

14 LYNCHING IN STATE SINCE 1885, NONE PROSECUTED

Prior to the hanging of Mathew Williams here December 4, there had been thirteen lynchings in Maryland since 1885. A summary perusal of the court records for the last half century in the counties where the lynchings occurred reveal that in each case the investigating agencies failed to establish the identity of the mob leaders sufficiently to procure either indictment or conviction.

The usual procedure has been to empanel a coroner's jury for the purpose of fixing responsibility for the victim's death. In a few instances, the case was sent to the grand jury, though this practice was followed in a minority of the cases, since the coroner's jury had already rendered a verdict that death had been "caused by unknown persons."

Of the fourteen lynchings, five occurred on the Eastern Shore, seven in the western shore counties and one in Baltimore city.

In the latter case, King Davis, a Negro, was taken from the jail in Brooklyn, Baltimore suburb, on December 23, 1911, and shot to death. Davis had slain a resident of Anne Arundel county. A coroner's jury found "unknown persons" perpetrated the lynching.

The same verdict was rendered by a coroner's jury in Cumberland probing the lynching of William Burns, Negro, the day after he had slain a city policeman.

At Princess Anne where Isaac Kemp and William Andrews, were taken from the jail and lynched, respectively in 1894 and 1897, the coroner's jury's investigation was followed by a grand jury probe, neither of which produced results.

The Kent county grand jury was instructed to investigate the lynching of James Taylor who was taken from the jail at Chestertown and hanged in May 1892. Nine witnesses were called but none were found who could identify any members of the mob.

Similar action, with the same lack of results, was taken in St. Mary's county after the lynching of Benjamin Hance, taken from the jail by a mob at Leonardtown.

Docket entries in the case of Howard Cooper, indicted for rape and assault with intent to kill by a Baltimore county grand jury, end abruptly with these words: "Abated by death of prisoner." The case had been removed to the criminal court in Baltimore city for trial, before Cooper was taken from the Towson jail and lynched. There is no record of jury investigation.

Of the other lynchings in Maryland, no court records are found of grand jury indictments, according to the clerks of the Circuit Court in the counties where the lynchings occurred.

The case of James Reed, hanged after slaying an officer at Crisfield was not reported to the court, Clerk J. Milliard Tawes stated.

Henry Davis was taken from the Annapolis jail and hanged in the rear of the college grounds, but "there was dothing done in the matter whatsoever; according to Clerk Frank S. Revell of the Anne Arundel county Court.

Court records were searched for investigation into the lynching of James Bowen in Frederick and "my opinion is that no action was taken by the grand jury in the matter," stated Eli G. Hough, the clerk.

Records also fail to furnish enlightenment on the disposition of the reports on the lynching of Jacob Henson, at Ellicott City and Hoe Verillion at Upper Marlboro, but in each of these the court clerk expressed the opinion there was no action taken toward investigation that would bring about a conviction.