

SWAIN, AUGUSTINE C.

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SWAIN, AUGUSTINE C., born in Georgia about 1828; listed, Territorial Census, April, 1864, 3d District (Yavapai County), age 36, resident in Arizona five months, occupation, Laborer, property valued at \$60; the following tale is condensed from the writings of Edmund Wells:

Gus Swain located a mining claim on the northern slope of Mount Union and built a log cabin nearby on the headwaters of the Hassayampa. One mid-day while enjoying his pipe, sitting just within the door, when an Indian came skulking around the cabin. Both were equally surprised but the Indian indicated that he wanted to eat so Gus took possession of his gun and went to the hearth where stood a batch of frothy sour beans.

Stirring into the beans a couple of handfuls of sugar he handed the kettle to the Indian who finished his dinner and then stretched out full length in the sun. Presently fermentation stole in on the unsuspecting Walapai. Rolling over on the ground in internal distress he suddenly leaped to his feet, gave a yell and darted swiftly up the trail and over the divide, headed for a medicine man and a sweathouse.

The following was printed in the Prescott Arizona Miner on October 4, 1867:

Tuesday night at Walnut Grove Gus Swain shot at and killed a fat, saucy Indian buck. The following are the circumstances as told by Messrs. Cullumber and Mathews: Gus and John White started up the river to the head of the ditch for the purpose of stopping a crevasse. John went to work and Gus stood guard. pretty soon, the keen eyes of Gus discovered 5 redskins advancing upon them. One of the Indians had Gus covered with his rifle. Quick as thought Swain raised his trusty rifle, took unerring aim, pulled the trigger and dropped the copper colored cuss in his tracks - dead as a mackerel.

The remainder of the dusky warriors took to their heels and ran for dear life. The dead Indian's body was hung up to dry, and also to warn his fellow reds, of the fate awaiting them should they come within range of Gus's old "Nevermiss" From the appearance of the dead Indian, the men came to the conclusion that he was a Wallapai, but we doubt it, although they are very good judges.

His name appears in the U. S. Census of 1870 at Prescott, age 41, occupation-Farmer; this item appeared in the Arizona Miner of May 4, 1872:

While at Wickenburg recently, J. H. Behan, Sheriff of this County, was called on to quell a row between some drunken soldiers from Camp Date Creek, when some of said soldiers fired three shots at him, from their six-shooters-- the bullets from which barely missed him. The Sheriff, though unarmed, disarmed the would be murderers, and with the aid of A. C. Swain tied the worst of them, so that they could do no more mischief.

How he came to his death was described in a letter written at Wickenburg on March 12, 1873, by C. G. Terry:

It is my painful duty to impart to you that yesterday A. C. Swain and a man whose name is unknown, was murdered by Indians, at a point twelve miles below here, on the road between here and Phoenix. The circumstances, as far as I can get information, were as follows:

On Tuesday, Swain left home for the purpose of taking water and provisions to some men in his employ, at, or in the vicinity of Nigger Wells. On his return, as is shown by apparent indications on the battle ground, he was overtaken by 300 or 400 Indians, who were coming from East to West, and are supposed to be going to some reservation, (perhaps Date Creek), and there killed in company with the other man.

When found the bodies were stripped of their clothing, their weapons taken, also a horse and mule that Swain was driving. And, from appearances, the mule was killed and eaten by them at the place aforementioned. "Gus" was shot with seven arrows, three of which were yet in his body, his skull was mashed with rocks, in fact his body was horribly mutilated.

The body of John McDonald was found about ten yards from the place of attack partially covered up in sand and five or six arrows in his breast, his head also mashed in with rocks. As soon as we saw the arrows Monroe said he was confident they were Apache-Mohaves.

This editorial appeared in the Prescott Arizona Miner of April 5, 1873:

We may be excused by the Quaker philanthropists for a little exultation in this issue of the Miner, on account of the speedy retribution which has been meted out to the murderers of Gus Swain, John McDonald and George Taylor.

On the 11th of March these three men were slaughtered near the sink of the Hassayampa by a large band of Apaches. Within twenty days after the murders were committed 79 of the warriors, comprising the band, have been killed and 20 of their women and children made prisoners.

Never, since the settlement of Arizona, has retribution, so speedily and full, ever overtaken the Apaches as in this instance. The credit for so signal a victory is due to Gen. Geo. Crook, Commander of the Department of Arizona.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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Farish, T. E. - History of Arizona, Vol. 2, 249
Wells, E. S. - Argonaut Tales, N.Y., 1927, pp. 372, 373-375
Barney, J. M. - "The Hassayampa Ambuscade" in Arizona Highways, October 1935, p.19
The Weekly Arizona Miner, Prescott, October 4, 1867, 213; May 4, 1872, 3:1;
March 15 and April 5, 1873.
The Arizona Citizen, Tucson, March 22, 1873, 2:2 (death notice)