



## CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

URBAN PLANNING AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

# STAFF REPORT

## COMMUNITY PLANNING and PRESERVATION COMMISSION MARKERS AND MONUMENTS REQUEST

Report to the Community Planning and Preservation Commission from the Urban Planning and Historic Preservation Division, Planning and Development Services Department, for Public Hearing and Executive Action scheduled for **July 14, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.**, by means of communications media technology pursuant to Executive Order 20-69 issued by the Governor on March 20, 2020, and Executive Order 2020-12 issued by the Mayor on April 9, 2020. Everyone is encouraged to view the meetings on TV or online at [www.stpete.org/meetings](http://www.stpete.org/meetings).

*Commissioner Gwendolyn Reese* serves as Co-Chair for the Community Remembrance Project Coalition, the applicant organization responsible for coordinating most important aspects of this application. All other possible conflicts should be declared upon the announcement of the item.

**Case No.:** MM 20-90600001

Address: Public right-of-way, see location description  
Location: Intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street So. and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue So.  
PIN: No PIN number  
Owner: Public Right-of-Way (Minor Arterial, City Road)  
Applicant: City of St. Petersburg  
Request: Installation of a non-standard, historic marker to memorialize an event.

**PROJECT OVERVIEW:** The City of St. Petersburg, working in partnership with the *Community Remembrance Project Coalition* (“CRPC”) is requesting approval to install a non-standard, historic marker memorializing the 1914 lynching of John Evans at the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street South (then-named Ninth Street South) and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South.

This historic marker is proposed for the west side of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street South, near the intersection with 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South. Due to pending construction on adjacent private property and constrained right-of-way, the exact location is under review by Staff and will be finalized prior to installation.

### **APPLICATION PARTNERS:**

#### Community Remembrance Project Coalition (“CRPC”)

The CRPC was originally organized in 2017 as a mission of the St. Augustine Episcopal Church of St. Petersburg, Florida working toward racial reconciliation. At first, the group met with church leaders and representatives from the City of St. Petersburg regarding the proposed historic marker. Members later contacted the Equal Justice Initiative (“EJI”) in 2018. EJI helped facilitate a collaboration with other local individuals and community organizations who similarly expressed an interest in constructing a historic marker or monument recognizing Pinellas County’s documented lynchings. The original effort has now

grown to include a diverse coalition of more than 80 individuals representing approximately 35 organizations.

According to the coalition, the CRPC believes, "...that publicly confronting the devastating history of racial terror lynching in our community is an essential step towards the recovery, healing, and racial reconciliation needed to create a more just society." Their mission can be furthered through approval of this request to install a historic marker at the only known site of a documented lynching in St. Petersburg.

#### Equal Justice Initiative ("EJI")

EJI is a private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides legal representation to the disenfranchised, works with communities that have been marginalized by poverty, provides research and recommendations to assist advocates and policymakers in the important work of criminal justice reform, and they partner with local organizations through their [Community Remembrance Project](#).

As part of its effort to help communities confront and recover from tragic histories of racial violence and terrorism, EJI is joining with communities nationwide to install historical markers in communities where the history of lynching is documented. EJI believes that by reckoning with the truth of the racial violence that has shaped our communities, community members can begin a necessary conversation that advances healing and reconciliation. For more information, see their website: <https://eji.org/projects/community-remembrance-project/>.

**REVIEW OF MARKERS AND MONUMENTS:** In 2001, City Council adopted an official policy regarding markers and monuments. Under the criteria of this policy, if the proposed marker is used to commemorate a historic event, building or person or group, it must be reviewed by the Community Planning and Preservation Commission ("CPPC") for consistency with the adopted policy. In this role, the CPPC is reviewing the application to decide whether the event that is the subject of the proposed marker made a significant contribution to history at a local, state, or national level, and certify that the proposed text is historically accurate.

- A. For the City of St. Petersburg to consider the placement of a marker or monument on public property, the following criterion must be met:
- 1. To commemorate an Event, the event must have made a significant contribution to the history and culture at a local, regional, statewide, or national level. The location of the marker must have an association to the event or show just cause for its placement elsewhere within the City.**

Based on several news reports and articles regarding the event, on November 10, 1914, Edward F. Sherman was murdered in his home and his wife was violently assaulted by two assailants. Several suspects, including John Evans, were captured and held on suspicion. Local newspapers reported that at approximately 10:30 p.m. on the eve of November 12, 1914 a mob broke into the police station, removed Mr. Evans from the jail, led a procession down Central Avenue attracting nearly 1,500 participants, and then lynched Mr. Evans near the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street South and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South. The details are described most completely in a 1983 article written by Jon L. Wilson and published in the *Tampa Bay History* titled "Days of Fear: A Lynching in St. Petersburg." A copy of the article is included herewith as Attachment E.

SEQUEL TO MURDER AND ASSAULT IS DEATH OF ONE OF SUSPECTS UNDER ARREST

**MOB TEARS OUT BACK OF THE CITY PRISON**

BELIEVE MURDER OF MR. SHERMAN AVENGED

Execution Follows a Day of Most Intense Excitement In West Coast City

ST. PETERSBURG, Nov. 12.—(Special)—A mob broke into the Police Station tonight and carried away John Evans, a negro believed to have shot and killed Edward F. Sherman, and hanged him to a telephone pole. The body was riddled with bullets.

The lynching was a surprise as the posse leaders had decided to take no

*Tampa Morning Tribune Nov. 13, 1914*

**ST. PETERSBURG HAS LYNCHING BEE**

**JOHN EVANS STRUNG TO POLE**

**Was Suspected of Committing Murder and Assault**

St. Petersburg, Fla., Nov. 12.—John Evans, a negro, was taken from the city prison here, tonight, by a mob and hung to a telegraph pole near by.

Evans was suspected of having shot and killed Edward Sherman of Camden, N. J., and then to have committed an assault on another person.

He had an accomplice who is still being sought.

*Miami Herald Nov. 13, 1914*

As is stated in the introduction from the editors of Mr. Wilson's publication, "History, unfortunately, is filled with examples of man's inhumanity to man. One of the cruelest forms of brutality in American History was the lynching of blacks, particularly in the South...In 1914, there were slightly over fifty lynchings of blacks, and one of them took place in St. Petersburg." The proposed historic marker memorializes the lynching of John Evans, while also providing narrative describing the national context within which this act of racial terror occurred.

B. Program

2. **Non-Standard Marker Program: A Non-Standard Marker may be used if a citizen would like to Commemorate or Memorialize an event, person, or building, with a custom designed marker.**

- *The applicant must coordinate all the design and manufacturing of the marker.*

The City of St. Petersburg's private partners, CRPC and EJI, are funding and coordinating all design and manufacturing of the proposed marker.

- *The applicant will be required to present the design, proposed text, location, and justification for the marker for review by Urban Planning and Historic Preservation staff.*

The proposed text is as follows and included in Attachment A:

**SIDE ONE: The Lynching of John Evans**

Near this site on November 12, 1914, a white mob lynched a Black man named John Evans. During this era, Black people were burdened by a presumption of guilt that made them vulnerable to mob violence and lynching. Mr. Evans arrived in St. Petersburg from Dunnellon, Florida, and worked for a white man, Edward Sherman. When Mr. Sherman was later found dead and his wife was reportedly assaulted, suspicion was directed at Mr. Evans. Without formal charges, trial, or conviction of Mr. Evans, a white mob kidnapped him from a rooming house and tortured him in a wooded area before throwing him in the St. Petersburg Jail. The mob later abducted Mr. Evans from the jail and hanged him from a light pole located at the border between the city's segregated Black and white communities. This public spectacle lynching was attended by an estimated 1500 white men, women, and children. As Mr. Evans struggled to hold himself aloft, a white woman shot him from her car, inciting the crowd to fire upon him for more than ten minutes. White mobs then terrorized the Black community for days in search of an alleged accomplice, Ebenezer Tobin. At least 170 Black residents fled their homes for safety. Mr. Tobin was later found and tried by an all-white jury, becoming the first person legally hanged in Pinellas County in October 1915. No one was held accountable for Mr. Evans' lynching due to the impunity granted by racial hierarchy in St. Petersburg.

**SIDE TWO: Lynching in America**

Thousands of African Americans were victims of lynching and racial violence in the United States between the Civil War and World War II. The lynching of African Americans during this era was a form of racial terrorism used to intimidate Black people and enforce racial hierarchy and segregation. Lynching was most prevalent in the South. After the Civil War, violent resistance to equal rights for African Americans and an ideology of white supremacy led to fatal violence against Black women, men, and children accused of violating social customs, engaging in interracial relationships, or crimes. Lynching became the most public and notorious form of racial terror and subordination directed at Black people and was frequently tolerated or even supported by law enforcement and elected officials. Though terror lynching generally took place in communities with functioning criminal justice systems, lynching victims were denied due process, often based on mere accusations, and pulled from jails or delivered to mobs by law officers legally required to protect them. Millions of African Americans fled the South to escape the climate of terror and trauma created by these acts of violence. Of the more than 316 documented racial terror lynchings that took place in Florida between 1877 and 1950, at least three took place in Pinellas County including John Thomas on December 25, 1905, and Parker Watson on May 9, 1926.

The proposed marker is cast aluminum and rectangular in shape, measuring approximately 42-inches wide by 38.5-inches high. The mounting post measures approximately 7-foot tall, using an octagonal aluminum post. The following sample image demonstrates what the marker will generally look like:

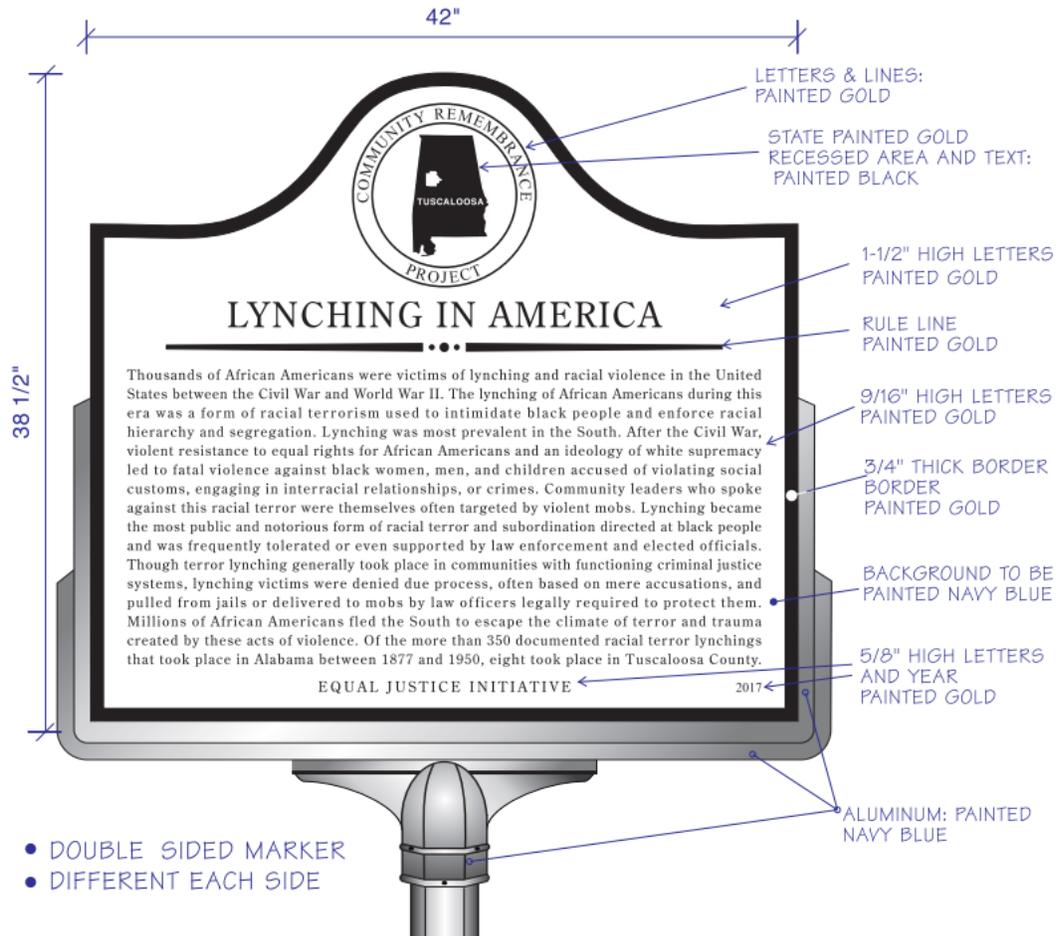


Image 1: Sign Specifications. Also included as Attachment B.

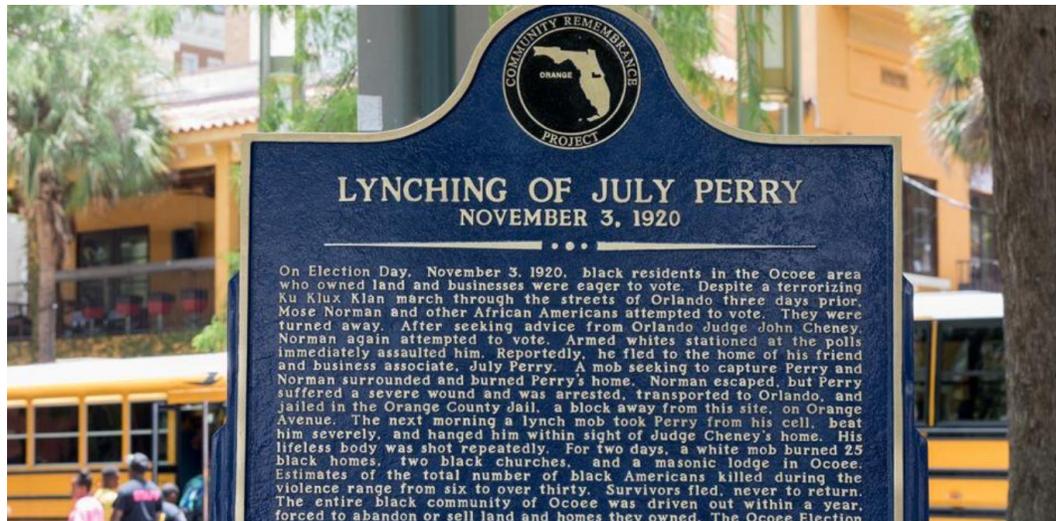


Image 2: Sample Sign (Close-Up) Orlando, Florida



Image 3: Sample Sign (Close-Up) Orlando, Florida

Abbeville, South Carolina – October 2016



Gadsden, Alabama – December 2016



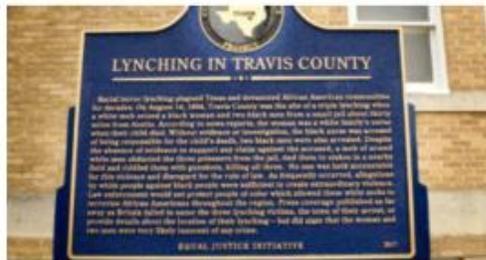
Tuscaloosa, Alabama – March 2017



LaGrange, Georgia – March 2017



Austin, Texas – December 2017



Selma, Alabama – March 2018



Image 4: Sample Signs, Southeast United States

Location of the monument is proposed for the west side of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Street South, near the intersection with 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South. Based on several news reports and articles, this is the reported location of the subject lynching. Due to

pending construction on adjacent private property and constrained right-of-way, the exact location for the proposed historic marker is under review by Staff and will be finalized prior to installation.

Justification of the monument is provided in the above proposed text, which provides local and national context.

- *The applicant will be responsible for all costs associated with the marker including the manufacture, construction, permitting, and maintenance fee.*

The City of St. Petersburg's private partners, CRPC and EJI, will be responsible for all costs associated with the marker, including the manufacture and installation.

- *When the marker is associated with an historic Event, Building, or Person, the application shall be reviewed by the CPPC and if the building is a local landmark, the applicant will also require COA approval.*

The historic marker is proposed for installation within the public right-of-way. Since the subject area is not located within a listed local historic district, a Certificate of Appropriateness ("COA") is not required.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The CPPC is certifying the proposed marker's historic accuracy and overall importance to St. Petersburg's local history and heritage. City Administration and Staff find that the proposed marker meets the criteria for the City's Markers and Monuments Policy and recommends the Community Planning and Preservation Commission **APPROVE** the contents of the marker **WITH CONDITIONS**:

1. Location and installation shall be coordinated through the City's Development Administration, and shall include the Office of Cultural Affairs, Engineering and Capital Improvements Department, Transportation and Parking Management Department; and Urban Planning and Historic Preservation Division;
2. The Community Remembrance Project Coalition and Equal Justice Initiative shall be responsible for all costs associated with the marker, including the manufacture and installation; and
3. Future relocation or removal, if required, shall be conducted in accordance with the City's Markers and Monuments Policy.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Proposed Text
- B. Sign Specifications
- C. List of Community Remembrance Project Coalition ("CRPC") Supporters
- D. Source (Research) Documentation
- E. Detailed Article / Account



**ATTACHMENT A:  
Proposed Text**

### **SIDE ONE: The Lynching of John Evans [1443 characters]**

Near this site on November 12, 1914, a white mob lynched a Black man named John Evans. During this era, Black people were burdened by a presumption of guilt that made them vulnerable to mob violence and lynching. Mr. Evans arrived in St. Petersburg from Dunnellon, Florida, and worked for a white man, Edward Sherman. When Mr. Sherman was later found dead and his wife was reportedly assaulted, suspicion was directed at Mr. Evans. Without formal charges, trial, or conviction of Mr. Evans, a white mob kidnapped him from a rooming house and tortured him in a wooded area before throwing him in the St. Petersburg Jail. The mob later abducted Mr. Evans from the jail and hanged him from a light pole located at the border between the city's segregated Black and white communities. This public spectacle lynching was attended by an estimated 1500 white men, women, and children. As Mr. Evans struggled to hold himself aloft, a white woman shot him from her car, inciting the crowd to fire upon him for more than ten minutes. White mobs then terrorized the Black community for days in search of an alleged accomplice, Ebenezer Tobin. At least 170 Black residents fled their homes for safety. Mr. Tobin was later found and tried by an all-white jury, becoming the first person legally hanged in Pinellas County in October 1915. No one was held accountable for Mr. Evans' lynching due to the impunity granted by racial hierarchy in St. Petersburg.

### **SIDE TWO: Lynching in America [1420 characters]**

Thousands of African Americans were victims of lynching and racial violence in the United States between the Civil War and World War II. The lynching of African Americans during this era was a form of racial terrorism used to intimidate Black people and enforce racial hierarchy and segregation. Lynching was most prevalent in the South. After the Civil War, violent resistance to equal rights for African Americans and an ideology of white supremacy led to fatal violence against Black women, men, and children accused of violating social customs, engaging in interracial relationships, or crimes. Lynching became the most public and notorious form of racial terror and subordination directed at Black people and was frequently tolerated or even supported by law enforcement and elected officials. Though terror lynching generally took place in communities with functioning criminal justice systems, lynching victims were denied due process, often based on mere accusations, and pulled from jails or delivered to mobs by law officers legally required to protect them. Millions of African Americans fled the South to escape the climate of terror and trauma created by these acts of violence. Of the more than 316 documented racial terror lynchings that took place in Florida between 1877 and 1950, at least three took place in Pinellas County including John Thomas on December 25, 1905, and Parker Watson on May 9, 1926.



**ATTACHMENT B:  
Sign Specifications**

# the southwell co.

928 N. ALAMO • SAN ANTONIO, TX 78215  
 ph. (210) 223-1831 fax (210) 223-8517

## CUSTOMER:

EQUAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE  
 122 COMMERCE ST  
 MONTGOMERY, AL 36104

- approved (no corrections)
  - approved as noted
  - revise and resubmit
- signed by: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN ONE (1) COPY.  
 FAILURE TO SIGN THIS PROOF WILL RESULT  
 IN RESUBMITTAL FOR YOUR SIGNATURE.

Thank You

## SHIP TO:

TBD

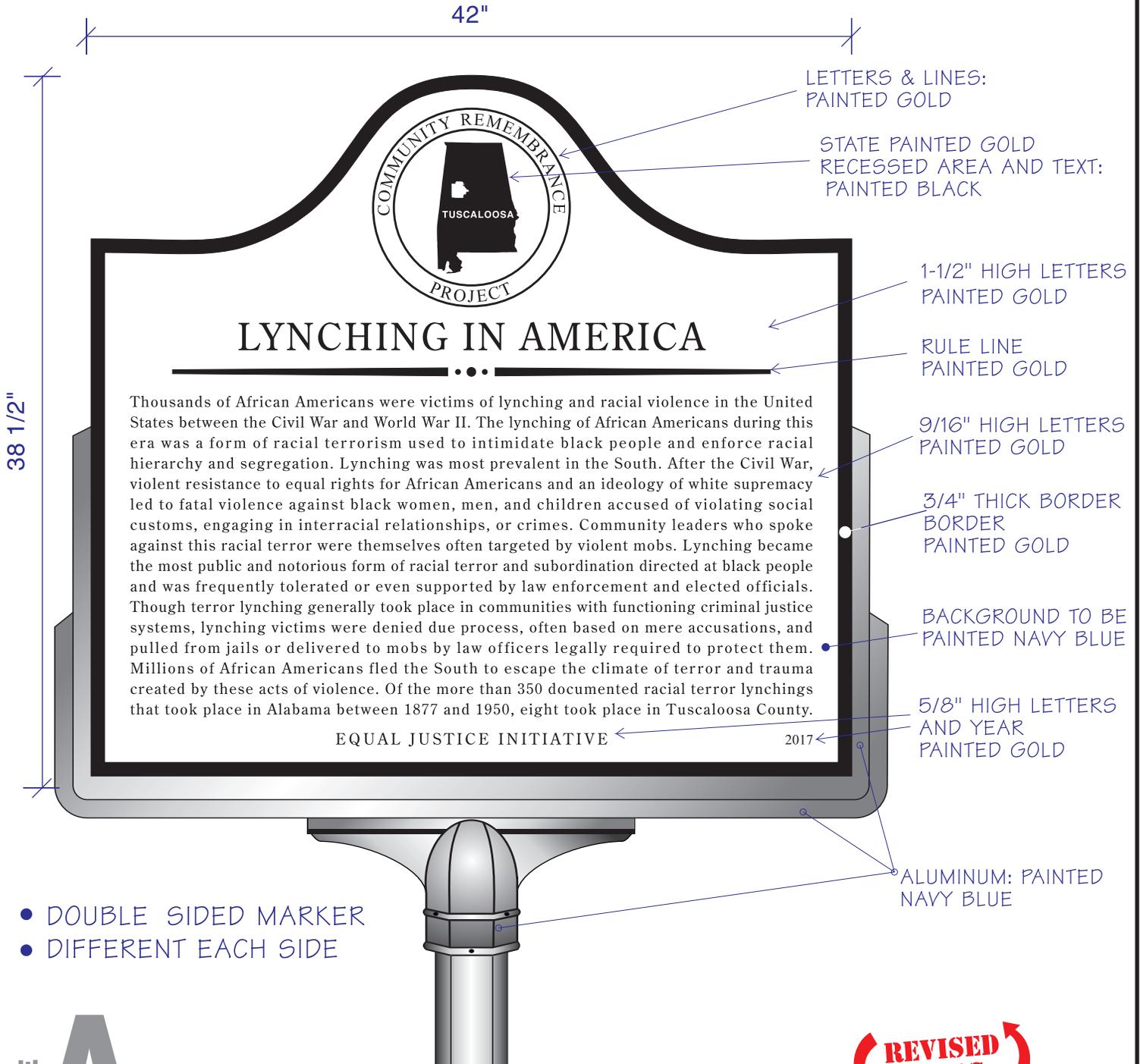
## CAST ALUMINUM PLAQUE

42" W X 38-1/2" H

SCALE: 1/8" = 1"



**YOU ARE THE FINAL PROOF-READER**



**SIDE A**

**REVISED 1.6.17**

QUOTE # \_\_\_\_\_ N/A FILE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ 16-18619.cdr  
 JOB # \_\_\_\_\_ 16-18619 DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 P.O. # \_\_\_\_\_ N/A SUBMITTED: \_\_\_\_\_ 12.30.16  
 RE: \_\_\_\_\_ LYNCHING IN \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ TUSCALOOSA / AMERICA DRAWN BY: BRADLEY EVERITT

QUANTITY: \_\_\_\_\_ ONE (1) DOUBLE SIDED  
 MATERIAL: \_\_\_\_\_ CAST ALUMINUM  
 FINISH: \_\_\_\_\_ \*SEE DRAWING  
 SIZE: \_\_\_\_\_ 42" WIDE X 38 1/2" HIGH  
 BORDER: \_\_\_\_\_ SINGLE LINE  
 LETTERS: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE SPECIFY MOUNTING ATTACHMENTS**

- CONCEALED
- WOOD SCREWS W/ROSETTES
- EXPANSION BOLTS W/ROSETTES
- TOGGLE BOLTS W/ROSETTES

THE DESIGN OF THIS PLAQUE HAS BEEN MADE USING COMPUTERIZED GRAPHICS. THE ACTUAL PATTERN USED IN CASTING WILL BE MADE BASED ON FINAL APPROVAL OF THIS SUBMITTAL DRAWING. THE FORMAT, LETTER STYLE, LETTER SIZE, SPACING AND MOUNTING ARE BASED ON INDUSTRY STANDARDS AND OUR CAPACITIES TO PRODUCE A HIGH QUALITY CASTING.



**ATTACHMENT C:  
List of Community Remembrance Project Coalition (“CRPC”) Supporters**

## **Community Remembrance Project Coalition Supporters**

### **Organizations**

#### **ACLU of Florida, Pinellas County Chapter**

Dr. Ray Arsenault

#### **Academy of Senior Professionals at Eckerd College (ASPEC)**

Ernest Mahaffey

Sheila Penrose

#### **Advocates for Race Amity Pinellas**

Susan Allen

Sue Rishworth

#### **African American Heritage Association of St. Petersburg, FL, Inc**

Irene Pridgen

Gwendolyn Reese

#### **The Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Inc. (ASALH) St. Petersburg branch**

Dierdre Downing-Jackson

Jacqueline Hubbard

Dr. Russell T. Jackson

Anita Pernell-Arnold

Irene Pridgen

Rev. Pierre Williams

#### **BackGetters LLC**

Christina Williams

#### **Blake Collins Group**

Tony Collins

#### **City of St. Petersburg**

Wayne Atherholt

Darryl Rouson

#### **The Deuces Live, Inc.**

Veatrice Farrell

#### **Diocese of Southwest Florida**

Mary Wallis Smith

**Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum**

Terri Lipsey Scott

**Eckerd College**

Kelly Kirschner

Bren Ross-Greene

**Florida Holocaust Museum**

Elizabeth Gelman

Sara McDonald

**Foundation for Healthy St. Pete**

Carl Lavender

**The Gathering of Women**

Samantha Richardson

**Greater Mount Zion AME Church**

Dierdre Downing-Jackson

Dr. Russell T. Jackson

Rev. Clarence Williams

Rev. Pierre Williams

**Indivisible FL-13**

Susana Darwin

**Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance**

Dr. Marva Dennard

J.C. Pritchett

Apostle Clarice Pennington

Kim Wells

**Lakewood United Church of Christ**

Kim Wells

**League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area**

Linsey Grove

Julie Kessel

Julia Sharp

**NAACP Clearwater and North Pinellas County Branch**

Sue Rishworth

**NAACP St. Petersburg branch**

Dr. Marva Dennard  
Cassandra Jackson

**Peaten Reese Peaten Consulting, Inc.**

Andrea M. Peaten  
Jeffery L. Peaten III  
Gwendolyn Reese

**The Pinellas County Urban League**

Vonda Ford

**Power Broker Media Group**

Gypsy Gallardo

**Racewithoutism, Inc.**

Danny White

**St. Augustine's Episcopal Church**

Dr. Julie Armstrong  
Yaté Cutliff  
Thomas Hallock  
Jacqueline Hubbard  
Cheryl Johnson-Tindall  
Jan Neuberger  
Rev. Jose Rose  
Andrew Walker

**St. Peter's Episcopal Cathedral**

Canon Katie Churchwell

**St. Petersburg Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)**

Gwendolyn Brown

**The St. Petersburg Metropolitan Section of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW)**

Thelma Bruce  
Dr. Marva Dennard  
Dierdre Downing-Jackson  
Apostle Clarice Pennington

**The Tiger Bay Club of St. Petersburg**

Kelly Kirschner

**Unitarian Universalists**

Susan Allen

**UNITE Pinellas**

Tim Dutton

**The University of South Florida-St. Petersburg Campus**

Dr. Ray Arsenault

Dr. Julie Armstrong

Thomas Hallock

Geveryl Robinson

Maxwel Stone

Jamie Tremblay

**Youth Farm**

Carla Bristol

Ja'Nyria Cole

**Individuals**

Gwendolyn Anderson

Anita Arnold

Jennifer Griffith

Layne Griffith

Madeline Griffith

LTC. Ashby Hobson

Col. RONALDA HOBSON

Gretchen Johnson

Dr. Bilan Joseph

Emily Levings

Kate McKeen

Donna McRae

Imam Askia Muhammad

Llani O'Connor

Mary Russell

Al Salo

Steve Sanger

Dr. Ronald Sheehy

Kyle Stang

Susan Stang

Patricia Terrell

Mary Wallis Smith

Laurel Westmoreland

Ruth Whitney

Noel Williams



**ATTACHMENT D:  
Source (Research) Documentation**

**Resources:**

**Research Locations:**

Nelson Poynter Library, USFSP: materials in special collections and on reserve  
St. Petersburg Museum of History: need to visit

**Books, Articles, and Websites:**

Arsenault, Raymond. *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888-1950*. Norfolk: Donning Co, 1988. USFSP Special Collections F319.S24 A 77 and <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00061982/00001>

Bailey, Amy Kate, and Stewart Tolnay. *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. Brundage, W. Fitzhugh. *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Dunn, Marvin. *The Beast in Florida: A History of Anti-Black Violence*. University Press of Florida, 2013. This book provides context and has an appendix of victims by date, county, race, offense, etc. USFSP Special Collections. E185.61 D895.

Equal Justice Initiative. "Lynching in America: A Community Remembrance Project" (2015 report, PDF). Online: <http://eji.org/reports/>

Florida Lynchings: Dark Memories in the Sunshine State. USFSP student project. Online <https://floridalynchings.wordpress.com/>

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Ortiz, Paul. *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida From Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920*. University of California Press, 2005.

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"She Remembers The Horror of Lynching". *St. Petersburg Evening Independent*, February 22, 1979. Online: <https://tinyurl.com/yd89yfwz>

Tolnay, Stewart and E.M. Beck. *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

Beck, E.M. "Judge Lynch Denied: Combating the Mob in the American South, 1877-1950," *Southern Cultures* 21 (No. 2, Summer): 117-139.

The Tuskegee Institute news clippings file [microform] / Project director, John W. Kitchens. Division of Behavioral Science Research, Carver Research Foundation, Tuskegee Institute; Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corp. of America, 1976.

Ugly past, uncertain future: Seeking reparations for St. Pete's most gruesome lynching. *Creative Loafing*, May 18, 2016. Online: <https://www.ctampa.com/news-views/news-features/article/20780532/ugly-past-uncertain-future-seeking-reparations-for-st-petes-most-gruesome-lynching>

Wilson, Jon L. "Days of Fear: A Lynching in St. Petersburg." University of South Florida. College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Department of History, "Tampa Bay History 05/02" (1983). Online: [http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/flstud\\_pub/2519](http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/flstud_pub/2519)

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Wilson, Jon and Rosalie Peck. *St. Petersburg's Historic African American Neighborhoods: Community, Culture, and Connection*. Charleston, SC: History Press, 2008.



**ATTACHMENT E:  
Detailed Article / Account**

1-1-1983

## Tampa Bay History 05/02

University of South Florida. College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Department of History

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/flstud\\_pub](http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/flstud_pub)

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# Tampa Bay History

FALL / WINTER 1983



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## FROM THE EDITORS

History, unfortunately, is filled with examples of man's inhumanity to man. One of the cruelest forms of brutality in American History was the lynching of blacks, particularly in the South. From the early 1880s through the 1930s an average of seventy Afro-Americans each year were killed as a result of extralegal vigilante mob action. The usual justification of the terrorists was that they had to avenge the heinous crime of the rape of white women by blacks. In actuality, most of the lynchings did not result from alleged rapes but grew out of a variety of other charges, especially homicides. Whatever the specific act of provocation, lynchers generally acted in order to maintain tight control over blacks and thwart real or imagined challenges to the prevailing system of white supremacy. In doing so, their methods were vicious. Hangings, shootings, burnings, and mutilations were the weapons used to torture and execute the victims. In 1914, there were slightly over fifty lynchings of blacks, and one of them took place in St. Petersburg. Jon Wilson employs the techniques of the historian and investigative journalist to uncover the story behind this Bay Area lynching in which diverse segments of the community, rich and poor, joined together in participation. This article was chosen to receive the \$50 second prize in the 1982 TAMPA BAY HISTORY Essay Contest.

The remainder of the articles in this issue deal with a broad range of subjects. Their authors examine the Civil War Battle of Fort Myers, the southernmost land battle in the state; the planning and construction of Tampa's municipal wharves, a study of public interest politics; the publication of the first newspaper in the lower Pinellas Peninsula in what is modern-day Gulfport; and the lives of Suncoast women as portrayed in photographs. In addition, we are presenting a memoir of a pioneer family in southwest Florida, and we would like to encourage our readers to send in accounts of their family histories.

We hope that you find this volume of TBH informative reading and invite your comments.

# DAYS OF FEAR: A LYNCHING IN ST. PETERSBURG

by Jon L. Wilson

*Lynching is a vicious practice in which members of a mob take the law into their own hands. On the pretext of seeking retribution for some wrongdoing, they injure or execute a victim in summary fashion, at times with great fanfare and public acclaim. Presumptions of innocence and proof of guilt are treated as afterthoughts, if at all. The accused may have broken a law, violated a local custom, or merely offended prevailing sensibilities. Outnumbered and overwhelmed, the victim has no means of redress, since the mob functions as self-appointed prosecutor, jury, judge and executioner.<sup>1</sup>*

Ed Sherman went to bed early. Immersed in the mystique of Florida real estate, the fifty-five-year-old entrepreneur had finished a busy day, and he expected the next few weeks to bring more hard work. Already it was November 10, and Sherman was hurrying to prepare his woodland acreage for the start of St. Petersburg's 1914 winter season and the expected invasion of northern tourists who might be interested in buying property.

Three years earlier, Sherman had purchased his tract on a desolate stretch of Johns Pass Road (30th Avenue North), a few yards west of the Atlantic Coast Line railroad tracks. During the winters of 1912 and 1913 he and his wife lived on Central Avenue in downtown St. Petersburg, where Sherman operated a photography studio. Each summer, the couple returned to New Jersey, where Sherman had studios in his home town of Camden and in the seaside resort of Wildwood eighty miles away.<sup>2</sup>

But it was among the piney woods and palmettos of remote Pinellas County that the photographer-turned-speculator dreamed of making his fortune. Many others in 1914 St. Petersburg held similar hopes. For three years, vigorous real estate trading had stirred the community, with property being sold and resold, often at inflated prices. Northern money provided much of the fuel for the little land boom. However, after war broke out in Europe, financiers seemed to back away, and St. Petersburg's land fever diminished. When contracts for war materials finally began to bring new profits for the money men, St. Petersburg boosters anticipated a new wave of activity. As an editorial in the town's *Evening Independent* put it: "Now that the tight period is over the people of this city have bright prospects and there is every reason to believe real prosperity is coming."<sup>3</sup>

Sherman hoped the well-to-do would fall for Wildwood Gardens, the fanciful name he gave his property, which he advertised as the "newest suburb of St. Petersburg." In truth, the land was at least a half-mile from the nearest neighbor, several miles from the town and still largely undeveloped. Nevertheless, Sherman had hope, and he had a crew of eleven black men clearing land and doing carpentry work. On the site was Sherman's home, a one-story, frame bungalow with its rear toward the railroad tracks, and a half-finished outbuilding to be used as a shed or garage.

The evening of November 10, 1914, a Tuesday, brought a soft autumn breeze and mild temperatures near sixty-five degrees. Sherman retired about 8 o'clock, sleeping in a bedroom alcove with low, narrow windows on both sides of it and two larger ones in the front. Mrs. Sherman was sitting in an adjoining parlor, making Christmas baskets of grass and pine needles. It was about 9:30 or 10 o'clock when the blast tore through the bungalow.<sup>4</sup>

Screaming, Mrs. Sherman leaped toward the bedroom. It was then, she stated later, that a black man appeared, thrusting a revolver in her face, demanding money and threatening to kill her if she resisted. Mrs. Sherman handed over about \$100 in cash that her husband had withdrawn from the bank the day before. According to Mrs. Sherman's account to police, a second black man appeared, and the pair dragged her outside, beat her across the face with a length of pipe, battered her head against an outbuilding wall and tore off some of her clothes. Newspaper accounts during the next two days strongly suggested she was also raped.<sup>5</sup> With a final threat to kill her if she moved, the assailants fled, and Mrs. Sherman fainted.

The woman told police she regained consciousness awhile later, crawled inside to her husband's bedside, touched his icy feet and fainted again. When she recovered several hours later about 3 o'clock in the morning of November 11, she managed to crawl out of the house and across the yard and railroad tracks. She then got up and staggered a half-mile through the woods to the home of J.W. Richter. But the Richters, like the Shermans, had no telephone, so a boy was sent one more mile through the woods to another house, whose owner in turn sent his son to a Ninth Street house from which the police were notified.

The news stunned the normally placid community. Edward F. Sherman, widely known, popular studio photographer, lay murdered in his bed, the top of his skull blown off by a shotgun blast. His wife lay in St. Petersburg's Augusta Memorial Hospital, the victim of a vicious assault, probably ravished, and hovering near death. Moreover, the criminals were black, according to the newspapers. "Slain As He Slept By Unknown Negro," blared the *Evening Independent's* front-page headline on November 11. The next morning, the *St. Petersburg Daily Times* published photos of Sherman and at least one black man said to be the assailant, next to headlines that declared: "E.F. Sherman Is Brutally Slain While He Sleeps," and "Two Negroes Accused of Most Atrocious Crime Here in Years."<sup>6</sup>

It was a shattering development for a town in which the peaceful pursuits of fishing, agriculture, tourism and, lately, real estate, had established a serene lifestyle. The crimes on Johns Pass Road both scared and outraged white residents. Black residents feared the reaction of the white community. Furthermore, shock waves must have jolted the business community, whose leaders were counting on the support and money of affluent patrons who lived in and near Philadelphia—just across the Delaware River from the Shermans' home in Camden, where Sherman's mother and minister brother still lived. Newspapers in the Philadelphia area carried front-page accounts of the killing and the assault.<sup>7</sup>

If the crimes terrified St. Petersburg's white community, the community's response was equally frightening. During the next seventy-two hours, St. Petersburg experienced almost total disintegration of the law, which passed from authorities to the hands of mobs. Before the disorder ended, the town witnessed the torture and hanging of a black man named John Evans,

whose dangling body was riddled with bullets fired by a lynch mob at Ninth Street and Second Avenue South. Besides whipping hundreds of white residents into a lawless frenzy, the hysteria caused hundreds of black residents to flee in fear of their lives; it nearly cost a city jailer his life; it fostered mob talk about invading Clearwater and Tampa; and it caused Florida Governor Park Trammell to consider calling out troops to restore order in St. Petersburg.<sup>8</sup>

Soon after the Sherman news started moving through the community, white residents took to the streets and the surrounding country. On foot, in buggies, on horseback and in automobiles, men and half-grown boys carrying rifles, pistols and shotguns began sweeping the southern part of the county. Searching parties were formed further north after the news went by telephone to Largo and Clearwater, and grim posses with bloodhounds poked into the most desolate thickets of the Pinellas wilderness. The *Evening Independent* reported that two lines of men, one starting from Largo and the other from St. Petersburg, and stretching all the way across the Pinellas peninsula, were searching for suspects. Rumors flew, and each one sent vigilantes swarming to check it. Reports that a bloodhound had been shot at Crystal Beach near Clearwater, and that three blacks had been chased into a swamp, sent a dozen packed autos swaying over bumpy roads to the northern part of the county. The story proved false.<sup>9</sup>

In St. Petersburg, the rumors fed crowds roaming Central Avenue and Fourth Street. Many gathered at the combined city hall and jail at Fourth Street and Second Avenue South, waiting for police to bring in suspects. At intervals, as it was reported black suspects were being taken before Mrs. Sherman for possible identification, throngs would dash off to Augusta Memorial at Seventh Street and Sixth Avenue South. At one point, more than 100 armed men surrounded the hospital to prevent any suspect from escaping. Incidents of random violence began. As the mobs rushed back and forth, a man on horseback rode up to R.B. DuBois, a white man who was photographing the furious activity, and knocked a camera out of his hands.

However, the vigilantes directed their terror against the black community. In an effort to round up all the men who had worked for Sherman, a posse raided the black “quarters” west of Ninth Street after midnight on November 12 and took a half-dozen men to the city jail. Several others were arrested elsewhere, either on the strength of Mrs. Sherman’s reports to police or because they were unfortunate enough to be seen outside. Another black man, seen on Ninth Street at 3 a.m., November 12, was shot at three times by a posse returning from Clearwater. According to the *Evening Independent*, no blacks were harmed during the searches, but over the next few days, many left the city. Some took the train, while others walked the Atlantic Coast Line tracks north toward Pinellas Park and Largo. On November 13, the day after the lynching, 179 black women and children left on an afternoon boat to Tampa, and still others took smaller boats to Pass-a-Grille.<sup>10</sup>

The events in St. Petersburg earned the town several days of critical press comment from newspapers outside the city. In its November 15 editorial, the *Tampa Tribune* observed: “St. Petersburg and its neighborhood could have won a national reputation by permitting the law to take its course in this aggravated case—or at least by waiting until guilt could be accurately fixed before adopting the mob method.” The *Clearwater Sun* commented caustically, “Surely there must have been those in that city of ten thousand people, with its culture and refinement, and its

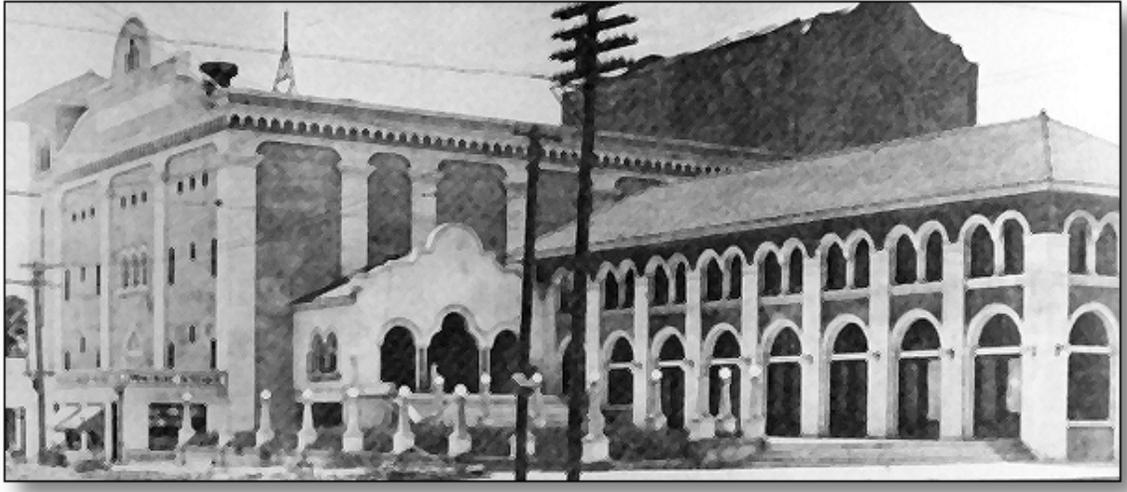
law and its gospel, who could have prevented the frenzy of a small portion of its people from adding crime to crime.”<sup>11</sup>

*Sun* editor Willis Powell may have been right in his assertion. However, the wave of terror raised a number of questions no one seemed to be asking publicly, in St. Petersburg or anywhere else. Why had the law not been allowed to take its proper course? Moreover, how could a placid community, which advertised itself as a “thoroughly cosmopolitan city” and the “cleanest, cheeriest, most comfortable little city in the south” so completely lose control?<sup>12</sup> And other, more haunting questions remained unanswered: Was the kidnapping of Evans from the city jail and his subsequent lynching the spontaneous action of a mob, or was there subtle planning to achieve a quick, extralegal execution to remove a threat to the community’s progress? Would a white man have been dealt with the same as John Evans? And finally, did the mobs and the lynching define St. Petersburg’s racial division and maintain, once again, still another version of a code that spoke of one kind of justice and position for white people, and another for blacks?

If there are answers to such questions, they are to be found in the town itself. No longer a remote, pastoral village, but hardly a bustling city, St. Petersburg in 1914 resembled a bumpkin struggling to shed a backwater character and assume a new one of polish and charm. A news item in the *Evening Independent* illustrated the duality: A driver hauling construction steel for the town’s modern, new gas plant was injured—when the mules pulling his wagon bolted and ran away. Such divided character was evident in many ways. Although Central Avenue was hard-surfaced in the downtown business district and twenty-five miles of trolley track stretched to Gulfport, Big Bayou, Coffee Pot Bayou and the Jungle on Boca Ciega Bay, citizens wrote irate letters to the editor, complaining that mule-drawn wagons were ruining the town’s few blocks of brick paving. Mechanics in five garages fixed the growing number of motor cars, but there was still a livery stable, and a harness shop and three blacksmiths. Residents could keep cows in their yards for a one dollar permit fee; and yet the town boasted a \$150,000 opera house, reputedly the most modern south of Washington, D.C.<sup>13</sup> St. Petersburg’s permanent population was a matter of debate. It was probably about 7,000 by 1914. Informal estimates varied, but a state census in 1915 set it at 7,186.<sup>14</sup>

An *Evening Independent* editorial, bemoaning a recent increase in burglaries, noted that “St. Petersburg is getting out of the village class and is becoming a city,” but serious crime was generally not a problem. The municipal court was more likely to fine someone for allowing a noisy card party to fracture the peace at the late hour of 11 p.m. Police Chief A. L. Easters and his four officers worried about pranksters and planned to have extra men on duty for Halloween.<sup>16</sup>

By 1914, St. Petersburg had developed a socially elite group nurtured by the attention given the town by affluent and influential easterners, many of them from Philadelphia. Thanks, for example, to Philadelphian F. A. Davis and his companies, St. Petersburg had its trolleys, paved streets and power company. The St. Petersburg Investment Company, a Davis brainchild to finance development in the town, attracted many other Philadelphia money men, among them George Gandy, H. C. Hatchett, William C. Haddock, Cyrus S. Detre, H. K. Heritage, Jacob Disston and Charles R. Hall. During 1912-13, Gandy built the Plaza theater, which included the opera house and office buildings, on Central Avenue and Fifth Street. As early as 1906, the



**They called it “Gandy’s White Elephant,” but his business complex at Central and Fifth featuring the Plaza Theatre proved to be a great success. It was built by George S. Gandy and opened on March 8, 1913.**

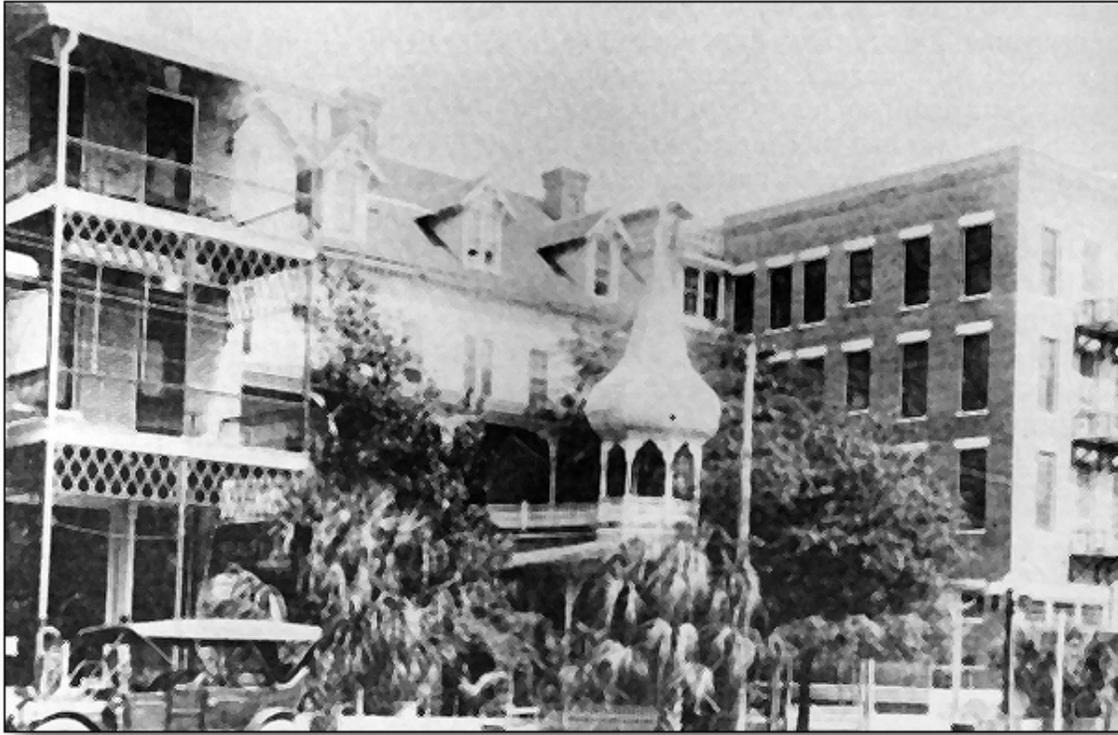
Photo courtesy of *Yesterday’s St. Petersburg*.

Philadelphia group had entertained big plans for St. Petersburg. In that year a *St. Petersburg Daily Times* story mentioned an article in the *Philadelphia North American* that declared, “Capitalists in Philadelphia plan to make St. Petersburg one of the most important ports in the South Atlantic states.”<sup>17</sup>

W. L. Straub’s *Times* carried on its editorial page the slogan, “Be Sure It Is Right—Then Boost It,” and the words seemed to provide inspiration. Residents consistently united behind proposals for improvements: About \$624,000 was approved by voters in bond issue elections from 1908 to 1913, and not one issue was defeated during that period. Clearly, St. Petersburg was an ambitious town.<sup>18</sup>

Not all was perfect, however. For many, personal and business finances were running low in the fall of 1914. *Evening Independent* city editor A. R. “Archie” Dunlap predicted that most residents would continue to burn wood for fuel even when the new gas plant was ready. “Money is none too plentiful in St. Petersburg, or anywhere else this winter,” Dunlap wrote in his “Rambler” column. The city’s Board of Trade and the proprietors of hotels and boarding houses were worried, too. More than 50,000 pieces of promotional literature had been printed and mailed north at great expense, which only a highly successful tourist season could recover.<sup>19</sup>

Still, prominent citizens were predicting success. Board of Trade President Charles R. Hall and St. Petersburg Investment Company manager H. Walter Fuller, returning from a conference in Philadelphia with St. Petersburg investors, both reported high optimism among the easterners, who were said to be loosening their finances. “Each brings a story of prosperity that will not much longer be delayed,” declared an *Evening Independent* editorial. “They say St. Petersburg’s



**The Detroit Hotel, about 1914.**

Photograph courtesy of the City of St. Petersburg.



**Central Avenue ran from Fourth Street and was a busy thoroughfare by 1912.**

Photograph courtesy of *Yesterday's St. Petersburg*.



**The passenger train station of the Atlantic Coast Line railroad was built in 1913 and in use until 1963.**

Photograph courtesy of the City of St. Petersburg.

prospects are better than ever before, and they are in a position to know, for they are the men who do things.” Hall, who had a reputation as a master salesman, claimed that people would be sleeping in bathtubs for lack of better accommodations. Hall reported also that \$100,000 worth of property had been sold to prospective winter residents during the past sixty days, at a rate of one home per week. W. A. Huber, president of the Pennsylvania State Society, announced that he expected to “bring a good-sized party [of visitors] with me to St. Petersburg this winter.” Another St. Petersburg resident, recently returned from a northern trip, reported that railway and steamship offices in Boston had never had such large bookings for Florida and that ninety percent of them were for the state’s West Coast.<sup>20</sup>

Whatever the season brought, 1914 had been a landmark year for St. Petersburg. The new gas plant and garbage crematory was almost complete. A second railroad, the Tampa and Gulf Coast, was building a \$20,000 depot in town and expected to begin St. Petersburg service soon. A library financed by a Carnegie grant was under construction. An agreement was reached to bring the Philadelphia Phillies to town for spring training in 1915. The city also received a big boost from the Atlantic Coast Line railroad, which devoted the entire back page of its fall promotional brochure to St. Petersburg.<sup>21</sup>

All of this reflected the happy growth of an ambitious town, but there was an ailment, a festering, a flaw. Like most Southern towns, St. Petersburg was strictly segregated by race. Blacks, who composed about one-third of the city's population, lived in separate areas west of Ninth Street. The largest sections were "Cooper's Quarters" near the gas plant project, "Methodist Town" north of Central Avenue and another settlement about a mile west of the city limits south of Central Avenue. The black sections contained their own churches, stores and meeting halls because the residents could not use facilities in white sections. There was a separate hospital for blacks, and people in the communities had their own schools.

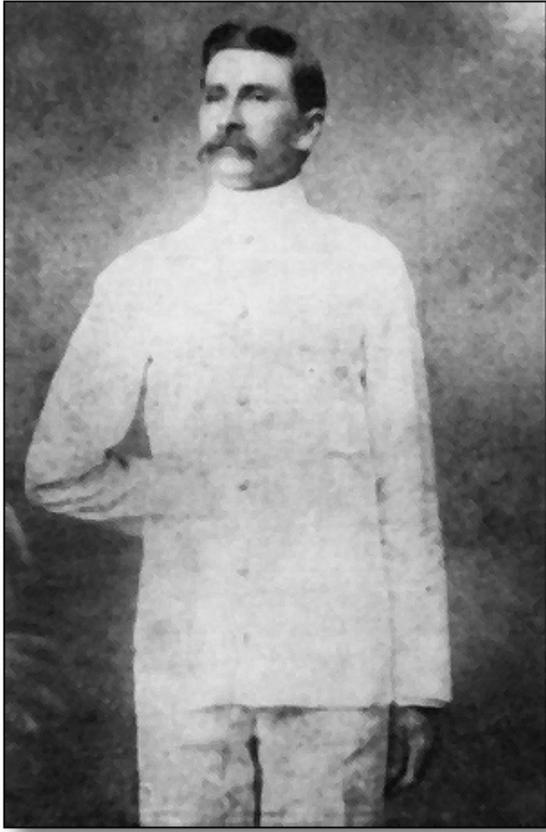
Blacks provided much of the work force that was building St. Petersburg. Men worked as laborers for one of the town's twelve white building contractors, on street paving projects, and on sewer-laying jobs. Others worked for the railroads, and some were craftsmen. Black women waited tables or were maids in hotels, boarding houses and the private homes of the affluent. A black woman might earn five dollars a week; a man five to ten dollars weekly. Other than the hours they spent working there, blacks were seldom allowed in the business district or in the white residential sections.<sup>22</sup>

Segregation was enforced in the political process as well. In 1913, for example, a primary election in which only whites were permitted to vote produced the commissioners who would direct town affairs for the next several years. The white-only election was called because some candidates apparently had strong support from blacks. Major Lew B. Brown's *Evening Independent* supported the white primary as "a voluntary expression of the white voters in order to maintain control of city affairs in the hands of the white people," and it expressed some fear that blacks could control the town if all of them voted in a bloc. That 500 blacks were registered to vote—less than one-twelfth of the town population—seemed enough of a threat to the white community to justify the special primary.<sup>23</sup>

Elected were J. G. Bradshaw, commissioner of public affairs; T. J. Northrup, commissioner of public safety; and C. D. Hammond, commissioner of public works. A week later, Bradshaw was chosen mayor by the other two. Bradshaw declared before the election that he "wanted to go into office as the choice of the white voters of the city and would rather not have the office than to rely on the negroes to win."<sup>24</sup>

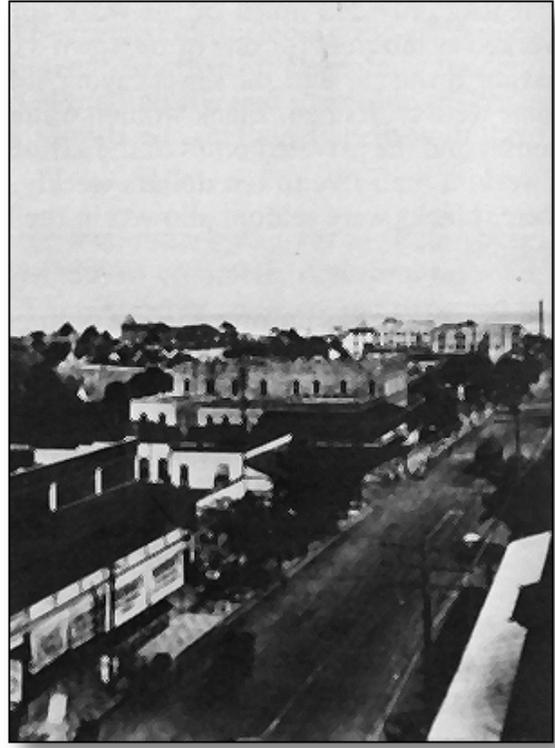
Segregation had always been present to some degree in St. Petersburg, but to some blacks it seemed that the practice grew harsher as the 1900s progressed. Paul Barco, a black St. Petersburg resident whose father had arrived in 1905, later recalled that his mother and father conducted their courtship in Williams Park, but Barco, born in 1916, had grandchildren of his own before he saw the park for the first time. The intensity of racial discrimination seemed to increase some time after 1905. Discussing the phenomenon, Barco observed:

My daddy said when he came to this city, if you had to go to a doctor, you went on over to the doctor. He had one waiting room there, he waited on whoever was there. And the people who were in there were rustic [white] people, just like the others [who were black]. They were not the polished persons from elsewhere, who probably had never been around a [black] person. But my dad said as these persons began to come down who had the great amounts of finance and they had been exposed to a great deal



**Marvel Whitehouse, the Pinellas County Sheriff in 1914.**

Photograph courtesy of Heritage Park County.



**Lower Central Avenue, looking east toward Tampa Bay in 1910, complete with trolley.**

Courtesy of Heritage Park, Pinellas

of literary training, then these people felt that they didn't care to sit in the same room with these [black] people.

According to his father, "the polished persons" put pressure on the people who rendered the services to institute segregated facilities. Eventually, the dentist, who was white, added a separate waiting room for blacks, telling Barco's father that "things were changing."<sup>25</sup>

Crime, even petty crime by blacks, frequently resulted in a harsh response. For example, whites would not hesitate to shoot at a black person for so slight a transgression as stealing fruit. Such extreme reaction for minor offenses further defined a system that placed blacks in an inferior position that seldom accorded them the consideration a white person would enjoy. Lula Grant, who came to St. Petersburg in 1908 when she was twenty-two years old, expressed it this way: "It's too bad to say, but we were just black people, and they was white people, that's all. We weren't considered [in] any way, we were just black people."<sup>26</sup>



**The Hotel Poinsettia on Central Avenue, 1914.**

Courtesy of Heritage Park, Pinellas County.

The November 10 *Evening Independent* editorial, predicting the imminent arrival of good fortune for St. Petersburg, appeared just a few hours before the Sherman crimes happened. Suddenly, a shadow fell over the optimism. With only five policemen on its payroll, the city was plunged into a situation where it was forced to cope with serious crime and civil disorder. The days of fear had begun.

Suspicion fell immediately on John Evans, a black man from Dunnellon who had come with Sherman by car from that town several weeks earlier. Evans had worked for Sherman as a chauffeur and general roustabout, but he was fired on Saturday, November 7. Although there had been no serious quarrel, Evans drank during the weekend and seemed to carry a grudge, according to an acquaintance. From her hospital bed a few hours after the crimes, moreover, Mrs. Sherman told Dr. F. W. Wilcox that she thought she recognized the voice of one of her assailants as that of Evans.

Law enforcement officials moved swiftly on November 11. A coroner's jury viewed the murder scene and Police Chief A. L. Easters went straight to the Sherman home. So did Deputy Charles Simms, representing Pinellas County Sheriff Marvel Whitehurst. The two law officers surmised that Sherman's killer had crept to a window outside the alcove where Sherman lay sleeping, stood on a low pile of dirt and fired a shotgun through the screen. Footprints under the

window seemed to match others leading north from the house. Based on Mrs. Sherman's descriptions, apparently relayed through Dr. Wilcox, Easters ordered the arrests of Evans and another black man known as Tobe, said to have fingers missing on his right hand.

As news of the crimes spread and residents began to form posses and mill in the streets, the first person arrested was Ebenezer B. Tobin. Sheriff's Deputy Grover C. McMullen made the arrest on Ninth Street, when he spied a man who fit the description of the man called Tobe. After questioning at the St. Petersburg police office, McMullen put Tobin on a train to Clearwater before anyone in the gathering crowd learned of the arrest. Tobin was held in the county jail at Clearwater despite the fact that Deputy Simms searched the black man's home, found no evidence and declared that he believed Tobin told the truth when he denied any part in the crime.

McMullen also arrested another black man, George W. Gadson, in some woods near Largo after two detectives trailed Gadson and three other black men along the railroad tracks. John Evans was found about the same time by former deputy sheriff E. L. Proctor, with the help of a black informant. However, Evans could not be linked to the killing. Taken before Mrs. Sherman, he was released after she could not identify him as her attacker. Mrs. Sherman looked at several other black men, but could not name any as an assailant.<sup>27</sup>

As crowds dashed wildly around the town, grim groups of manhunters prowled the rural areas, determined to find the guilty persons they thought must be hiding in the dense woods. It was rough going. George Gandy, one of the searchers, said the country his party went through was so thick with palmettoes that one hundred men could have hidden within a few feet and never have been detected.<sup>28</sup> In town, commissioners ordered saloons closed about nightfall. Nevertheless, Central Avenue remained crowded with white people until midnight. Blacks disappeared from the streets, even in their own sections, and nearby Ninth Street was empty except for an occasional car carrying white men. At the railroad depot, just one black hotel porter remained on duty, although many were usually on hand to meet the night train.

Thursday, November 12, began ominously. Frustrated after failing to find and identify the Sherman attackers, a posse raided black homes during the early morning hours and took six or seven men to the town jail. Later in the morning, St. Petersburg seemed quieter than on the previous day, with not so much frantic dashing about, although the streets remained crowded.

As the day wore on, new developments began to excite the people again. By now, both the morning and evening newspapers had devoted much space to detailed, sometimes gruesome accounts of the crimes, descriptions of black suspects including their names and the progress of the manhunt. To infuriate further the white populace came apparent confirmation that Mrs. Sherman had been raped. While not saying so directly, the *Evening Independent* published an article pointing out that Florida law prohibited printing the name of a woman who had been sexually assaulted. The article also reported that it would be unlawful to mention the woman's relationship to Sherman, because it would identify her. Thus, the newspaper disclaimer, added to opinion in the community, effectively established Mrs. Sherman as a rape victim.

Although the *Evening Independent's* lead editorial on November 12 denounced mob violence and expressed hope that the law would take its proper course, the news columns of both local

papers seemed to fan the flames of anger. Besides graphic descriptions of the crimes, stories contained statements that would tend to inflame a mob. For example, an *Evening Independent* story said, “. . . the general feeling is that the guilty man should be hanged promptly as soon as positively identified.” On the previous day, the *Evening Independent* had speculated that the guilty parties, if caught, had small chance of getting to jail alive. City editor A. R. “Archie” Dunlap’s November 12 column brought up the idea of lynching, although he stopped short of endorsing the practice. In an accompanying front-page story, the *Evening Independent* reported that new clues had been found and that one of them appeared to link John Evans to the crimes. Despite his release the day before, Evans was still under suspicion because he had left Sherman’s employ under forced circumstances, the story declared. It also noted: “The general feeling here is that Evans knows more of the crime than he has told.”<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, the St. Petersburg newspapers, including the *Times* with its pictures of Sherman and black men on the front page, had gone by train to Clearwater and other sections of north Pinellas County. The news stimulated residents in those sections. “They came in [to St. Petersburg] from all over the upper county. Old-timers, old pioneers, they came in on horseback,” according to Luther Atkins, a St. Petersburg resident who observed the events and recalled them in a 1981 interview.<sup>30</sup>

Two discoveries again led posses to John Evans. A torn, bloody man’s shirt and a pair of bloody shoes were found by a search party in the back of a house in Methodist Town where Evans had roomed. A black man in the house at first stated that the shirt belonged to Evans, but he soon changed his mind, saying he did not know who owned it. Another piece of evidence also turned up. A double-barreled shotgun, thought to be the murder weapon, was found alongside the railroad tracks south of the Sherman home toward the town. One barrel had recently been fired, and the gun appeared to be the one earlier stolen from L. R. Hardee’s home on Central Avenue. That discovery seemed to indicate the assailants must have fled south instead of north as originally supposed, but it did not immediately implicate any person in particular. Nonetheless, the bloody shoes and shirt were enough to spur the search parties on another hunt for Evans. Though Mrs. Sherman had said the day before that Evans was not her attacker, her statements were now placed in doubt because her injuries and medication supposedly prevented her from thinking clearly.

Since his release from custody the day before, Evans had gone to work for a black man west of town near Fifth Avenue South and Twenty-second Street. Someone telephoned his whereabouts to Police Chief Easters. The caller also indicated that Evans had been told the mob was after him again but that he had responded that he would not run. If the mob wanted him, he said, it could come get him.<sup>31</sup>

That it did, after receiving directions from the police chief. Hoping to force a confession, the vigilantes took Evans into the woods, tortured him and nearly lynched him on the spot. According to the *Tampa Tribune*, Evans

was subjected to intense methods to provoke a confession, but remained a stoic throughout. After being subjected to all known methods, and his continued denial that he knew anything of the crime, Evans was told to make his peace with God and to say

his prayers. He said he had no prayers to say. It is alleged a rope was placed around his neck and he was lifted clear of the ground, but he continued to deny he is [sic] the guilty man.<sup>32</sup>

Unable to extract the confession it wanted, the mob decided to take Evans into town so Mrs. Sherman could inspect him again. For awhile, he was hidden in a Roser Park garage while an expectant crowd at the hospital awaited his arrival. Kept waiting, the crowd began to disperse, and Evans was then taken to Mrs. Sherman, who for the second time could not identify him. She said she could not see without her glasses, which had been broken in the assault. Dr. Wilcox declared that her vision had also been damaged by a blow she had received across the left eye. Later, Dr. Wilcox, Mayor J. G. Bradshaw and Police Chief Easters talked briefly with the people outside the hospital, saying that Evans would be left in the St. Petersburg jail and not taken to Clearwater if the crowd would not molest him until he could be named as an assailant.<sup>33</sup>

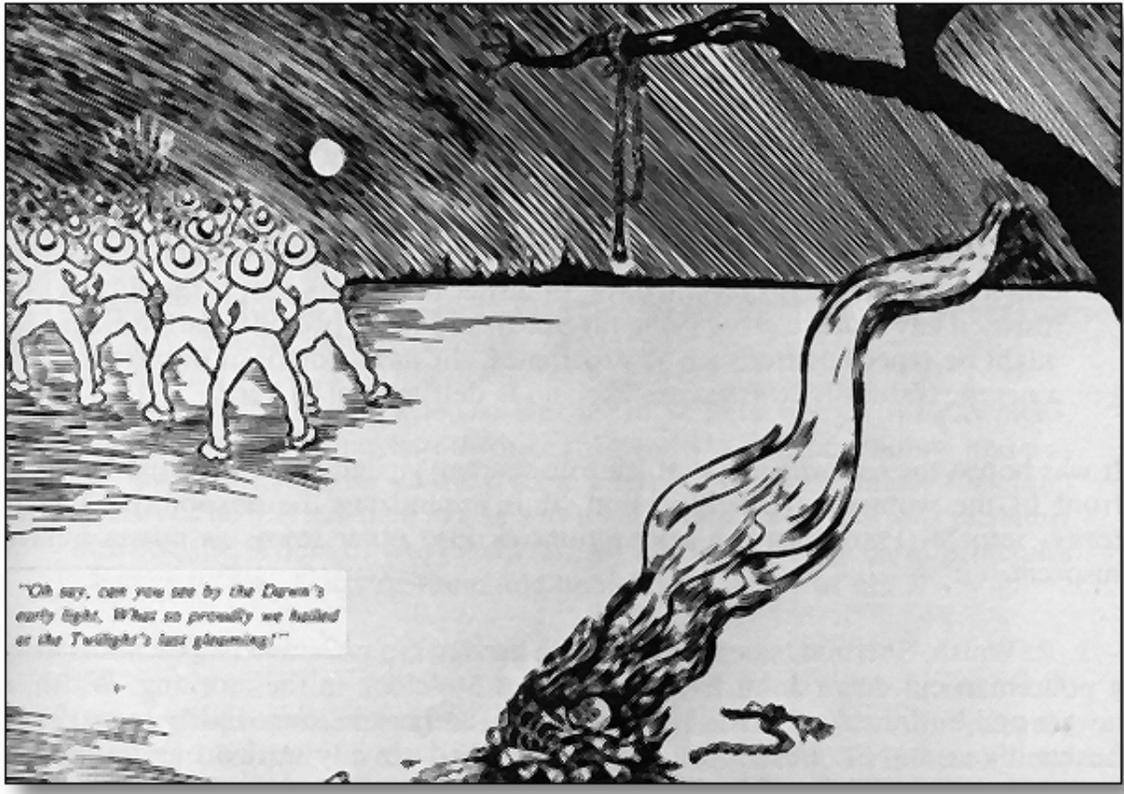
During the afternoon, the crowds downtown seemed to be growing more unruly. "A number of strangers, probably from the outlying sections, appeared and the crowd became more determined," commented one newspaper story, although the account noted that there was no talk of lynching or breaking into the jail.<sup>34</sup> But at one point, a group at the city hall became so demonstrative that Mayor Bradshaw mounted the steps to plead. He contended that he had no doubt that the law would be carried out, whether by summary justice of some determined posse or, as he hoped, by a duly constituted court.<sup>35</sup>

About 10:30 that night, a mob estimated at 1,500 seized Evans. Accunts vary as to how the vigilantes gained entrance to the jail. According to one, a crowbar was used to pry open the iron door of the corridor leading to the cells; another said bricks were removed from a wall; a third declared the jail door was battered down; and a fourth said ropes or chains hooked to horses were used to tear down the jail's alley door.<sup>36</sup>

Brandishing guns of all kinds, a crowd filled the jail corridor. The two or three officers present retreated before the muzzles. Someone thrust a revolver into jailer E. H. Nichols' face, shouting "Kill him!" Fire chief J. T. McNulty grabbed the weapon as its hammer fell on the skin between his thumb and forefinger. The move probably saved Nichols' life.

Evans was in a cage in the rear of the four-cell jail. Several blacks in the other cells hollered: "Are you looking for the murderer? He's in that cell." Others called out, "Be sure to get the right man," pointing toward Evans. After being allowed to put on his clothes and shoes, Evans was yanked out. As he was hauled away, he said to his cellmates: "Boys, I am sorry you told on me." Men dragged him down the corridor to the alley, where they placed a rope around his neck.

Then began a procession from the jail at Fourth Street and Second Avenue South to Central Avenue, and then west on Central. Men, women and children, some partly dressed, poured out of hotels and guest houses along the avenue. Both the street and the sidewalks were full as the parade, grimly silent, marched west toward the black section. A lighted street car followed the procession, and behind it was a line of automobiles, motorcycles and bicycles. As the cars pulled into line, someone shouted, "Put out your lights!" and every headlight blinked off.<sup>37</sup>



An anti-lynching cartoon appearing in *The Crisis*, the NAACP's official publication in February 1915.

At the head of the column trudged Evans, still stoic and silent, the rope around his neck. Eyewitness Luther Atkins later recalled Evans' silence:

He never said a word. He knew that he was guilty, and he knew it was his time, and as far as I know I never heard him say any sound and everybody was quiet walkin' down the street. And everybody was determined to do one thing, and that one thing was to lynch that nigger, and that's what they did. It was just that simple. However pitiful it was and unlawful.<sup>38</sup>

The procession turned south on Ninth Street and moved to the corner of Second Avenue South where there was an electric light on an arm attached to a pole. There was some discussion about setting fire to Evans, but as the rope was already around his neck, it was decided to proceed with the hanging. First, someone threw a rope over a nearby trolley pole, but the mob leaders decided the pole was not strong enough. They moved across Ninth Street, thinking a tree there would do for the hanging, but decided the street's east side was too dark. The mob then went back to the light pole. A boy climbed up the pole's spikes and threw a rope over the crossbar, and as he did someone in the crowd fired a shot at him by mistake, missing. After he scuttled down, the mob leaders started hoisting Evans off the ground.<sup>39</sup>

In every account of the lynching, both in newspapers at the time and by witnesses in later years, women played prominent roles in the episode. News accounts always mentioned women as being in the mob that finally lynched Evans. The *Times* reporter who covered the lynching recalled that a woman was one of the leading instigators. And as Evans desperately tried to wrap his legs around the pole while the white men heaved on the rope below, it was a white woman in an automobile who fired a shotgun into the black man's body.<sup>40</sup>

The blast began a murderous fusillade of bullets and shot that tore into Evans for nearly ten minutes. As he dangled in the noose, volley after volley erupted from rifles, pistols and shotguns. Occasionally, a louder explosion was heard when someone pulled both triggers at once on a double-barreled shotgun. According to Luther Atkins,

They shot that fella so fulla holes that I carried a postcard taken by a big flashlight. One on my friends here was a photographer, he took the picture at night after everybody left. You could actually see the holes in his body through his clothes. It was just riddled. Little kids with guns were shootin', and women standin' there shootin' and screamin' and yellin' and—and shootin'. It was the damndest mess you ever heard in your life, you never heard anything like it.

It all took about 40 minutes from the time Evans was taken from jail. When it was over, the crowd melted away, remarkably quiet as it dispersed, as though, remarked the *Times*, "it had been going to a funeral instead of coming from an execution of its own making." Left behind was the blasted corpse of John Evans, swaying ever so slightly in the soft, Florida night.<sup>41</sup>

Two grim possibilities loomed as St. Petersburg entered its third day of fear on Friday, November 13. The first was that angry, white citizens, searching for the second assailant, would continue to rampage. It seemed likely to happen. Muttering crowds continuing to congregate on the streets, and their numbers increased toward evening. Ebenezer Tobin, held under tight security by Sheriff Whitehurst, was now believed with certainty to have been John Evans' partner. Whitehurst was thought to have spirited him to Tampa for safekeeping, but when rumors circulated that Tobin was still in Clearwater, a clamor went up to march on the town and seize him. There was also talk about invading Tampa, if necessary.

The second possibility was that a race riot would explode. Not only were some white residents threatening to storm the black areas again, but angry blacks were ready to retaliate. Fighting words were heard on both sides of town. Florida Governor Park Trammell sent a telegram to Clearwater, asking Sheriff Whitehurst whether St. Petersburg needed troops to maintain order. In St. Petersburg, officials declined the offer, but an infantry company in Pinellas County stayed on alert in the armory.<sup>42</sup> Mayor Bradshaw, in a prepared statement issued to the press, pleaded with the town to remain calm. "I am aware that the recent occurrence has been sufficient to excite everyone, but the crime has in a measure been avenged. We cannot help things by undue excitement which might work grave injury to our city," Bradshaw declared.<sup>43</sup>

White hostility and the possibility of further abuse convinced hundreds of blacks to flee St. Petersburg even while some white leaders promised to protect the innocent. The trouble was that

vigilantes were not making distinctions as they searched. Considering the lynching the night before, the raids on black homes and the apparent inability of authorities to control the mobs, it is not surprising the promises went unheard.

An attempt to quench some of the mob fever came with the issuance of a report about Mrs. Sherman. Acting with police as a representative of the crowds, J. C. Blocker made this public statement:

While Mrs. Sherman is on the road to recovery, the woman is in no condition to be bothered for several days. In justice to her, the people should not insist on any more negroes being taken before her for two or three days. As might be expected after such an experience, she has a horror of the sight of a negro. Naturally, this excites her and is detrimental to her.<sup>44</sup>

It was hoped the remarks might at least discourage vigilantes from taking blacks in front of the woman for identification, thus minimizing the possibility of white forays into St. Petersburg's black sections or into other towns as posses hunted suspects.

J. P. Walsh, Sherman's business partner, arrived from Camden a few hours after a policeman cut down John Evans' corpse at 3 o'clock in the morning. Walsh, a lawyer and businessman, visited Mrs. Sherman and began immediately to settle her husband's estate. St. Petersburg, meanwhile, had already settled one thing: The coroner's jury, summoned by Magistrate Addison Arnold, viewed Evans' body at S. D. Harris' undertaking parlor on Central Avenue and reached a verdict. Evans, the jury reported, had died at the hands of parties unknown.<sup>45</sup>

Such verdicts were typical of lynchings everywhere. A black person would be killed, often after being tortured, and the white perpetrators would remain anonymous. Because blacks were virtually powerless in terms of voting, holding public office or serving on juries, the arrest, prosecution, conviction and punishment for lynchings was almost unknown. Said historian Robert L. Zangrando,

Local white sentiment condoned [the lynchings'] actions; public officials, answerable to a white electorate, either cooperated with the mob or sought refuge in silence and inaction. As a result, coroner's juries repeatedly found that death had come 'at the hands of parties unknown,' a sham verdict, indeed, since lynchings' identities were seldom a secret.<sup>46</sup>

That night it rained, as if to cleanse a troubled town. The showers sent milling crowd members scurrying into their homes. Armed patrols—composed of businessmen, according to a *Times* headline—stayed on guard to stop any stragglers determined to create disorder. Gradually, a calm seemed to descend.

The next day, a Saturday, found the town drifting back to routine. Business in stores and shops, practically at a standstill the past few days, began to recover, although saloons remained closed until Monday at the order of the mayor. The blacks who left town started to return as the excitement and high emotion of both black and white residents began to abate. The Pinellas

County Teachers Association decided to hold its meeting as scheduled, while the city government and the Board of Trade met to discuss public ownership of waterfront property. And the *Times* carried a brief announcement: There would be a Sunday concert on the pier at 3 o'clock; a collection would be taken up to pay for band uniforms.

Almost immediately, efforts began to justify or minimize the lynching of Evans. Newspaper stories, prominently displayed, said St. Petersburg blacks were certain that Evans was guilty. Mrs. Sherman, whose mind had apparently cleared, was quoted as being sure that Evans was the man who had killed her husband and assaulted her. This was on November 14 after she had twice failed to identify Evans, and the day after she had been reported in no condition to identify suspects.<sup>47</sup>

Newspaper editorials also took up the cause of justification. The *Times* carried a commentary that appeared first in the *Ocala Star*:

The negro John Evans, who was lynched in St. Petersburg Thursday night, abided awhile in his passage through this world in Marion County, and was sent up by the superior court to serve a term in the penitentiary for grand larceny. The officers here say he was a bad character, and it was probably safe for the people of St. Petersburg to lynch him on general principles whether he was guilty of the crime he was accused of or not.<sup>48</sup>

The *Evening Independent* dismissed Evans as an outsider.

It should be remembered that John Evans was not a St. Petersburg negro; he came here only a few weeks ago from Dunnellon. It is usually the negroes who stray in here and stay only a short while who commit crimes. The bulk of the St. Petersburg negroes are honest, straightwalking people who are industrious and well-behaved.<sup>49</sup>

Both editorials, while intending to reassure the town, contained elements of justification. In fact, defending mob action was a common response after a lynching. Arthur F. Raper, research secretary for the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching in the 1930s, pointed out that those who participated in or accept lynchings tended to be adamant that the right person was killed. He wrote:

The credibility of the lynchers or pro-lynchers in taking at face value all rumors, and the development of the tradition of the absolute guilt of the mob's victims are both phases of the inability of the mass of white people to deal dispassionately with situations involving actual or potential racial conflict.<sup>50</sup>

In Evans' case, it certainly made no difference that the evidence and accusations were circumstantial, questionable or motivated by self-interest. Mrs. Sherman, after all, twice failed to identify Evans as her attacker, even as the man stood in front of her. If she had named Evans, her identification could have been called into doubt because she lay seriously injured, emotionally traumatized and under medication. Moreover, Mrs. Sherman could not see without her glasses, which had been broken, and her doctor said the assault had further impaired her vision. Although

there is no evidence to support it, the possibility cannot be overlooked that Mrs. Sherman was persuaded to name Evans after his death as an attempt to rationalize the lynching.

As for the blacks who insisted on Evans' guilt, it certainly would not have benefited them to claim his innocence. The whites wanted a person they could consider guilty; if not Evans, than another black person, either one of Evans' cellmates or someone still free in the black community. As a stranger in St. Petersburg, Evans was available for sacrifice by blacks who hoped to make certain that they themselves would remain safe.

Nor could compelling physical evidence be brought against Evans. The bloody shirt and shoes, which allegedly belonged to him, were discovered at least twenty-four hours after the crimes in a house where Evans was no longer staying. A resident of the house expressed doubt that the shirt was, in fact, Evans'. The shoes could not be said with certainty to fit because, during Evans' second interrogation in the woods, posse members had simply jammed the shoes on his feet. Even a perfect fit would not have established his ownership or that he wore them the night of the Sherman killing.

Evans' own actions should also be considered. It would be unusual for a guilty man, once released, not to hide or attempt to leave the area. Evans did neither. He took work west of town and refused to run even when told the posse was coming for him again. Furthermore, after being recaptured and tortured, he still would not confess.

Perhaps the most damaging evidence was a pair of cuff links discovered later. The shotgun identified as the murder weapon was reported stolen from a Central Avenue house on Halloween night, and the cuff links were said to have been taken from the same house that night. However, they were not found among items reportedly belonging to Evans until after he was killed.<sup>51</sup>

Since the evidence was so limited and circumstantial, there must have been other reasons for the lynching. There were. The determination of the mobs, the manhunting posses, the fear that spawned hysteria and the whites' willingness to kill unlawfully all contributed to the lynching, and all were rooted in the thorough racism that permeated the city. As racism fostered segregation, so too it ultimately caused a black man's vigilante murder. The mobs and posses had quickly formed after news circulated that black suspects were wanted. The vigilantes showed no hesitation to raid black homes, round up black men on whim or torture black suspects, all of which led to the lynching. It is doubtful such extreme and indiscriminate terrorism would have been applied to whites or white neighborhoods.

Indeed, American history shows that the victims of lynchings were usually black. Between 1882 and 1968, 4,743 people were reported lynched in the United States, and 3,446 were black. In 1914 alone, Tuskegee Institute reported that 51 of 55 lynching victims were black. *The Crisis*, an NAACP magazine, reported even more victims that year—74, of whom 69 were black. Florida mobs lynched five blacks and no whites in 1914. The lynching in St. Petersburg, then, was part of a much larger pattern.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, the actions of St. Petersburg's white citizens fit another tradition of segregated society in the South: that of the manhunt. Although statistics actually proved otherwise, whites

thought that blacks were to be prone to commit crimes against white women and that unless a black was lynched periodically, women in remote areas would be in danger. According to Arthur Raper,

These assumptions underlie the traditional practice of Southern white men in arming themselves unofficially and hunting down an accused person. This method of mutual aid in policing an area evolved on the frontier and persist[ed] in localities where the populace, for whatever reasons, insist[ed] upon dealing directly with crime and criminals.<sup>53</sup>

In St. Petersburg, the mobs clearly fit the pattern of providing unofficial aid to the law officers. With no apparent qualms, Police Chief Easters encouraged a posse to hunt down Evans the second time, even telling the vigilantes where to look. Remarkable, too, was the spirit of cooperation evident in the naming of one man, J. C. Blocker,<sup>54</sup> to act as an intermediary between the crowds and the lawmen. With such encouragement, it is not surprising that people in the mobs felt free to act without restraint.

Throughout the disorder, news accounts tried to distinguish between the unruly crowds in town and the posses that scoured the country, as if one were inferior and the other elite. Those in town tended to be labeled irresponsible, while the search parties in the bush were viewed as responsible citizens who deserved more respect.<sup>55</sup> To be sure, the men who took Evans the second time may have operated separately from the downtown crowd that the posse tried to avoid at the hospital, and from which town leaders requested patience. But which element ultimately proved the more responsible [or brutal] is difficult to say. All distinctions may have been lost by the time Evans was lynched.

In fact, the notion of lynch mobs being composed of rabble has been proven a myth, in light of hundreds of newspaper accounts nationwide that point out the participation of prominent people from every station and profession. Rather than a band of howling rustics, mobs were more likely to be a cross-section sliced from every status level in the community.<sup>56</sup>

All people, regardless of social standing, may suffer from fear and hatred, and those two emotions certainly cause distinctions to be made along caste or class lines. If St. Petersburg's white people, for whatever reason, held blacks in fear, the lynching somehow served to reassure them. "It was something that had to be done to protect our wives and children," remarked Luther Atkins, talking about the lynching years later. He suggested that blacks had to be suppressed or they would take control of the community—a sentiment similar to the one expressed when the town held a white primary in 1913. Again, the attitude fit a wider pattern. Throughout the South, particularly after Reconstruction, lynching became the typical method of intimidating blacks and maintaining the racial superiority sought by whites. The practice, or the threat of it, was used as a means of social control and to enforce racial division.<sup>57</sup>

Although strong feelings may have prompted some St. Petersburg residents to join mobs spontaneously on the emotion of the moment, newspaper accounts and witness recollections suggest that the Evans lynching may have been quietly planned. Certainly, some in the community would have had financial reasons to want a person quickly identified as guilty and

then dispatched as soon as possible. For these people, a primary consideration would have been St. Petersburg's economy which was on the verge of vibrant, good health but dependent on the promised support of eastern capitalists and tourists. In a single stroke of misfortune a man had been murdered and his wife brutalized—a couple from the very Philadelphia area whose support St. Petersburg needed. Worse, northern newspapers were following developments, and the dead man's partner, himself a prominent personality from the Philadelphia area, was coming to St. Petersburg to view the situation first-hand.<sup>58</sup>

Clearly, something had to happen to calm the community. Arrests were necessary to assure people that brutes were no longer at large. Given the attitude of many who obviously lusted for summary justice, an on-the-spot execution was not out of the question, and attempting to frustrate it would have risked the further ire of unpredictable mobs. In any event, neither killers on the loose nor armed bands of men prowling the county would be attractive to the refined northerners that St. Petersburg hoped to impress.

John Evans happened to be available. Rumor, bloody clothes and a speculative press to persuade further an aroused public made Evans a good choice for a satisfying execution. Besides, he was a transient, and a black one at that. Few people would object to killing him, and St. Petersburg could then return to the matter of pursuing prosperity.

On the afternoon of November 12, following the recapture of Evans, several things happened that suggest the lynching was well-organized. First, a policeman visited the white people living near the black area immediately west of Ninth Street South and warned them. Stanley Sweet, a witness to the lynching who lived with his family on Tenth Street and Fourth Avenue South, later remembered, "A police officer came up there and told my dad, he says, 'You'd better plan on getting out tonight because there's liable to be trouble.'" <sup>59</sup> Secondly, the coroner's jury, whose members acted officially several times but were never named in news accounts, convened that afternoon.<sup>60</sup> The group had viewed the Sherman death scene and would later view Evans' remains before deciding unknown persons had killed him, but on the afternoon of November 12, there was no apparent official reason to meet. St. Petersburg's official records do not mention any concern being voiced about the lynching or the events leading to it, either by elected officials or by appointed investigators, but it is likely the coroner's jury met to discuss events in St. Petersburg.<sup>61</sup> Third, during the afternoon, the downtown crowds took on an uglier mood after some strangers joined it.<sup>62</sup> While these developments do not prove the lynching was calculated, encouraged or allowed to happen the night of November 12, they do suggest a degree of anticipation and instigation.

Additional evidence of planning came from J. P. Walsh, Sherman's partner, who arrived in St. Petersburg shortly after the lynching and should have been in a position to learn details of the events. While settling Sherman's affairs, Walsh undoubtedly talked with St. Petersburg community leaders and others concerned with the dead man's estate and his wife's welfare. As a matter of course, the crimes and their aftermath would have been topics of conversation. On his return to Camden several days later, Walsh granted an interview to the *Camden Courier*. Most of it contained a description of the mob action and Evans' hanging, but Walsh disclosed evidence of an organized conspiracy that went unreported in St. Petersburg newspapers. Walsh revealed that Evans had been tried and found guilty during a secret meeting of a committee—composed of

fifteen of St. Petersburg's wealthiest citizens. They were not named and have remained, as have those who placed the rope around Evans' neck and blasted his body, parties unknown.<sup>63</sup>

Most of the blacks rounded up by St. Petersburg posses were later released. George Gadson, an early suspect, was sentenced to pay a fine of ten dollars or serve thirty days in jail for stealing George Meares' fruit. Another suspect, Ebenezer Tobin, was eventually identified by Mrs. Sherman and tried for murder on September 17, 1915. After deliberating fifteen minutes, the jury found him guilty and Circuit Judge O. K. Reaves sentenced him on September 20 to be hanged by the neck until dead. Governor Park Trammell rejected a plea for clemency by Tobin's attorney. On October 22, at 11:06 a.m., Tobin died maintaining his innocence in Pinellas County's first legal hanging. Sheriff Marvel Whitehurst, who had seen to it that Tobin was kept from the mobs, dropped the gallows trap. Tobin's family refused the body, and it was buried in a potter's field.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Petersburg Evening Independent*, November 11, 1914; *St. Petersburg Daily Times*, November 12, 1914.

<sup>3</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 10, 1914. Accounts of St. Petersburg's 1911-1914 period of real estate speculation are found in *The Story of St. Petersburg* (St. Petersburg: P. K. Smith and Company, 1978) and in *The History of St. Petersburg* (St. Petersburg: Tourist News Publishing Company, 1924, both by Karl Grismer, and in Walter Fuller, *St. Petersburg and its People* (St. Petersburg: Great Outdoors Publishing Company, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 11, 1914; *Times*, November 12, 1914. *The Times* said 9:30 p.m., the *Independent* 10 p.m.

<sup>5</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 12, 1914.

<sup>6</sup> *Times*, November 12. Microfilm of this edition shows a section of the front page ripped out where photographs would have been placed. In a taped interview, St. Petersburg resident Luther Atkins said the *Times* published pictures of the black men suspected.

<sup>7</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 9, 1914; *Times*, November 12, 1914; *Tampa Tribune*, November 12, 1914. Both the Philadelphia Bulletin and the Camden Courier published front-page stories on November 12, 1914.

<sup>8</sup> These developments were reported as they occurred in the *Times*, *Evening Independent* and *Tribune*, November 11 through November 15, 1914.

<sup>9</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 11, 13, 1914; *Clearwater News*, November 12, 1914.

<sup>10</sup> *Times*, November 12, 14, 1914; *Evening Independent*, November 11, 12, 1914; Taped interviews with St. Petersburg residents Luther Atkins, November 10, 1981 and Lula Grant, December 2, 1981.

<sup>11</sup> *Clearwater Sun*, quoted in the *Tribune*, November 17, 1914.

<sup>12</sup> St. Petersburg Board of Trade Brochure, 1911.

<sup>13</sup> *Evening Independent*, October 28, November 4, 5, 1914; *Times*, November 12, 1914. Descriptions of street paving and the trolley appear in the Grismer books and Fuller's book, and the *Times* periodically claimed twenty-five miles of track for the city. The *Times* and the *Evening Independent* periodically published a list of the town's amenities under the heading "St. Petersburg Has."

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<sup>14</sup> Department of Commerce, Bureau of the census, Thirteenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C., 1913), p. 311. Estimates of St. Petersburg's 1914 population varied; the *Evening Independent* guessed 13,000 people lived in the town and immediately outside its limits, the *Times* an area winter population of 25,000 and the *Sun* thought the town had 10,000. Walter Fuller quoted the 1915 state census as counting 7,186 people in town.

<sup>15</sup> *Evening Independent*, October 27, 1914.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, October 24, 1914.

<sup>17</sup> Grismer, *History of St. Petersburg*, pp. 69-76; *Times*, May 19, 1906.

<sup>18</sup> Grismer, *History of St. Petersburg*, pp. 83-86. The motto appeared on the *Times* editorial page masthead for several years.

<sup>19</sup> *Evening Independent*, October 28, November 5, 1914.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, October 28, November 4, 9, 10, 1914.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, October 24, 29, 30, 1914.

<sup>22</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States; Grismer, *History of St. Petersburg*, pp. 124, 188-89; Grant interview; taped interview with Paul Barco, November 24, 1981.

<sup>23</sup> Grismer, *History of St. Petersburg*, p. 85; *Evening Independent*, June 24, 1913.

<sup>24</sup> *Evening Independent*, June 23, 1913.

<sup>25</sup> Barco interview.

<sup>26</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 11, 1914; Grant interview.

<sup>27</sup> *Tribune*, November 13, 1914; *Evening Independent*, November 11-13, 1914; *Times*, November 13, 1914.

<sup>28</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 13, 1914. As George Gandy Sr. was 63 years old at the time, the person referred to may have been George Gandy, Jr.

<sup>29</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 11-12, 1914.

<sup>30</sup> Atkins interview.

<sup>31</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 12-13, 1914; *Times*, November 13, 1914.

<sup>32</sup> *Tribune*, November 13, 1914.

<sup>33</sup> *Times*, November 13, 1914; *Evening Independent*, November 13, 1914.

<sup>34</sup> *Times*, November 13, 1914.

<sup>35</sup> *Tribune*, November 11, 1914.

<sup>36</sup> *Times*, November 13, 1914; *Tribune*, November 13, 1914; *Evening Independent*, November 13, 1914; Atkins interview.

<sup>37</sup> *Times*, November 13, 1914; *Evening Independent*, November 13, 1914; *Tribune*, November 19, 1914.

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<sup>38</sup> Atkins interview.

<sup>39</sup> *Times*, November 13, 1914; *Tribune*, November 13, 1914; Atkins interview.

<sup>40</sup> Taped interview with Ralph Reed, retired reporter, December 5, 1981; taped interview with Stanley Sweet, St. Petersburg resident, January 18, 1982.

<sup>41</sup> *Times*, November 13, 1914; Atkins interview.

<sup>42</sup> *Times*, November 14, 1914; *Tribune*, November 15, 1914; *Evening Independent*, November 14, 1914.

<sup>43</sup> *Times*, November 14, 1914.

<sup>44</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 13, 1914.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, November 13, 1914; *Times*, November 14, 1914; *Tribune*, November 15, 1914.

<sup>46</sup> Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade*, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 13-14, 1914; *Times*, November 14-15, 1914.

<sup>48</sup> *Times*, November 17, 1914.

<sup>49</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 14, 1914.

<sup>50</sup> Arthur F. Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching*, (Montclair, NJ: Patterson-Smith, 1969), p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> *Times*, November 15, 1914.

<sup>52</sup> Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade*, p. 5; *The Crisis*, February, 1915.

<sup>53</sup> Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>54</sup> *Evening Independent*, November 13, 1914.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, November 12, 1914.

<sup>56</sup> Donald L. Grant, *The Anti-Lynching Movement: 1883-1932* (San Francisco, 1975), p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> Luther Atkins, untaped interview, November 29, 1981; Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade*, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> The *Philadelphia Bulletin* and the *Camden Courier* provided their readers with continuing coverage of the events in St. Petersburg.

<sup>59</sup> Sweet interview.

<sup>60</sup> The *Times* on November 13, noted that the coroner's jury convened the afternoon of November 12, 1914.

<sup>61</sup> Minutes, City of St. Petersburg, Book 6, pp. 499-500.

<sup>62</sup> The *Times* on November 13 noted the appearance of strangers and the growing determination of the crowd the afternoon of November 12, 1914.

<sup>63</sup> *Camden Courier*, November 20, 1914.

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<sup>64</sup> Minutes of the Circuit Court (Microfilm No. 1, Book No. 1), p. 128. Pinellas County Courthouse, Clearwater, Florida; *Tribune*, September 22, October 19, 22-23, 1915; *Evening Independent*, October 22, 1915; *Times*, October 23, 1915.