

## Stephen Ballew

Stephen was the first person legally hanged in Collin County. He came to the county from Illinois with James Golden to sell mules. He killed Golden about 3 miles from McKinney. He returned to Illinois pretending to not know what happened to Golden. The Golden family became suspicious and investigated. They found Golden's body buried in a shallow grave.

Sheriff W. N. Bush went to Illinois to bring Ballew back for trial.

The Collin County courthouse at that time was a 2-room log structure that had been moved from the square before the Civil War. It was too small for all of the spectators at the trial. The trial was held at the First Christian Church.

Stephen Ballew was found guilty and hanged from a tree in **Finch Park on May 24, 1872**. A large crowd gathered for the hanging.

[Finch Park is a small, 32 acre park located at 301 West Standifer Street.]

## McKinney Courier-Gazette,

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### **Josh Herndon Tells of Ballew Execution**

Uncle Josh Herndon, who resides a few miles southwest of McKinney, who was born in Collin County, near McKinney over 70 years ago, was an eye witness to the hanging of Stephen M. Ballew, in 1872 – the first white man ever legally executed in Collin county.

When Ballew walked out of the jail to the wagon which contained his coffin, Ballew asked Mr. Herndon to lay a plank down so that he could walk to the wagon, only a few steps from the jail, with out getting his shoes muddy. Ballew ate a hearty breakfast on the morning of the execution Mr. Herndon said and rode to the gallows on his coffin and was smoking a cigar. He had on a nice suit of clothes and wore a big white hat, according to Mr. Herndon, arriving at the gallows, which were erected somewhere in the immediate neighborhood of Joplin's Garage.

After mounting the gallows, he placed his feet and asked Capt. W. M. Bush, the sheriff, if his feet were placed right. His feet were then strapped. He then took off his large white hat and handed it to Capt. Bush, saying "Here Captain, lay my hat over there." He then placed his hands in the correct position, which were also tied and went to his death with all the nerve a man could. said Mr. Herndon.