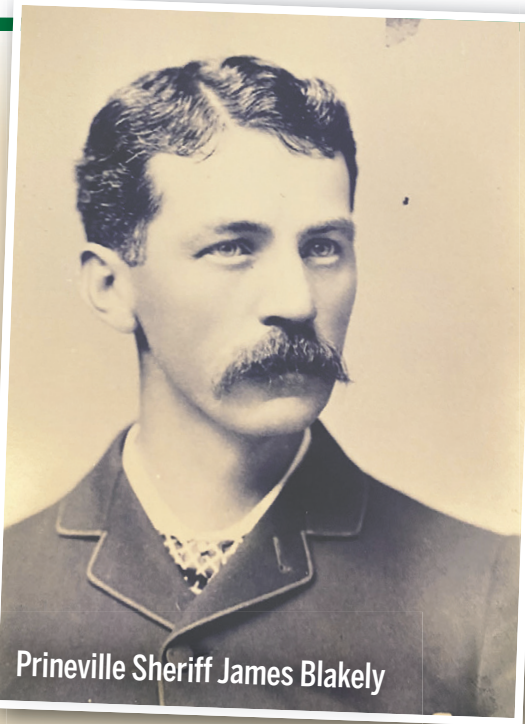




Prineville Sheriff James Blakely



Tillman Glaze



Tillman Glaze's fiddle.

by family and friends for 130 years. The beautifully tooled leather case is a marvel and has the words “Till Glaze Prineville” carved on the cover. The violin is inlaid with a shell flower.

And 13 years after his summer of fence-building at Glaze Meadow, 36-year-old Mossy hung himself in the upstairs of his family’s house in Prineville, a house that still stands today. Historian Steve Lent at the Bowman Museum and I agreed we don’t really believe in ghosts, but then Steve paused and said “But...”

He explained that in his 20 years at the museum at least 12 renters of the Barnes house had come in asking, “What happened in this house?” They reported sightings of a man sitting in the house and walking the hallways.

Today if you wander the wild reaches of Glaze Meadow, there is no trace of Till’s cabin, but a small piece of Mossy’s fence still stands. And on the right summer evening in July, you may think you hear a ghostly violin tune as spirits of the wild and tragic West gather and the moon rises.

fence around Glaze Meadow with Till’s brother Joe. Mossy later turned himself in to the new county seat in Prineville and was released with a verdict of self-defense. But many accounts written of those years tie Mossy to the reign of the Prineville Vigilantes.

In 1902, 20 years after the events occurred, a Portland newspaper article called it “Crook County’s Reign of Terror.” The Prineville Vigilantes started from a stockman’s association for protection from cattle thieves, but somehow evolved into masked men who left a skull and crossbones death notice on the doors of their enemies, and then killed and hung them from bridges and juniper trees. Nine or more people in Prineville were killed.

A deeper dive into accounts from that time revealed that Mossy Barnes was believed to be one of the Vigilantes. Despite his folksy name, Mossy Barnes was no poor country boy. He was James Morse Barnes, the son of Elijah Barnes, one of the founders and first mayor of Prineville. Elijah Barnes was understandably bitter because his first ranch in Prineville was lost to the government’s land grant to Willamette Valley and Cascade Mountain Wagon-Road Company. He was not compensated and the road company was accused of some fraud, not completing the roadwork promised. Elijah never recovered from the unfairness of it.

Mossy, his father, Elijah, and his brother George were described as a “fighting family,” and accounts alleged that young Mossy helped carry out a plan to pick a fight with Mike Mogan after a poker game, to create a quarrel and kill him. Mossy claimed the shooting was in self-defense, but the dying man identified the gun Mossy used as belonging to a leader of the Prineville Vigilantes. Some accounts accused Mossy of other Vigilante murders. Mossy was advised to hide out at Glaze Meadow.

Public opinion was first with the Vigilantes due to frustrations with lax local

law enforcement. When the new county seat was formed in Prineville in 1883, the appointed county officers and court officials were nearly all Vigilantes. Mossy returned from his Glaze Meadow hideout and was acquitted by reason of self-defense.

After a string of killings in Prineville, the public and local rancher James Blakely had had enough. When the Vigilantes threatened him with death, Blakely formed “The Moonshiners,” citizens who rode in the moonlight looking for the masked riders. Then the Vigilantes threatened they would break up the Moonshiners gang for good.

But many had joined Blakely, and the Moonshiners were 75 strong the night of a showdown at Glaze’s saloon.

Till Glaze is reported to have tried to stay neutral in the dispute, considering Blakely a friend. In 1884 *The Oregonian* reported that Blakely said, “The gang members were looking out the windows of Till Glaze’s saloon, I was fighting mad, and so were the rest of us. We were ready to fight it out right there. ‘If you think you can stop us, come on out and try it!’ I hollered at the gang.”

They didn’t come out, and it’s said that on that night the Vigilantes power was broken and they never rode again. A few months later, James Blakely was elected sheriff.

The stories of Mossy Barnes disappear after that. His father, Elijah, still bitter over the loss of his claim, moved back to Missouri.

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Brother George, a lawyer, died in a gunfight in Canyon City.

In 1889, Till sold Glaze Meadow to his friend, the new Prineville sheriff James Blakely, who reportedly used the cabin in Sisters as a retreat. Then, in 1894, Till got into a dispute over a horse race in Burns and died in a saloon shootout. He and many of his family rest together in Juniper Haven Cemetery in Prineville.

Till’s gun and beloved violin are at the Bowman Museum, carefully protected

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