

# LYNCHING IN HOWARD.

**A Mob of Colored Men Take a Colored Prisoner from Jail and Hang Him.**

[Reported for the Baltimore Sun.]

Great excitement was created in Ellicott City yesterday morning about two o'clock by the forcible entry into the fine granite jail of Howard county and the lynching of Nicholas Snowden, colored, 26 years old, who had been confined there since last Saturday on the charge of feloniously assaulting Alberta Fisher, a colored girl about 10 years of age. The man would have been put on trial Saturday before the Circuit Court. The lynchers gained access to the jail by pretending they wanted to deliver a prisoner to the warden. Sheriff N. T. Hutchins, who is in town attending the September term of the court, was asleep at the Howard House, about 150 yards from the jail.

The sheriff and such a posse as could be hastily summoned started in pursuit of the lynchers to rescue Snowden, but were not successful in coming up with them. By daylight the whole town was aroused, when news came that Snowden's body was dangling from a large white oak not more than 200 yards outside of the western limits of the town, on the farm of Mr. Jackson Isaac, where there is a grove of about two dozen beautiful white oak trees.

## CORONER'S INQUEST.

Coroner James D. Cooke summoned a jury of inquest at about 9 A. M., and they repaired to the grove, where the body was still swinging. The jury was as follows: Dr. M. G. Sykes, John J. Vernay, Gustave Dalcourt, John A. Denton, E. Alexander Talbott, James Helm, John O'Brien, William E. Welsh, Edward Norris, John Holtman, John B. Shipley, Frank R. Isaacs.

A stained pine coffin on a push-cart was taken up the steep hill, and the body was lowered into it by Deputy Sheriff Vansant. The corpse was hanging from a large limb, the feet being about 18 inches from the ground. A new rope the size of a common plow-line, with a slip-knot, was around the neck and buried out of sight in the flesh. The other end of the rope had been thrown over a stout limb, and drawn down, and made fast to another tree. The hands were tied behind the back with a piece of the same rope.

At least 500 people visited the scene of the lynching before the coroner had the body taken down, the greater number being colored people. The corpse was given in charge of Mr. S. Hillsinger for burial, and after being kept until 5 o'clock P. M. without any claimant appearing, it was buried in Locust Cemetery, Ellicott City. After disposing of the body the jury adjourned to the courthouse. Dr. E. E. Keene, physician to the jail, testified that Snowden died from strangulation. An intelligent white prisoner in the jail testified substantially the same as Mr. Ray, the jailer, whose statement is given below in full. James Kearney, a youth, about 15 years of age, who, while hucking his cows, discovered the body, testified to that fact.

A lock broken from the door of Snowden's cell and an axe with which it was done, both badly battered, were shown the jury. Deputy Sheriff James E. Vansant stated that he had traced a wagon from near the jail to the vicinity of the house of the girl's father. In the yard of the girl's father was found harness that presented all the appearances of having just been used. The father of the girl on being questioned said the wagon and the harness had been used the night before, and had returned from Ellicott City about 9 o'clock the preceding evening. The father said if Snowden had not been convicted when tried he should have shot him on sight. The father seemed delighted when told of the lynching. The jury rendered a verdict "that Nicholas Snowden was forcibly taken from the jail about 2 o'clock on the morning of September 18, 1885, by parties unknown to the jury, and was hanged to a tree, his death being caused by strangulation."

Mr. John T. Ray, warden of the jail, says: "A mob of about 24 men came to the jail about 2 o'clock in the morning and rapped at the back door of the rear building of the jail. His wife told him some one was rapping, and he got up and went to the door. I asked who was there," said Mr. Ray. "They said a prisoner. I told them to go to the front door and I would get the keys and come down. I got the keys, went to the front door and opened it, and they came in. About 12 came in. They were dressed as ordinary citizens, but had veils and other disguises over their faces, and I could recognize none of them. I thought beyond doubt they were all colored. Their veils did not fully cover their faces, and I could see they were colored. When they first came in they asked where Snowden was, and said they wanted him. I said he was up stairs. I was standing close by the door with the keys and my hands behind my back, when they took hold of me and took the keys away. I had not the least suspicion of anything wrong when I went down. I thought it was a prisoner. On getting the keys they went to the other end of the first floor and attempted to go in a room where I have two women. I said, 'Men, don't go in there, for there are two women in that room.' The two women in that room had roused up, one was white and the other was colored. The colored woman said to the masked men, 'Snowden is up stairs.' She seemed to know at once what the men wanted. They unlocked the gate opposite the women's room and went up stairs at once, and seemed to be in a hurry. When they got up there they had the bunch of keys that unlocks the corridor doors, but not the keys that unlock the prisoners' cells. One of them came back to me down stairs and demanded the keys. I told him I did not know where the key was. He said, 'You certainly do know, for you locked this prisoner up last night.' I still held out that I did not know where the key was, and he demanded it violently. I told him I would not give it to him, when he walked to the front door and called men in with axes. He seemed to be the leader of the party, and was a colored man. There was no light in the jail save the lamp I took down with me to open the door. This the masked men had taken from me and carried up stairs. I was therefore in the dark save for the light from the corridor above where the men were in waiting before the cell of Snowden. The doomed man had not to my knowledge said a word so far. The leader said, 'We will have him anyhow.' The men with the axes went up stairs, and, after several severe licks, succeeded in cutting through the hasp on the door and getting into the prisoner. The next thing I saw was two of the masked men, each with a hand in Snowden's collar, leading him down stairs and out of the jail. All the other masked men followed. Nothing was interfered with but Snowden, and the maskers assured me, when I told them I had other prisoners there, that no one but Snowden should be interfered with. When the masked men with their prisoner went out into the open air through the front door one of the party handed me back the bunch of keys and the big lock off the corridor door. There was not a word spoken in the jail save by the leader when asking for the keys, and Snowden, who was in a cell with another colored man, did not speak. One of the party who came into the jail had a long coil of half-inch rope, something like a plow-line. He carried the coil on his arm. I was not threatened with violence personally, but the leader put his hand on my shoulder and said: 'I am not going to hurt you or your family, but we are going to have Snowden out of here or rear this — place down.' The maskers had three or four guns inside with them, and I requested them not to point them at me, as, though they did not intend to kill me, one of them might go off. As soon as they got outside I shut the door and went upstairs. I saw nothing of what occurred outside of the jail. I dressed myself as quickly as I could, and went to the Howard House and notified Sheriff Hutchins of the trouble. The sheriff, myself and a number of citizens then went on a hunt to find where they had hung Snowden, for I was confident they had hung him, though the masked men did not say what they were going to do with him. We had lanterns, and soon found wagon tracks leading from the direction of the jail towards the scene of the outrage. The posse went up to the place, but the masked men had not been there with their prisoner. I went back to jail, being a man of some age and worn out with the night's work. As the sheriff and posse, mounted, were returning about seven o'clock they learned that the body of Snowden had been found about daylight swinging from an oak tree in a picnic grove about a half mile from the jail. The lynchings were not in the jail over ten or fifteen minutes. There was no noise or confusion among the other prisoners, though some of the women were badly scared. There were eleven prisoners in the jail. Myself, wife and daughters were all, save the prisoners, in the jail. My wife was sick, and was made very ill by the attack. This is the first time anything of this kind has occurred at this jail, and I have been jailer here twenty years. Snowden was a right good-looking copper-colored mulatto, and this was the fourth or fifth time he had been in jail. He was a moderately well-dressed man. He was polite and clever-talking. He had been in jail before for stealing and disorderly conduct."

## STATEMENT OF THE SHERIFF.

Sheriff N. T. Hutonins says: "The body was discovered by a youth in an unexpected locality, called Cat Rock, swinging from an oak tree, the feet being eighteen inches from the ground. An axe was lying near the tree, an empty whisky bottle, and masks and remains of disguises. The swinging corpse had its head leaning towards the right shoulder, one eye open and the other closed, the tongue protruding. When the lynchers left the jail door with Snowden they skirted the town and came out in front of the courthouse, crossed the main road and went over to the grove mentioned. I had no knowledge of the affair until I was aroused at the Howard House by the warden of the jail, Mr. Bay. I have heard that both white and colored men were in the lynching, but I am inclined to the belief that all were colored. All the colored people express themselves as gratified at the prompt action of their race in this matter. This opinion is expressed by both men and women. There have been no arrests, no indictments, nor any suspicions. Some of the lynchers evidently came here in vehicles, and there seems to be no doubt but that the principal actors and the main body of the lynching party came from the surrounding country and were not residents of this place. The lynching party, in selecting a site for the hanging, made it necessary for the cortege to pass by long strings of colored people's cabins, and marched the condemned man on the way to his death past a cake-walk in full blast, where many of his friends were in the full tide of life's enjoyment. It is supposed that many of the revelers in the church where the cake-walk was held knew of the action in progress against Snowden. Shortly after the passage of the death party the cake-walk broke up. It is supposed that the lynchers passed this convivial scene on the way to Cat Rock about 2.30 o'clock in the morning."

Judge I. Thomas Jones, of the Circuit Court of this judicial district, says that while the order-loving people of the district cannot commend such an action, he has heard no condemnation of the lynching of Snowden. All the prisoners in the jail agree that the lynchers were colored men. It is stated, however, that some white men were present standing aside while the colored men brought Snowden out.