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## A Newspaper Account of J.D. Hogan's Participation in South Carolina's First Lynching

Below is a transcript from article that was published in an un-named newspaper. The article was originally published in the *Fairfield News*. Emma Boyle, who was a niece of J.D. Hogan, gave a typewritten copy of the article to Toby Terrar in 1970. No date of publication was included in the typewritten copy.

### Capt. J.D. Hogan Takes Part in Unveiling Event.

Conducts Trial and Execution of a Negro Brute for an Assault on a White Woman.

Below we publish a clipping from the *Fairfield News* which deals with South Carolina's first lynching which was conducted by Capt. J.D. Hogan.

The incident, while called a lynching, was really a legal trial, for it was in June 1865, and there was no regular court in which it could be tried. Federal troops were in Charleston at the time and news of the incident spread like wild fire. Many feared trouble later. Capt. Hogan at first decided that it would be best for him to leave the country and planned to sail for Brazil. On second thought, however, he was convinced that he had nothing but what was right to protect the women of the country and would remain and die in his homeland if necessary. One hundred and fifty Negroes witnessed the execution and Capt. Hogan made them an address in which he told them that the same fate awaited anyone who laid his hands on a white woman. Just before this incident the Federal Army under Gen. Sherman had passed through the country and had burned every house on the Hogan plantation. The Negroes, feeling their freedom, had to be dealt with a strong hand, but the incident passed off without the arrest of anyone by the Federal Authorities.

The Clipping follows:

Mr. Editor:

From the best information obtainable, the first lynching in S. Carolina occurred on the old Columbia and Longtown road near the Fairfield and Richland line away back in the early sixties more than fifty years ago. The lynching was the result of a criminal assault upon a highly respectable white woman, the widow of a prominent physician. The culprit was a young negro about 18 yr. old who only a few months previously had obtained his freedom. The crime was entirely new, as no such offense as far as was know had ever been attempted during the bondage period. It was shortly after Sherman's raid that left only confusion, gloom and destruction in its wake. Law and order had been

dethroned, and justice had fled to the bushes. The only substance of justice and authority left was the Yankee garrison stationed at the various court headquarters. These military tribunals were very friendly to the negroes, but exceedingly bitter to the whites, and were often seen roaming over the country enforcing their decrees at the point of the bayonet on helpless people. When the alarm of the outrage was given, it spread like wild fire and great crowds began to assemble, but all were at sea. There was no Civil Government to avenge the horrible wrong. The officers had all been overthrown by the military despotism and the question at once arose what should be done, or what could be done. Lynching was entirely unknown then. It was worse than folly to expect justice from the Yankee garrison and no consideration whatever was given that source. After many orderly conferences, and indeed the whole proceeding was as orderly under the trying conditions, as a court room, things began to crystallize. From this time on, the proceedings took the course largely of a legal trial.

Capt. Dick Hogan, a noted scout of the Hampton Legion, suggested that a jury of the most prominent citizens be drawn and the negro given a fair and impartial trial. This was accepted and the following jury was selected. Samuel Lawhon, F.M.L. Duke, Benjamin Cloud, John Raines, John Lorick, John T. Hall, Jos. Kennedy, G.P. Hoffman, father of the late sheriff, Adam Reed, was voted sheriff and Hampton Johnson, father of ex-Senator W.J. Johnson, acted as foreman of the jury and Hogan appeared to be the prosecuting attorney. There appeared, however, to be no clerk selected to record the proceedings. Whether this was intentionally omitted is not known.

The negro was brought before the victim and she at once identified him as her assailant. The tracks leading to and from the negro's home were measured and compared with his and corresponded perfectly with some other corroborative evidence. The prosecution rested its case.

Then the accused, who stoutly denied his guilt, was allowed to testify in his own behalf and given the greatest latitude. The sheriff was ordered to arrest any witness the accused desired and bring them before the court that they might testify in his behalf. The negro attempted to prove an alibi but could find no one to support his statement. When all the evidence had been taken, Hogan addressed the jury, who were standing in a line, and said "Gentlemen, as many as believe the prisoner guilty will step three paces to the front." Without the slightest hesitation the whole line moved forward and the doom of the negro, whose name was Young, was sealed.

Immediately, a scaffold was erected on the side of one of the most public roads in the county, in broad daylight, with no effort whatever to conceal anything. The negro was then conducted to the scaffold and a rope adjusted around his neck. After being permitted to pray, the acting sheriff, with a mighty blow, knocked the scaffold from beneath and the soul of the negro was landed in eternity. After hanging 30 minutes the body was examined by a physician and pronounced dead. The body was then cut down and delivered to his relatives, many of whom were present and witnessed the execution.

The matter was disposed of, but who knew what would come next? The Negroes were in good standing and in close friendly touch with the Yankee garrison, while the whites were hated, despised and persecuted on every occasion possible, especially, Dick Hogan, who had piloted a portion of the Hampton Legion in the rear of Grant's army on one occasion and captured a great herd of the enemy's cattle. Doubtless they would have welcomed an opportunity to court martial and shoot him or even all concerned, on the

slightest pretext. Naturally it was expected that the Negroes would promptly report the affair to the Yankee garrison. Excitement was running high for all expected the community to again overrun with bristling bayonets and many shot to death without the privilege even of a trial.

To meet any emergency it was said that all prominently concerned after lynching met and resolved to perfect an organization and each member to be on the alert for any move on the part of the military and in which event carriers were to be sent in haste and all the members notified who were to meet at a given point and all take passage to some foreign port. Many anxious days passed and to the delight of all the matter ended with the lynching.

## THE PHOENIX RIOT, VIOLENCE AT THE POLLS

By Carol Hardy Bryan

*A recent visit by a researcher to the Tompkins Library prompted this article. The man was on a quest to fill in some gaps in a friend's family history. The family had come from the Gray Township of Old Edgefield District and apparently left for reasons that would not be discussed among them openly until this day. I was reminded, while doing this article, that not all history is glamorous and not all of our ancestors were model citizens. Nevertheless, we would not be true historians if we did not tell the truth about history, and in the process discover some things about ourselves.*

In the aftermath of the War Between the States, black and white citizens in Edgefield District were in a state of turmoil. Even though the official conflict ended in 1865, many additional years of antagonism kept the region in uneasiness. An analysis of the turbulent years would show that many horrors were endured. Hangings and intimidation were common and usually the Negroes were on the losing end of things. Whites struggled to regain control of the State, and Negroes struggled to find a legitimate place in society.

After the end of slavery, tenants were used by farmers to provide the required labor for the chief crop, cotton, and black labor was cheap and abundant (Tindall 2). But the bottom had dropped out of the cotton market, so the farmers were left at the end of the growing season with little cash in their pockets (Kleinschmidt 27). At the same time, the Town of Greenwood was prospering in population growth. The modern conveniences of schooling, telephone service, electricity, indoor plumbing, industry and railroad lines made city life one of ease compared to life in the country. Prosperity was at hand for the dwellers in town, but the agricultural countryside was overwhelmingly poor (Wilk 2).

An interesting anecdote that reflects the times was recorded by the Shakespearean scholar Louis B. Wright, who spent his first six years in Phoenix. Wright's memories of the crop-lien system came from his experiences at Watson and Lake's general store: *Although I was just short of five years old, I soon got interested in the procedure of buying and selling. I noticed that by merely saying charge it one could go away*

*with marvelous things, from candy to plowshares. Young Louis bought a pound of nails on credit, brought them home, and pounded them one by one into the barn door. When his father came home and saw what Louis had done, he explained that one must eventually pay for what one has charged and sent him to pick enough cotton to settle the debt. (It seems that even the local school principal cultivated a field of cotton in the back yard.) More than thirty years were to elapse before I could be persuaded to open a charge account, Wright recalled (Wilk 3).*

Ben Tillman became Governor in 1890. Under the leadership of Governor Tillman, the State of South Carolina adopted a new State constitution in 1895 which effectively stripped blacks of any political privileges (Kleinschmidt 27). Tillman was openly and vocally derogatory of Negroes. The Negro leader, Benjamin Elijah Mays, who lived near the Phoenix community while growing up, blamed Tillman for promoting racial hatred. He was quoted as saying *The number of lynchings (and the attention paid to them) increased dramatically. Mobs more and more frequently preempted the work of civil authorities, often explicitly claiming the authority of a white-supremacist "higher law."* . . . *Lynchings in upcountry Edgefield, Abbeville, Laurens and Newberry Counties actually outnumbered legal executions (Kantrowitz 165).* Critics saw economic conflict as the cause of most lynchings, and this reason would seem to be accurate. *Many whites accepted the argument that black peoples' movement into workplaces, political arenas, and public accommodations*

*would logically lead to the "social equality" white supremacists dreaded (Kantrowitz 164).*

During November of 1898, in the farming community of Phoenix in newly formed Greenwood County, preparations were being made for the elections of 1898. Phoenix was just north of the Edgefield County line. The formation of Greenwood County in 1897 out of Edgefield and Abbeville Counties placed Phoenix in the Third Congressional District, unlike Edgefield and Abbeville which were in the Fourth Congressional District. Blacks outnumbered whites in the community of Phoenix three to one (Wallace 3: 399). *The possibility of a return to black domination was great, and most whites were determined that this would not occur (Wells 58).* The major race in Greenwood County was for a congressional seat and pitted Asbury Churchwell Latimer of Abbeville, the Democratic incumbent, against Robert Red Tolbert who was running as the Republican Candidate.

The stage was set for an event of dramatic proportions. What happened that dreadful day eventually involved the President of the United States, William McKinley, and his cabinet.

At the center of the controversy was the Tolbert family, an educated and well-to-do family who had owned slaves before the War. The Tolberts had opposed secession, but four of the Tolbert brothers fought for the Confederacy in the famed Hampton's Legion. Although likeable, they disagreed with their neighbors over politics. Several members held federal political appointments and during the period of reconstruction served in Republican party offices. Colonel John R. Tolbert was Commissioner of

Education for South Carolina's reconstruction government, but lost his office when Wade Hampton's Democrats wrestled power from the Republicans in 1876. In 1898 John R. Tolbert was Collector of Customs in Charleston and served as a Republican National Committeeman. John R.'s son, Robert Red Tolbert, was State Republican Chairman. A cousin, Robert Henderson, was Republican Township Leader in Phoenix. James W. Tolbert was assistant postmaster at McCormick, and Mrs. James Tolbert was the postmistress at McCormick (Wells 58,59).

The Tolberts, unlike many of their neighbors, were committed to be fair to Negroes. Tolberts owned several thousand acres of land and were the envy of white neighbors who did not fare as well. Many whites were unable to have a place to farm, much less have the convenience of having tenants to help them work their crops. The Tolbert family paid higher wages than their neighbors and Negro tenants received leadership from them. The repercussion from their fair treatment of the Negroes was great. Tolbert homes and gins were burned, and they were socially ostracized (Wells 59).

The Tolbert family and its Negro allies sought to make challenges to the new State constitution in the general election of 1898. Following the advice of Joseph Weeks Babcock, chairman of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, during the campaign Red Tolbert, his brothers Thomas and Joe, and a cousin, Robert Henderson, *held meetings for Negroes, often at night in churches - as their opponents put it, "in weird places and unholy hours" to give instructions for election day* (Wells 59). *Democrats accused the Tolberts of turning "the large number of Negro tenants on their several plantations into a machine to feather their public nest in the republican party"* (Wilk 7).

During the clandestine meetings, the Negroes were instructed to go the polls and, if they were denied the opportunity to vote, they were to fill out one of three special forms: one

form was for Negroes who could neither read nor write, to be signed with a mark; one for those who could sign their names but could not read; and another for those who could both read and write (Hoyt 16, 17). These forms were then to be witnessed and dropped into a separate ballot box at the poles. One of the Tolbert family would oversee the voting attempts in various precincts by the blacks and witness the statements. If things went as the Tolberts thought and Negroes were not allowed to vote, there were several options available. Appeals could be made to the Republican-appointed Supreme Court, an election could be contested before a Republican Congress, or Republican President William McKinley could intervene (Wells 59, 60).

*Election week came at a somber time for the people of Phoenix. The earlier part of the year had been so dry that seed had failed to germinate. August rains started early and continued through the autumn, rotting the scanty crops and sprouting the little cotton and corn that matured. The sodden countryside had a dejected air that even the prospective return of South Carolina volunteers from the Spanish-American War did little to cheer. Old people's health gave way* (Hoyt 60). Adding to the misery was the fact that the cash-poor farmers had trouble paying back their debts, mortgages and crop liens held by merchants, and merchants were in debt themselves (Wilk 3).

A family member's death caused changes in the original polling-day plans of the Tolberts. Mary Henderson, a Phoenix resident and Tolbert relative, died on November 7, the day before elections. Her son Robert had been the one who was given the duty of maintaining the duplicated ballot box at J. Sale Watson and Joe Lake's store at the Phoenix crossroads. Thomas Payne Tolbert took his cousin Robert's place at the store. Thomas was the brother to Red Tolbert who was running as a Republican for Representative in the Third Congressional District. Thomas set up his work station on the porch of

Watson and Lake's store and went about his business of assisting the Negroes in filling out the forms (Hoyt 18). With Thomas were Joe Circuit, Will White and a number of other black men (Wilk 1).

News had spread quickly to the other voting precincts via the phone in Watson and Lake's store that Thomas and the blacks were at the polls. Thomas had taken twenty-two affidavits when he saw two of Gaines's supporters, J. I. "Bose" Ethridge and Robert Cheatham, pushing their way through the crowd surrounding the store (Hoyt 18). J. Milton Gaines had been recently defeated as a Democratic state senator but still served as the County Democratic Chairman and was also "Bose" Ethridge's landlord (Wilk 8). He had recently told Robert Henderson *it would be better to kill two or three white men and settle the thing than to let the niggers vote and have to kill a whole lot of people later* (Hoyt 18).

Sam Dominick, the election manager of the Phoenix Precinct, emerged to join the men on the porch (Kleinschmidt 6).

*Ethridge, followed closely by Cheatham and several young men, demanded of Tolbert his right to carry on such a side election and contemptuously kicked over the box holding the ink and forms. Blows were exchanged between Tolbert and Ethridge. About the same time Joe Circuit dealt Ethridge a horrible blow with an iron rod. Almost at the same instant a pistol was fired, and Ethridge fell dead with a bullet hole in the center of his forehead* (Hoyt 3). Speculation was that the bullet was fired by a white man and intended for Tolbert, not Ethridge. Bose Ethridge was one of the best citizens of that section. *He was a brave, calm, public-spirited citizen, as was shown on more than one trying occasion. He was a favorite with all the people, an industrious farmer, a member of the Baptist church, a school trustee, and in every way identified with the best interests of the community. He was 35 years old* (Hoyt 3).

After Ethridge was shot, random shooting broke out. Thomas Tolbert, who was unarmed, was struck by several shots and wounded in the lung, ear, head and back. The whites rushed down from the upstairs polling area and fired into the crowd. Negroes fled in all directions, some wounded. Thomas Tolbert was taken by buggy to his Uncle Elias Tolbert's house and dropped off there. Rather than endanger the family, he struggled on down the road to the Tolbert tanyard about a mile to the north. Sam Pressley, a grandson of the old ex-slave tanner, came out of his cabin to help Thomas.

Elias Tolbert and his sister Ann were down the road at Mary Henderson's preparing for her funeral. They heard the shooting and saw the Negroes fleeing. Elias and Ann rushed in their buggy through the chaos to their house. A white man along the way told them their nephew Thomas had been badly wounded. They arrived at the tanyard just as Sam was assisting Thomas. Elias went to fetch a doctor while Ann and Sam loaded Thomas into a wagon and took him to Aix, the home of Colonel John R. Tolbert, Thomas's father. There they waited for the doctor (Wells 61).

Word of the shooting spread by telephone to the other polling places where Tolberts were witnessing the affidavits. All Tolbert men headed to Aix. Ethridge's friends followed Tolbert's trail to Elias Tolbert's. Not finding him there, they ransacked the house and headed for Aix.

Ann Tolbert described what happened in a letter to Hattie Lake 21 Nov 1898.

*It was about 4 or 5 p.m. when there was a knock at the front door. I rose to open it. Seeing an armed mob, I told them I could not open the door. They forced both front and back doors open, entered, pushed me along the hall into the dining room, shut the door & a man crossed my hands & held me captive. The others pressed on to Thomas's bedside. I implored the man holding me to let me go to Thomas. He only urged the*

*others to hurry up & finish Thomas. They had four others to kill before they returned. Will Stallworth, son of H. S. [Hodges Stallworth] was Cap. He said we spared you at Phoenix, but have come to kill you. Thomas said that will be an easy matter. I am almost dying & can say truthfully I never harmed one of you or any one else in my life. Harrison said you can tell us who killed Bose Ethridge. Thomas said I know nothing of his death. Did not know he was shot when I left Phoenix. Thomas said he had always told the truth & would not die telling a lie. Ellison says kill him, if he gets up, he will aid in prosecuting us for trying to kill the Irving boys. Thomas replied that he had had nothing to do with their prosecution. Henry Hutchison urged his being shot immediately. Thomas asked him if he had not always acted on the square with him? He said he had. Then Will Stallworth said we will not shoot a man down.*

*The door opened & as I passed through to Thomas, Henry Hutchison [said that] every Republican shall leave this county. No colored people shall live on their land. James Stallworth said you have talked of nothing but Dave Harris' death since he was killed (Wells 62).*

Harris was an eighteen-year-old Negro accused of burning a neighbor's cotton gin. He had been taken from the sheriff and beaten to death (Wells 62). We can read through the lines here to know that the Tolberts had obviously chastised their neighbors for taking law into their own hands in their actions against this young black man. They made three successive efforts to bring the participants in the lynching to justice (Wilk 6).

Ann's letter continued, *Just then Bro. John [Colonel John R. Tolbert, father of the wounded man] was seen approaching the yard, & a fusillade was fired on him. The frightened horse turned & ran furiously. He [John R.] received 37 shots in his head and 20 in his back. Stevie, Elias's little boy was with him. He was wounded in several places, but their wounds were not serious & they*

*are getting over them. Bro. John knew nothing of the mob being here, was returning from Bradley where he had voted (Wells 62).*

When the horse bolted, the Negroes on the road let it pass, then closed in again. The white mob did not pursue. They were under the false impression that the Negroes were part of a Tolbert-trained underground militia. John R. Tolbert could not control the horse, and hold the wounded boy. The buggy overturned. A passing Negro took care of Stevie. John R. managed to make it to the home of an old friend, Major White where the other Tolbert men gathered to defend themselves. Among those at Major White's were Red Tolbert and his brother Joseph, two brothers-in-law Morton Collins and a Napier, and probably Robert Henderson. About twenty men took up the defense position. The day after the Tolberts were shot, Red Tolbert sent word to his Negro tenants to arm themselves and report to his home near Verdery, about nine miles northwest of Phoenix, near Major White's where John R. Tolbert was taken. About twenty took the extreme risk and came to do their part in the defense (Hoyt 17, 19).

The murderous mob did not carry out their plans to kill Thomas Tolbert at Aix. As darkness approached, they broke up and headed home to safeguard their families from anticipated vengeful blacks and Tolberts. The Tolbert family had cooler heads. They wanted the rioting to go no further and hoped that the wounding of Thomas, John R. and Stevie and countless Negroes would satisfy the crowd. They spent their time during the night after election day moving their women and children to safety. Some Negroes fled to the safety of the woods. Others stayed in their homes with the doors shut and lights out. Others went to the Tolberts for protection and instructions.

Watson and Lake's store became a gathering place for whites from all around the region. *J. M. Gaines, Greenwood Postmaster L. M. Moore, Professor T. M. Wright, J. S. Watson, J. V. Duffie and others of high repute*

and known grit begged for nonviolence (Hoyt 4). But the rioters wanted Joe Circuit's life. Telephone calls were placed to surrounding counties for reinforcements and hundreds responded by the next morning. Thirty or forty men of a peace committee came to meet with the Tolberts Wednesday morning at Aix. Ann Tolbert described what happened in a letter to Mary Burns on November 18, 1898.

*Mr. McKinny, Capt. [F. S.] Evans, a reporter in from Greenwood. Mr. McK was greatly excited, could not hear a word of our agony from the mob Tuesday afternoon. Said they were in great terror. . .the people believed the woods were full of armed col people. We told them we had seen no armed colored people. All we had seen were running for life. We were assured if we advised the col people to disband, we would be protected. All the people had to leave our place. The col[ored] were never armed & were driven from fields & shot indiscriminately. Many were lynched. Before the men left our place, Aix, Wednesday, T's room, the dining room & hall were fired in by the largest balls. They went whizzing through the windows & we would have been killed if we had not been on the other sides of the room. Our cook had to leave & there was no one here but T & I Thursday. The mail came & when I read of the lynchings I fainted & was not able to be up Friday. I am up now. . .If we made a mistake, it was in giving out affidavits, & if we had known there was danger, would not have done it. We surrendered at the polls & since then have been worse treated than Cubans by Spanish (Wells 64).*

Bands of whites continued to search into the night for Tolberts and Negroes. M. J. Younger, a merchant from Greenwood, Cresswell Flemming, a local farmer and Private Stuart Miller, a local young man about to be discharged from his regiment in Columbia, were badly wounded as they passed Rehoboth Church on Tuesday night. They were attended to at A. C. Stockman's about six miles

from town. Elias Tolbert was also there, but the fact remained a secret for his protection. Elias Tolbert had never been part of the political dealings of the other family members and later made a signed statement that he supported "white supremacy" (Wilk 16).

After the Peace Committee left Aix on Wednesday, they passed Rehoboth Methodist Church where the men were wounded the night before. A raucous crowd of several hundred men held eleven Negroes captive. One of the Negro men was Wade Hampton McKenny, who had been wounded at Phoenix. Ropes were placed around the necks of the Negroes. The peace committee attempted to subdue the crowd, but was unsuccessful. The Negroes were "tried under the skilled hand of "Judge Lynch." Witnesses were called and the defendants were given a change to confess to their misdeeds on Tuesday. Jesse Williams and two others found that a pistol held to their heads aided their recall of the murder. After one hour the verdict was returned and the court recessed to a large oak tree near the church building. The sentence of death by firing squad was carried out. Jesse Williams, Wade Hampton (Hamp) McKinney, Columbus (Lum) Jackson, and Drayton Watts, Charlie White and Robert Daniel were all murdered under that tree (Kleinschmidt 9). Sam Baker and George Logan were both critically wounded (Hoyt 8). This event prompted several of the whites to release their captive Negroes. Five of the eleven men were given their freedom, but only after they were brought to the oak tree and told to run for their lives (Hoyt 31). A white man, Cleave Armstrong, was shot in the neck for releasing Frank Latimer, and E. C. Rice [brother to the State newspaper editor] risked his life to save another Negro (Wells 65).

The situation was considered critical after the lynchings at Rehoboth. An armed body of men from Edgefield, Newberry, Abbeville and Greenwood counties spent the night at the Phoenix store and posted pickets in two squads in a cotton field.

James Hoyt reported, "That was my first sight of a 'mob' and I have never been able to erase the picture from my mind. There was a burly fellow, on a gray horse. The rider wore a patch over one eye. "Let's kill the Tolberts! He cried, and the yell was taken up - 'Get the Tolberts!' And off they rode."

George Logan died on Thursday at the home of Joe Goode from the wounds he received in the shooting at Rehoboth. He was the son of Turner Logan, "an old-time Negro leader" (Hoyt 10, 11).

*The next day, Hamp McKinney's father, London, came to Rehoboth church to identify the bodies of his son and the others. London McKinney was a black man whom local whites trusted. He was an illiterate renter who supported the Democratic Party and had named his son after Wade Hampton, the hero of white South Carolina who had helped topple the "Negro rule" of Reconstruction in 1876 and was the first governor of the post-Reconstruction regime. McKinney felt it prudent to demonstrate his loyalty to the white community one more time: he testified before the coroner's jury (which included J. Sale Watson, Joe Lake, and T. M. Wright) that he had been at Watson and Lake's store on election day and saw Will White shoot and kill Bose Ethridge. London also named four other men - including Lum Jackson and Charlie White, but not his son Wade - as complicit in the murder. The coroner's jury concluded that Will White fired the shot that killed Ethridge and that Jackson, Charlie White, "and Others" had "aided and abetted" in Ethridge's death, lending a patina of legitimacy to the lynchings. The jury further stipulated that the murder had been "instigated by Thos. P. Tolbert and R[obert] L. Henderson." Another jury deliberated over the murders of the four African American men, but the only conclusion they came to was the killers were "persons unknown." (Wilk 9) as found in State Case #174.*

The frenzied crowd continued their murderous rampage on November 10.

Essex Harrison, whose only crime was to be at the polls on election day, was caught and taken to Rehoboth where the corpses of the men killed the previous night had been left to rot. He was released but shot multitudes of times and was left to lie on the same log with the four men killed the night before (Hoyt 10). The County Coronor Dean went to Rehoboth church on Thursday afternoon and with much difficulty procured a jury who rendered the verdict, "death at the hands of unknown parties." The bodies were buried on Saturday in a mass grave, but no relatives attended (Kleinschmidt 12).

The shooting continued. Ben Collins was seen on W. H. Stallworth's place and was slain. He supposedly fired at Ethridge on election day. Jeff Darling was killed that evening in retaliation for his presence at the polls on election day. Will White, who was supposedly a Negro leader, was wounded but managed to escape (Wells 65).

The Negro church was vandalized. Hundreds of Negroes were driven from Tolbert farms and even Democratic landowners such as Andrew Stockbridge. Old Sam, who had assisted Thomas Tolbert, was beaten and driven off. Wallace Hunter who lived on Ann Tolbert's farm, was terrorized when his house was vandalized. That night, riders fired into the cabin of Eliza Goode near the black church of Piney Grove. Bullets struck her in the abdomen as she cared for her invalid daughter. She later died (Kleinschmidt 13). Thomas Nathaniel Tolbert's house near Abbeville was fired upon and his son Gus [who was a Democrat] barely escaped injury (Wells 64).

Benjamin Mays had his own recollections of the Phoenix riot. *I remember a crowd of white men who rode up on horseback with rifles on their shoulders. I was with my father when they rode up, and I remember starting to cry. The cursed my father, drew their guns and made him salute, made him take off his hat and bow down to them several times. Then they rode away. I was not yet five*

*years old, but I have never forgotten them (Wilk 5).*

Ann continued her vigilance over Thomas Tolbert and several Tolberts came to Aix to be assured that Thomas was receiving adequate medical treatment. Mary Henderson's funeral was conducted without the Tolberts in attendance. Her own son Robert did not attend. As mentioned above, he was probably one of the defenders at the home of Major White (Wells 66).

Red Tolbert was in Abbeville when he learned of the shooting. He headed for Tom's house, but met his father on the road. They went together to Verdery where a doctor attended to Colonel Tolbert's wounds and they spent the night.

On November 10, John R. Tolbert decided to go to Columbia to appeal to Governor William H. Ellerbe for protection. Red drove his father about 2 a.m. to halt the train at Leonard. John R. and his son Joseph arrived in Columbia on that evening. John's wounds had not been dressed, so Joe went for a doctor, but was spotted by a soldier from Private Stuart Miller's outfit. As word got out, it appeared that the Tolberts were about to be lynched. Lieutenant Wyatt Aiken, a Greenwood County man [who later became a Congressman] swore out a warrant for the arrest of John R. and Joe Tolbert. Joe coaxed his father to surrender. They were taken to the Richland County jail, and later were moved to the State penitentiary where they could be better defended. The prison doctor, a Confederate veteran and college schoolmate of John R. took care of his wounds.

Joe Tolbert requested protection for the whole Tolbert family from Governor Ellerbe, but the governor advised that no male Tolberts should return to the Phoenix area. He put the militia on alert, but they were not called out (Wells 67). The Tolberts couldn't expect help from the Greenwood County sheriff either. James A. Hoyt told in his booklet about the riot that a newspaper reporter who went through Greenwood on his way to Phoenix said Sheriff R.

F. McCaslin was the town's only able-bodied man who had not gone to the scene of the trouble and if Negroes were to be killed, it was no place for the sheriff, in that day and times (Hoyt 6).

Red Tolbert left about nine hours after his father to make his way to Greenville by train where he then boarded the train to Washington, D. C. He arrived on November 11 and was accompanied by the Solicitor General when he called on President McKinley (Hoyt 20). The President was in the midst of preparing a peace treaty with Spain, but received Red Tolbert, and also took up the Greenwood situation with his cabinet. The only action he took was to send Federal agents to the scene on several occasions, but they reported all was quite, and nothing was done (Wells 68).

On Saturday, November 12, the men of Phoenix gathered and wrote several resolutions about the riot. J. M. Gaines, the retiring state senator from Old Edgefield County, presided. *These resolutions deplored the occurrences that had taken place in the community but went on to declare that the evidence was conclusive that "the first hostile attack was made by Thomas Tolbert and certain "Negroes (their names were not given), and that the first shot fired was the one that killed Ethridge and was fired by a Negro.*

*"We regret," continued the resolution, "that deluded Negroes have had to suffer the penalty for misdeeds committed as a result of the influences of white men whose greed and selfishness have led them to act the part of enemies to both the white and colored people of our country."*

*As a further resolve, the pronouncement declared, "We hereby express our firm conviction that the deplorable troubles through which we have just passed are attributable solely to the evil influence exerted by John R. Tolbert, R. Red Tolbert, Joseph W. Tolbert, Thomas P. Tolbert and Robert L. Henderson, and we believe their further residence in Greenwood county or its vicinity will*



tend to imperil the lives and property of both the white and colored people, and we earnestly hope they will choose to remove themselves and their evil influence elsewhere" (Hoyt 13).

The grand jury met the next week and placed the responsibility for the riot on the actions of the Tolberts, but no action was proposed for bringing to justice the lynchers. They had made no move to hide their identity and were well known individuals. August Kohn, reporter for The News and Courier, wrote, *There is universal agreement*

that it is time to stop killing Negroes through other than legal methods . . . Representative men from all over the territory agree that there must be a turn in the tide, not only because of the brutality and shamelessness of the killings, but because of the reputation of the state and from the selfish motive that further hostilities will only result in driving away the colored labor (Holt 14).

He was right. The riots were a precursor to an out-migration of Negroes from Greenwood. A

notorious emigrant agent, Robert A. "Peg Leg" Williams and his cousin and associate, Mary E. LaVett, enticed the laborers away to new jobs in Texas and Mississippi in the years between 1883 and 1890. Several hundred Negroes from the Phoenix community relocated to southern Mississippi (Wilk 12). This accentuated the problems of the already desperate economy.

See a map of the Phoenix area on page 85.

Editor's comments: *This has been a tremendously difficult article to write. I hope that readers will understand that all of the history of Old Edgefield District is important. When the researcher came to the Tompkins Library seeking family information, we had no idea what was going to be the result of our search. However, when that search uncovered the family member as a victim of the riot, then I felt it was my duty to put the story together. I once told people that the way to put a good smell in laundry is to let it blow in the breeze. A good airing in the sunshine can do wonders.*

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### **Getzen Reunion at Republican Church**

On June 21, 2003 ninety-nine Getzens and relations met at Republican Baptist Church for the largest family reunion in two decades. Represented in the group were visitors from Maine, Oregon, California, Colorado and Arizona and the Old Edgefield families of Mealing, Morgan, Corley and Bussey. Attendees were treated to a walk through the Sumter National Forest to an old family cemetery on the banks of Cheves Creek.

The Getzen role in Republican Baptist Church was covered during the meeting, as well as interesting facts concerning the Briggs cousins, the Morgan cousins, and the family's seventeenth and eighteenth century Pace ancestors. The family association was begun by family members in Florida. All previous reunions have been held in northern or central Florida, but the group enjoyed Edgefield hospitality and Trenton Barbecue and voted to hold the 2005 reunion in Edgefield County. We welcome these visitors and cousins, and look forward to having them in Old Edgefield in 2005.

# The Phoenix Riot

BY JAS. A. HOYT.

Run in The State in Three Installments of Which This Is the First.

—a few weeks ago, to be exact, in the daily papers of "Race Harlem"—fighting and shooting at section of New York City now live almost half as many as in South Carolina. Investigating that the disturbance on meet one afternoon in March, was not started by, but was by, Communists, a political which would overthrow the reform of government in the states, and which has enrolled thousands many Negroes, North and out chiefly in the great cities. Reports find, further, that the economic conditions, which transformed Harlem from "Nigger Heaven" to "Nigger Hell," have furnished a fertile field for Communist propaganda and agitation. Conditions are terrible; "malnutrition and overcrowding have an appalling health situation." (April 1, 1935.) Abnormally high rents are demanded and "harassing problem is an open sore. Rents are from 15 per cent. to 25 per cent. higher than in corresponding quarters of the city, occupy other nationalities. Of New York 250,000 Negroes, "more than are now on relief." "Last Harlem riot," says Time, "was New York City's most violent civil disturbance in 35 years."

"The Negro problem" has very recently been transferred, in the last year, from the agricultural Southern centers in the North to the Negroes in the North, who are victimized and misled by demagogues in political fields, where they are again repeating themselves. Reference to "race riot" (how accurate or inaccurate its application) the Harlem outbreak may bring me back, in memory, to conflict between the races in South Carolina growing out of political leadership on the part of Negroes, and selfish white leadership. As a result for The State, it was my duty to "cover" this latest election fight at the polls on election day precipitated a conflict in the Negroes of the community, the chief victims. At that persons were killed, only one white. The economic life of the prosperous community was, for years, seriously disturbed, and Negro families left their homes, as at the little settlement of Greenwood county, that election day race conflict occurred in November, 1898-37 ago. The present governor of South Carolina was not then born. A former governor, re-elected for a term on that day, was William B. O'Connell; within less than a year he "covered" for The State his own and burial in the soil of his nation.

There was no premonition of trouble in South Carolina that election year. It had been no political conflicts between white and blacks, of any consequence, for more than 20 years—since 1816. But our neighbor, South Carolina, was struggling to free itself from the last vestige of black domination. There was great agitation there, especially in Wilmington, where under the leadership of A. M. Waddell, a former congressman, a bitter campaign had been conducted to overthrow the Negro municipal government. Violence was expected on election day at Wilmington.

It did not come. The Waddell ticket was elected, without violence, and the trouble did not occur until several days later when, having taken over the government, the whites decided to close up the Negro newspaper and run the Negro editor out of town. This was to be done peaceably, but as usual the crowd became uncontrollable; the newspaper plant was wrecked and set afire; shooting began; several were killed and wounded; and for a period conditions of disorder and lawlessness prevailed. But that was all several days after the election.

The election day trouble came in South Carolina, at Phoenix, and was altogether unexpected and unpredictable. It so happened that I was sent to the scene by The State and was one of the reporters who wrote up the events as they occurred. As the affair is of some historical interest, as are also the conditions which led up to the fatal culmination, and the result, I have several times been requested to write a connected account of the "Phoenix riot," as it is commonly called, and this I have now attempted to do. The files of The State and The News and Courier have been reviewed to supplement the very vivid recollection of my own experiences as a reporter on that occasion.

## The Election Day Killing.

This is the story sent to The State by its regular Greenwood correspondent, Leland Smith:

"About 9 o'clock this morning Giles O. Etheridge and R. C. Cheatham, citizens of the Phoenix section, went to the store of J. S. Watson, where the state and federal elections were being held, and at the instance of several citizens, reproached T. P. Tolbert for the unusual proceeding he was evidently directing. On the small piazza in front of the store Tolbert had an ordinary looking ballot box, and in it he was directing all the Republicans who had no registration to drop a certificate, marked blank No. 3, reading as follows (this affidavit is quoted in full elsewhere):

"Etheridge demanded of Tolbert his right to carry on such a side election, being closely followed by Cheatham and several young men. Tolbert struck Etheridge in the face and at about the same time some one dealt him a horrible blow with an iron rod. Almost at the same instant a pistol was fired, and Etheridge fell dead with a bullet hole in the center of his forehead. Then there was excitement and fury amounting almost to distraction, and rapid and seemingly indiscriminate firing commenced. By the time the men upstairs at the boxes got down Tolbert and all the Negroes present scattered and got away. Those who did the firing were mainly young men, and their aim was bad. (What a reflection on the marksmanship of South Carolina youth of that day!) Tolbert was the only man, it seems, who was seriously hurt. Several Negroes were hit, but the wounds were not sufficient to stop the flight of any one.

"Twenty-two men had been refused the privilege of voting when the killing took place, two being white Democrats. Eighteen Negroes had deposited in Tolbert's box the certificate being copied."

The State's correspondent went on to say that as soon as the news reached the city of Greenwood by telephone "over 100 fully armed men, embracing many of the most level-headed and best citizens of the city,

went down." At 4 p. m., he reported, men were "still gathering at Greenwood, Ninety-Six, Kirksey, Bradley and the entire countryside, including the upper part of Edgefield county. You might know, if you knew old Edgefield county, that she would be there if white supremacy was in any way at stake!

Of the slain Etheridge, Leland Smith said, "Boss" Etheridge, as the slain man was known, was one of the best citizens of that section. He was a brave, calm, public-spirited citizen, as was shown on more than one trying occasion. He was a favorite with all the people, an industrious farmer, a member of the Baptist church, a school trustee, and in every way identified with the best interests of the community. He was 35 years old."

The coroner promptly that afternoon held an inquest into the death of Etheridge, and Leland Smith was present and reported it for The State. It appeared that when Tom Tolbert appeared at Watson's store, he was accompanied by "a very tall, black Negro, said to be Joe Circuit, who resides several miles from Phoenix." When Etheridge made his remonstrance against the special box, "Tolbert rose from a seat and made a blow at Etheridge, striking him in the face." Etheridge, according to the report, was also struck a blow with an iron, "itself sufficient to cause death, followed by the immediate discharge of a pistol." Witnesses said Cheatham was also shot at, but he was not hurt. Shooting became general, probably 100 shots being fired. It seems that the first shot fired killed Etheridge. It also appeared that Etheridge was not armed. Tom Tolbert was wounded and left the scene on foot.

The Negroes ran, but later a party of Negroes gathered at Rehoboth church, less than a mile away. The whites, from all around, congregated at Watson's store. It was proposed to go after the Negroes and "dispense them," but cooler heads prevailed. That afternoon, State Senator J. M. Gaines, a resident of the ... "naturally became the leader and his cool course probably ... Others who are named as exercising their influence against violence were "Postmaster L. M. Moore of Greenwood, Prof. T. M. Wright, J. S. Watson, J. V. Duffie and others of high repute and known grit."

These wise counsels prevailed that Tuesday afternoon at Phoenix, but a very different spirit asserted itself the next day, and for several days thereafter. Other men took the lead, and vengeance and violence held sway. To kill the Tolberts and their Negro adherents became the slogan of the "mob." At least four Negroes were killed the next day, Wednesday, and two more on Thursday. Another died several days later from wounds inflicted on Wednesday.

The feeling among the white people, already aroused by the killing of "Boss" Etheridge at Phoenix, and the belief that the Tolberts and the Negroes were greatly intensified by another attack that came afternoon of Tuesday. Three young men, returning from Phoenix to Greenwood, were fired on from ambush and wounded. This gave substance to the suspicion that the Negroes had been organized to attack the whites, whether that suspicion was correct or not. The State's regular Greenwood correspondent, Leland Smith, wired Tuesday night:

"Three young white men returning from Phoenix tonight about dark were fired on from ambush and were badly wounded. Dr. G. P. Neil and Dr. B. W. Cobb are with them, and the citizens are making a strenuous hunt for the bushwhackers.

"M. J. Younger, a young merchant here, was wounded in the foot. Crosswell Fleming, a prominent young farmer, was badly hurt. Stuart Miller, a member of Company A, First South Carolina Infantry, a son of Col. G. McD. Miller, was wounded. These

young men are at A. C. Stockman's, six miles from town."

It turned out that Elias Tolbert was also at Stockman's, but the fact was kept secret, lest he be attacked. I visited the Stockman home Wednesday afternoon to ascertain the condition of the wounded men. At that time Miller was said to be in a serious condition. I also inquired if Elias Tolbert was there and was told he was not. Mr. Stockman was later severely condemned for harboring a Tolbert, but his action was courageous and wise. Elias Tolbert had never been offensively active in politics but in the inflamed state of feeling at the time, the fact that his name was Tolbert was sufficient to get him into trouble. He later made a signed statement, disavowing sympathy with the political activities of his relatives, and asserting his support of "white supremacy." He had been a Confederate soldier, Company I, Second South Carolina cavalry.

## A Cub Reporter's Experience.

The election took place Tuesday, the 8th, the second Tuesday in November. It was that day that Etheridge was killed. The account of that killing was sent to The State by its local correspondent at Greenwood, an entirely reliable reporter, who sent an adequate story (already quoted). J. E. Norment, then traveling for The News and Courier, was there Wednesday for his paper. August Kohn, the Columbia correspondent for The News and Courier, who usually covered all the big stories for the Charleston paper, had been sent to Wilmington in the expectation that a story would break there on election day, but election day in Wilmington passed off peacefully and the Wilmington riot did not occur until several days after the election. Meanwhile, Kohn left Wilmington and went to Greenwood, arriving early Thursday morning and going to Phoenix immediately. He was present when the Negro, Essex Harrison, was killed at Rehoboth church. Kohn returned to Greenwood that afternoon and sent in his story to Charleston from Greenwood that night by wire.

With its competitor having competent staff men at the scene, The State probably concluded it should have a special reporter there also, if only for the looks of things. But all the able-bodied men on The State were in the army. William E. Gonzales was a captain in the Second South Carolina regiment, expecting to go to Cuba in the army of occupation. Ambrose E. Gonzales was in the quartermaster corps, and though anxious to be released after fighting had ceased, was kept in the army because of his excellent work, but was back at his desk a few weeks later. William Banks, The State's star reporter, whose vivid powers of description illuminated that paper's pages for many years, was a soldier in the First South Carolina. Clarence B. Smith, the steady and reliable Citadel graduate, was an officer in First South Carolina; afterwards to become an officer in the regular army and to retire as a colonel.

N. G. Gonzales had only recently returned from his grueling service in the Cuban Army of Independence, and during his absence the editorial chair had been filled by James Henry Rice, Jr., still then on the staff; a native of the Ninety-Six section himself. E. J. Watson, the hardest working newsman any of us ever knew, was city editor and the entire city staff. Physical disabilities had kept him out of the army.

The State had no one in the office who could be spared. So in desperation, The State, Wednesday morning, wired its Greenville correspondent to go to the scene of hostilities. What a thrill that was for a fellow, just a year out of college, who had never covered a really big story!

After showing the telegram to my:

Don Woods 4041  
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stand  
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—who was a veteran in the game and the most accurate reporter I have ever known—I went to the courthouse and confided to my friend and stand-by, P. D. Gilreath, the "Old Bald Sheriff," as he called himself. He insisted that if I were to go to the wars I must be properly equipped. He went to his high desk, opened a drawer, and pulled out a pair of Colts, with a belt and holster, and strapped it under my coat. I caught the "C & G" train for Green-

**Riding With the Hounds.**

Living in that pleasant village, I had deserted. I knew a number of people there, college friends and friends of my father, but no one was home; the town was deserted. All the men had gone to Phoenix. All the eyanucs—it was the horse and my age—had gone to the wars. How y a Model T would have been! There was no such animal in those days—not in Greenwood. After much perplexity I learned in some way that "bloodhounds had been sent for." I was my chance. If the bloodhounds were going to Phoenix some must take them and I went over to jail to interview the sheriff, who was the official custodian of the blood hounds. You might think the sheriff would have been at least near the scene of the trouble but that was not the custom those days. The sheriff, Bob McIn, did not lack courage; far from it was a brave and fine gentleman. If Negroes were to be killed, it was no place for the sheriff, in that time.

As the sheriff was, he was a cautious of a reporter, especially one so youthful and inexperienced. But I did admit that he had been asked to lead the bloodhounds and that he was preparing to send them. Then I decided that it might be necessary for someone to go along and hold the reins while someone else drove the horse, and that is how I got to the Phoenix riot. I held those flea-bitten and restless pups while a very young horse pulled a most uncomfortable buggy to the scene of carnage.

On the road from Greenwood to Phoenix not a Negro was to be seen Wednesday afternoon. There were no children playing in the yards; men nor women working in the fields. Every house we passed was out of a sign of life; doors were shut, windows were down, and every shadow was darkened with quilts or make-shift shades. The inhabitants of these homes were either huddled inside, in silent terror, or had fled to some refuge considered more safe. They all believed that it was a safe for a black face to be seen.

The lonely silence was once broken by a sound that proved this fear was unfounded—the sound of sporadic firing of rifle, shotgun and revolver a few miles away. It was soon that the 11 Negroes at Rehoboth church were facing the unofficial squad, and four of them were fall-lead; and others wounded, one of whom died later.

I suggested that we turn off and go to the scene of the firing, but the rest of the bloodhounds thought better to proceed to Phoenix, and so I did. It was a disillusioning ride. But as I got there I at once began to wonder how I would get back. I did not that night. I had to stay at Phoenix, and the telegraph office at Greenwood. When I suggested going back to Greenwood, the suggestion was very promptly and quite firmly vetoed by the men there. Enabled at Phoenix and for very good reasons—it would have been a very unsafe ride, that night, and no chance was available anyhow. So Phoenix I stayed that night, and of itself is a story.

I don't have to look up any records to tell it. It is an experience that is writ large in my memory. That my experience was not any more unpleasant than it proved to be was due to three gentlemen whom I shall always regard as princes of men—Capt. T. F. Riley of Greenwood and Capt. James Rodgers of Ninety-Six, friends of my father, and J. S. Watson, owner of the store where the election fight took place and where the crowd was that night gathered. His son, Harry L. Watson, had been one of my closest friends at Furman university, and has remained such until now. Harry was then at the University of North Carolina and missed the party at his home.

It did not take me long to find out what had occurred in the Phoenix community that day. No one kept anything back, and in addition to the men mentioned, I knew personally some of the younger men in the crowd; as a matter of fact, at least one of them had been at Furman with Harry and myself. One other had two brothers with The State company and was afterwards for many years himself a valued employe of The State at the same time I was on the paper, and for many years thereafter.

**The Reporter and the "Mob."**  
I had the story all right, but how was I to get it to the paper? Please remember, gentle reader of 1935, that there was no such complete and convenient system of telephones as now exists. In Watson's store also were the men, or at least many of them, who had killed the four Negroes at Rehoboth church, that very day. But there was only one thing to do and I did it.

After nightfall, I called the Western Union office at Greenwood on the phone—I could not get Columbia—and gave the operator the story to wire to Columbia. It was brief but complete and accurate. It is quoted in full at another place in this narrative.

As I stood at the telephone, in the back of the store, and talked to the Greenwood operator, the "mob" stood around and sat around in the store. I did not have to ask any one to keep quiet. The silence, if broken at all, was broken only by the sound of two knees knocking together at a very badly frightened young man talked into the mouthpiece. If that story seems somewhat sketchy and excited, it should not be difficult to judge the reason.

Having got that over with, I began to wonder what the reaction of the men would be, and I soon decided to test it out. It had been decided to put out pickets around the settlement. Captain Rodgers had been made captain; he was a former Confederate soldier, of course. I went up to him and to Captain Riley and told them I would like to go on picket duty with the rest of them. They at first protested that it was not necessary for me to do that, as I was there as a reporter, but I insisted, and they apparently saw that it would probably have a good effect to let me so serve, and Captain Rodgers asked me if I was armed. I pulled the old Colts from under my coat, but he said that I would need a real gun, and handed me a shotgun. He assigned me to the watch that went on duty from 1 o'clock to daylight and teamed me up with Captain Riley, also a Confederate veteran and a man of proved courage and coolness. In after years, I ate many a meal at Captain Riley's hotel in Greenwood, where the trains stopped for dinner, and where the chicken pie was famous, and I never saw Captain Riley without recalling with gratitude his companionship that night.

He and I were stationed, if my memory is correct, down a lane leading to a pasture; our station was several hundred yards from the store. It seemed many miles to me. It was a quiet night. But every time a brush moved in the slight breeze, I could see dozens of murderous darkies advancing. But they never came. an-

after long hours daylight did come, and with it great relief.

Then we went over to the Watson house, across the road, for breakfast and how good it was—that breakfast. I got a lot of kindly attention from Mrs. Watson, for I was Harry's friend, and he had often been at my parents' home in Greenville. I have eaten in some splendid dining rooms since that day, and tasted the very best that famous chefs could produce, but that breakfast at Mrs. Watson's home that chilly November morning remains in my memory as the most delicious meal I have ever eaten.

**Four Negroes Killed.**  
This is the story that was phoned in to Greenwood from Watson's store Wednesday night by the cub reporter: "Phoenix, S. C., via Greenwood, Nov. 9.—Four Negroes were killed near Rehoboth church about 5 o'clock this afternoon by a crowd of white men. Several other Negroes escaped, including Joe Circuit, who shot Etheridge. There has been a large crowd at Phoenix today, but nearly all have now left.

"The situation at dark is critical. Negroes are gathered a few miles from here in large crowds.

"The number of white men at Phoenix is small but reinforcements are expected.

"Fight is looked for. Some of the Negroes who were shot were at Phoenix yesterday.

"The Tolberts have not been harmed today but feeling against them is intense.

"Young Miller, who was shot from

ambush last night, is at Stockman's and may die.

"This message is phoned to Greenwood from Phoenix. I will stay here tonight and send more later if wire is not out. J. H."

I had to stay there, because there was no way to leave. The fear that the wire might be cut was well founded, as it had been cut the night before, and this message was sent early in order to make sure it would get through.

Later in the night this message was phoned:

"Phoenix, S. C., via Greenwood, Nov. 9.—Fifty white men are now at Phoenix. Armed Negroes are supposed to be near in large numbers. A conflict may come at any moment; at present all is quiet. Reinforcements would be acceptable.

"Six Negroes were shot by whites this afternoon. (Correct number was four killed; two others probably wounded.)

"Thomas Tolbert's house was fired into; results unknown. He was in bed, wounded in yesterday's fight. "J. H."

At Phoenix that night also was that Chesterfieldian journalist, J. E. Norment, then of The News and Courier, later private secretary to Governor Heyward, and colonel on his staff. He knew something, at first hand, about riots, for his kinsman had been a victim of the dispensary riot at Darlington several years before. Norment also had to take his turn at the telephone, and my recollection is that out of courtesy, or perhaps from a more sordid motive, I let him talk first.

Here is the dispatch sent:

"The situation here is extremely critical. Four Negroes were lynched this afternoon and the crowd of 500 dispersed, leaving only 30 or 40 men here. Two crowds of Negroes are on each side of us, and trouble is imminent. Couriers are out and help has been telephoned for from Greenwood. Things are dangerous. There are only 40 good men here."

In a later dispatch, Norment said: "The citizens here consider the situation very critical. An armed body of men, about 50 in number, from Edgefield, Newberry, Abbeville and Greenwood counties, is here. Reliable information says that the Negroes are arming in considerable numbers. Pickets are posted all around and are put out. The men are di-

vided into two squads in a cotton field. They are prepared to meet any emergency to the best of their ability. Direct rumors indicate that the Negroes are arming and assistance is needed."

Evidently the future Colonel Norment and I—also to become a colonel a year later on Governor McSweeney's staff—that night shared a keen anxiety for reinforcements, and lots of them. We also shared a lack of knowledge of the true situation, as Watson's store that long night was probably the safest place for 20 miles around. The Negroes were more frightened than the whites, and had no desire or intent to fight, especially after their white leaders, the Tolberts, had left the scene of hostilities. But we had no means of knowing this. No fast motor cars, few telephones; bad roads. The apprehension expressed in their telephoned stories by the two impounded future colonels was very real to them, and reflected the mental attitude of the 40 or 50 men there assembled. There was nothing to do but wait and see what would happen.

**After the Tolberts.**  
The expected "conflict" that night did not come. The only "armed Negroes in large numbers" anywhere near were those who had been gath-

ered as his guard by R. R. Tolbert at his home. Neither R. R. nor any of the other Tolberts, or any of the Negroes, had any plan or desire to make an attack on the whites that night. They were gathered for defense only, and the Negroes of the community were nearly all in hiding, terribly afraid for their lives. Feeling was indeed tense, but as long as distance separated the Tolberts and the aggrieved whites, and as long as darkness prevailed, no further bloodshed was imminent.

With daylight came courage, and again the crowd. When we returned to the store from the Watson house, after breakfast, men were riding up on horseback, and in buggies, from all directions. They had returned home to protect their own families during the night but now were ready to ride again and "finish the job." As long as the Tolberts were alive, and the negroes who had killed Etheridge, the job was incomplete. That was my first sight of a "mob," and I have never been able to erase the picture from my mind. There was a burly fellow, on a gray horse. The rider wore a patch over one eye. "Let's kill the Tolberts!" he cried, and the yell was taken up—"Get the Tolberts!" And off they rode.

But the Tolberts had wisely fled, and the mob had to be satisfied that day to wreak its vengeance on Essex Harrison, the Negro, who was caught and killed at Rehoboth church, and Ben Collins, who was shot down on the Stallworth place. I sent to The State from Greenwood that night a dispatch which began as follows:

"Two more Negroes were killed in this county today. This morning the crowd which started from Phoenix met near Rehoboth church, the scene of yesterday's lynching, Essex Harrison, a Negro, who was in the Tuesday fight when Mr. Etheridge was killed. Harrison was halted and his heart was shot out. He was thrown on the pile of four Negroes lying in front of the church who were lynched yesterday. Their bodies still lie there, horribly shot, and frequent showers are falling to make matters worse. Coroner Dean went down to hold the inquest today. He met a crowd, who did not molest him, and after some little threatening and parleying, with some difficulty secured a jury. The verdict mentioned the customary unknown parties as responsible. Coroner Dean says the bodies will be buried tomorrow.

"It is reliably understood that two other Negroes shot yesterday are lying in the woods nearby. No inquest was held over these. (This report proved to be not so reliable.)

3/1/00



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The h  
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Lynch  
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South

Pelham,

My husband, John, asked that I mail these two reports to you. So here goes.

Think spring and be sure to stay in touch.

Berna Hannon

. One chapter there were stims, except

group acting solely a ngs and white

racism in the South. Between 1882 (when lynching statistics were first kept) and 1930 (when lynchings began a rapid decline), nearly 4,700 persons were lynched in the United States, 84 percent of whom were lynched in the Southern states. Between 1882 and 1930, 83 percent of all lynching victims outside the South and Border States were white, whereas in the Southern and Border states during this period 85 percent of lynching victims were black.

Georgia was one of the leading Southern states in terms of lynchings. Many prominent Georgians including politicians and, especially, journalists and newspaper editors used to defend lynching as a positive good. In 1897 Rebecca Lattimer Felton, a writer for *The Atlanta Journal*, gave a speech to a Georgia agricultural society in which she said that "if it takes lynching to protect women's dearest possession from drunken, ravening human beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week if it becomes necessary." Charles E. Smith, a journalist for the *Atlanta Constitution* who used the nom de plume Bill Arp, wrote in a 1902 column: "As for lynching, I repeat what I have said before, let the good work go on. Lynch 'em! Shoot 'em! Hang 'em! Burn 'em!" Comments such as these received wide support in Georgia

### THE LYNCHING OF 1905: "DUMB HORROR"

Books on neighboring Oconee County usually omit reference to the most terrible event in the county's history, the mass lynching in downtown Watkinsville, the county seat, on June 29, 1905. The incident, in the words of a contemporary newspaper account, caused "[t]he people of Watkinsville [to] stand in dumb horror,"

The immediate cause of the lynching was an alleged attempt by a black man, Sandy Price, to rape a white woman near Watkinsville two days earlier. Forty armed men tracked down Price a half mile away, where he was surrounded, shot at, seized, and conveyed under strong guard to jail. An Athens newspaper said Price's alleged offense had "set the people of Watkinsville wild with excitement."

Another cause for the lynching was outrage over a notorious double murder near Watkinsville six weeks earlier. Lon J. Aycock, a white man, was awaiting trial on charges of being an accomplice to the crime. He had been charged with hiring three black men Claude Elder and two brothers, Lewis and Rich Robinson to carry it out. Eller and the Robinson brothers were awaiting trial along with Aycock in the Oconee County Jail.

At around 2 a.m. on a Thursday, a masked mob of 40 to 100 men in buggies or on horseback silently entered Watkinsville with military precision. The mob went to the house of the town marshal and forced him to accompany them to the old jailhouse, which still stands behind the Oconee County Courthouse. When the mob reached the jail they entered its outer doors by using the town marshal's keys. At gunpoint the mob then forced the lone jailer on duty to surrender the keys to the cells.

The mob was not there to kill any particular person; its implacable purpose was to empty the jail and slay all its inmates.

Besides Aycock, Elder, the Robinson brothers and Sandy Price, the mob also seized Rich Allen, already convicted of murder and awaiting legal execution under a judicially imposed death sentence; Bob Harris,

Your son, J. C. FEASTER.

Probably the First Lynching.

In the early part of June, 1865, shortly after I had reached home after the great civil strife, our whole country was thrown into a turmoil by the news that "old Mrs. Ricks," widow of Dr. Recks, had been criminally assaulted by a negro. Mrs. Ricks was about 60 years old and was on her way to the postoffice at Blythe-wood when she was assaulted. She came to me, crying as if her poor old heart would break and related the story to me. I got all the information possible from her and sprang into my saddle and galloped to the scene of the crime.

I readily found tracks leading off to a field near by where a bunch of darkeys were hoeing cotton under Uncle Nat McClenigan, an old driver. I hitched my horse at the fence and followed the tracks across several rows of cotton and upon questioning old Nat I learned that Josh, a young negro about 20 or 22, had been out in the woods about two hours before my arrival. I ordered Josh to place his feet in the tracks leading from the fence. It was plain to be seen that they were his own tracks. He by this time was excited and very nervous. This evidence was plain. I ordered him to get over the fence and again, to make sure, had him measure tracks.

I mounted my horse and marched the negro into the presence of Mrs. Ricks who immediately recognized her assailant, and burst forth in tears and exclaimed:

"That's the fellow! That's the brute. I want you to kill him!"

Knowing that we had no law to rely upon, I at once determined to deal out justice to the culprit.

I at once summoned 12 of the oldest men in the neighborhood, embracing Benj. Cloud, Hampton Johnson, Samuel Lawhorn, Jackson Joyner, John Raines, Arthur and Joseph Kenedy, John Laurie, Lewis Perry, Elias Hood, Hampton Wooten, Simon Faust, and by this time the whole neighborhood had assembled, probably about 35 men and boys.

By this time the day had been spent and after placing the negro under heavy guard action was deferred till morning. We again assembled next morning about 8 o'clock, some having remained throughout the night.

I called the assemblage to order and made a short talk, impressing upon their minds that we must protect our wives, mothers and sisters from the fieldish hands of the "new-freed" negro.

I furthermore said that we must protect the women with our own lives and after going over the proof of the undoubted guilt of the negro I formed a line and said: "All of you who are in favor of hanging Josh McClenigan by the neck for the assault on the person of Mrs. Ricks till his body is dead, dead, dead, will step three paces to the front.

Every man, as one, moved three paces to the front and the negro's fate was sealed. A rope having been procured, the convict was taken to the scene of the crime and mounted upon a scaffold made of blackjack saplings and hanged to a leaning tree. Henry Faust acted as sheriff, mounted on the tree and tied the rope. Eli Faust wrecked the scaffold and sent the negro into eternity.

Upon a petition from the people, I was commissioned captain of home guard, with J. Q. Davis, first lieu-

Some War Experiences.

(By James M. Timms.)

I was in my first battle on White Oak road five miles below Petersburg, Va. On Thursday night, the Yankees attacked our breastworks at Burgess Mills. We fought them all night Friday night and Saturday night, then our lines were broken at our winter quarters near Petersburg, Va. We fell back to Smith Station, where we were taken prisoners and carried to Hart's Island. Just after we were captured, one Yankee courier came riding up and called to me, saying, "Hello, Johnny, has Gen. Lee any breastworks across the Appomatox?" I said, "yes and that he would give

to leave the prison, it was told to me that we South Carolina soldiers would stay there to be hanged for the lives of old Sherman's men who were bush-whacked in South Carolina. I told them that if the rest were to be hanged that I was willing and ready to go with them. One of the Yankee sergeants talked with me of the beginning of the war. He was from Massachusetts. I told him if Massachusetts and South Carolina had started the trouble to let Massachusetts and South Carolina fight it out, that we South Carolina men would die before we would let Massachusetts whip us. He laughed and we went on our way home.

As we landed in New York, there is when we got one square meal. The ladies were good and kind to us. They gave us all we wanted to eat, and hats and shoes to wear. They shed tears and begged us to stay there. They said that Sherman had burned us out of house and home, and that we were coming home to starve. I told them that we were coming home to starve with our people, with our fathers and mothers and wives, and that we had been starving anyway, and as we set sail for Savannah a storm struck us. That is where I heard the most earnest prayers in my life. Our men could stand the storm on land, but not on sea. Some said if they ever got their feet on land again, they would never take the water, and some did walk from Savannah, Ga., to Ridgeway, S. C.

We stayed one week at Savannah, and from that place we came to Hilton Head, then to Charleston, then to Orangeburg. We walked home from there. Got home on the fourth of July, 1865. We found our homes had been destroyed, as the New York labor mothers were without any houses and something to eat. That was my first time to come home and not find something to eat, as that crowd of Sherman's had ruined our country, but it was not long until you could have plenty again, and now as the time glides slowly but surely on, and as we look around us and see our comrades, our loved ones falling from day to day, as they did in the cruel bloody war, it will not be long before the last of us will be laid away. They are passing out from this earth to their reward in the great beyond, yet still in our memories they live. We love them in life, we love them in death. When we all shall have been laid away, we hope that some day we will meet in that bright land above where war, death and hell shall have no power, and as we are passing out one by one, let us still sing, "Praises to the God of War, to the God of Peace and

be overlooked, O Dixie, round a dew drop there and whisper in the South wind's softest breath: "Thy mother loves thee still!"

Charlotte Hardware Grows.

Separating Wholesale and Retail Departments—New Building on Corner of Sixth and Railroad with 25,000 Feet Floor Secured—Increasing Salesman from Four to Six.

To keep pace with the extension of its business and the growth of Charlotte Hardware Company is enlarging its stock of goods and separating the wholesale and retail departments. The company has been very successful during the four years of its life and it has become necessary to secure more floor space and make an addition to the stock of good in order to cope with the growing business. Mr. W. W. Hagood is erecting a building at the corner of Sixth street and Railroad 60x170 feet two stories high with a basement which has been leased for the wholesale department of the concern. This building will be 25,000 square feet of floor space. Being in close proximity of both the Seaboard and Southern tracks the shipments can be received and dispatched in short order without cost of drayage. This building will be devoted entirely to wholesale, while the office will be maintained at the retail department on East Trade street where it is at present.

The business has outgrown the present quarters which have been used for wholesale and retail since its organization. When the change is made in the near future, the four floors in the present building will be

