Negro Taken Out Of Marianna Jail Beaten to Death

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MARIANNA—(AP)—Celloss Harrison, negro awaiting trial Monday on a charge of killing a white man, was taken from the Jackson county jail here yesterday by a group of men, and several hours later he was found beaten to death.

A coroner's jury, conducting an inquest, decided Harrison "came to his death from wounds inflicted by a blunt or sharp instrument in the hands of an unknown person or persons."

No arrests have been made. Deputy Sheriff A. J. McMullen reported "we are investigating the case." Sheriff Barkley Gauss is in Ocala attending the state sheriff's convention.

Tom Belser, night jailer, said four men came to the jail shortly after midnight and told him they had a drunk man they wanted locked up. He opened the gate, he said, and one man, holding a gun, forced him to stand by while the others removed Harrison from his cell. Belser said the men were masked with paper sacks over their heads, and he didn't recognize them. He didn't know they were masked, he said, when he opened the jail gate.

Harrison's body was found at daylight in a roadside ditch five miles south of Marianna by state highway patrolmen and deputies who conducted a search. McMullen said the negro had been killed by blows on the head. "We didn't find any bullet holes in his body," he added.

Harrison was to be tried Monday on a charge of killing Johnnie Mayo, white filling station operator, in 1940 by beating him on the head with a hammer. He previously had been convicted, but the state supreme court ordered a new trial, holding that a purported confession used as evidence at the original trial was obtained under "influences calculated to delude the mind of the ignorant negro of its far-reaching consequences." The court did not elaborate.

Lt. Reid Clifton of the state highway patrol headquarters in Tallahassee and four other patrolmen came here early yesterday to help local officers. If they were needed, but Clifton reported there were no disturbances during the day.

Governor Spessard L. Holland is out of the state, and there was no comment by other state officials at the capital.

Marianna is located in northwest Florida, 75 miles west of Tallahassee. It is the county seat of Jackson county, which has a population of 34,427, with 36 percent listed as negro in the 1940 federal census.
Democracy Has A Holiday

ONE of the things that this war is about is the right of every man to a fair trial and due process of law. We abhor the Nazis and the Fascists and the Japs because their system allows them to murder innocent people.

Yet, up in Marianna, in west Florida, on Tuesday night four men took it upon themselves to take a murder suspect from jail and lynch him.

The men guilty of this crime are no better than the enemies we are fighting, and the only way Florida can clear itself in this disgraceful matter is to bring to court and try for murder the persons responsible.

Florida's record on lynchings in the past few years has been excellent. We have had no lynchings.

Southern senators have been crying about states' rights. They say each state should have the right to handle its own problems. With that right, then, also goes the responsibility to see that every citizen gets fair treatment. Since that responsibility has been violated, it is now the duty of the state to punish those guilty. If it fails, the federal government may see fit to step in and take a hand as it did in a recent Mississippi lynching case.