

The other juvenile hanging in the 1880s is a part of one of the most famous murders and executions in Missouri history. It concerns the Talbott family of Nodaway County. The father, Perry Talbott, was a physician; he had served both in the Missouri House of Representatives in the 1856–57 term and as a surgeon in the Union Army in the 25th Missouri regiment. He was a 53-year-old highly respected medical doctor in and around Maryville at the time of his murder. He was shot through a window of his own home on September 18, 1880, after returning from a call on a sick child. The shooting occurred about 11:00 p.m., and the victim survived until the following afternoon. An inquest was held, and the initial verdict was that Dr. Talbott had come to his death at the hand of some unknown person. However, from the start, the victim's family was suspected. Dr. Talbott was known as an abusive husband and father; his home was an arsenal of weapons, and his children were familiar with their use. A Kansas City detective, posing as a bank robber, gained the confidence of the oldest Talbott son, Albert, age 21, and Charles, age 16, and they confided to

him that they had murdered their father with Charles doing the actual shooting. Charles, Albert, their mother Belle Talbott, and a hired man, Henry Wyatt, were arrested, but only Charles and Albert were indicted. Their trial for first degree murder began January 13, 1881, and it lasted ten days. The defense was represented by three attorneys and the prosecution by two. After two hours of deliberating the jury returned a guilty verdict, and the judge sentenced them to be executed March 25, 1881.

On appeal, the Supreme Court of Missouri upheld the sentence without any issue, fact, or reasoning in its decision mentioning the age of either Talbott son. After their convictions were affirmed, they were resented to be executed on June 24, 1881. At the eleventh hour on this date, the governor granted them a stay until July 22, 1881. On that later date and in the presence of 8,000 to 10,000 witnesses at Maryville, the Talbott sons, Charles and Albert, were hanged from a public scaffold at 2:17 p.m. Their mother, Belle Talbott, buried four of her family together. Her oldest sons of her eight children, her youngest daughter, Ella Rosa, who died on June 27, 1880, at age "3 years, 8 months, and 13 days," and her murdered husband are interred on private property (once the Talbott farm) in a common plot north of Arkoe. Their gravestones have inscribed upon them their ages at death. The brothers share a common stone. On its west side is engraved: "We died innocent." Its south side states that Albert was "22 years, 5 months and 6 days old," and its north side that Charles was "17 years, 2 months, and 4 days old."²⁰



Inscriptions on the west side, "We Died Innocent," and the north of the Talbott sons' tombstone near Arkoe, Missouri. They were hanged on July 22, 1881, in Maryville, Nodaway County, for killing their father. The mother and wife buried her perpetrator sons, her murdered husband, and her three-year-old daughter who died a natural death together. (Photographs by the author.)

