

BURN NEGRO AT STAKE

Murderer of a White Woman Is Cremated by Citizens of Bartow, Fla.

HIDEOUS CRIME AVENGED

Entire Population Turns Out to Assist in Destroying Slayer of Mrs. Rena Taggart.

ALL NIGHT SEARCH REWARDED

Prisoner Is Turned Over to the Sheriff by His Friends, but Is Taken From Jail and Executed by De- termined People.

[SPECIAL TO THE RECORD-HERALD.]
BARTOW, Fla., May 29.—Fred Rochelle, a negro, who yesterday assaulted and murdered Mrs. Lena Taggart, was this evening burned at the stake on the spot where his crime was committed. Business was suspended and every citizen of Bartow attended the execution.

The crime was the most revolting and cold-blooded in the history of Florida. Mrs. Taggart, who was born and reared here, belonged to one of the best white families in the state. Yesterday forenoon she was fishing in a small rowboat belonging to Edward Taggart, her husband.

Toward noon she rowed in from the little creek and tied her boat to a bridge. A negro was fishing from the bridge, and she spoke to him as she started across the little strip of prairie to her home.

Negro Was Lying in Wait.

She had not proceeded far until another negro, lying in wait for her in the swamp, sprang out and seized her. Screaming and fighting, she managed to break away from him and start back to the public highway.

The negro speedily overtook her and dragged her back to the edge of the swamp where he assaulted her and then deliberately

cut her throat, despite her pleas for mercy. The negro on the bridge was a witness to the crime, but was too badly frightened to attempt to save the woman.

After making sure that Mrs. Taggart was dead, Rochelle, brandishing the bloody knife, approached the negro on the bridge and asked him what disposition should be made of the body. He was advised to leave it where it was, but disregarding this advice, he picked up the mutilated form, hurled it further into the swamp and then disappeared.

Entire Town Is Aroused.

The negro on the bridge ran speedily to town and gave the alarm. Posses were formed and immediate search begun for the murderer. Bloodhounds were put upon his trail, but they were thrown off by the streams in the swamp. All during the night the search was continued without success, but was resumed to-day.

At 2 o'clock this afternoon some negroes captured Rochelle when he left the swamp and approached a cabin, seeking food. They brought him to Bartow in a wagon, taking a circuitous route to avoid the posses riding over all the highways. Rochelle was turned over to the sheriff and placed in jail. Meanwhile couriers had been sent out in every direction calling in the searchers. When all had arrived stores were closed, and the sole business of every man in the town was centered upon the execution of Rochelle.

It was 6 o'clock when the citizens appeared in front of the jail and demanded the prisoner. Only a nominal resistance was offered and the guards were pushed aside. With a rope around his neck, Rochelle, screaming, begging, praying and cursing, was dragged from the jail.

Dragged to the Bridge.

By common consent the crowd started for the bridge overlooking the scene of the crime. While there was no organization, everything was orderly. Rochelle was led upon the bridge and his face turned toward the dark spot marking the crime for which he was soon to pay the extreme penalty.

The negro who had witnessed the crime positively identified him. In fact, there was no need of identification, for Rochelle admitted the crime and started to explain it, but the enraged neighbors of the murdered woman refused to listen to his story of the revolting crime.

Meanwhile busy hands were gathering fagots. Directly over the spot where Mrs. Taggart was done to death a stake was driven into the ground and a barrel placed beside it. The inflammables were piled around this, and then Rochelle was hoisted upon the barrel and bound to the stake.

By this time he was speechless with terror. The executioners moved swiftly and silently. They had grim work to do and desired to have it quickly over with.

Expiates His Terrible Crime.

There was no thought of hanging him. Death by fire seemed the only fitting punishment. Cans filled with kerosene were speedily passed to the men in front, and the negro was thoroughly saturated. He begged for mercy, but his pleadings fell on deaf ears.

Then the match was applied. Writhing,

screaming and cursing, Rochelle tugged at the chains. The crowd was silent. The stern, set faces were hard and pitiless. In fifteen minutes all that remained of the murderer was a shapeless mass of smoking flesh slipping down through the red-hot chains to the ground, which was still wet with the blood of his victim.

Had Planned the Assault.

The scene of the crime and execution is within a hundred yards of the main thoroughfare of Bartow. On each side of the road is a strip of swamp, and beyond that, across a bit of prairie, was the Taggart home. It was apparent that Rochelle had planned the crime and knew that the woman would cross the strip of swamp in going home.

Rochelle was 35 years of age and bore an unsavory reputation. His victim will be buried to-morrow. Immediately after the burning of the murderer the crowd quietly dispersed. At no time was there any talking.

It was the act of determined neighbors, appalled by the enormity of the crime and bent on ridding the earth of the monster who committed it.

NEGRO BURNED AT THE STAKE BY A MOB

Hundreds of Men, Women and Children Looked on at the Torture.

ACCUSED OF MURDERING MRS. EDWARD TAGGART.

Tracked with Bloodhounds, Soaked with Kerosene, He Died Screaming for Mercy.

(By Associated Press.)

BARTOW, Fla., May 29.—Fred Rochelle, a negro, thirty-five years of age, who at noon yesterday assaulted and then murdered Mrs. Rena Taggart, a well-known and respectable white woman of this city, was burned at the stake here early this evening in the presence of a throng of men, women and children.

The burning was on the scene of the negro's crime, within one hundred yards of the principal thoroughfare of this city.

The murder was one of the boldest and coldest-blooded crimes ever committed in Florida.

Bloodhounds were secured and all night a fruitless search was continued. This morning no trace of the negro had been secured, and the men were

becoming more determined to apprehend him as the chances for his final escape seemed to grow.

About noon a courier arrived announcing that the negro had been captured by two other negroes three miles south of the city.

Posses were immediately on the trail, but the capturers evaded detection and succeeded in getting their prisoner quickly into the city and in turning him over to the Sheriff of Polk County.

In less than ten minutes after the transfer had been made the streets became congested with people, and the crowd, augmented as it marched, moved on the jail.

In spite of the Sheriff and a strong guard of extra deputies who made every effort to protect him from mob violence, they secured the prisoner and took up the march to the scene of the crime.

He was half dragged, half carried to the bridge, enveloped by a great throng of people of all ages, who were resolute and determined, but quiet and orderly.

Scream after scream broke from the wretch's quivering lips, followed by groans and prayers for mercy. At the bridge the mob turned toward the prairie, and then into the swamp and to the scene of the negro's crime.

By common consent burning was to be the penalty. There were no ropes and no plans for lynching by hanging.

The stake was the only suggestion as to the proper expiation of the crime and without organized effort and yet with apparently unanimous understanding, a barrel was in readiness and was placed by the stake on the very spot where Mrs. Taggart was murdered.

Chained to the Stake.

On this the negro was placed and chained to the stake. He pleaded for mercy, but in the great crowd around him silence was the only response. There were no jeers, no swearing, no disorder.

Before the chains around his body had been made fast cans of kerosene oil from many sources were passed to the front, and one of the leaders stepped to the negro and slowly but deliberately poured it upon him and his clothes until clothes and barrel were well saturated.

It was then 6 o'clock.

The crowd was growing and business in the city had practically been suspended. When the match was applied the blaze quickly leaped skyward.

The burning body could be seen only as a dark object in the circle of a roaring flame. Then the fire slackened and the writhing body came back in full view, but the groans had ceased and the only evidence of life was in the contortions of the muscles of the limbs.

For fifteen minutes the body burned and in a half hour from the time of the application of the match only the charred bones were left as a reminder of the negro's crime and his fate. The crowd dispersed as orderly as it had gathered and at 8.30 to-night the city was quiet.