



“Killing Them by The Wholesale” Lynching rampage in South Georgia

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Mob Violence

- Mob violence and lynching, which have a long history in Brooks County, Georgia, had become even more prevalent in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries



May 1918

- The local townspeople in Brooks County had been following the story for almost a week, and the saga of Sidney Johnson was coming to an end.

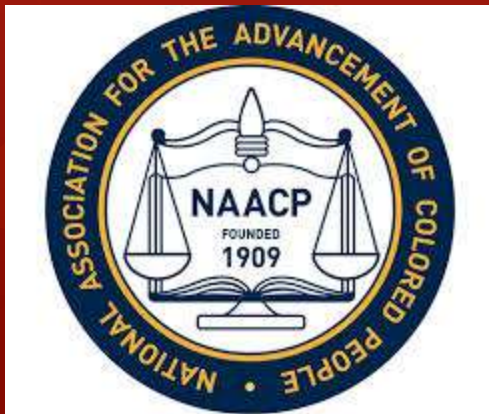




- There were so many lynching between 1880 and 1930 that two sociologists have called this the “lynching era”

NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)

- The NAACP reported 3,244 lynchings between 1889 and 1918, while the Tuskegee Institute counted 4,587 for the years 1882-1930. Lastly, the southern commission on the study of lynching concluded there were 3,724 lynchings



A New National Past Time

- It was indeed fraught with irony that the progressive era, when social justice was one of the reformers goals an event that was unjust became known as the national crime. More recently, one historian suggested that lynching at this time had become “a new national past time.”

The Assault



- While Mrs. Smith dragged herself to safety, Sidney Johnson and his accomplices ransacked the home, taking the gun, ammunition, some clothing, and Smiths pocket watch. The interior of the house was demolished. After crawling to safety, Smith named her assailants, positively identifying Sidney Johnson and Julius Jones.

Will Head

- The first of the mob's victims was Will Head, one of the employees who had helped plan the killing. Head was captured early Friday morning, May 17, near Barney.
- While being held the mob with details of the plan to kill Smith.
- He was taken to Troupville, about five miles from Valdosta in the neighboring Lowndes County. There he was hanged under a large oak tree.

Eugene Rice

- The mob caught and lynched its fifth victim during the day on Saturday. This man, Eugene Rice was employed on Smith's farm and allegedly attended the meeting at which the killing had been planned. Rice was apprehended and hanged Saturday after noon at the Camp Ground Church between Morven and Barney.

Sidney Johnson

- One newspaper reported that the corpse was “placed upon a fat pine stump and large quantities of wood piled around it, and the whole was then thoroughly saturated with oil.
- When the officers and some of the crowd finally entered the structure they discovered Johnson dead.

Mobs Victims



- Little was known of these individuals and It is unclear whether they were additional victims of the mob or the bodies of those already lynched.
- On Wednesday, May 22 Valdosta police officers, led by Chief Dampier, went to the house , located at South Troup and South streets, to arrest the suspect.

Walter F. White

- They sent an investigator, assistant secretary Walter F. White, to Brooks county to look into the affair. White, because of his light skin and blue eyes, was able to infiltrate southern white society and frequently spoke with the men who had been lynched. This was exactly what happened in his investigation in South Georgia; he conversed with members of the mob and learned names not only of the individuals involved but also leaders.

Hampton Smith

- Hampton Smith had abused his workers over a lengthy period of time, and they finally took matters into their own hands. The combination of the murder of Hampton Smith and the allegations (however true) of the sexual assault of his wife were enough for the lynch mob to murder at least thirteen victims.
- An explanation for who became a victim of lynch mobs was put forth by Walter White in a 1934 statement to a U.S senate committee