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Photographs / Images: illustration depicting Hickok's role in the fight at Rock Creek Station, Nebraska Territory, 1861 (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, February 1867)



James Butler “Wild Bill” Hickok is familiar to many Nebraskans because of the so-called “McCanles Massacre” on July 12, 1861, when David McCanles and two others were killed in a fight over possession of Rock Creek Station, a road ranch (now a Nebraska State Historical Park) in present Jefferson County, Nebraska.

McCanles sold it to Russell, Majors, and Waddell for use as a Pony Express relay station for a down payment to be followed by monthly payments. When they went bankrupt, payments ceased.

After the incident Horace Wellman, the station-keeper, Hickok, and J. W. “Doc” Brink were charged with murder; but their plea of self-defense

This melodramatic depiction of Hickok’s role in the fight at Rock Creek Station, Nebraska Territory, in 1861 was published in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in February 1867. Like the story that accompanied it, it is heavily fictionalized.

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while defending company property was accepted. Hickok is credited with killing McCanles, but the evidence is not conclusive.

McCanles himself had purchased the ranch in 1859 with money stolen when he fled North Carolina with his mistress, Sarah Shull, who had borne him a child who died in infancy (See *Nebraska History*, Vol. 10, No. 2 [April–June, 1927] which is devoted to the incident; Joseph G. Rosa, *They Called Him Wild Bill: The Life and Adventures of James Butler Hickok*, Norman, 1974, 34–53; and Mark Dugan, *Tales Never Told Around The Campfire: True Stories of Frontier America*, Athens, Ohio, 1992, 29–77). See also *NEBRASKAland Magazine*, Vol. 83 No. 5 (June 2005), 10.

For information about Rock Creek Station State Historical Park call the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission or visit [www.ngpc.state.ne.us](http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us).

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