Had Been Threatened

Mob Takes Life Of Ga. Farmer

(Special to The Courier)

BAINBRIDGE, Ga.—The body of 53-year-old Hollis Riles, well-to-do 200-acre farm owner, lay in the morgue of a local undertaker Sunday as sheriff's investigators and GBI agents launched a probe into his slaying that had all the earmarks of a lynching.

Riles was shot by five white men, whom he had ordered off his fish pond, according to reports to Decatur County Sheriff A. E. White. His body was found Friday night propped up against a tree where he had staggered after being hit with thirteen buckshot. The spot of the murder scene is in extreme Northeast Decatur County, about fourteen miles from Bainbridge.

Sheriff White expressed belief it was a case of premeditated murder, since he was still investigating an incident of last May, when Riles' house was riddled with bullets fired from an unidentified automobile. When last seen, Riles was seen fishing in the pond.

A coroner's jury, which conducted an inquest by flashlight Friday night, found that Riles came to his death "inflicted by unknown parties."

Jesse Gordon, 52, who accompanied Riles to his pond, known as a fishing paradise, was a witness to the shooting. He told Sheriff White that he and the farm owner went to the pond Friday afternoon. Gordon planned to fish. Riles carried his shotgun, having feared for some months his life was in danger.

SAW GUNS

Upon approaching the pond, Riles and Gordon saw two white men lounging under a tree, their guns beside them. At the pond they found two other white men, one of whom had a string of fish. One of the white men, Riles said, told the white men the pond was posted and they must either get off or pay for the privilege of fishing. One of the men gave the fish to Gordon after commenting they did not know the pond was posted and promised to leave at once.

Shortly afterwards, Gordon said he heard shots and turned up to see four or five men shooting at Riles as he ran across a clearing. The farmer did not return their fire, Gordon said. Gordon said the shots were heard about five minutes after the first shot, Gordon said.

The witness said he watched two cars drive away. The license plate of one of the vehicles was covered.