

## **The 1878 Bushwacking of James F. Malone at Jack Ward's Farm Near Farmerville, Union Parish, Louisiana**

**by Timothy Dean Hudson**

Throughout the nineteenth century, Port Union served as a vital economic conduit for farmers and merchants in Union Parish, Louisiana. Situated on a high bank at the mouth of Bayou d'Loutre on a bend in the Ouachita River in modern southeastern Union Parish, John F. Ailes operated a store at this location during the 1830s. As steamboat traffic increased along the river in the 1830s, it became one of the few natural steamboat landings between Monroe and the Arkansas line. After Ailes' 1838 death, John Parker purchased the site, and it became known as Parker's Landing. Parker died in 1843, after which the tiny settlement became known as "*Port Union*."

Port Union consisted of little more than a few mercantile establishments and multiple warehouses used to store baled cotton for transportation downriver to New Orleans. It undoubtedly sported a saloon or two, but the wide floodplain surrounding the channel of Bayou d'Loutre leading inland from Port Union made the nearby countryside unsuitable for the typical patchwork of small farms that dotted most of the parish. A few absent landowners acquired large swaths of land near Port Union and cultivated it with itinerant workers who fled when the inevitable seasonal floods inundated the area. This geographical feature prevented Port Union from ever developing into a village.

During the dry seasons when the water levels in the bayous fell too low for steamboat navigation, residents of Farmerville, Shiloh, Spearsville, and the interior regions of greater Union Parish hauled their cotton to and goods from the Ouachita River, the only conduit to the New Orleans markets. Port Union was the most convenient landing on the river from Farmerville and much of the interior.

To facilitate this needed land travel, the Police Jury prioritized construction of the "*road from Farmerville to Parker's Landing*" in 1839. Beginning in the 1840s, the Jury regularly ordered careful maintenance of the "*Port Union Road*" between Farmerville and Port Union [1]. In the twentieth century, after railroads eliminated the need for easy access to Port Union, the portion of the old Port Union Road near Farmerville became known as the Wards Chapel Road, today's Highway 828.

In the 1850s, the families of James Franklin Malone, Peyton Roan, and John Thomas (Jack) Ward settled near one another along the Port Union Road between six and seven miles east of Farmerville. James Franklin Malone was born in 1827 in Georgia and moved to Union Parish in the 1840s with his family. During the Civil War, he served in the "*Stars of Equality*," Co. E, 19<sup>th</sup> Louisiana

Infantry Regiment, a unit of soldiers from Union Parish that saw action in many of the bloodiest battles of the War while assigned to the Army of Tennessee [2]. Peyton Roan was born in 1825 in Alabama, and after the death of his first wife in the early 1850s, he married in 1856 to Leander Isabella Spigener [3]. The youngest of the trio, Jack Ward was born in 1835 in Alabama and came to Union Parish in 1837 with his family. In 1854, at the age of nineteen, Ward married Betsy Scarborough [4].

In the early 1870s, Caroline Adams Meeks settled with her children along the Port Union Road near the Malone, Roan, and Ward farms. Caroline's husband had died of disease in 1864 as a Confederate prisoner of war in a Federal prison. Her two eldest sons, John Sidney Meeks and Charles Lucas Meeks [5], were the same age as Malone and Roan's sons, Wilburn Hezekiah Malone and Francis Marion Roan, with all four were young men in their twenties [6].

At dusk on Saturday evening, 9 February 1878, James F. Malone rode home from Farmerville along the Port Union Road. About three-quarters of a mile from his home, he passed the place of his neighbor, John T. (Jack) Ward. When he was about three hundred yards from Ward's house, someone waylaid and assassinated Malone, shooting him with a pistol. Other than the murderer, no one witnessed the crime. Malone's wife later wrote, *"he was shot we found him dead."*

Coroner W. S. Agerton held an inquest on Monday morning, and the jury determined that an unknown person killed Malone with a pistol shot. After the Coroner's Jury returned their verdict, Hez Malone identified Francis Marion Roan as the murderer, and officials arrested him. A grand jury indicted Roan for Malone's murder, and his trial began in late February. Roan hired young Farmerville attorney George Allen Killgore, Jr. to defend him, while District Attorney Allen Barksdale hired Farmerville attorneys William R. Rutland and James A. Ramsey to assist him with the prosecution.

Judge William R. Roberts attentively listened to over thirty witnesses who testified over a nine-day period, both against and in support of Roan [7]. At the close of the lengthy arguments, Judge Roberts ordered Roan held until the April session of the court and had an arrest warrant issued for Samuel Spigener, a maternal uncle of the defendant, as an accessory to the murder. There is no record of any further charges filed against Spigener, so he was presumably exonerated. At Roan's trial held in Farmerville on April 12<sup>th</sup>, the jury found him not guilty [8].

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, a few days before Roan's murder trial, perhaps due to Hez Malone's claims that Roan killed his father, an altercation occurred in which Malone charged that David Nolan, Jr. did *"willfully and maliciously assault and beat"* him. Malone charged his neighbors, John T. Ward and

the Meeks brothers, with "*aiding, assisting and abetting*" Nolan with his assault. At that time, Jack Ward served as the local constable. Upon his arrest, Ward had to post bond for his release, and two of his securities were John M. Lee Sr. and his son, John M. Lee Jr. The elder Lee had served as Union Parish Sheriff for several terms in the 1870s and was a current deputy sheriff as well as an alderman and treasurer of Farmerville, while the younger Lee had served as a deputy sheriff and was the current Union Parish Registrar of Voters. Their support Ward indicates strong support for his innocence among local residents.

At the trial, the jury found Nolan guilty of assault, leading Judge Roberts to sentence him to a \$15 fine. However, the District Attorney dropped charges against John S. Meeks, and a jury found Charles Meeks and John T. Ward not guilty [9].

None of the surviving records give any indication regarding the motivation for James F. Malone's murder or the beating of his son. There was no known further activity in the case, and James F. Malone's assassination remains unsolved.

An interesting family connection in this case further ties the man charged and tried with James F. Malone's murder, Francis Marion Roan, to Jack Ward, the constable on whose farm Malone was murdered and who was charged with helping Nolan in his assault on Hez Malone. Four years after Malone's murder, on 21 December 1882, Marion Roan married Nancy L. Scarborough Ward, the widow of William Henry Harrison Ward, Jack's younger brother, and also the sister of Betsy Scarborough Ward, Jack Ward's wife [10].



## Notes

1. [Union Parish LA Police Jury Minutes, Book 1 \(1839–1844\)](#) and [Book 2 \(1844–1846\)](#).
2. Antioch Cemetery (Farmerville, Union Parish LA), tombstone of “*James F. Malone*” (18 Mar 1827–9 Feb 1878). Compiled Military Service Records, James F. Malone, Co. E, 19<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry Regiment, Civil War (Confederate). [Louisiana Confederate Pension Application #4907, LDS Film #4117616, Images #194–198](#): Susan Malone, widow of James F. Malone, filed 2 April 1909, Union Parish.
3. [1850 Union Parish LA Federal Census, p. 409a](#), Dwelling #940, line #4: “*Peyton Roan*” (age: 24; Farmer; born: “*Ala*”). [1870 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Ward 1, p. 18a](#), P.O. Farmerville, Dwelling #279, line #4: Peyton Roan (age: 45; Farmer; born: Alabama). Union Parish LA Marriage Book 3, p. 86: Peyton Roan to Leander Isabella “*Spigner*,” 31 January 1856.
4. For more details on the family of Jack Ward and Betsy Scarborough, see the [John Thomas Ward Biography](#).
5. Compiled Military Service Record, Mark Meek [Meeks] (private), Co. D, 37<sup>th</sup> Arkansas Infantry, Civil War (Confederate). [1860 Union County AR Federal Census, Johnson Township, P.O. Hillsboro, p. 237/27](#), Dwelling #171, lines:
  - #15: Mark Meek – age: 28, Farmer.
  - #16: Caroline Meek – age: 24.
  - #17: Jno. S. Meek – age: 7.
  - #20: “*Cha<sup>s</sup> L. Meek*” – age: 1.[1870 Union County AR Federal Census, Johnson Township, P.O. Hillsboro, p. 567a/26](#), Dwelling #197, lines:
  - #1: Caroline Meeks – age: 37; Farmer.
  - #2: John S. Meeks – age: 16.
  - #3: Charles L. Meeks – age: 11
 His military record states that Mark Meeks died 12 October 1864 at the U. S. Military Prison located in Alton, Madison County, Illinois.
6. 1870 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Ward 1, P.O. Farmerville:
  - [p. 18a, Dwelling #279](#), lines:
    - #4: Peyton Roan – age: 45; Farmer.
    - #5: Lena Roan – age: 33; House Keeper.
    - #6: Francis M. Roan – age: 12; Farm Labor.
  - [p. 18b, Dwelling #287](#), lines:
    - #5: James F. Malone – age: 42; Farmer.
    - #6: Susan H. Malone – age: 34; House Keeper.
    - #7: Heseekiah W. Malone – age: 17; Farm Labor.
 1880 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Ward One, ED #84,
  - [p. 403a/28](#), line #28: “*Joe S. Meeks*” [sic – John] – age: 25; Farmer.
  - [p. 409a/40](#), lines:
    - #6: John T. Ward – age: 44; Farmer.
    - #7: Sarah E. Ward – age: 41; Wife; House Keeper.
    - #19: Lucinda Flowers – age: 41; widowed; House Keeper.
    - #20: Marion Roan – age: 22; son; Farmer
    - #25: Susan Malone – age: 46; widowed; Farmer.
7. “*The Daily Picayune*” (New Orleans, LA), 23 February 1878, p. 2, column 1. “*The Richland Beacon*” (Rayville, LA), 2 March 1878, p. 3, column 3. “*The Donaldsonville Chief*” (Donaldsonville, LA), 9 March 1878, p. 1, column 1. [Louisiana Confederate Pension Application #4907, LDS Film #4117616, Images #194–198](#): Susan Malone, widow of James F. Malone, filed 2 April 1909, Union Parish.
8. Union Parish LA District Court Minutes, Book 1878–1882, Case #924, State of Louisiana vs. Marion “*Roane*,” [sic] Murder, p. 24 (6 Apr 1878, indicted), p. 35 (11 Apr 1878, District Attorney Allen Barksdale and special state counsel Trimble & Rutland, Roane’s attorneys Ellis & Killgore; Roane pleads not guilty and requests trial by jury), p. 40 (12 Apr 1878, evidence heard, jury retired, verdict: Not guilty, Roan discharged).
9. Union Parish LA District Court Minutes, Book 1878–1882, Case #927, State of Louisiana vs. J. T. Ward, et. al., Assault and Battery, p. 29 (9 Apr 1878, indictment and bond), pp. 70–72 (16 Oct 1878, David Nolan convicted of assault; Ward’s case continued due to his illness); p. 73 (17 Oct 1878, Nolan sentenced to \$15 fine or sixty days in jail); p. 95 (10 Apr 1879, District Attorney dropped charges against John S. Meeks, and jury found Ward and Charles Meeks not guilty). Union Parish LA Mortgage Book C, p. 514. Union Parish LA Unnamed Record Book, p. 60 (John T. Ward’s oath of office as Constable of Ward One, 29 Dec 1875). Union Parish LA Court Records Book 1878–1879, pp. 74–75.

---

10. Union Parish LA Marriage Book 6, p. 449 (Francis M. Roan to Mrs. Nancy L. Ward, 21 December 1882).

