

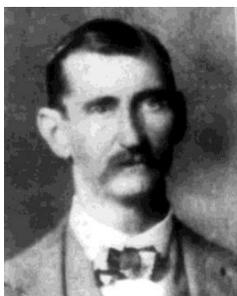
ACSO's Fallen Heroes – Line of Duty Deaths while serving Alachua County

Deputy Sheriff Thomas H. Branch – no photo

Thomas H. Branch was born in North Carolina in 1837, served in the Confederate army during the Civil War, and was the town marshal in Gainesville, Florida in 1875, also acting in the capacity of a deputy sheriff with the Alachua County Sheriff's Office. On September 23, 1875, Mr. Branch was shot on the streets of Gainesville by Mr. James Shoals, an Irishman. Shoals shot Deputy Branch with a double-barreled shotgun, one round striking him in the side and one in the back. Deputy Branch died within five minutes. Mr. Shoals was immediately arrested, but was housed in the jail in Jacksonville, Florida. The grand jury returned a "true bill" indictment and Mr. Shoals was tried by a jury of his peers in April of 1876. The jury was hung and a mistrial was declared.

The Alachua County Commission paid the state attorney \$125 to retry the case and a second trial was held in November of 1876. The jury returned a not guilty verdict and Mr. Shoals was released. Deputy Branch left behind a wife and several children. The place of his burial is unknown.

Deputy Sheriff George Lasonro Bryant



Deputy Bryant died on December 3, 1908, at the age of 48. He was shot while attempting to arrest a suspect for drunk and disorderly conduct in High Springs. When Deputy Bryant initially encountered the suspect, he told the man that if he returned home he would not be arrested and sent the man home in a buggy. However, when the buggy driver did not return from the suspect's home, Deputy Bryant and another deputy went to investigate. They found the buggy driver running from the suspect's home. The driver claimed that the suspect had kept him there and beaten him. When Deputy Bryant approached the front door of the suspect's home, the suspect shot him.

Although Deputy Bryant returned fire, he failed to strike the suspect who was later convicted of second degree murder in Bryant's death and sentenced to life at hard labor. The man was granted a conditional pardon a mere seven years later. Deputy Bryant served as an Alachua County deputy and as marshal for High Springs for 15 years. He was survived by his wife, son and five daughters.

Deputy Sheriff Charles H. Slaughter

Deputy Slaughter died on May 11, 1912, at the age of 29. He was shot when he, Deputy J.A. Manning, and a citizen went to the home of Cain and Fortune Perry to arrest them for illegally possessing firearms. As the deputies attempted to make the arrest, the Perrys opened fire, killing both Deputy Slaughter and the citizen who was with him. Deputy Manning returned fire, wounding one of the Perrys. Both shooters were apprehended and hung three months later by Sheriff Perry Ramsey.



Deputy Slaughter, who was also the marshal for the Town of Archer, was survived by his wife and two young children

Deputy Sheriff Samuel George Wynne – no photo

Deputy Wynne died on August 18, 1916, at the age of 47. He was shot while attempting to serve a warrant on a suspect for stealing hogs. Deputy Wynne woke the suspect and began to search the man's room for weapons. While Deputy Wynne was searching the room, the man shot him. Although the suspect was also shot and wounded, he continued to flee. He was eventually apprehended and executed for Deputy Wynne's murder by Sheriff Perry Ramsey. A lynch mob seized three men and two women who were accused of helping the suspect escape on the day of the killing from the jail and hung them as well. Deputy Wynne served as the constable for District 6 – Newberry.

Deputy Sheriff Cornelius “Neal” Rain



Cornelius “Neal” Rain’s grandparents were some of the founding members of Alachua County, having moved to the area around 1841. Though Neal Rain pursued a career in the railroad industry, his mother, Telulah was the daughter of Samuel W. Burnett, who had been the Alachua County Sheriff from 1857 to 1865.

According to Alachua County Commission minutes, Neal Rain became a bonded deputy with the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office on February 6, 1917, under Sheriff Perry Gilbert Ramsey. Deputy Rain collected \$12.35 for his investigative services with the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office during the 1917 calendar year.

On June 5, 1917, Mr. Ed Dansey registered for the federal draft but failed to appear for a physical examination. On February 17, 1918, two Georgia deputies, one of whom was Charles Dancy McCraw, went to Willacoochee, Georgia to Edward Dansey’s residence, intending to arrest him for failing to appear at the exam. Prior to the deputies’ response to his home, Mr. Dansey gave law enforcement notice that he was not going to submit and would kill any man who attempted to make him do so. When the deputies arrived at Dansey’s home, he shot and killed Deputy McCraw before fleeing to Florida, just outside of Archer. A Coffee County Deputy from Georgia named Shaw followed Dansey to Florida in an attempt to apprehend him arrived in Archer just four days after the murder of Deputy McCraw. When he arrived in Archer, he summoned help from local law enforcement. Deputy Shaw, Deputy Rain and their posse of 5 set out for the Dansey residence on the night of February 21, 1918, with Deputy Shaw reminding the men to be careful as Ed Dansey had already killed Deputy McCraw the previous week.

When the group arrived at James Dansey’s residence that night, the people inside the residence warned him not to come inside but Deputy Shaw responded by threatening to burn down the house if they didn’t let him come inside. Finally, a woman came to the door and Deputy Shaw and Deputy Rain went inside, leaving the posse in the yard to stand guard.

As Deputies Shaw and Rain entered through the doorway, an old man lying in a bed fired at them with a shotgun but missed the deputies as “the shot was wild.” Deputy Shaw ran to the old man’s location, struck him with the butt of his pistol and took the shotgun away. Deputy Shaw demanded to know where Ed Dansey was located and was told by Dansey’s family that Dansey was in an adjoining room. They warned the deputies not to pursue Ed Dansey further or they would be killed.

Deputy Rain began to open the door to the room where Ed Dansey was thought to be hiding and was immediately shot with buckshot at almost point blank range. The Daily Sun reported the shotgun was fired within such a close proximity, the wadding and buckshot did not have time to separate before striking him. Deputy Rain uttered his last words, "Men, I'm killed," as he fell backwards to the floor. The very next day, Alachua County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy W.T. Bruton and Deputy W.T. Whitten went to Archer to investigate Deputy Rain's death and took bloodhounds with them to aid in the search. That same day, a relative of the Danseys was brought to the county jail by citizens of Archer to be locked up for safe keeping as people feared that the posse might harm or kill him if Deputy Neal's murderer was not immediately arrested. The Daily Sun reported that Alachua County Sheriff Ramsey responded to the Dansey home and arrested Edward Dansey on Friday night.

But The Atlanta Constitution ran a newspaper article on Saturday, February 23, 1918, tying Ed Dansey to the murder of both Deputy Rain and Deputy McCraw. They also reported that Dansey had made his escape, but was wounded.

Meanwhile, Ed Dansey fled to Suwannee County, where he demanded something to eat from a farmer and his family, but the Adams family was just leaving their residence, did not have food prepared, and offered him milk. Dansey drew a pistol, said he had deserted from the army and killed a sheriff, and shot Adams and his wife in their arms and their son in the leg. The son ran back to the house and grabbed a shotgun loaded with birdshot. He shot Mr. Dansey twice with loads of birdshot, significantly wounding him, enough to leave a blood trail, but not enough to stop him from fleeing once again.

Law enforcement and a posse of 200-300 men with bloodhounds borrowed from the Lafayette County convict camp tracked Dansey from 10:30 Saturday morning until 09:00 pm Saturday night, when they finally located him in a shed.

As the posse passed the shed, they heard a noise and several men jumped over the fence to investigate. As they made their approach, Dansey opened fire. When the remaining armed posse members arrived at the shed, they gave Dansey orders to surrender, but he did not comply, instead choosing to shoot at the men through cracks and gaps in the boards of the shed. During the shootout, two citizens were killed and another three wounded. The posse positioned themselves on the shed and on the command fire, "riddled the house from top to bottom" with bullets, killing Dansey. When the posse opened the door to the shed, they found Dansey dead, with his pistol still in hand. Oral history and Florida lynching records also suggest that Dansey's body may also have been lynched after his death.

Deputy Rain was laid to rest in the Jonesville Cemetery alongside other family members, including his parents. The Daily Sun reported that Deputy Rain had a host of friends, was a brave officer and died "while in the performance of his duty." Other accounts mentioned his was "highly esteemed" and a "universally liked citizen."

Deputy Sheriff William Crayton Newberry – no photo

William Crayton Newberry was born in Bradford County, Florida, and chose law enforcement as a career, serving as a deputy sheriff under Sheriff Perry Gilbert Ramsey.

In the summer of 1917, the town of Alachua was experiencing a rash of burglaries and hired Deputy Newberry to serve as a “special night policeman” in hopes of catching the criminals responsible. It was by today’s standards, the equivalent of working extra duty. The city of Alachua would not have a police department until 1976.

On the night of Wednesday, August 1st, 1917, Deputy Newberry was patrolling the streets of Alachua. Shortly after midnight, Thursday, August 2, in the area of an Alachua shop owned by a person named Sullivan when he saw a young male inside the store in the middle of a burglary. Deputy Newberry went to the back door where he encountered the man, later identified as Virgil Ross and commanded him to halt. Mr. Ross told Deputy Newberry that there was another man in the store. Deputy Newberry shined his light inside the store and started to search Mr. Ross when Mr. Ross grabbed Deputy Newberry and a struggle ensued over Deputy Newberry’s pistol. During the struggle, Mr. Ross shot Deputy Newberry in the stomach and fled the scene. Mr. Ross traded Deputy Newberry’s pistol for a pair of pants in an attempt to avoid capture.

Deputy Newberry was fatally wounded, but did not succumb to his wounds until the night of Thursday, August 2nd, 1917, despite a doctor’s attempts to save him.

Sheriff Ramsey formed a posse which consisted of Deputies G.W. Livingston, Arthur Cathcart and Dukes. D.W. Purvis used an automobile to carry the sheriff’s bloodhounds to the scene of the crime to start a track. They tracked Mr. Ross from Alachua into High Springs and into Columbia County, capturing him near Fort White in a cotton patch on Friday morning, August 3rd.

Sheriff Ramsey, accompanied by Deputy Dukes, wasted no time trying to get Mr. Ross to the safety of the county jail in Gainesville, but was met with a roadblock about six miles outside of Gainesville on Newberry Road in what was thought to be a lynch mob. Mr. Ross was given over to the mob while Sheriff Ramsey continued back to Gainesville, reporting the loss of his prisoner around 9am Friday morning.

Meanwhile, the mob took Mr. Ross back to Alachua. Mr. Ross initially denied shooting the officer, stating it was one of his accomplices, but in the hands of the mob, gave a full confession that he acted alone and failed to identify the other two men who assisted him in the burglary. Satisfied with the confession, the mob took Mr. Ross back to Sheriff Ramsey where he was placed in the county jail. A marshal from Alachua identified and arrested Mr. Ross’ two burglary accomplices and brought them to the county jail as well on Friday afternoon.

A grand jury indicted Mr. Ross of first degree murder and jury selection was held on November 28, 1917, requiring the sheriff to round up another twelve jurors in a special venire as the initial panel had been exhausted. The empaneled jury found Mr. Ross guilty of second degree murder that same day and he was sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Deputy Newberry.

Deputy Newberry was buried on his family’s property in Hampton during a private service on August 4, 1917. He was 44 years old at the time of his death.

Deputy Sheriff Robert Edward Arnow



Deputy Arnow died on June 20, 1921. He was shot when he tried to arrest a suspect for carrying a concealed .32 caliber handgun. Deputy Arnow knew the suspect and believed he could talk the man into surrendering peaceably. When he asked the man if he had a weapon, the suspect replied, "Yes, I will give it to you," before firing five shots into Deputy Arnow from the pistol he had hidden under his coat. Deputy Arnow was hit with four of the rounds, one of which struck his neck and severed his spinal column. Deputy Arnow fell against the police chief who was with him at the time. This kept the chief from being unable to return fire against the fleeing suspect until after he lay down the mortally wounded Arnow.

Arnow died two days later in Williams Sanitarium in Gainesville, after undergoing surgery. The suspect was later apprehended and hung by Sheriff Perry Ramsey, who tied the noose himself.

Deputy Arnow was survived by his wife, three sons and his mother.

Deputy Sheriff William Arthur May – no photo

Deputy William "Arthur" May was shot and killed in LaCrosse, Florida, while attempting to arrest a man for threatening to kill his own family as well as any law enforcement officer who attempted arrest him.

Deputy May was off-duty, attending the Antioch Baptist Church on April 22, 1934, when he was notified of a domestic violence incident by the suspect's mother-in-law. Deputy May responded to the home to investigate the matter at the family's request. When Deputy May knocked on the door, the suspect opened it with his hand in his pocket. Deputy May told him he was under arrest the suspect pulled out a handgun and shot him three times. Despite being mortally wounded, Deputy May returned fire and killed the suspect.

Deputy May had served the Alachua County Sheriff's Office for five months as the constable of LaCrosse. He was survived by his wife, mother, three brothers, three half-brothers, one half-sister, and grandfather.

Deputy Sheriff Jack Allerton Romeis

Deputy Romeis died on February 1, 1988. Deputy Romeis lost his life as the result of injuries sustained in a vehicle crash approximately a month prior while pursuing a vehicle stolen by two juveniles. The two suspects were arrested after the accident. When Deputy Romeis died from his injuries, the juveniles were charged with third degree murder. They were sentenced to seven years in prison and eight years probation.

Deputy Romeis served the citizens of Alachua County as a full-time deputy for five years and as a reserve deputy for 15 years prior to that. He was survived by his wife and two daughters.

