HOT IRON TORTURE
LYNCHING IN MISSISSIPPI
REVEALED BY N.A.A.C.P.

Lumber Worker Shot, Burned and Body Thrown in River For Objecting to $5.50 Deduction From Pay

New York, June 3. The hot-iron torture lynching of Joe Rodgers, lumber worker and respected citizen of Canton, Mississippi, on May 24, was revealed here today by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, following receipt of an investigator’s report.

According to the investigator’s report Rodgers, a deacon in Canton’s Mt. Zion Baptist Church, was shot, tortured by hot irons, brutally cut, and his body thrown into the Pearl river by a foreman of a local lumber mill where he was employed.

He was lynched, the report said, because he refused to accept a weekly deduction of $5.50 from his wages in payment for testing a company-owned cabin which he did not occupy.

The lynching represents the fifth in the United States for 1959 and the first in Mississippi this year. It was followed by nine other lynchings in Mississippi, in the same town, July 21, 1958. Banks was the innocent victim of a white mob who was making suspects in the killing of a white man.

The lynching of Rodgers has brought no arrests, no publicity from the local papers, and an order from town officials advising local citizens to refrain from discussing the crime, despite the fact that the mill worker’s body has been recovered from the river and given a decent burial. The text of the investigator’s report follows:

"On the eighth of May at Canton, Miss., a Negro named Joe Rodgers was lynched. He was a workman at a lumber company, and was notified by his foreman that he had to live in the mill quarters. He refused to obey these orders. However, the company deducted from his weekly wages the sum of $5.50 for rent just as if he were living in the mill quarters. This Rodgers protested and asked for his full payment. His foreman struck him with a sledge and Rodgers struck his back with one whereupon he was captured, tied and bound, shot, tortured with red hot iron and cut and the body thrown into the Pearl river.

"The body was recovered from the river three days later and held in the funeral parlors of People’s Funeral Home at Canton, Miss. He was later buried at Forest, Miss.

"This man was a deacon of Mt. Zion Baptist church at Canton, president of the church choir and had a splendid record in every way. The newspapers of Canton have not written a word, and there have been no arrests made. The Negroes have been told..."
not to discuss the incident.

"The sheriff of Canton is C. H. James. The mayor of the town is C. N. Harris."

Other lynchings during 1939 listed by the N.A.A.C.P.

February - ELDERADO, ARKANSAS: Walter Lee Frazier - alleged to have molested white couples - shot.

March - WOODCLIFF, GEORGIA: Charley Williams, accused of having said "something to a white woman that she didn't like", was snatched from a freight train and hanged.

April 1 - PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA: Miles W. Brown (white), convicted of first degree murder for the killing of a former employer, was shot to death after being taken from jail by a band of masked men.

April 29 - DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA: Lee Shell, Negro taxi driver, was shot to death on a highway near Daytona Beach while being taken to jail, and Constable James Durden said the slayers were two brothers of a boy fatally injured by Shell's taxi several hours earlier.