

CHAINED NEGROES

THROWN OFF BRIDGE

Witness Describes Killing of Two of Eleven Victims on Georgia Peonage Farm.

ACCUSES PLANTATION HEAD

Directed the Crimes and Forced Others to Aid Him on Threats of Death.

COVINGTON, Ga., April 6.—Fear for his own life was the motive that prompted Clyde Manning, negro farm boss, to help kill eleven negro farm hands employed on the Jasper County plantation of John S. Williams, the negro told the jury today in the trial of Williams in Newton County Superior Court here. Manning asserted on cross-examination he did not want to help kill them, but was afraid to disobey Williams, who, he declared, was trying to do away with the negroes for fear they might testify regarding alleged peonage conditions on the Williams farm.

"They wan't a-bothering me," said Manning, a coal black, short, stockily built man of about 150 pounds, "and I didn't want to get 'em out of the way," but, he added later, "Mr. Johnny said, 'It's their necks or yours.'"

The negroes met death shortly after Federal authorities started an investigation of alleged peonage on the farm, six of them, according to Manning, being chained to rocks and thrown alive into rivers, and five knocked in the head or shot and buried on the farm.

Williams is on trial charged with the murder of Lindsey Peterson, one of three of the negroes alleged to have been brought into Newton County and drowned, and the defense sought to confine the witness to his account of Peterson's death and to bar him and two Federal agents from testifying to peonage conditions. Judge John B. Hutcheson overruled both motions, and Green F. Johnson, chief counsel for Williams, indicated he would appeal on these grounds in event of conviction of Williams.

Throughout an hour of cross-examination, Manning, who was indicted jointly with Williams, denied any pressure had been brought to bear on him to make him tell the story. It was only after long questioning by officers, he said, that he first told his story, but he denied he had been beaten, threatened with drowning or promised a light sentence if he would help convict Williams, as the latter's counsel intimated.

Huland, Marvin and Leroy Williams, sons of the defendant, for whom Governor Dorsey has asked indictments in Jasper County when the Grand Jury there takes up on April 11 investigation of the deaths of the eight negroes in that county, were not in court today, but Dr. Gus Williams, the oldest son, flatly denied reports they had left the State.

Murder Followed Peonage Inquiry.

The State put on four other witnesses besides Manning—two Federal agents, Clyde Freeman, a negro farm hand, and a negro woman cook—and was expected to conclude its case tomorrow. The defense indicated it would conclude its testimony in about one day and that the case should go to the jury Saturday.

The jury was sent out of the courtroom when the defense objected to the State offering the testimony of two Federal agents as to an investigation they had conducted into reported peonage conditions on the Williams farm. The State also won this contest, Judge Hutcheson allowing the testimony.

This evidence was presented by the State as bearing on the alleged motive for the wholesale murders. It was shown that the murders started soon after the Federal agents had made their inquiry into conditions on the Williams farm.

Manning was the State's chief witness, and during his testimony the Court House was packed to capacity. He seemed little affected by his recital, and rarely changed the inflection of his voice. He is unable to read or write, he said, and about 29 years old, but does not know where he was born.

"When I first remember myself," he said, "I was in Jasper County."

During some three hours of direct examination the negro told in detail of the

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alleged murder of the eleven negroes, giving his description in simplest words.

Manning began his story of the "death farm" when Colonel Howard asked him if he knew Lindsey Peterson.

"Yes; he's dead," said Manning.

"Do you know Willie Preston, and, if so, is he living or dead?"

"I know him, and he's dead."

The names of eleven were called, and to each question Manning replied, "He's dead."

Manning said Willie Preston, Lindsey Peterson and Harry Price were killed the same night, one Saturday night about the last of February or the first of March.

"Tell the jury where Lindsey Peterson died and how he died," the attorney said.

"He was thrown into the Yellow River with a weight around his neck," replied Manning.

"What place?"

"About the middle of the river, on Allen's Bridge," he said.

"Had you been to that bridge before?"

"Yes, I had crossed it several times before."

Manning said the river is pretty wide at this point.

"Now, go on and tell the jury all you know about how this man was thrown into the river that night," he was told.

Manning said trace chains were put around the necks of Lindsey Peterson and Willie Preston at Palk's store. He said Williams was driving an automobile and took the two negroes together from Palk's store to the Yellow River. He said sacks were tied to the negroes' necks and filled with rocks. He explained how the hands of the two men were tied together with trace chains around their necks and a sack of rocks tied to the chains. He said the negroes scuffled when they reached the bridge.

"Mr. Johnnie (Williams) told us to throw them over the banister of the bridge," he said.

Charlie Chisholm, a negro farmhand, was present, he said.

"Mr. Johnnie held up the sack of

rocks as we walked to the middle of the bridge," said Manning. In the party which made the trip to the river were Manning, Chisholm, Preston, Peterson, Harry Price and Williams.

"They was stubborn and a begging," Manning said simply, "and me and Charlie rolled 'em over the banisters of the bridge."

How Others Died.

The men, as were the others killed, he said, had been lured away from the farm by Williams on the pretext that they were being taken to trains and would be allowed to return to their homes in Atlanta or Macon, where they had been taken from jail by Williams paying their fines.

Harry Price, another negro taken to be drowned, jumped off the bridge himself, Manning said, when he found there was no hope for him.

"Don't throw me over; I'll get over," Manning quoted Price as saying, and added that the negro, with a cry of "Lord, have mercy," flung himself into the river.

Manning then went into details of the alleged murder of other negroes, declaring one known on the farm only as "Little Bit" was induced to help lift "Red" Brown, another negro, over the river bridge railing on the pretext that Williams merely wanted to "scare" the one known as Brown. The latter, already weighted down, was dropped into the river, Manning said, and then he said he helped "Little Bit" to the same fate.

Another farm hand known only as "Big John" was induced to help dig his own grave on the pretense that he was digging a well, and when the hole was about shoulder deep, Manning testified, Charlie Chisholm knocked the negro in the head and he and Chisholm filled the hole. Manning continued his testimony until he had described each alleged murder in detail.

He declared Williams was present at the various drownings and had ordered the killings when defense counsel sought to make him admit he was the instigator in the alleged killings. He said that on one occasion he tried to "break away" from the Williams place, where he has worked for the last fourteen years, but said "Mr. Johnny jumped on me, and I ain't tried it no more."