

CLARENCE WILLIAMS

THE MURDERER OF JOSIE TILMAN,

Expiates His Terrible Crime Upon the Gallows.

IMPRESSIVE SCENE AT THE EXECUTION

History of the Crime and the Only Authorized Statement From Williams. He Tells Of the Crime and His Reasons for Committing It.

At 7:05 o'clock this morning, in the yard of the Bourbon County Jail, Clarence Williams paid the extreme penalty of the law for the murder of Josie Tillman, by being hung by the neck until he was dead.

HIS LAST HOURS. Williams retired early, and at nine o'clock he was in bed and slept soundly through the night. He was, however, up early. At five o'clock he arose and began to dress himself. The wonderful nerve he has displayed all along has caused those who have been in daily contact with him to wonder. His first

At ten minutes to seven Williams began his march to the scaffold. He was in charge of Deputy Sheriff Mitchell who had previously pinioned his arm. Williams wore a black suit of clothes with a red rose on the lapel of his coat. Sheriff Bowen brought up the rear. He ascended the scaffold with a firm step and took his place on the trap.

Eld. J. C. Graves sang a hymn and delivered a prayer. The noose was then adjusted, the black cap drawn, and at 7:05 the drop fell.

His neck was broken and his death was painless. At 7:15 Drs. F. M. Faries, Wm. Kenney and Ben Frank pronounced him dead.

As the noose was placed on his neck he exclaimed, "Draw it tight," at the same time recognizing a friend in the crowd said: "Good bye Wes."



CLARENCE WILLIAMS.

(From photograph taken in Jail yard November 28.)

request this morning was for a needle and thread, as he wished to sew a button on his clothes. A female prisoner was taken to his cell to do the sewing, and her extreme nervousness caused him to smile. "Why, you are more nervous than I am," he said. He threaded a fine cambric needle by candle light. The efforts of the minister yesterday had a marked effect on him. He was perfectly resigned to his fate, and said that he freely forgave all his enemies, and wished their forgiveness. He wished to meet Josie Tillman in Heaven, and knew that she has already forgiven him for the great wrong he had done her. He was particularly proud of the fact that he had kept his nerve up, and said it was his intention to die game.

When asked what he desired for breakfast he said he did not care. Mrs. Ashbrook furnished him with a broiled quail and coffee, etc., and he ate it with evident relish.

Early this morning Mr. Kiser received the following communication from Williams which was his last on earth: "Mr. Kiser remember me as long as you live. This is from the one you have been so kind to. Here is a picture that is drawn for you at your request. I don't think there is a prisoner in jail can speak a harmful word against you and tell the truth. You have been good to me, and I appreciate it very much. Hoping that we will meet in Heaven on the golden street. Good bye. Yours respectfully, CLARENCE WILLIAMS.

Williams kept his wonderful nerve to the last, and it was the universal opinion that he died the gamest of any person ever executed in the State.

The execution was the most successful one ever had in the State.

The scaffold was erected in the Southwestern side of the jail yard, near the railroad bridge.

The spectators were admitted by gatekeeper Joe Williams, upon the presentation of the black-bordered card of admission.

Williams began yesterday to make preparations for the execution. He was shaved by Forrest Lang. The doomed man wore a plain black suit furnished by Parker & James. The coffin was furnished by undertaker G. W. Davis.

At four o'clock yesterday afternoon Williams was visited by Rev. Webster and four deacons of the colored Baptist Church, who prayed and sang with him. Williams said that he had made his peace with his Maker, and that he was ready to die. To a News reporter Williams said that he knew the hour and would not take any stimulant to nerve himself for the terrible ordeal.

During the religious services a noisy crowd laughed and joked below the window of the death cell, and called to the prisoner to get a glimpse of him.

To a News reporter Williams said that he did not want his mother, who lives in Mississippi to know how he died. His father is alive but does not live in Paris.

Williams' Own Story.

The following is Clarence Williams' own story of his life, as dictated by him for THE NEWS:

My father is Peter Williams and my mother is named Ellen Barrett. My mother left here when I was a small boy in 1888 with Mrs. Thompson, and I stayed with my father for about two years until he treated me so bad that I left him. After that I stayed in town with Martin Palmer for one year, and after that I stayed in Claysville the balance of my life, until I got into this trouble.

The public called me a mean man simply because I wouldn't let everybody run over me. I am a small man and carried a gun to protect myself. The first time I ran away from home I asked him to let me go hunting and that night when I came home he jumped on me and beat me until I could hardly stand up. It seemed like I was the black sheep of the family so I left home and stayed with Vol Howe, and my father came after me and said he was going to



(From a photograph of Williams taken a year ago.)

put me in jail until I was twenty-one years old. I begged him not to do that and I would come home and be a good boy.

After I came back home he worked me for a week when I was sick and wouldn't get me a doctor. I took down in bed with a fever and I laid in bed four months and got up too soon and took a backset. The cause of my taking the backset was that he made me go to the field and shuck eight shocks of corn in the snow and March winds. He run me away from home once with a shotgun and told me to stay away and never come back, if I did he would kill me.

After that I had trouble with William Warren and I shot him once in the abdomen and once in the arm, and served two years in the Frankfort penitentiary for it. Previous to this I had Josie Tillman as a paramour and Cap Tillman found it out and took her out to the colored folks' cemetery at Williams-Magowan's, and told him if I came out there to kill me. Then I never had anything to do with her until I came back from the "pen."

I took up with her on the third day of January; as a paramour and I stayed with her until I killed her—the one I loved—Josie Tillman.

I was on the table at Sam Graffort's grocery in Claysville and Henry Walker came to me and asked if I wanted to make some money. I asked him what doing and he said he had some cows to sell and we would make about \$75 or \$80. I told him I never did anything like that but he insisted on me going with him and I finally went with him, and we took them to Georgetown and sold them for \$45 and went to Lexington, where we divided the money. If it hadn't been for him I wouldn't be where I am to-day—in the Paris jail, condemned to be hung.

I bought my gun in Lexington. I killed Josie Tillman but I didn't go to do it. It wasn't my intention to kill her but to scare her and make her come back to me. I do not believe I would have shot her if she had stood still, but she wheeled to run, and that was the cause of her getting shot. The evidence that was given against me I could not blame the jury men. There was lots of perjuring done on the stand, if it was only known. There was a great deal of malice against me in my case, and at that they won't make any great fortune for it. All I can say is that I hope them all well in the future. The reason a great many swore to lies they were afraid of Capt. Tillman, as he is a great bully in Claysville, and they thought he would fix it with them.

I think I deserve to be punished but not so severe. I only wish that Mr. Bradley will change my sentence to life in the penitentiary and then I will have a chance to change my ways and get repentance, as I have been a sinner in my past days.

I must say that Mrs. Ashbrook and her turnkey, Mr. A. M. Kiser, have treated me like I was white, and I appreciate it. My favorite among the prisoners is Mr. Forrest Lang. He has treated me like a brother. There wasn't anything he had that was too good for me. As the saying goes "he certainly was good to me," and that aint no dream.

CLARENCE WILLIAMS.

Williams' Last Statement.

I won't have anything to say Monday but will say all I have to say to-day (Wednesday, December 6th.) I hope all men and boys will take my advice and not let women or whiskey or a gun get the best of them. Look what a women has brought me to. I have to suffer death for people getting up in the court house and perjuring themselves. Take warning of me and pick your company. It is altogether in the company you keep, and you will find out that you will get through the world better if you pick your company.

A friend in need is a friend indeed. I will say that if Forrest Lang had been brother to me he could not have treated me any better. There was nothing in his power that I asked him to do for me but what he did.

I am to hang dead by the neck in a few days, to which I was sentenced by the June term of Court. I did not kill Josie Tillman with the intention of killing her, but the Commonwealth of Kentucky found me guilty and fixed my punishment at death. I am thankful to my lawyer, Mr. Webb, for what he has done for me. I think he has done his duty in every respect. I am also thankful to Gov. W. O. Bradley for what he has done, and would like for him to do more if he will.

I have done nothing to die for but if I must I will this should be a lesson to the younger people who are conducting themselves disorderly in the communities in which they live. I have led the wrong kind of a life from the beginning and I am sorry for the country to know of it. There are lots of things I have done in life I don't want the public to know of because of its disgrace.

I have found no peace with my Maker and don't think there is any place in Heaven for me. I have appealed to the Supreme Being but it was all in vain. I guess the devil has got the bill of sale for me. I am so corrupt I don't want to bear a prayer from the mouth of any one and I am not anxious to see anyone except some that belongs in jail.

I suppose that my sentence will be executed December 11th. Now I truly hope the boys of this community and elsewhere who are standing in open ruin will take warning from my case, and never be guilty of any crime in the least. Also use this as a lesson and it will guide them right.

CLARENCE WILLIAMS.

Story of The Crime.

The crime for which Clarence Williams was executed, was committed on Wednesday, March 23d, 1899, in Claysville, which has added so many murders to the criminal history of Paris.

Williams and Josie Tillman, who had been keeping company since January, were standing in a doorway talking, when some person the other side of the street called to the girl to come over. She left Williams, who called to her as she reached the middle of the street, asking her to come back to him. Instead of coming back she started to run, when Williams pulled his pistol and fired three shots at her. One of the bullets took effect, entering her back at the right side, passing through her liver and out her breast. The wounded girl died the next afternoon.

The killing caused the greatest excitement in the village where so many mysterious crimes have been committed and so few ferreted out and the criminals captured.

Immediately after the killing Williams disappeared. At two o'clock on the same afternoon a warrant for his arrest was issued and Deputy Sheriff W. W. Mitchell, Constable Joe Williams and Officer George Hill started in pursuit of the murderer. He was traced to Lloyd Ashurst's farm near this city where they arrested him just one hour after the warrant was issued. He was in a cornfield when apprehended by the officers, and had on his person a revolver with every chamber loaded, but he made no effort to use it when he saw the officers.

After being arrested, the murderer's first question was "Is Josie dead?" He said that the shooting was accidental, as he just shot to scare her. He was immediately brought to Paris and placed in jail to await trial. It was alleged that Williams said two weeks before the shooting that he expected to kill the girl at some time.

Coroner H. E. Roberts held an inquest over the body of the dead girl and the jury returned a verdict that she came to her death from a gunshot wound inflicted by Clarence Williams.

The murdered girl was a comely colored girl, the daughter of "Cap" Tillman, a one-armed negro who is a noted character in Claysville.

His Last Hope Gone.

Charles D. Webb, Williams' attorney, who used every means in his power to secure executive clemency for the condemned man, received the following communication Saturday:

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT. Frankfort, Ky., Dec. 9, 1899. CHAS. D. WEBB, ATTY., Paris, Ky.

SIR—Referring to the petition of Clarence Williams, I am directed by the Governor to say that the statements contained therein do not show sufficient reason for the exercise of Executive clemency. Very truly, J. L. EARLYWINE, Private Secretary.

Sketch of Williams.

Clarence Williams, who paid the death penalty for the murder of Josie Tillman, his paramour, was a young negro man about twenty-five years old, weighing probably 140 pounds. He lived in Claysville, and last January finished serving two years in the penitentiary for shooting and wounding William Warren. Shortly after his release he and Henry Walker drove two cows belonging to Eld. J. S. Sweeney over to Georgetown and sold them. With part of this money he went to Lexington and bought a pistol which was the weapon he used in killing the Tillman girl.

Williams was very illiterate, not being able to read or write, and dictated all of his communications, after he was confined in the Paris jail, to Forrest Lang, who wrote them for him. All during his confinement, even after being sentenced to death, Williams has been in good spirits, and never seemed to realize the enormity of his crime. He persistently refused to see ministers and had but few callers besides his relatives, his attorney and newspaper men.

Williams willingly stood in the jail yard while a News man took the photograph from which the above cut was made. He was grateful for a copy of the photo which he gave to his sister.

The Trial.

Clarence Williams was indicted by the Grand Jury at the June term of the Bourbon Circuit Court, and he was tried during the same term. Being without means to employ a lawyer, Judge J. B.



By kind permission of the Paris Democrat.

Cantrill appointed Judge Charles D. Webb as his counsel, to be assisted by Rogers & Moore. The trial consumed less than half a day, the hearing of the evidence occupying only a short time. Speeches were made for the defendant by Judge Webb and attorney S. B. Rogers, and Commonwealth's Attorney Franklin spoke for the prosecution. The case was then given to the jury, which after twenty minutes' deliberation, returned a verdict fixing his punishment at death. Judge Cantrill passed sentence on Williams, and named September 1st as the date for his execution. Judge Webb then took the case to the Court of Appeals, which affirmed the decision of the lower court. Gov. Bradley then named December 11th as the day when Williams must pay the penalty for his crime.

Judge Cantrill complimented the defendant's counsel upon the management of the case, and the condemned man expressed himself as well satisfied with their efforts in his behalf. It is doubtful if any lawyer could have saved Williams from the gallows, the evidence showing no extenuating circumstances.

John Frazier Goes To The 'Pen.'

John Frazier, alias "Sharper," who was the principal witness against Williams, received a sentence Saturday of a year in the penitentiary for stealing money from the Fordham Hotel.

Frazier called Josie Tillman across the street, while she was talking to Williams, and it was her refusal to come back when he told her that caused the killing.

The Death Warrant.

On Saturday morning Sheriff Bowen, in the presence of Jailer Kiser and Deputy Jailer Gibson, read the death warrant to Williams in his cell. The condemned man listened to the reading without any outward show of feeling whatever, and Deputy Jailer Gibson, who watched his face closely, says he did not move an eyelash even. The following is the death warrant:

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY.

To THE SHERIFF OF BOURBON COUNTY: Whereas a copy of the judgment of the Bourbon Circuit Court, and the mandate of the Court of Appeals, in the case of the Commonwealth of Kentucky against Clarence Williams was this day filed before me, and it appears therefrom that said Williams was convicted of murder in said Circuit Court of July 5, 1899, and sentenced by the Judge thereof to be hanged on September 1, 1899, and that said judgment was affirmed by the Court of Appeals on September 29, 1899.

Now, therefore, you are hereby commanded on Monday, the 11th day of December, 1899, to take the said Clarence Williams from confinement in the jail in Bourbon County and in some inclosure convenient to the jail aforesaid, in the presence of not more than fifty persons (ten of whom may be designated by the Court rendering the judgment and the remainder by you) between sunrise and sunset, hang the defendant by the neck until he is dead. And you will make due return of this writ.

(Given under my hand and seal as Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, this 10th day of October, 1899, and in the one hundred and eighth year of the Commonwealth.

WM. O. BRADLEY, By the Governor.

CHAS. FINLEY, By E. C. WOOD, Sec. of State. Asst. Sec. of State.

The Scaffold.

The scaffold used in the execution was brought down from Lexington for the occasion. It has been used three times. The men who have paid the death penalty on it are "Muddauber" Smith, who was hanged at Lexington for ravishing and murdering an aged white woman near Lexington; Clarence Vinegar, colored, who was executed at Georgetown for murdering a negro woman in that

city, and Robert Laughlin, a white man, who was hanged at Brooksville, Bracken County, for ravishing his niece and then murdering her and his wife with a poker when the wife, who was in a delicate condition, discovered his first crime. Laughlin then set fire to the house, and ran to tell the neighbors that a burglar had killed his wife and niece. The scaffold was thoroughly tested by Sheriff Bowen. The trap is on the right side of the gallows, in full view of the persons who witness the execution.

The scaffold was put up Friday, and yesterday the jail yard was open to visitors, when hundreds of men and boys and a score or more colored women went in to view the gallows.

Lashbrook Leaves Mason.

Over one thousand persons, from four counties, attended the sale near Maysville of the household furniture, farming implements and stock of all kinds belonging to James Lashbrook, whose wife was murdered by Dick Coleman, the negro burned by a mob at Maysville last Wednesday. Lashbrook has rented his farm and will make his future home among relatives in Fleming County. He could no longer endure the scenes that were reminders of the horrible murder of his wife.