

LOUISIANA IN 1878.

---

REPORT

OF THE

UNITED STATES. SENATE COMMITTEE

TO INQUIRE INTO

ALLEGED FRAUDS AND VIOLENCE

IN THE

ELECTIONS OF 1878,

WITH THE

TESTIMONY AND DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE.

---

VOLUME I.  
LOUISIANA.

---

WASHINGTON:  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

1879

Chas. ...  
May 18...



## THE LOUISIANA COMMITTEE.

---

Senator H. M. TELLER, CHAIRMAN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Colorado.
Senator ANGUS CAMERON	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Wisconsin.
Senator S. J. KIRKWOOD	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Iowa.
Senator A. H. GARLAND	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Arkansas.
Senator J. E. BAILEY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Tennessee.

---

JAMES REDPATH	-	-	-	Clerk.
W. E. CREARY	-	-	-	Sergeant-at-Arms.
J. COVER	}	-	-	Stenographers.
JAS. L. MCCREERY				

## CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.



	Page.
Title .....	I
Members of Louisiana committee .....	II
Report of the committee .....	V
Caddo Parish .....	3
Caddo Parish, supplementary .....	589
* Natchitoches Parish .....	115
Natchitoches Parish, supplementary .....	484
Tensas Parish .....	169
Tensas Parish, supplementary .....	453
Concordia Parish .....	355
Saint Mary's Parish .....	381
Pointe Coupée Parish .....	411
New Orleans Parish .....	434
† Louisiana State statistics .....	564
Documentary evidence .....	597
Index of testimony .....	611
Index of names .....	629

---

\* See Vol. II, p. 763, for the testimony of Alfred Fairfax, of Tensas Parish. It was taken in Washington after this volume was in type.

† See testimony of Mr. Brown, Vol. II, p. 118. His evidence should have preceded these tables.

# T E N S A S .

---

MRS. AMY L. PECK.

Mrs. AMY L. PECK sworn and examined.

By Mr. MARKS:

Question. Mrs. Peck, where do you reside?—Answer. In Catahoula Parish.

Q. Please state, madam, who is your husband, if you have any, and all about it.—A. John G. Peck was my husband.

Q. John G. Peck was your husband?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. Proceed, madam; where is he—what has become of him?—A. He was killed on the 12th October, 1878.

Q. Where at—in what parish?—A. In Tensas Parish, I think; I was at the point of death at the time, but I think it was in Tensas Parish.

Q. What time did he leave home to go to Tensas Parish?—A. Well, he left on Saturday morning, the 12th, I think—the same day that he was killed.

Q. By himself or in company with whom?—A. He was alone, sir.

Q. At the time of leaving, did he inform you where he was going and how long he would be gone?—A. I was very low, and my baby was only three days old, and he told me he was going to Tensas, to the store, and asked me if there was anything that I would wish; and I gave him a list of articles that I wished, and he told me that he would be back in the evening.

Q. Where is that store situated that he started for?—A. At Curk's Ferry.

Q. How far from your place of residence is that?—A. About six or eight miles.

Q. Is it in the parish of Catahoula?—A. Yes. Well, sir, it is adjoining; it is not far; it is in Catahoula Parish.

Q. When was the next time that you saw him?—A. Well, I didn't see him any more after that. I told him "Good-bye" when he went to the store. If he had any intention of going further I didn't know it. I was very sick at the time. I didn't ask any questions at all.

Q. When did you first hear of his death?—A. I heard of his death the next morning at ten o'clock.

Q. Whom did you hear it from?—A. His death?

Q. Yes.—A. Well, I can't exactly say. I believe it was one of my own sisters that told me.

Q. Are you acquainted with Sheriff Register, of Tensas?—A. No, sir; I am not.

Q. Do you know him when you see him?—A. No, sir; I merely heard his name mentioned and that is all.

Q. Has he ever visited your place for the last two or three months prior to the election?—A. No, sir; not to my knowledge. We keep a ferry, and a great many strangers cross it. If he has been there, I don't know it.

Q. I see, madam, by the subpœna, that you have been ordered to

bring certain papers, received by your husband from parties in Tensas in 1878, in your possession or under your control. Have you brought any of those papers?—A. No, sir; there was none at all to bring. I have seen none since his death. There is none, to my knowledge.

Q. Did you look for the letters and papers?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. Your husband was a farmer, I suppose?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. You say you looked for those papers?—A. Yes, sir. I looked over his papers and could not find any of them. I don't think he had any.

Q. Did you make inquiries as to where he went that night?—A. No, sir, I didn't make any inquiries, for I told you I was very ill at the time, and asked no questions at all.

Q. Do you know the place where he was killed?—A. No, sir; I don't. After his death I was at the point of death myself for about three weeks, and I never questioned any more on the subject.

Q. Did they bring his body home?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. What time did they bring it?—A. Well, I am not certain; I think it was on Sunday morning.

Q. Then you have no letters or papers in your possession belonging to Mr. Peck?—A. No, sir; none at all.

Q. Do you know whether or not, madam, he had received an invitation from persons residing in Tensas Parish to come over to the parish on public or private business?—A. No, sir; not to my knowledge. I was in wretched health and he never talked business to me; but he had no such invitation, to my knowledge.

Q. What time on Saturday did he leave your house?—A. About ten o'clock in the morning.

Q. And the store that he said he was going to was six or eight miles away?—A. Yes, sir; six or eight miles.

Q. Did you make any inquiries about him that evening?—A. No, sir; because I expected him, fully expected him home.

Witness not cross-examined.

---

## TENSAS PARISH

By the census of 1870 the population of this parish was, whites, 1,400; colored, 11,018. By the State census of 1875 the population was, whites, 1,417; colored, 17,100. Governor Nicholls says, in his last message, that the proportion of the colored to the white population is ten to one. It is a planting region, without any towns of any considerable size. A large number of witnesses were examined who testified to disturbances in this parish. Among these were a number of ex-confederate soldiers and planters, men of property and character.

As to what did occur there is but little controversy among the witnesses, although they do not agree as to the cause of the disturbances. About the first of October the colored Republicans began to prepare for a political campaign. A convention was called to meet on the 5th. At this convention it was found that white men who had, before that, acted with the party had determined not to accept nominations at the hands of the Republicans; and it was reported to the convention that leading Democrats had made threats against the colored people if they attempted

to run a Republican ticket. For these reasons it was determined by the convention not to nominate a ticket, but to appoint a committee to confer with the Democratic convention to be held on the 7th of October to see if a compromise ticket could not be formed and put in the field. After the appointment of the committee the convention adjourned until the following Monday. The committee so appointed was composed of colored men, and at the head of it was Alfred Fairfax, who was a Baptist preacher, a man of great influence among the colored people, and a candidate for the unexpired term of the Forty-fifth Congress.

Fairfax and his committee attended the Democratic convention on the 7th and presented their proposition. The convention, after considering the matter, determined not to confer with the Republican committee, and so notified Fairfax. The Democratic convention then nominated C. C. Cordill for the legislature and John Register for sheriff. Cordill was at that time the parish judge and Register the sheriff, both having been elected by the Republicans. The result of their nominations was an independent movement by some Democrats, at the head of which was one Bland, who was a candidate for sheriff. With him was associated one Douglass, and the ticket is referred to by the witnesses as the Bland and Douglass ticket.

This ticket was composed of whites, with one exception, and that was for a minor office. The whites on the ticket had all been soldiers in the Confederacy. All were men of property and character, and all were Democrats; but they were not in sympathy with the Democratic executive committee, which supported the ticket on which Cordill and Register were placed. It appears at first to have been the intention of the Bland and Douglass party to support Alfred Fairfax for the short term in Congress. The colored people had never been in the habit of nominating a ticket composed wholly of colored people, and were somewhat demoralized at the treachery (as they regarded it) of Cordill and Register; and on Saturday, the 12th of October, quite a large number of colored people met to confer as to the course to be pursued and the candidates to be nominated on the 14th. At that conference there were a number of white Democrats who were opposed to the regular Democratic ticket. It was determined that the Bland and Douglass ticket should be adopted as the ticket of the convention to be held on the 14th of October.

Fairfax lived near Waterproof, in the lower part of the parish. On Saturday night, about 8 or 9 o'clock, a band of armed men, variously estimated at from twenty-five to thirty, went to the house of Fairfax. They were under the command of one J. S. Peck, who lived in the Congressional district, but not in the parish. A portion of the force remained in the road, and Peck and a few others invaded the house of Fairfax, who, on their entrance, fled out of the back door, followed by bullets from Peck's pistol. A young colored man by the name of Singleton, who was in the house, was shot by Peck; and as he lay on the floor several others shot him also. He subsequently died. A man by the name of Branch crawled under the bed, but was pulled out and shot through the arm and in the back. He was before the committee, and will be a cripple for life. One Kennedy, who ran to the window, was shot from the outside by buckshot, and dangerously wounded. Several women in the house made their escape. It appears that when the firing began in the house the men outside fired into the house through the windows. Peck, during the excitement that followed, went out of the house, and was killed, as near as can be ascertained, on the gallery.

He was undoubtedly killed by his own men while they were firing into the house.

Fairfax was at once charged with the killing of Peck, and although Peck had come a distance of twenty-three to twenty-five miles from his residence, and assembled a body of armed men from Catahoula and Tensas, and made the attack on Fairfax in the most wanton and unprovoked manner, he was the object of sympathy, and Fairfax was compelled to leave the neighborhood, and if taken would doubtless have been killed by the whites. Cordill, the parish judge, peace officer, and Democratic candidate for the legislature, the next morning telegraphed to Governor Nichols as follows :

OCTOBER 13, 1878.

J. S. Peck was murdered by Fairfax, colored candidate for Congress. He (Fairfax) is trying to excite the negroes to violence. The sheriff has a warrant and is searching for him.

No evidence was offered to prove that Fairfax had attempted to excite the negroes to violence, and his character was not assailed before the committee by either whites or blacks. All the evidence shows that up to the night of the 12th of October the community was quiet and orderly, and only disturbed by the threats of a few men, made against the colored people in case a Republican ticket should be nominated. The report was first circulated that Fairfax had been killed; and on Monday, the day the Republican convention was to assemble, the colored people in large numbers, as is the custom, started for the convention. Owing to the rigid quarantine regulations, they were not permitted to go to Saint Joseph, the county town, and were compelled to hold their convention in another place. At their convention they indorsed the Bland and Douglass ticket. Many of the colored people who started for the convention did not find the place of holding it, and were more or less disturbed by this fact, and because it appeared to them to indicate a determination of the leaders of the regular Democratic party to prevent them from holding a convention.

It is claimed by two witnesses that on Monday, the 14th, a number of negroes appeared in Waterproof and made threats against the people and the town; but the evidence is not of such a character as to establish the charge, and it is denied by the colored people. On Sunday, it is said, a number of colored people assembled near Waterproof, at a place called Bass's Lane. Cordill says, in his report to the governor, that there were about 400 of these men, and that he, with three others, rode through the crowd without any interference whatever. The sheriff (the candidate for re-election) went to Waterproof on Sunday with a small body of men, 8 or 10, and does not appear to have met with any obstruction. He returned the same night to Saint Joseph, which is about 14 miles distant.

On Monday, Cordill, accompanied by a citizen, went to Waterproof and returned to Saint Joseph unharmed. On Tuesday, the sheriff and Cordill, at the head of about fifty armed men, left Saint Joseph for Waterproof, and when near there, at a place called Bass's Lane, the sheriff's posse fired into the colored quarters, and, Cordill says, killed eight and wounded others. It is asserted by Cordill and his friends that the colored people fired first. Only one witness swore to that, and his story is quite improbable, at least; while another witness, whose opportunity to know what did take place was excellent, and who was a member of the sheriff's posse, swears that he heard no shots from the colored people at all, and that the first shot fired was from the posse, and at command of its officer. He also swears that no colored people



could be seen until after the firing, and that they dispersed and ran down the lane, and that he only saw a dozen or so. This witness also says that none were killed, and but three or four wounded. There is no evidence to justify the belief that any were killed at that time. No *white* men were hurt.

From this time until election, bodies of armed white men appeared from the neighboring parishes, riding through the county, committing outrages on the colored people. Some were whipped, some were shot, and some were hung. Many were killed without any provocation on their part. Some of these raiding forces were under the deputy sheriff, and some were under the command of J. Floyd King, the Democratic candidate for Congress. With Cordill, the committing magistrate, and the sheriff in command of these bodies of unauthorized troops, there was but little show for the colored men or for the Bland and Douglass ticket. Colored men were threatened with death if they supported that ticket. Many of the leading colored men left the parish during the excitement; among the rest the postmaster at Waterproof, who still remains away. It was in evidence before the committee that not less than 500 armed white men came into Tensas Parish from Franklin, Catahoula, Concordia, and other parishes between the 12th of October and election-day. In addition to these, a company came from Mississippi, bringing with them a cannon; but that company appears not to have been guilty of any outrages.

While these armed bodies were raiding the parish the colored people were greatly excited, and very many fled to the woods. One witness swore that four men from his plantation died from exposure in the swamps, and that all the colored labor was for a time almost useless to the planters. It is impossible to say how many colored people lost their lives through this campaign. One witness gave the names of fifteen killed and two wounded; and this list did not include those who died from exposure; nor does it include the killed in the adjoining parish of Concordia, which Governor Nicholls says was eight. One witness swears that he thinks 70 to 80 were killed.

The white men who were supporting the Bland and Douglass ticket were the objects of the ill-will of the raiders and regular Democrats, quite as much as the colored people. One Elijah Warfield, an ex-Confederate colonel, appears to have taken command of the military part of the Bland and Douglass organization. He testified that on two occasions the supporters of the Bland and Douglass tickets fortified with cotton bales, preparing for an attack from the raiders; that threats had been made against them, and that they thought the attack was to be made, because these men were in the neighborhood, under the command of a deputy sheriff. When asked if his party would have fought, he replied "*most assuredly*; had they come, not one would have got away; we were better armed than they, and were the better men." He also testified, as did others, that one of the raiding parties, under command of a deputy sheriff, came into his neighborhood with a warrant for the arrest of three of the leading colored men. Speaking of the deputy sheriff in command, he says:

He gave us the names of the men he had come to arrest. I asked him what they had done; and he said he did not know; that he had simply been ordered to arrest them; and to take them to Saint Joseph. I believed this was done for political purposes. I did not believe then, and I don't believe now that it was done for anything else. We read a protest, and told him we would not submit to anything of the sort; that this was pushing the thing a little too far. I am satisfied the men had committed no crime except that they supported our ticket. I thought our party ought to have

manhood enough to protect the men who had served us, and we intended to do it. This protest was signed by twelve white Democrats, who would have kept their word if the arrest had been attempted.

The excitement ran so high that no political meetings appear to have been held, as the armed troops, in number from twenty-five to seventy-five, would appear in the neighborhood and frighten the people so they would not attend a political meeting. Warfield, Bland, McGill, and others, all white men, and supporters of the Bland and Douglass ticket, swore that threats were made against them because they would not support the regular Democratic ticket. All these men appear to be men of character and worthy of belief.

The election resulted in the triumph of the regular Democratic ticket, although the Bland and Douglass men believed that they were cheated out of their ballots by the regular party, as it had all the machinery of the election. Although they supposed they had cast nearly five hundred ballots more than the regular Democratic party, as they kept a tally, they found on the canvass that they were beaten by fifteen or twenty. At one ward where the Independents voted about three hundred and fifty, they were credited with only fifteen. Says one witness, "They told us if they could not win by voting they would by counting." (Page 171.)

It cannot be doubted that the attack on Fairfax, on the 12th of October, by Peck and his men, was for the purpose of preventing the colored people on the Monday following from indorsing the Bland and Douglass ticket. The Democratic convention on the 7th had refused to confer with the colored people as to a compromise ticket; the colored men in their convention on the 5th had declared by resolution that it was not prudent to nominate a colored ticket; and no white Republican would accept a nomination. It was therefore pretty certain that the Bland and Douglass ticket would be indorsed. Besides, Fairfax was the Republican candidate for the short term to the Forty-fifth Congress; and his death would not only dispose of him as a candidate, but would doubtless have prevented the meeting of the convention on the 14th.

The Democratic leaders of Tensas Parish deny that Peck went to the house of Fairfax with any illegal intent. The chairman of the Democratic executive committee of that parish declared before the committee that he thought Peck's mission was in the interest of peace. (Page 288.) He says, "In short, I consider it to have been a mission of peace on the part of those who came." How unreliable the testimony of such men must be can be readily understood by an examination of the facts on which the chairman of the Democratic executive committee, a lawyer of mature age, bases his opinion. All the witnesses agree that the first thing that Peck said was, "Where is Fairfax?" and then replied, "Yonder goes the s— — —," and immediately fired. A moment afterwards he was firing his revolver in the body of young Singleton, who was unarmed. Branch and Kennedy next receive the shots of this murderous crew. And yet it is the theory of the Democratic chairman that theirs was a peaceful mission, and these men were high-minded gentlemen.

A warrant was at once issued for Fairfax, who appears to have been guilty of nothing, unless it was a crime to refuse to be shot by these ministers of peace under the leadership of Peck. Governor Nicholls, in his message to the legislature of Louisiana, on the 6th of January last, says (page 602): "The visit of these men to Fairfax was utterly wrong, in my opinion, without justification; and, while attempted to be justified on the ground that they went in the interest of peace to expostulate against a proposed rumored attempt of the colored people to force

the quarantine lines at the town of Saint Joseph, *I am satisfied* that such was not the purpose, but that it had a political object. I do not believe the purpose was to kill Fairfax, but I do believe it was to influence his course in the political campaign in the parish." What follows the governor attempts to justify or excuse by the statement that large bodies of armed colored men paraded through the parish, while the whites were unprepared for a conflict that they feared. The testimony taken by the committee does not justify the governor in this statement. It is not proved by any reliable witness that bodies of colored people were found anywhere, either armed or unarmed, after Monday, the 14th of October; and there is no pretense on the part of any one that there were any after the 15th; and the greater part of the whipping, killing, and intimidation practiced was long after that.

No effort has been made by the State authorities to punish the offenders, whether they are white or black. If Fairfax and his associates are guilty of what is charged they should be brought to punishment. If, on the other hand, they were the unoffending parties, those whites who thus murdered and plundered should be brought to a speedy trial, and should receive the punishment they so richly deserve. A tragedy that results in the death of fifteen men in one county, and eight in another, ought certainly to call for an investigation in a civilized country. But no investigation has been made by either local or State authorities to determine where the blame rightfully belongs.

### CONCORDIA PARISH.

This parish, which adjoins Tensas, had, by the census of 1870, a population of whites, 720; colored, 9,257. By the State census of 1875, it had a population of whites, 673; colored, 10,794.

This parish appears to have been seriously affected by the condition of affairs in Tensas; and raiding parties overrun the parish, as they did Tensas. The coroner testified that he had held inquests on six men that had been hung. At least one other was hung, and others were killed, over whom no inquest was held. One of the armed bodies of men, in passing through the parish, took six horses belonging to the colored people, and never returned them.

The people were greatly excited over the incursion of these armed bodies of men, and went into the towns for protection, or fled to the swamps. The general condition of affairs was not unlike that of Tensas. On the day of election it is complained that the voters were prevented from voting on the pretense that their names were not on the register.

At Frogmore some armed men took possession of the ballot-boxes, broke them up, and destroyed the ballots.

David Young, an intelligent colored man, said (page 371): "I have lost all confidence in the ability of the administration to protect the lives of my people down here, and I have made up my mind to leave the place, or to leave out politics, or join the worst bulldozers there are. We have men like Mr. Walton" (a member of the legislature from that county, who was present) "there, that disapprove of any such thing as bulldozers, of course. Truthfully speaking, we have not more than five Democrats in our parish, and have not had since the war. None of them approved of killing at all. Still, Mr. Walton and such don't have nerve enough to come out and protest against it. I do not know but they are afraid of being bulldozed themselves. I know some are. I think the best course for me politically is now to make friends with the worst bulldozers, and lay such men as Walton and others like him aside,