

starting it, while Democrats blamed blacks. In the fight that followed, several blacks and whites were killed. The news spread rapidly, and special trains of armed whites came from Jackson, Vicksburg, and Bolton. A reign of terror followed. For several days, blacks around Clinton were killed; from 20 to 50 died. Many fled to Jackson; others hid for days in woods and swamps.

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### ***"He had to Die"***

Charles Caldwell had to die. He had to die because he was a Republican, because he was a leader, and because he was black.

He was no ordinary man. Those who liked him described him as strong, fearless, a dead shot. Those who did not like him called him "a notorious and turbulent Negro" and "a desperate character." Even they admitted that he was "a man of great courage."

Born a slave in Hinds County, Caldwell lived all his life near Clinton. He educated himself and worked as a blacksmith until Emancipation gave him a chance to do other things. The people of Hinds County elected him to the 1868 Constitutional Convention in Jackson; there he helped draft the new state constitution. He then served in the Mississippi Senate and became a top officer in the state militia.

In the violent days following the Clinton riot in September 1875, bands of armed white men terrorized both black and white Republicans in Hinds County. A group of whites told Caldwell's wife that they were going to kill her husband "if it [takes] two years, or one year, or six; no difference; we are going to kill him anyhow. We have orders to kill him, and we are going to do it, because he belongs to this Republican Party, and sticks up for these Negroes."

They got their chance on Christmas Night, 1875. Those who planned his death lured him into a store for a "friendly" Christmas drink. There he was shot in the back from ambush. Bleeding heavily, he was carried outside to the street. A crowd of white men with drawn pistols gathered. Charles Caldwell looked up at them and defiantly spoke his last words: "Remember, when you kill me, you kill a gentleman and a brave man. Never say you killed a coward. I want you to remember it when I am gone."

The roar of blasting pistols shattered the quiet of that Christmas Night in Clinton. Charles Caldwell, a leader of his people, was dead.

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Undeclared war raged up and down the state. Governor Ames petitioned the federal government for help, but President Grant replied that he was not willing to use federal troops to restore order. Grant wrote: "The whole public are tired out with these annual autumnal outbreaks in the South, and the great majority are ready now to condemn

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