THE FIRST LYNCHING IN CULPEPER IN 40 YEARS

Mob of Avengers Chose Sunday Night for their Work

Prior to Monday morning few people in Culpeper were aware of the fact that there was a colored prisoner in jail charged with assault and rape on a white woman.

Allie Thompson a bright mulatto, residing in Jefferson township, near Amisville, was arrested last week charged with criminal assault on Mrs. Leila Sisk, whose husband is with the army in France.

On Sunday night – or rather Monday morning – between two and three o’clock, Jailers Tipton and Herndon were aroused by two men, who bore a third man, tied up in rope, with them. They told Messrs. Tipton and Herndon that they had a prisoner to put in jail. This talk took place at the front door of the jail. Mr. Tipton, naturally thinking that the men were telling the truth, told them to come around to the side door, which is the regular entrance to the jail part of the building. When he opened the side door, twelve or fifteen men, their faces covered with cloth masks, rushed in, carrying both him and Mr. Herndon, and tied them hand and foot. They declared they had come for Allie Thompson, and that they were going to get him.

They then took, Mr. Tipton’s keys, and began a search of the steel cages. They finally located their victim in the hospital room of the building. Messrs. Tipton and Herndon say that when they came down stairs with the prisoner there was a rope around his neck. They both say that there was no struggle or scuffling, and that neither of them heard any out-cry on the part of Thompson. That the whole proceeding was remarkably quiet and devoid of any exciting circumstances or noise. That it was impossible to recognize any one of the lynching party.

On their way out of town, the mob must, have been very quiet, for no one has been found who heard any undue noise of that hour of night. Upon arriving at the entrance of the old John W. Payne place, no the Rixeyville road, about 3 miles north of town, the Lynchers selected a small oak tree and from it hanged the unhappy and helpless victim. His body was discovered early Monday morning by some passer-by. This is the first lynching in Culpeper in over 40 years, the last instance being soon after the Civil War.


The facts and information that were possible to be gathered by a representative of the Exponent, point to the following case.

On Thursday or Friday morning last, before light, Allie Thompson, near Kears, called at the home of Mrs. Leila Sisk and told her that she was wanted at a farm in the neighborhood to help in the work of butchering hogs. This was the second morning he had come to her house on the same errand, each time using the name of different neighbors. Upon the second visit Mrs. Sisk told him that she would be along after light. Thompson said that she could go along with him. To this she acceded. When they reached an isolated spot he assaulted her, tearing her clothes from her in the struggle. Thompson was arrested about 10 o’clock while shucking corn in the field of Mr. Willie Luttrell. Two other suspected colored men had previously been taken before Mrs. Sisk. When Thompson was confronted with her she promptly identified him as the guilty party, and he was brought to Culpeper and placed in jail.

Thompson’s appearance and general make-up was such that it is difficult to think that any one could be mistaken in identifying him. He was a light mulatto, and his face showed more than the average intelligence.

While there appears to be no doubt as to Thompson’s guilt, this resort to lynching law is to be greatly deplored. Had the law been allowed to take its course, it is not thought that there would have been any doubt of his conviction and the imposition of the full penalty – death.

Lynching is murder in the eyes of the law, and no law abiding community should tolerate it. But, in this particular case, the movements of the mob were so quiet and unexpected that it will scarcely be possible to ever identify a single one of the lynchers.

This incident recalls the fact that Lynn Woodson and Horace Williams, charged with the murder last February of Mr. O. F. Clark, the merchant at Mitchells, are still in jail, both of whom were convicted of murder in the first degree. The verdict against Lynn Woodson was set aside afterwards upon the confession of Horace Williams, while exonerated Woodson. Horace Williams later escaped from jail and was afterwards recaptured. His sentence to death is being deferred because of the fact that he is considered a material witness in any proceeding regarding the murder of Mr. Clarke. This case is set for final trial at the coming December term of the Circuit Court.