that dark tragedy on the morning of September 8, 1865, who recalls it as vividly as if it were but yesterday. Then but 14 years of age, the minutest details were burned into his memory. He is Mr. George A. Langford of this city, who was within 30 feet of the soldiers when they fired, and within about the same distance of Crozier when he fell. The relative positions of Mr. Langford and the soldiers and Crozier placed them at each angle of an equilateral triangle, and the whole scene was before him.

The exact spot was pointed out to the writer by Mr. Langford. If a line were drawn from the center of the water tank of the Southern Cotton Oil mill to the west corner of the hull house of the Farmer's Cotton Oil mill, it would pass through the spot pointed out by Mr. Langford as that on which the Texan stood. It is almost exactly half way between, but probably a little nearer the water tank. Crozier was facing almost south, his back to the place where is now the Southern Oil mill building. Mr. Langford was to Crozier's left, the soldiers were in front of Crozier, and to Mr. Langford's left. The officer in charge of the soldiers was between Mr. Langford and the soldiers. Mr. Langford says when the command was given to fire his glance was across the barrel of every musket that pointed towards Crozier's breast.

South of the place where Crozier stood, towards the Farmer's oil mill is a little knoll, where stood the tents of the officers of the negro troops. Down this slope he was being marched by the negroes when first seen by Mr. Langford, who was just approaching the place from the east. He was marched to the little ditch, which still remains. He was not allowed to cross the ditch, but was placed just on its edge, about ten feet in front of a large white oak tree, the stump of which may still be seen.

Mr. Langford took up his position, as stated above, resting against a tree about ten steps to Crozier's left. The stump of this tree still remains also.

Mr. Langford then gives a vivid description of what followed. Crozier was caused to turn around, facing the south, and he stood erect and folded his arms across his breast. Five negro soldiers were lined up 30 feet in front of him, their officer to the right of the soldiers. The command was given to fire, and the rain of lead poured into Crozier's breast, each of the five balls taking effect between his arms. He fell instantly, and while he was struggling in the agony of death the negro officer walked up to him and sent a pistol ball speeding through his brain, saying with an oath, "Now, you will lie still." Crozier had fallen into the ditch behind him, and with their feet the negroes raked the leaves over his body.

It was clear morning in September, shortly after sunrise. Mr. Langford puts the time at a little before 7 o'clock, probably.

Mr. Langford and some others carried the body to the top of the hill, where the face was bathed in warm water to remove the dirt. Mr. Langford says that his recollection is that Mrs. Lathrop, who lived only a little distance from the spot, across the hill, supported Crozier's head, that he supported his feet, and that he thinks a negro was secured to help bear the weight of the body. There were probably others who assisted, he says, but he does not recall them positively.

Such was the death of the Chivalrous private from the Lone Star State.

Calvin S. Crozier was born in Brandon, Mississippi on August 1840 and died in Newberry September 8, 1865. A monument was erected at Rosemont Cemetery with the following statement:

"After the surrender of the Confederate Armies, while on the way to his home in Texas from a Federal prison he was called upon at the Railroad Station at Newberry, S.C. on the night of 7 September 1865 to protect a young white woman temporarily under charge from gross insults offered by a Negro Federal soldier of the garrison stationed there.

A difficulty ensued in which the Negro was slightly cut. The infuriated soldiers seized a citizen of Newberry upon which they were about to execute savage revenge when Crozier came promptly forward and avowed his own responsibility for the deed, thus refusing to accept safety from allowing a stranger to receive the violence intended for himself.

He was hurried in the nighttime to the bivouac of the regiment to which the soldier belonged was kept under guard all night, was not allowed communication with any citizen, was condemned to die without even the form of a trial and was shot to death about daylight the following morning and his body mutilated."

<http://genealogytrails.com/scar/newberry/crozier.htm>