

Timeline to a Lynching

Chatham County North Carolina, 1885

This paper consists of clippings from various newspapers reporting on murders that occurred in Chatham County, NC and the lynchings that followed. The murder victims, all white, and the lynching victims, all Black, were Chatham citizens.

The first murders occurred in December 1883, when two members of the Gunter family, Mrs. Olive Gunter and her daughter Jane, were found bludgeoned to death, and Mrs. Gunter's granddaughter severely wounded in their home south of Pittsboro. First accused of the murders was a relative, Baxter Gunter, but after many months, the blame shifted to John Pattishall. Details about evidence indicating Pattishall's guilt are not found in the clippings provided here.

Three additional murders were committed in July of 1885. Elderly Ned Finch and his sister Sally,ⁱ along with their hired Negro boy Ephraim Ellington were bludgeoned to death in the Finch home in the same neighborhood as the Gunters. Accused were three Black neighbors, Jerry and Harriet Finch, and Lee Tyson. The newspapers indicate that Harriet, Jerry's wife, and also his his sister were later "hung up" by unknown assailants in an attempt to get them to provide information about the crime, but that despite this torture, both continued to claim no knowledge of it.

A grand jury indictment of Jerry and Harriet Finch, and Lee Tyson for the Finch murders was made in September of 1885 and their trial scheduled for the next court date. On 28 Sept 1885, however, disguised men took the three, along with John Pattishall, who had been arrested (but not indicted) for the Gunter murders from the jail in Pittsboro. A mob had already gathered and from there took the four prisoners to a large oak where they were hanged. The Chatham Record provides great detail of the event, which was covered by papers all over the country.

The clippings provided here describe these ugly events—both the murders and the lynchings—as they were covered in real time, providing detail that otherwise would have been lost and perspective that shows how the events were viewed at the time they occurred. Little comment is necessary.

Thanks to DigitalNC and NCLive and Newspapers.com for making these pages available and searchable. The recent digitization of newspapers allows word search, which allows the amateur historian to take a deep look at past events, records of which would have been previously buried like so many needles in a haystack.

"Some see the world as a struggle between good and evil; some see the world as a mad parade of fear and folly.
Some see only points of view."

Anonymous

Compiled by Doug Berg, 2022

A Horrible Murder

A HORRIBLE MURDER.—The most unprovoked and diabolical murder that we have ever heard of was committed in this county, on last Saturday night. The victims were two old women and a little girl. Mrs. Olive Garter nearly 90 years old, her daughter, Miss Jane, about 65, and her grand-daughter about 8 years old. The two women lived alone about four miles south of this place, and, on last Sunday morning, Mr. Baxter Garter, a son of the old lady and who lived a short distance from her, went to her house and found his mother dead in one bed, and in another his sister, and lying by her side was his little daughter (who had gone there to spend the night) barely breathing. He at once called in some neighbors and what a horrible sight met their eyes! The women's heads were badly crushed and gashed, their brains oozing out and their blood smeared on the bed clothes,

and both cold in death. The little girl's head was fractured and bloody, but she was still breathing, though unconscious. All of them were lying on their sides in a natural sleeping position, and apparently were murdered while asleep. Near the gate was found a bloody axe, which undoubtedly was the instrument of their deaths. There were no signs of robbery, nothing was missing. A messenger was immediately sent for the coroner, and soon a crowd of excited neighbors was assembled.

Upon the arrival of the coroner a jury of inquest was empanelled and viewed the dead bodies. A few witnesses were examined and because of the suspicions excited by their evidence, three negro men living in the neighborhood and named Lewis Farrer, Fred. Johnson and Frank McClenahan were arrested and confined here in jail that night to await a further examination next day. Next

further examination next day. Next day the jury of inquest met again, and, after hearing all the evidence that could then be obtained, decided there was not sufficient cause for the further detention of the prisoners and they were accordingly released. The jury continued their investigation yesterday but could not find sufficient evidence to justify the arrest of any one, but "murder will be out" and we confidently predict that the author of this most atrocious crime will yet be convicted.

Of course the perpetration of so shocking a **murder** has sent a thrill of horror throughout all this section and has produced intense excitement. We are pleased to hear that, on yesterday, there were hopes entertained that the little girl might recover, and, if she does, she may be able to clear up the mystery. Pieces of her skull were removed and her head skilfully trepanned by Drs. Budd and Hanks. It is thought she was awakened by the **murder** of her grandmother and aunt, and, as she raised up her head, was stricken with the murderous

The idea of so fiendish a crime being committed in our quiet and peaceful county!

12/27/83

MURDERED.

TERRIBLE TALE FROM CHATHAM COUNTY.

**The Killing of Mrs. and Miss Gunter—
Fatal Wounding of the Little Girl
—Complete Details of the Hor-
rible Crime—The Search
for the Assassin.**

[Special to THE NEWS AND OBSERVER.]

MONCURE, N. C., December 27.

You have published the facts of the murder near here Saturday night, the victims being Mrs. Olive Gunter, aged 89; Miss Jane Gunter, aged 64 and a little girl eight years old, the latter being yet alive but perhaps mortally injured.

The facts of the crime in detail as they have been reported to us by trustworthy persons, are as follows: Mrs. Olive Gun-

ter and her daughter Jane lived in a house alone on the McQueen road about four miles southwest of Pittsboro. It was this revolting tragedy occurred. mile distant lives

three otherwise look after ter's comfort. He was there on Saturday late in the afternoon, ministered to their wants and returned home, leaving them in their usual health. That night he went with Mr. William Womble, a near neighbor, to a prayer meeting at a neighboring school-house. As he returned from prayer meeting, carrying in his hand a torch-light, he says he passed by the house and seeing the door ajar and a light in the fireplace, stopped long enough to ask what time of night it was. His sister answered 8.30 and his daughter 8.40. Without further conversation he

840. Without further conversation he passed on and went immediately home. In the morning, as it was Sunday, and a cloudy morning, he did not go over there as early as usual. He reached there between dawn and sunrise and as he approached the house he saw the door ajar but this awakened no suspicions. He says he went at once to the fireplace and began to remove the ashes from the fire coals, remarking as he did so "mother, you are sleeping late this morning." To this there came no response. Yet no suspicion was awakened, as he supposed she was only asleep. But when he turned around and observed her hand partly under the cover, hanging down and strikingly pale, he went to the bedside, and took hold of her hand and finding it cold, looked further at her face, saw the blood, the wounds, the death pallor, and discovered that his mother was dead. He rushed across the room to the bed in which his sister and daughter were sleeping, exclaiming, "mother is dead." He was further more profoundly

horrified at the bloody spectacle of his sister lying cold in death. Looking beyond her for his little daughter, he was appalled to find her, though warm with the pulsations of life, yet speechless and her skull crushed by the blows of the assassin. Mrs. Gunter was lying on her left side, in a comfortable position for rest. She had received two severe blows with the edge of her own axe, which it is thought by Mr. Gunter was left the evening before on the porch. One of the blows was made a little above and behind her right ear and the other on her neck behind a perpendicular line passing across her right ear. Miss Jane Gunter was also found lying on her left side, as any one might be expected to be who was sleeping comfortably. She had received a severe blow with the butt of the axe, a little to the right of the crown of her head, which crushed in her skull and made an aperture through which her brains were oozing. She also had received two other shocking blows with the edge of the axe,

one a little above and back of the right ear and the other one on her right cheek, cutting into her cheek bone and making a deep gash where her teeth were in contact. The little girl received two severe blows with the butt of the axe on the top of her head, which crushed her skull.

Dr. Hanks, the coroner, was summoned immediately. Upon an investigation, to discover the criminal, three colored men were arrested. But subsequent inquiry led the jury to conclude that they were innocent and they were released. The jury of inquest continued their investigations from Sunday until late yesterday evening. No developments leading to the arrest of any one were made. Every effort seems to have been exerted to discover the assassin.

The jury's verdict was: "We find that Mrs. Olive Gunter and Miss J. B. Gunter came to their death by the use of an axe in the hands of some person or persons to the jurors unknown." Great excitement prevailed in the neighborhood of the tragedy.

This afternoon it is reported that a man was arrested, against whom is a strong suspicion. He is a relative of the family.

F. A. W.

The Triple Murder in Chatham.

In Tuesday's paper we published a telegram giving the facts of the murder of Mrs. Alvin Gunter, her daughter and granddaughter, at Chatham church, six miles from Moncure. Since that time three negro men were arrested. The circumstances which led to their arrest were as follows: A negro lad, once employed by Mrs. Gunter, acknowledged upon inquiry, that he had told three negro men that he had seen Mrs. Gunter have quite a sum of money, a \$100 bill and some smaller ones. As soon as this fact was discovered the three men named by the boy were arrested. It was found, however, that there was no evidence against the men that they had committed the murder. So they were released on that charge. Two of them acknowledged having been concerned in a robbery at another place and were held. It was discovered, on making an examination of the house where the murder was committed, that the money (about \$100) had not been touched. We learn that a neighbor of Mrs. Gunter was around in his yard Sunday night, and his house being quite near, the noise he made might have frightened away the murderers just as they had done their terrible work and before they could rob the house. It appears pretty evident that the murder was committed to get possession of the money. The citizens of the good county of Chatham, which is notably one of the most law-abiding and peaceful in the State, are terribly wrought up by the horrible crime. They have been doing very hard work in their search for the murderers, and this continues. Hundreds of people visited the scene of the murder.

Articles: Authors: House

A year and a half later:
Chatham Record. 9 July 1885,

A Triple Tragedy!

A DIABOLICAL DEED—THREE PERSONS MURDERED—GREAT EXCITEMENT.

On last Saturday night the most diabolical deed of which we have almost ever heard was committed in this county, being the murder of two old white persons and a colored boy. The victims were Mr. Edward Finch, aged 79 years, his sister Miss Sally Finch, aged 82 years, and a negro, named Ephraim Ellington, aged about 16 years. They were all murdered in the dwelling house of Mr. Finch, about six miles south of this place and within two miles of the scene of the Gunter murder that took place about 18 months ago. These three persons were the only occupants of the premises, and all were killed by blows on the head inflicted with an axe, just as the Gunter women were killed. The first person to give the alarm was a colored woman, named Mary Neal, who lived about a quarter of a mile distant and who every morning went to Mr. Finch's to milk and cook breakfast. On Sunday

and cook breakfast. On Sunday morning, as usual, she went there about half an hour after sunrise, and as no one in the house seemed to be stirring she called the boy, Ephraim, but as he did not answer she supposed they were all asleep and went to the cow-pen and milked the cow. After that she returned to the kitchen (a few yards from the dwelling) and strained the milk, and then hearing no movement in the dwelling she called Ephraim several times. No answer being given to her calls she became alarmed and at once hurried to the residence of Mr. Henry White (about half a mile distant) and told him that something was the matter

him that something was the matter at Mr. Finch's. Mr. White and his ten-year old son, Tommy, immediately hastened to Mr. Finch's, and on their arrival there Tommie ran ahead and started to enter the house, but rushed back from the door exclaiming "they are all killed"! Mr. White by that time had reached the house and upon hearing Tommie's exclamation ran to the stable lot and began calling Mr. J. H. Poe, who lived about a quarter of a mile off. In a few minutes Mr. Poe and Mr. Nathan Gilmore arrived and entered the dwelling, and oh! what a terrible sight met their eyes. There on the floor of one room lay the dead body of Ephraim Ellington from which a stream of blood had poured and ran across the room: in her bed in the same room was old Miss Saily Finch with her head all covered with blood:

with her head all covered with blood; and in the adjoining room was the dead body of Mr. Finch lying in bed, while on the floor were scattered papers and the drawers of a bureau that had been pillaged, and an axe that was bloody. The neighborhood was soon in a state of great excitement and the neighbors quickly assembled. A messenger was at once sent for the coroner, and another came here. By 12 o'clock two or three hundred people had come there and of course all were greatly excited. Everybody determined to do all that was possible to detect the perpetrators of so shocking a murder, and yet there seemed to be no clue that could be followed. The coroner arrived before mid-day and summoned as the jury of inquest Messrs. A. J. Bynum, A. H. Merritt, W. J. Wombie, Carson Johnson,

The jurors were at once sworn, and proceeded with their investigation, being assisted in the examination of the witnesses by Messrs. H. A. London and T. B. Womack. A number of witnesses were examined that day, and from their evidence suspicion was excited against two colored men, named Jerry Finch and Lee Tyson, who were arrested and brought here to jail that night to await further developments. We do not think it proper now to publish the evidence of the witnesses. We would however state that there is little or no truth in many of the rumors that are being circulated. The jury met again on Tuesday and yesterday and diligently continued their investigation. They are to meet again today, and it may be several days before a verdict is rendered.

Mr. Finch was an old bachelor and much respected by his neighbors, and did not have an enemy in the world, as was supposed. His sister had always lived with him, and no one could have imagined that this good old brother and sister would ever have met with so horrible an end, living, as they did, so quietly, peaceably and simply. With them lived the colored boy Ephraim, whose mother on her death-bed had given him to Mr. Finch, and who faithfully waited on his good old couple and shared their fate. The wounds were all inflicted with Mr. Finch's own axe, which was found lying in the room covered with blood and gray hairs. Each victim had received more than one blow, showing that the murderers were determined to make sure of their bloody work. Ephraim's neck was cut almost half in two, and his skull badly fractured. The old lady's face was a most ghastly sight, one side being crushed to a jelly, while Mr. Finch's face and head were horribly managled with seven blows of the axe. It is supposed that more than one person committed the murders. There were no signs of any

struggle, the victims having been killed while asleep. Robbery is supposed to have been the cause of the murders. Mr. Finch was generally known to be a man who usually had considerable money on hand, and a bureau in his room in which he kept his money was found broken open and pillaged. The drawers of it, in which was some clothing, were found piled on the floor and his valuable papers scattered around, except a few that had been burned in the fireplace by the murderers. It is not known how much money was taken from the bureau, as no one knows how much Mr. Finch had. But they did not get all he had, because they failed to open his desk that stood in a corner of his room, and in which

the coroner's jury found \$67.50 in gold and \$200 in greenbacks.

There is a most striking and suspicious coincidence between this murder and the Gunter murder, that occurred on Christmas Eve of 1883. Both occurred on Saturday night; the fatal instrument of death used at both was the axe that belonged to the victims; both occurred in the same neighborhood; and there was the same number (three) of victims at each, two being old and one being young.

Of course such mysterious and brutal murders have created a widespread excitement in this county, and no little uneasiness is felt by the citizens of the county. Our county authorities are doing everything possible to detect and punish the murderers, and our citizens are all on the alert and doing what they can. They feel that it is not only proper to punish the perpetrators of such fiendish crimes, but that the safety of others demands that this mysterious murdering must be put a stop to. Not only does the safety of our citizens demand this, but the fair name of our good old county must not be again so disgraced.

7/9/85

A TRIPLE MURDER.

CHATHAM STAINED BY A MOST
ATROCIOUS CRIME.

TWO VENERABLE PEOPLE AND THEIR COLORED
SERVANT BRAINED AND MUTILATED —
ELEMENTS OF MYSTERY IN THE
MATTER—TWO NEGROES AR-
RESTED—FOOTPRINTS AND
CLOTHING AS CLUES.

Special Dispatch to NEWS AND OBSERVER.

MONROE, July 6.

Edward Finch, aged 79 years, and his sister, aged 81, both white, and a negro boy about 17 years of age were murdered near here Saturday night, between midnight and day. The throats of all were cut. It was evident at a glance that all three had been knocked in the head with an axe.

The scene of the murder is only about two miles from that of the famous Gunter murder, eighteen months ago, and is six miles from Moncure.

It is reported that several hundred dollars in money were stolen from the house of Mr. Finch. It is thought probable that the robbers became murderers to screen themselves from detection.

It is reported here this morning that one of the murderers has been captured at his home, with his hand yet red with the blood of his victims. He was found, it is said, in his house, washing the blood from his hands.

Great excitement prevails in this entire section, among all classes of people, and earnest efforts are being made to discover the murderers, of whom there are believed to be several.

J. F. W.

[Moncure is in Chatham county, on the Raleigh & Augusta Air-Line, about 35 miles from Raleigh, and is the station nearest Pittsboro. The Gunter murder, of which mention is made, was one of the most horrible crimes ever perpetrated in this State.]

A FULLER ACCOUNT.

The murder committed within six miles of Pittsboro, in the very neighborhood of the Gunter murder, last Sunday morning, was one of the most atrocious that disgraces the annals of the State, more than equalling in fiendish butchery that which occurred there some eighteen months ago. In a thickly settled neighborhood there lived Mr. Edwin Finch an old bachelor, 79 years of age, with his maiden sister, herself almost 81, and with them lived a negro boy of 17, who some years ago was bound to Mr. Finch and who slept in the room, to be within easy call. A short half mile in one direction was the house of Mr. White, a natural son of Mr. Finch, about 35 years of age, well-to-do, the only son of his father, who had made

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Finch, about 50 years of age, well-to-do, the
a will in his father, who had made
manager. In another direction, and about
the same distance, lived Mr. Poe, a re-
spectable man and good neighbor. Mr.
Finch was prosperous and had money to
lend, and kept cash on hand to pay his
farm hands and for use for other purposes.
On this occasion he had in a secretary in
his room \$365, and perhaps some in his
bureau, which he kept locked; but if so,
the amount is unknown. Near by lived a
negro, Jere Finch, with his wife, sister
and child, and there were other negro
neighbors. Jere was acquainted in a gen-
eral way with all that happened at Mr.
Finch's. His sister milked the cows there.

Saturday night Jere Finch and a
negro named L. e. Tyson, who has a bad
reputation, were in Pittsboro, where they
remained until 11:30 p. m.; when they
left for home. They said at the investi-
gation that a rain overtook them and they
sought shelter in a gin house, where they
remained some time, and that the chickens
were crowing when they left; that they

were crowing when they left; that they reached home before day and went to bed. They wore new shoes.

Sand y morning, as usual, Jere's sister left his house to go to Mr. Finch's and milk. She noticed the door ajar and called for the boy, but eliciting no response went on and milked: Returning, she again called the boy; and getting no answer she went some distance and called Mr. White, telling him that she feared something was wrong at the house. Mr. White and his little boy came on and the little boy ran in the house and rushed out, exclaiming "They are all dead!" Mr. White, without going in, went some little distance and called neighbor Poe, who came and with others went into the house before Mr. White did. They found that Mr. Finch had been stabbed in the throat and knocked on the head with an axe. Miss Finch had been similiarly butchered, while on the floor lay the negro boy, with his head nearly severed from his body by cuts from the ax, and his skull crushed in a most barbarous manner, his teeth knocked out

the ax, and his skull crushed in a most barbarous manner, his teeth knocked out of his head, &c., &c. The floor was covered with blood.

The secretary had not been touched. The top of the bureau had been knocked off and the drawers knocked out with the axe, the contents being thrown on the floor. The axe and the knife had been thrown into one of these drawers. The deed had evidently been very recently committed, probably just before day. The body of Miss French was warm until noon.

An examination revealed the fact that two men with new shoes, whose footsteps well agreed with those of Jere Finch and Tyson, had crossed a ploughed field and come to the house, and then had returned. There were also prints of a mule's feet across the field and to the house. Where the men got over the fence were some threads on the rails that seemed to have been caught in the splinters from trousers stuff.

Jere's wife and a neighbor use a washing pot in common, which was at the neighbor's Saturday night. Sunday morning early she got the pot and soon returned it. At her house was found a pair of Jere's trousers, with only the legs

T D	<p>wet, hanging out to dry. She said she had washed them Friday. Her little daughter said she got the pot Sunday morning, washed them and then threw the water out of the pot. The threads on the fence rail appeared to be of the same stuff as these trousers. The latter have been brought to Dr. Dabney for test for blood stains.</p>	<p>She said she had washed them Friday. Her little daughter said she got the pot Sunday morning, washed them and then threw the water out of the pot. The threads on the fence rail appeared to be of the same stuff as these trousers. The latter have been brought to Dr. Dabney for test for blood stains.</p>
	<p>THE LATEST NEWS Special to THE NEWS AND OBSERVER. MONDAY, July 10 P. M.</p>	
	<p>The two negroes who were arrested are both in jail. Suspicion points to three other negroes and the greatest efforts are being made to effect their capture. There will be a preliminary trial tomorrow.</p>	
	<p>S. F. WOMBLE</p>	

7/7/85

Raleigh News and Observer 15 July 1885

D f 8 t e s - A 9 -	<p>Ordered to Pittsboro.</p> <p>On last Friday morning Gov. Scales sent a dispatch to Mr. E. J. Parrish, Captain of the Durham Light Infantry, ordering them to get ready to move to Pittsboro to quell an insurrection. The Capt. soon assembled his Company at the Armory; a second dispatch was received ordering him to dismiss the Company, but hold them in readiness for any emergency. Capt. Parrish sent the following telegram:</p>
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following telegram:

DURHAM, July 10—Maj. Charles D. Heartt, Chief of Police:—My company assembled at the armory promptly. On receipt of your telegram conveying instructions from the Governor, I dismissed the company with orders to be in readiness for any emergency. Julian S. Carr, W. A. Whitted, George D. Miller, T. L. Peay, Lucius Green and others of our best citizens volunteered their services promptly.

The disturbance was caused by a note being found purporting to have been sent by a negro, threatening to kill some of the leading white men in the neighborhood of Pittsboro, and to rescue the Finch murderers. As it turned out, the note was bogus. The party who perpetrated the joke ought to be suspended forty feet above ground.

7/15/85

The Haywood Hoax!

A FOOLISH FRIGHT—TERRIFYING TELEGRAM—TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT—INDIGNATION MEETING, &c.

The ancient town of Haywood, in this county, was the scene of a most remarkable sensation, a few days ago, that caused greater alarm among its inhabitants than ever before known. Late in the afternoon of last Thursday, the 9th inst., a paper writing was found in front of a store at that place, lying on the ground and partly covered with dust. A colored man picked it up, after it was pointed out to him by a white man, and attempted to read it but being unable to read it he threw it back on the ground. Shortly afterwards it was picked up by a white man, who not being able to read it all carried it to a lady, who being more expert at reading soon read it, and the following is a literal copy of it:

“WILLIAM BRYANT, SIR:

I sent dis her note by Eafrom neal
you and him must see bout dat ar
thing de old man Peater Haris my-
self and de other boys have got ours
pistois and guns you felows must
hav de metins to de church and git
all we was talking bout days got got
dem two felows up to day never will
own nufin when we gos to start we
must go whar we nose dar is money
to git guns and pistols den we can
son weed de whit folks out don never
own nufin I speekt Ras Cotton has
got a null of dis start him caise he
say he was goin to do it now we must
cep dis thing up Rite and not let de
whit folks se into dis I will meet you
whar we sayd.

WILLIAM
HARIS.”

As soon as the above letter was read the greatest excitement prevailed. It was at once suspected that there was a conspiracy among the negroes and that an immediate insurrection was threatened. With wonderful rapidity this news spread throughout the town. It was now dark and the darkness of the night increased the alarm, women and children began crying in great distress and soon were all assembled at one house for protection. The men began to gather up their guns and pistols ready for the expected attack, while two or three (with more zeal than discretion) mounted their horses and rushed to Moncure and Lockville, a short distance off, arousing the inhabitants of those two places and announcing that the negroes were rising and that they must prepare to defend their families. Of course such startling news greatly alarmed all who heard it, and in a few

alarmed all who heard it, and in a few minutes the women and children at those two places were collected together, as had been done at Haywood. Armed men watched as sentinels all night, while the women and children were huddled together weeping and terrified. Moncure being a station on the R. & A. A-L. railroad and about half-way between Lockville and Haywood became the headquarters, and by 10 o'clock the alarm had become so great that Mr. B. W. Wilkie, a magistrate, sent to the mayor of Raleigh the following telegram:

"There is a threatened insurrection of negroes, on account of the arrest and incarceration of two negroes on a charge of murder, in jail at Pittsboro'. Send fifty armed men.

XX MAGISTRATE."

From the receipt of this telegram

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Upon the receipt of this telegram in Raleigh the greatest excitement prevailed. The mayor, the chief of police, and Governor Scales held a mid-night council of war to devise means and men for the suppression of the threatened insurrection. There being no white military company at Raleigh the Governor telegraphed to Capt. Parrish, of the Durham Light Infantry, to go to Pittsboro' with his company, but a little later ordered him to be in readiness. The Oak City Blues, a colored military company in Raleigh, very patriotically tendered their services to the Governor to come here also. And all this time the citizens of Pittsboro' were sleeping soundly, in blissful ignorance of the great danger(?) threatening them, and of the warlike preparations that were being made for their protection!

But at Howard, Monro, and

But at Haywood, Moncure and Lockville there was no sleeping done that night by anyone, except by a certain citizen of that section (noted for his loquacity and corpulency) who was posted as a sentinel to guard the Haywood bridge. During the night and early next morning five or six suspected colored men (and the most respectable in that section) were arrested, and brought here by mid-day under a strong escort. A preliminary trial was at once given them by justices Womack and Powell. The terrifying letter was produced, a number of witnesses were examined, and soon our Haywood friends were satisfied that there had been no cause for alarm and that the letter was bogus, being written by some educated person either as a joke or through malice to the men whose names were mentioned in it. Of course the prisoners were discharged, there being no shadow of suspicion against them. We read the letter

and at first glance saw that it was a forgery, that it was written in a disguised hand by some one attempting to imitate an illiterate negro's dialect, and yet that letter had produced a greater sensation and excited more alarm in the neighborhood where it was found than the approach of Sherman's army did!

When the citizens of Pittsboro' heard of the excitement at Haywood they laughed at the idea of an insurrection, and treated the affair as a foolish fright: but on Saturday when the Raleigh papers arrived, in which the telegrams had been published and which located the excitement as being at this place, styling it "Pittsboro's Sensation", our citizens became indignant. They had nothing whatever to do with the excitement at Haywood, and were naturally incensed that it should be published to the world that they were so fool-

ishly frightened. They regarded the telegram for troops as an insult to the white men of Chatham, as if they could not protect their families from the negroes: and they also regarded it as a libel upon the colored people of the county, who are law-abiding citizens and had no more idea of an insurrection than the author of that ridiculous telegram. Accordingly, on last Saturday, a public meeting was held at the court-house composed of our best white and colored citizens, to express their indignation. The meeting was called to order by Mr. J. A. Womack, the chairman of the board of magistrates, and on his motion Mr. A. G. Headen, the mayor of the town was elected chairman. Mr. R. J. Powell, chief Justice of our Inferior Court was elected secretary. At request of the chairman, Mr. H. A. London explained the object of the meeting and introduced the following preambles and resolutions which were unanimously adopted:

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“WHEREAS, on the night of the 9th inst. a telegram was sent from Moncure, in this county, signed “XX Magistrate”, and addressed to the Mayor of Raleigh, stating that there was a threatened insurrection of negroes in this county, and requesting that a body of armed men be sent here ;

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Governor ;

AND WHEREAS, in consequence of such telegram, the Governor of the State ordered the Durham Light Infantry to be in readiness to come to Pittsboro’, and the Oak City Blues, a colored military company of Raleigh tendered their services to the Governor ;

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RESOLVED, That we do most indignantly denounce the sending of said telegram as an insult to and a libel upon all the people of Chatham both white and black ; that there is the kindest feeling existing between the two races in this county ; that there is and has been no danger whatsoever of any insurrection of negroes in this

of any insurrection of negroes in this county; that the Sheriff is fully able to arrest any man in the county without any help; and that said telegram was as ridiculous as it was unnecessary.

RESOLVED, That our thanks are due and are hereby tendered to the said military companies for their readiness to come to our rescue(?), and to the Governor, the mayor of Raleigh, and those citizens of Raleigh and Durham who so kindly tendered their services."

We have written a fuller account of this affair than its importance would seem to demand, but we wished to correct an erroneous impression that the public abroad might have formed to the prejudice of our county. Chatham has been sufficiently disgraced by the recent horrible murders committed within her borders, without being still further disgraced by one of her magistrates calling on the mayor of Raleigh for

calling on the mayor of Raleigh for armed men to protect her white citizens from an insurrection of her colored citizens. The white men of Chatham have not yet lost their manhood, and in their name we indignantly deny that they wish any armed men from another county to protect them: and in behalf of our colored fellow-countymen we deny that there has been any idea of an insurrection among them. In doing this we are sure that we express the sentiments of the people of every portion of Chatham. What say you, fellow-countymen?

7/16/85

Daily Review Wilmington, 24 Nov 1884
About the Oak City Blues

date last year. — Some people make inquiries as to the number of troops in the State Guard, their armament, &c. There are now twenty-four white and twelve colored companies. Of the latter one, the Oak City Blues, is at Raleigh, and the other, the Howard Light Infantry, is at Fayetteville. They have a strength of about forty men each, and each has forty rifles. The number of guns held by the companies is as a rule forty, only the Fayetteville Light Infantry, the Wilmington Light Infantry, the Pasquotank Rifles and the Winston Light Infantry having more. There are in the possession of the twenty-six companies about 1,000 rifles. By the military schools about 500 are held. Other arms are always kept in reserve. In all there are close upon 2,000 rifles.

CHATHAM ISN'T SCARED!

The Finch Case, and Gunter's, Baffles the Hunters; but this you Can bet, the Fiends will Hang Yet!

Last week's CHRONICLE detailed the main points of the second triple murder in Chatham county, the past year, or yearabouts. Both were terrible, in the extreme; but it is consoling to hope that both were the work of the same set of fiends. The Editor has been made, by the force of circumstances, to study the peculiarities of criminal life: and he cannot recall an instance of a murderer, allowed to go unhanged, who did not sooner or late commit one, (and in some cases two or three) more murders. To have slain a man, and escaped punishment, seems to blunt the moral sense. It not only destroys the fiction of a "haunting REMORSE," but also disproves another common saying that "Murder will Out." So, the tigerish thirst for blood grows stronger, instead of weaker.

Raleigh was aroused one evening last week by teligrams reciting the peril of the Law and its supporters in Chatham. A negro named Jerry Faucette, found and carried to a lady at Haywood Station, near Moneure, a note as follows:—

“To Wm. Bryan: I send this note by Ephraim Neill. Meet us where we said. Uncle Peter Harris and myself and the boys have pistols and guns. We must get the moneyed men first so we can get guns and pistols, and we will weed the white folks out. They have got two of our men but they won't tell anything. Know nothing and let us carry this straight, and don't let white folks see into this.”

(Signed) WM. HARRIS.

There were circumstances indicating uncommon stir among the negroes. The whites took alarm: and there was hasty assembling of the people of Haywood, Moneure, Lockville, and adjacent settlements. When the families had been made secure, an armed force arrested several negro ring-leaders. A telegram to Raleigh signed by a magistrate, asked for “fifty armed men.” Gov. Scales sat until a late hour, ready to forward a force under Maj. Charlie Heart if necessary. A telegram

Charlie Heart if necessary. A telegram to Durham brought reply that Capt. E. J. Parrish's company was ready to start at the click of the wire: and that Julian S. Carr, Will. W. Fuller, Lucius Green, John W. Dowd, and any numbers of others were ready to go along as volunteers if their services were needed. The Oak City Blues, a colored company at Raleigh, also promptly volunteered to go Pittsboro and help to maintain law and order.

Happily—it was a panic rather than a practical necessity. The negroes in jail no doubt have confederates out of it: but our Chatham county friends feel perfectly able to "hold the fort." At a meeting last week, A. J. Headen in the chair, R. J. Powell, secretary, the excitement was greatly deprecated, and the call for troops denounced as needless.

7/16/85

THE FINCH MURDER.—The coroner's jury has not yet rendered a verdict in the inquest upon the bodies of the victims of the recent atrocious murder. The jury met again on last Tuesday, and adjourned until next Monday. We do not think it proper to publish what evidence has been brought before the jury, but we can assure our readers that everything possible is being done to obtain evidence sufficient to convict the murderers. The two negroes, Jerry Finch and Lee Tyson, who were first arrested are still confined in jail. Some persons are quite certain of their guilt, while others doubt it. It is probable that other arrests will soon be made. In the meantime we appeal to our citizens to refrain from any attempts to lynch anyone on suspicion. There are any number of wild rumors in circulation as to what evidence the jury of inquest has discovered, and our people must restrain their excited feelings.

23 July 1885: The Chatham Record

THE FINCH MURDER.—The jury of inquest in the Finch murder case has not yet rendered a verdict. The coroner has gone to Philadelphia to obtain the opinion of a scientific expert as to whether or not there are blood stains on the pants and drawers of Jerry Finch, one of the two negroes arrested on suspicion. The county authorities are using every effort to discover the perpetrators of this mysterious murder, and are determined to have them punished.

Chatham Record 23 July 1885

MAGISTRATES' MEETING.—Last Tuesday was the day appointed by the county commissioners for the magistrates to meet, but when the roll was called it was ascertained that there was not a quorum present. Mr. T. B. Farrar stated that there were several magistrates within hearing of the court house who would not attend the meeting, and in view of this fact he moved that the Governor be requested to declare their offices vacant and appoint others in their places, who would attend to their duties.

Mr. R. J. Powell read the following
preambles and resolutions:

WHEREAS, on the night of the 22nd
of December, 1883, while Mrs. Olive
Ganter and her daughter, two aged
and inoffensive residents of this
county, slept peacefully at their
home, confident that the strong arm
of the law guarded them from all
bodily harm, their abode was entered
and both of them most horribly and
brutally murdered, and after the
 lapse of more than 18 months, with
the most searching investigation to
ferret out the perpetrators of this
most revolting crime, no one has
been brought to trial;

AND WHEREAS, on the night of the
4th inst. in the same neighborhood,
and under circumstances most stri-
kingly similar, the residence of Ed-
ward Finch was entered and he and
his sister, two inoffensive old people,
and a colored boy were mangled to
death, and after most untiring exer-
tions by the coroner and his jury they
have failed thus far to render a ver-
dict of any positive evidence;

AND WHEREAS, it is the most solemn

AND FURTHER, that we earnestly enjoin upon all the good people of the county to use such diligence as will speedily bring to justice the authors of these horrible crimes.

In introducing the above resolutions Mr. Powell stated that while he knew their adoption by less than a quorum of magistrates would not be legal and binding, yet it would be an assurance to the county commissioners that they would receive the sanction of the magistrates present in their efforts to discover the perpetrators of the Finch murder. A vote was taken on the resolutions and every magistrate present, except one, voted for them.

As no quorum could be obtained the meeting adjourned without any business being transacted.

Ladies' Meeting.

7/23/85

Ladies' Meeting.

HAYWOOD, N. C., July 22d, 1885.

MR. H. A. LONDON: By request of the ladies I send this communication which you will please publish in this week's issue.

Respectfully,

Mrs. W. M. BRYAN.

AN INDIGNATION MEETING HELD BY THE LADIES OF LOCKVILLE, MONCURE AND HAYWOOD, IN HAYWOOD, JULY THE 20TH, IN RESPONSE TO THE ONE HELD IN PITTSBORO', ON THE 11TH INST.

The meeting was called to order, and on motion, Mrs. Dr. A. V. Budd, of Lockville, was elected chairman, and Mrs. J. L. Tysor, of Haywood, secretary.

The following ladies were appointed by the chair to draft resolutions: Mrs. W. M. Bryan, Mrs. Dr. P. D. Laster and Mrs. E. H. Bryan. They reported the following, which were unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, there was on the evening of the 9th inst. a paper, purporting a

o black conspiracy, found on the streets
l- of Haywood, containing the names of
r- several of the leading colored men of
p this community: and there had been
f- circumstances indicating an uncom-
h mon stir among the negroes, and

8 WHEREAS, the white gentlemen of
s the community considered it a matter
a of serious import, and believed it was,
s in some way, connected with the re-
cent murder, and who still believe it
to be an instrument of a most serious
nature, and demands the investiga-
tion of the most experienced experts
that the State affords, and notwith-
standing the parties named in the
note were arrested, tried and acquit-
ted in the town of Pittsboro' yet all
the evidence in the case has never
been heard:

1 RESOLVED, That we are indignant,
f 1st, at the manner in which the trial
c was conducted and consider it a mock
v trial.
i

2nd. We are indignant at the court for believing the statement of one prisoner against the testimony of two of our best white citizens while there were several others who would have corroborated the same statement, but were not called upon.

3rd. We are indignant at the insignificant number that composed the indignation meeting which claimed to represent the whole town of Pittsboro' and the entire county of Chatham, also at the resolutions passed by that body and the communications sent therefrom.

4th. We are indignant at the misrepresentation of the original telegram sent from this place to Raleigh, in which telegram Pittsboro' was not mentioned.

5th. We are indignant at the Editor of the Record for his unprovoked attack, both in person and press, upon Mr. W. B. Wilkie, for sending said telegram, when he did it at the request of the ladies.

6th. We are indignant at the several false statements made by the Editor of the Record in his last issue, 1st, in regard to the manner in which the suspicious paper was found; 2nd, in the way the women and children behaved themselves during the excitement; 3rd, in his statement that the gentlemen of Haywood were convinced that it was a bogus affair.

Resolved, That we hereby tender our sincere thanks to the Governor for his kindness and readiness to aid us, and to the military companies for tendering their services to come to our rescue at any moment; also, to those who so gallantly volunteered to assist.

We, the ladies of this meeting, do furthermore say, that we have never thought it was a general insurrection of the negroes, as was stated in the papers, but we know there is a band at large in our midst, whose sole object is robbery and bloodshed, and suspicion rests on this band, as the perpetrators of both the horrible murders committed in this county within the past eighteen months. Mr. H. A. London laughs at our danger and boasts of his power, still eighteen months of careful study has failed to throw a particle of light, or procure one scintilla of evidence, to convict the perpetrators of these terrible crimes. We think that under our present state of insecurity we are justifiable in calling for help from the State. In conclusion we would

are justifiable in calling for help from the State. In conclusion we would say to those who are so certain that the paper found in Haywood was a forgery that we would be under lasting obligations to them if they will come down and prove it to us satisfactorily; we would be only too glad to know that it is a bogus affair, that we might once more be able to lie down and feel secure.

Signed, in behalf of the ladies of Lockville, Moncure and Haywood.

Mrs. J. L. Tyson, Sec.

[The Record has never refused any man a hearing in its columns, and of course its editor is not so ungallant as to refuse to publish the above interesting communication from his fair countywomen, even though he himself is the innocent victim of their wrath.—Ed. Record.]

7/23/85

23 July 1885: The Chatham Record

The grand jury made a presentment against all the overseers of the public roads in Matthews township, which is likely to make things lively in that section of the county.

There were not many persons attending court this week, indeed the crowd was smaller than we have ever known at any previous court. Even the horse-swappers failed to turn out, and we missed the lively and ludicrous scenes that are usually witnessed here during court-week. All of the cases having been disposed of, court adjourned yesterday.

Pittsboro Home: An officer in searching the house of Jerry Finch, charged with the Finch murder, discovered a peculiar little bundle of rags sewed up with a thousand stitches. Jerry's wife was excited over the discovery and begged earnestly that it be not opened. Upon being pressed on the subject, she finally said that it was a "hand" which Jerry carried with him to prevent tricks and spells being laid on him; that there were conjurers about who could do such things, and this "hand" would destroy their power over the one who kept it about them. It was opened before the jury and found to contain a dime, half dime, a piece of file, and half dozen black peppers wrapped compactly in different colored rags and sewed tightly together.

Story picked up and run in numerous newspapers across the state.

23 July 1885 Wilmington Daily Review

Raleigh Visitor: Our readers doubtless remember the killing of the Gunter's, in Chatham county, about a year ago. We learned this morning that the coroner's jury in Pittsboro have information derived from Dick Tyson and Jerry Finch, who are in jail and charged with the murder of Ned Finch and sister and the negro boy, that Baxter Gunter murdered his mother and sister. The sheriff has been trying to arrest Baxter for more than a week and he cannot be found. He has fled and is believed to be hiding in Wake county.
— Capt. C. B. Denson, who is so

25 July 1885 Raleigh News and Observer

Contradicted.

The statement that Baxter Gunter had disappeared and was evading the law is contradicted. It is said that he can be found at his home, two miles from Sanford, at any time.

To Sue a Newspaper.

Messrs. McIver & Black, attorneys for Baxter Gunter, have brought suit in this county against the *News & Observer* publishing company for several thousand dollars damages for the slander of said Gunter in an article published in said paper on the 27th of July last alleging that Gunter was the murderer of his mother and daughter and that he was concealing himself in Wake county and avoiding the officers of the law. The suit promises to be an interesting one.—*Moore Gazette.*

A year or two ago the Gunter family was murdered in Chatham county. The *Raleigh News and Observer*, upon information received, connected Baxter Gunter with the murder and he sued it for libel in the sum of \$10,000. The case was tried in the Superior Court of Moore county last week and the plaintiff was awarded \$250 damages.

A complete account of the trial was recorded in the *Raleigh News and Observer*, Sunday, 01 May 1887. Of which a final page does not appear to be extant.

30 July 1885

THE FINCH MURDER.—Gradually the coils are being drawn more closely around the murderers of the Finch family, and proofs of their guilt are accumulating. Who the supposed murderers are, or what the proofs are, it is not proper for us to publish, but we have an abiding faith that the majesty of the law will be fully vindicated. As it has become an "open secret" in this community that expert detectives have been employed to unravel this mysterious murder, we think it proper to allude to their employment, in order to assure the public generally that our county authorities have been doing their full duty. On the day after the murder we suggested to the county commissioners, then holding their regular monthly meeting, the necessity of employing a detective, upon which suggestion they promptly acted and by their authority we entered into a correspondence with and secured the services of the best detective agency in the South, and we hope to be able soon to publish the results accomplished. All this time we did not think it proper to give publicity to this, but remained quiet while persons were loud in their complaints that no detective had been employed.

20 August, the Rockingham Rocket

The jury of inquest in the Finch murder case has not yet rendered a verdict. Another meeting will be held next Monday. A report has been received from the Philadelphia scientist, to whom the pants and drawers of Jerry Finch had been sent for examination, and he states that in his opinion the spots on those garments are blood stains. We are informed that Rhody Baker, John Pattishall and Nicey Pattishall, who were arrested on suspicion of being implicated in the Gunter murder, will have a preliminary trial to-day before a magistrate.—
Chatham Record.

8/20/85

05 September 1885

e Chatham Record : We hear that
e on last Tuesday night a party of dis-
sister of Jerry Finch, who is con-
fined in jail on suspicion of being
one of the Finch murderers, and at-
tempted to extort information about
the murder from them by hanging
them up. It is said that each of the
women was hung up twice, but both
persisted in declaring that they
knew nothing about the murder to
tell. We much regret this occur-
rence, as it did no good and is cal-
culated to do harm.

10 Sept 1885: The Chatham Record

THE FINCH MURDER.—The coroner's
Jury in the Finch murder case held
a meeting on last Monday, and ren-
dered the following verdict :
"The Jurors for a verdict do say
that Edward Finch, Sally Finch and
Ephraim Ellington came to their
death, on the night of the 4th of
July, 1885, from blows on the head,
inflicted by an axe, in the hands of
Jerry Finch, Harriet Finch and Lee
Tyson, and other party or parties to
the Jurors unknown."

Two of the accused, Jerry Finch and Lee Tyson, are the two negroes who were arrested on the day after the murder and have been confined in jail ever since. Harriet is the wife of Jerry Finch, and was arrested by the sheriff on last Tuesday and put in jail. It is expected to try all three at our next court, that is if the grand jury should think the evidence sufficient to justify them in finding a true bill.

We congratulate the coroner and his jury upon the termination of their investigation. They all have done their best to discover the perpetrators of so foul a murder, and have been faithful and conscientious in the discharge of their duties, although their apparent delay has been censured by some persons.

LYNCH LAW!

A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY—A
SHOCKING SIGHT—FOUR
NEGROES HANGED!!

The most horrible lynching that has ever disgraced the State of North Carolina occurred near this place on last Monday night. During that night a band of disguised men took from our county jail and hanged on the same tree, a mile from here, four negroes—three men and one woman. The prisoners were John Pattishall, who was accused of the Gunter murder, and Jerry Finch, Harriet Finch, and Lee Tyson, who were charged with the Finch murder. So quietly was the terrible deed executed that the citizens of our town knew nothing about it until next morning, when the news of it spread over town like wildfire and created intense excite-

wildfire and created intense excitement. In a short time after the information was received a large number of persons, little and big, black and white, hastened to the scene of the tragedy, and what a sickening sight met their eyes! There on the same tree—a large red oak that stands by the side of the McQueen road about 100 yards from where it branches off from the Lockville road just a mile south of here—suspended with ropes around their necks and rigid in death were four human beings, three men and one woman. An oppressive and solemn silence pervaded the horror-stricken crowd as they gazed upon the shocking scene. The feet of all four victims almost touched the ground. The neck of only one, John Pattishall, seemed to have been broken, the others having been strangled to death. The arms of the woman were tied behind her at the elbows, and John Pattishall's arms were tied at the wrist, but the other two men were not tied, their

other two men were not tied, their arms hanging by their sides. It is possible that they were hanged first, and the ropes that tied their arms were taken off and used in tying the others. The eyes of all, except John Pattishall, were shut, and their faces were not distorted. They were all hanged at the ends of the limbs—each on a different limb—and the limb from which Jerry was suspended was so small that it was propped up with a long fence rail. No placard or paper writing of any kind was found upon or near any of them. From persons who live in a few hundred yards of the place, we learn that they heard an unusual noise during the night, and above all the tumult were heard the shrieks and screams of the woman, Harriet Finch, appealing most piteously for mercy. It is thought that she was the last one hanged, as the mob dispersed soon after her cries ceased.

The sheriff, as soon as he rode out to the scene of the lynching, sent for the coroner, who came, and, summoning a jury, held an inquest. The only witness examined was Mr. Thomas Cross, the jailor, whose testimony, in substance, was as follows: At 10 minutes to 1 o'clock, on Monday night, he was aroused by a knocking and calling at the front door of his residence (about 100 yards from the jail), and upon opening the door he was confronted by about 20 men with disguises on their faces who demanded the jail keys. He refused to surrender them and started back into his bed-room, but they followed after him and forced him to give them up. Then they made him put on his clothes and go with them to the jail and unlock the door. At the jail were assembled a great many more men—the crowd altogether being estimated at from 75 to 100—and as soon as the door was

opened they seized and tied the four accused murderers and quietly marched them out of town. Very little was said by anyone and he did not recognize any of the crowd.

The Jury of inquest, after hearing the above evidence, returned a verdict that the deceased came to their deaths at the hands of persons unknown to the Jurors. The bodies of the deceased were then taken and buried at the county's expense. As yet no one of the lynching party is known, but it is thought that most of them came from distant parts of the county. Some of them crossed Haw river at Bynum's bridge, some at Moore's bridge and others passed down the road towards Lockville.

This terrible tragedy is to be deeply deplored, and we are pleased to know that it is condemned by every person whom we have heard speak of it. The Record has so often and so strongly condemned lynch law, that of course we most heartily join in the general condemnation of this extraordinary case, which is utterly destitute of any excuse to justify it. All good citizens regret it now, and we doubt not that most of the misguided men who participated in the lynching will themselves soon regret it. Not only was the hanging of the three men a great outrage, but the lynching of the woman was especially horrible, and we doubt not that her piercing screams and piteous appeals for mercy, as they reverberated on the midnight air, will often be recalled with a shudder of remorse by those who so cruelly put her to death.

The advocates of lynch law only resort to it when the guilt of the accused is certain, but in this case it was by no means certain. Indeed many of our best citizens, who heard all the evidence, are decidedly of the opinion that Harriet and John were not guilty. What a fearful responsibility then rests upon those who took the law into their hands and so summarily hanged them! If one set of men can force open our jail for one purpose, why cannot another set for another purpose? and why have any jail, or courts of justice? Where is the boasted supremacy of our law? And where, Oh! where men of Chatham are we drifting? and where will this violence end? Who will be the next victim, and whose life is safe?

10/1/85

agree to its re-employment.

Four Negro Murderers Hanged.

On last Monday night four negroes, Jerry Finch his wife, Lee Tysop and John Pattishall, were lynched one mile from Pittsboro, Chatham county. They were taken from jail and their bodies found Tuesday morning suspended to a tree near the public road. This is a terrible sequel to the murder of the Finch family on the night of the 4th of last July, and of the murder of the Gunter family near the same spot some 18 months ago. There were two of the Finch family. Edward aged 79, and his sister aged 81. They were found on the morning of Sunday, July 5th, lying on the floor with their throats cut. Near them lay their servant, a negro boy aged 16. All had been knocked in the head with an axe. Suspicion early rested on the negro Jerry Finch, and he was arrested. It was a great task from the first to prevent the lynching of these parties. Lee Tyson was afterwards arrested, and some time later John Pattishall was taken on the charge of being concerned in the Gunter murder, and possibly in the Finch murder. He was said to have been seen near the spot where the Gunters were killed, and next morning was in another county and told the first news known there of the crime. Detectives from Richmond worked up the case. The verdict of the coroner's jury was long delayed, the feeling that if it was adverse to the prisoners they would be promptly lynched. The verdict, when rendered, was against the prisoners. A majority of the people appeared to be well satisfied that these people were guilty of both murders.

Great Floods in India.—CALCUTTA,

08 October 1885

O. S. Johnson, for services on coroner's jury in Finch murder case, 28.00

A. H. Merritt, for services on coroner's jury in Finch murder case, 24.60

ORDERED, That the coroner be paid \$7.20 in the inquest of Jerry Finch and others, and the following jurors \$1.60 each, viz: O. S. Poe, R. J. Powell, E. A. Hanks, J. W. Gibson, J. R. Mulken and W. A. Pendergrass.

ORDERED, That Henderson Holt be allowed \$2 a month for keeping Jos. Carpenter, a pauper.

ORDERED, That Alick Moore, Jack Smith, Bragg Jackson, George Womack, Nick Cotten and J. W. Poe be paid \$1 each for burying Jerry Finch and others.

ORDERED, That the treasurer pay the following persons for services in jury of inquest on bodies of Edward Finch and others: Carson Johnson \$41.20; J. H. Tysor \$48.55; J. D. Griffin \$5.00; Charles Knight \$1.65; Suggs \$1.50; and Carson Tysor \$2.40.

ORDERED, That license be granted to Walter D. Moore to retail spirituous liquors at Suer Station.

Afterword:

“Oh! where men of Chatham are we drifting? And where will this violence end? Who will be the next victim, and whose life is safe?”

Henry A. London’s summation of events cited above is one of the few sure things to be derived. Denied trial, the guilt or innocence of Jerry and Harriet Finch, Lee Tyson, and John Pettishall must remain undetermined, therefore they must be presumed innocent.

It’s not hard to imagine that, along with a genuine revulsion to mob violence, the editor and staff of the Chatham Record must have been disappointed that the first sensational trial scheduled to be held in the newly completed courthouse was not going to happen. Editor Henry London’s brother William Lord London had been a partner in the construction of the courthouse. The newspaper’s office was right across the road from the courthouse. The new courthouse was, as it remains today, the pride of the county. In the ensuing years The Chatham Record consumed untold gallons of printers ink in covering the numerous hi-profile trials that were held in the courthouse, but, thanks to the mob, that first show was cancelled.

In these days of “media fueled frenzy,” it is useful to remember that such doings are not new; nor is it unusual to see the media wring its hands over the frenzy it helps create. Sensational crimes boost sales of newspapers. Horace Greeley, a prominent journalist of that era, once said no newspaper was any good unless it had a batch of libel suits pending against it. Baxter Gunter won his libel suit against the Raleigh News and Observer; no lawyer stepped forward to sue for the lynching victims.

An aroused public may not react in ways editors would approve of; however, an aroused public may react in sensational ways that further boost sales. The only way for the media to deal with the paradox is to hew as closely as possible to the truth but refrain from extraneous matters that might shed an unfavorable light on persons accused of crimes. In this it appears that The Chatham Record and Henry London conducted themselves, if not well by today’s standards, then at least better than some. It’s said that newspapers are history’s first draft; in the case of the Finch murders and lynchings, these first drafts are the only easily obtainable details of that story.

Footnote:

ⁱ Flashback to 1870

Fifteen years prior to the events of 1885, murder victims Ned and Sally Finch had intervened when Ku-Klux Klan terrorists fired their guns repeatedly into the nearby home of Black tenants of the Finch’s. Those attacked were: Essex Harris; Harris’s wife, Anna Finch Harris; and their five children. Prior to emancipation, Essex had been enslaved on the nearby plantation of G.W. Harris. Anna had been enslaved by the Finches. It was reported that during the attack Ned and Sally Finch walked among the attackers, pleading with them to stop. Sally told the masked men that she had helped raise Anna. Sally Finch, two years older than Ned, would have been about sixty-six years old when this event occurred.

The attackers threatened the Finches and continued shooting. Inside the house Essex was struck several times. The others in the house were not. Essex finally returned fire, striking one of the attackers, upon which

they left. Essex reported the crime; arrests were made, complete details of which have not come to light. Essex later traveled to Washington to give testimony, and that's how many of these details were preserved.

The details of the attack are reported in an article on the CCHA website: *ESSEX HARRIS And the Ku Klux Klan in Chatham County*. Sources include: The Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States 42nd Congress 2nd Session House Report 22 vol. 2. Also sourced were the Chatham County Superior Court Minutes, newspaper articles, census data, and other related sources. A fuller account of the Essex Harris story can be accessed at the link below.

<https://chathamhistory.org/resources/Documents/PDFs/ResearchArticles/EssexHarrisandtheKuKluxKlan.pdf>