

# PINTLALA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**Next Meeting:**  
October 16th—2:30 p.m.  
Pintlala School



c/o Pintlala Public Library  
255 Federal Road  
Hope Hull, Alabama 36043

Volume XXV, Number 4

[www.pintlalahistoricalassociation.com](http://www.pintlalahistoricalassociation.com)

October 2011



**William Henry Underwood**



**Ciddie Sellers Underwood**

William Henry Underwood and his wife, Ciddie Sellers Underwood, dates unknown; Photographic scan courtesy of Mary Grota, only image available to PHA.

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## President's Message - "Miscellaneous Matters"

The work of the PHA continues between meetings. Wonderful people through the region are seizing the initiative and working hard to preserve and perpetuate matters of historical significance. Consider the following:

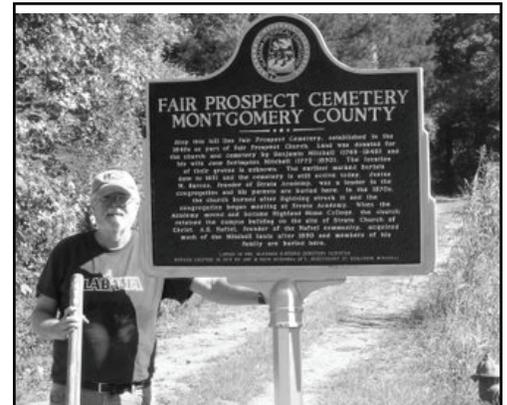
- Our meeting place will change on October 16. The PHA will convene in the library of the Pintlala Elementary School. We will hear from the school's new principal, April Lee, and then we will tour the improved and renovated areas. Our meeting will begin at 2:30 P.M.
- The new historical marker for the Fair Prospect Cemetery on Highway 331 approaching Highland Home is a tribute to the rich heritage of the area. Jay and Ruth Ott purchased the marker. It was installed recently thanks to Lee Barnes. The public is invited to the dedication of the historical marker on Saturday, Oct. 8th at 2:00 p.m. at Fair Prospect Cemetery
- The Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church is now on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage. We appreciate the work of L.T. and Julianne Hataway in making this happen. Both are helpful to PHA in many ways.
- Be sure to visit the new Museum of Alabama at Alabama Archives and History. The Land of Alabama exhibit includes a multimedia introduction to the state's varied geology and the natural resources that have helped shape Alabama history. The gallery also features photographs by Beth Maynor Young, highlighting Alabama's diverse and beautiful environment. Artifacts help illustrate the state's natural resources and products from the land of Alabama. The First Alabamians exhibit tells the story of Native Americans from prehistory to 1700 using artifacts, interactive maps, a large diorama model of a Mississippian village, and ten specially commissioned murals. These exhibits constitute Phase I of the Museum of Alabama, which eventually will include five renovated galleries and an entirely new centerpiece exhibit, Alabama Voices

I am excited about our next meeting and I hope you will bring a friend.

Gary Burton, President



Marking the spot for the Sign: L-R: Lee Anne Wofford, Alabama Historical Commission, Pat Patterson, ALDOT and Ruth Ott



Lee Barnes after installation

## October 2011 PHA Program

The Pintlala Historical Association will meet on Sunday, October 16, 2011 at 2:30 at Pintlala School. We will convene in the auditorium for our business meeting and will then be given a tour of the recently renovated school building by the principal, April Lee.

See you there!

**WILLIAM HENRY UNDERWOOD  
(FEBRUARY 7, 1872-OCTOBER 10, 1913)**

**“JUST IN THE MORNING OF HIS DAY IN YOUTH AND LOVE HE DIED”**

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[Great care has been taken to transcribe news articles from the *Montgomery Advertiser* just as they were published. Spelling, grammar and word usage are as printed in each edition.]

*Montgomery Advertiser*

October 12, 1913

**PROMINENT MAN IS FOUND MURDERED 8 MILES FROM CITY**

**William H. Underwood Shot from Wagon on Norman Bridge Road by Thieves  
Who Drag Body to Ditch**

**STRATA PLANTER HAD SOLD HIS COTTON FRIDAY**

**Police and Sheriff Are Searching for Negro Who was Former Tenant**

Lying with half his head torn away by the charge of an assassin's gun, the lifeless body of William H. Underwood, prominent planter of Strata, was found at an early hour Saturday morning partially buried in the sand on the Norman Bridge Road twelve hours after he had been brutally murdered by thieves. His clothes had been rifled and all indications point to the fact that he was slain by thieves while returning from a business trip into Montgomery.

The dead man was discovered early Saturday morning by a negro who notified the Sheriff. The body, lying in a pool of blood and partially buried in the sand was battered and bruised in several places by the assassins. The left hand, which had evidently been thrown to his face to ward off the charge of buckshot, was torn almost completely from the wrist. His clothing was in shreds and his pockets had been turned inside out by the thieves.

Dock and John Bowman, negroes, were arrested by Sheriff Hood and deputies Saturday afternoon and locked in the county jail charged with the murder. The negroes were arrested on suspicion growing out of a clew upon which the officers are working but deny any knowledge of the hold-up or the murder of the planter.

Will Roberson, another negro, alleged to have been closely connected with one of the negroes arrested yesterday, was brought to Montgomery from Snowdown by Deputy Sheriff Tucker last night and is being held in the county jail. Another negro the officers think was connected with the murder is being sought in the vicinity of Snowdown. The negro fled when he saw the officers approaching yesterday afternoon and is being traced with bloodhounds.

Deputy Tucker returned to Montgomery last night and stated that other arrests by Deputy W.J. Cope, who is now with the bloodhounds were expected hourly. One negro who is understood to have made threats against Underwood will likely be arrested today.

**Shot from Wagon**

It was the supposition of the Sheriff and Coroner last night that Mr. Underwood had been shot while sitting on his wagon and that when he fell under the charge of buckshot his body was dragged to the roadside and his pockets rifled. There it is thought that the robbers dealt the dead man a blow to make sure of their gruesome deed.

Underwood had been in Montgomery during the greater part of Friday and during his stay here had sold

three bales of cotton to a local warehouse. He received \$191 for the cotton and it is supposed that his murderers knew of the money in his possession. On his way out of town Underwood went to Sellers store on North Court Street where he paid a bill of \$150 and also bought \$35 worth of groceries, paying cash for the purchase.

After leaving Sellers store, Underwood started home but stopped at Dean's store on South Decatur Street to pay another bill and make other purchases. He left Dean's store about 9:30 o'clock Friday night on his way home.

### **Tried to Borrow Pistol**

Stating that he did not wish to go home without arms of some kind, Underwood attempted to borrow a pistol from Mr. Dean. The latter told him however, that he had only one pistol and that it would be necessary for him to keep that to protect himself and his property. Mr. Dean stated yesterday afternoon that he was certain the dead man did not have over \$35 in his pockets at the time he was killed.

The robbers did not take Underwood's watch and chain or knife after they had murdered him. Instead they were left as they were and only cash money was taken. Letters and papers were scattered over the road near where he was killed, indicating that he had been hurriedly dragged from the wagon in which he was shot.

Underwood, who was a successful farmer, was well known in Montgomery. It is said by his friends that he never had any trouble with his negro tenants but officers here are searching for a former tenant who attempted to prosecute the planter before the grand jury here last week. According to Bill Frizzle, ballif, the negro came to the grand jury room and when refused admittance because he expected to press a civil suit before the body, replied that he knew one way to "get" the white man.

### **Body Brought Here**

The body of the deceased was brought to Montgomery yesterday and placed in the morgue of Tice, Moore and Diffly, where it remained until 6:30 o'clock yesterday evening when it was shipped to Le-Grande for interment there. Funeral services will be held today.

The deceased was 63 years of age and is survived by his wife and two daughters, Miss Mattie Underwood and Mrs. John Sellers and three sons Robert, George and Joseph Underwood.

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*Montgomery Advertiser*

October 13, 1913

## **TWO MORE NEGROES HELD FOR KILLING W. H. UNDERWOOD**

**Negro Preacher, Louis Perry, Arrested in Lowndes County While Conducting Religious Service**

### **TWO OTHER MEN BEING HUNTED BY DUPTIES**

#### **Black Arrested at Sprague Junction Thought to Know Details of Murder**

Rev. Louis Perry, a negro preacher and Wesley Williams also a negro were arrested yesterday in connection with the murder of William H. Underwood, a prominent Montgomery County farmer, on Friday night on the Norman Bridge Road, a short distance from Montgomery. These arrests bring the total in the Underwood case up to five. Dunc and John Bowman, brothers, and Richard Robinson, all negroes having been arrested Saturday, and landed in the county jail.

Deputy sheriff W. J. Cope made the arrests of Perry and Williams Sunday. Rev. Louis Perry was conducting a religious service in Lowndes County, just before the Montgomery County line when Deputy Sheriff Cope arrived and placed him under arrest. The arrest of the preacher created consternation among the followers who had gathered to hear the sermon, and some of them to be baptised.

### **Knew He Was Wanted**

The negro preacher had concluded the baptizing before the deputy arrived, and was in the midst of the religious service when he saw Deputy Cope driving up. He seemed to realize that the deputy wanted him, for before the deputy had a chance to speak the negro preacher saluted the deputy and asked permission to finish the service before being taken away. Following the service Perry was brought to the county jail here and locked up with a charge of murder docketed against him.

Early Sunday morning Deputy Cope took in custody Wesley Williams at Sprague Junction, this county. What evidence the authorities have against Williams in the Underwood case is not known as it had not been revealed.

Rev. Louis Perry, the negro preacher was a former tenant of Mr. Underwood at his farm and Mr. Underwood only opened and closed him out taking over certain farm produce it is said for a debt which the negro is said to have owed him.

### **Wanted to Prosecute**

Perry came to Montgomery only a few days ago and had a talk with Deputy Sheriff Frizzle about prosecuting Mr. Underwood for closing him out claiming that he had been very unjustly treated. The negro told deputy Frizzle that he wanted to place the matter before the grand jury, but Deputy Frizzle informed the negro that it was not a case for the grand jury, but a case for the civil courts only. Deputy Frizzle says the negro then stated that if he could not get justice in the courts he knew how he could get justice and then walked away.

Deputies are searching for two other negroes now who they believe are either implicated in the murder of Mr. Underwood or else know all about it. One of these negroes is the son-in-law of the negro preacher who was arrested yesterday.

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*Montgomery Advertiser*

October 14, 1913

## **GRAND JURY IS EXPECTED TO ADJOURN THIS MORNING**

### **Inquisitorial Body Has Investigated Two Murders Submitted Since Organization**

After a busy session covering a period of two weeks the Montgomery county grand jury for the October term of the City Court will adjourn today. It was expected that the body would finish their investigations last night but they were not ready to report and adjourned to meet again at 10 o'clock this morning.

The grand jury has been in session now longer than it was first expected as it was understood when empanelled that their work would be light during the session. New reports however, coming in have caused a lengthy term. Among the cases that have come up for investigation are two murders of white men in Montgomery county during the last two weeks. These occurred or were reported during the session of the investigating body and being of considerable importance have brought many witnesses.

### **Murder of Stewart**

The murder of Wesley Stewart, who was found dead near the tracks of the Atlantic Coast Line Railway at Grady two weeks ago was one of the most tangled the body has investigated. Stewart was killed while in a fight with a party of negroes according to the confessions of a negro and six negroes have been arrested for being implicated in the crime.

Eight arrests of negroes charged with the murder of William H. Underwood, the Strata planter who was found dead on the Norman Bridge road eight miles from Montgomery a week ago have occurred during the last week's session of the grand jury. Underwood was assassinated while returning home from a business trip to Montgomery and was killed and robbed during the night, his body being discovered the next morning.

The prisoners in neither of the two murder cases have been given a preliminary hearing, both cases were allowed to wait upon the grand jury's investigation.

Other cases also carried over to the grand jury were those of C.C. Singley, charged with shooting Gaston Turner in a pistol duel in the Mechanics Club and Eugene Naftel and Frank Murchison charged with assault to murder and violating the pistol law.

The latter named men were constables from Chisholm and were arrested on a warrant charging them with shooting a negro named Tolliver without cause.

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*Montgomery Advertiser*

October 14, 1913

## **GRAND JURY INVESTIGATING MURDER OF UNDERWOOD**

### **Six Negroes held in County Jail Will Not Have Preliminary Hearing**

Owing to the fact that the grand jury is now in session, and will investigate the murder of William H. Underwood, the Strata planter who was found shot on the Norman Bridge road early Saturday morning, no preliminary hearing will be had for the six negroes now locked in the county jail charged with being implicated with the crime. No other arrests were made Monday and the case rests at present pending an investigation by the grand jury.

The negroes now under arrest are: Louis Perry, Wesley Williams, Doc Bowman, John Bowman, Richard Roberson and Richard Bowman. Perry who is a negro preacher, is considered by the officers as one of the best finds in connection with the case. He is alleged to have made threats against the murdered farmer, and was apparently expecting the officials when they arrested him.

On seeing the officers approach at the place where he was conducting a baptizing in Lowndes County, the negro asked to be allowed to continue the services. The officers so permitted and when the preacher emerged from the waters quietly submitted to arrest. The negro was brought to Montgomery and locked in jail.

Officers of the sheriff's department are now working on testimony getting it in shape to present to the grand jury. The case has been reported in due form to the Solicitor, but has not been worked up sufficient to present to the body for their official investigation. Before the week is over, however, it is expected that several indictments will be returned against the supposed assassin of Underwood.

Underwood was found early Saturday morning lying dead in the road where he had been assassinated the night before. A load of buckshot had torn part of his head away, and he was beaten and bruised about the body. He had been robbed and dragged to the side of the road.

The murder occurred about eight miles from Montgomery on the Norman Bridge road.

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*Montgomery Advertiser*

October 14, 1913

### **William H. Underwood**

The funeral services of William H. Underwood who was murdered on the Norman Bridge Road late Friday night were held at 4 o'clock Sunday afternoon from his late residence in Le Grande, Ala. Masonic services were held. Interment was in the family cemetery.

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*Montgomery Advertiser*

November 12, 1913

### **NEGRO PREACHER IS HELD FOR HEARING**

#### **Is Denied Release by Judge Armstead Brown on Hearing Habeas Corpus Petition Filed by Attorneys**

Louis Perry the negro preacher arrested October 15 in connection with the murder of William H. Underwood is still in the jurisdiction of the inferior court and must remain in jail until given a preliminary hearing by that body according to a ruling by Judge Armstead Brown in the City Court Tuesday morning. The negro thorough his counsel had sought through his counsel had sought his release which was denied by Judge Brown.

Counsel for the negro argued that he had been held since October 12 without a preliminary hearing and that the case had been continually put off from time to time without giving him a showing. The State, however, held that they had a right to put off the case for ten days each time it was called for a reasonable length of time. Judge Brown held that as the case was still in the jurisdiction of Judge Screws court he would remand the negro back to jail until given a preliminary hearing in that court next Saturday.

All of the negroes arrested in connection with the Underwood murder will be given a hearing before Judge Screws Saturday. Their cases were called Saturday. But the State asked for another week in which to prepare its case.

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*Montgomery Advertiser*

November 16, 1913

### **NEGROES HELD FOR FARMER'S MURDER**

#### **Justice Arrington Repeats His Story in Court Implicating Lewis Johnson and the Bowman Brothers**

After having revealed to the police the details of the murder of William H. Underwood who was killed near Montgomery October 10, Justice Arrington, one of the negroes implicated in the crime went on the stand in the Inferior Court yesterday, and gave damaging testimony against his alleged confederates Arrington with Lewis Johnson, Doc and John Bowman was bound over to await the action of the grand jury, without bail.

Arrington was the chief witness for the State during the trial and his story, just as he had told it to the police was one of the most brutal crimes in the history of the State. Arrington told of how the other three negroes had planned the murder, had followed the white planter and of how Lewis Johnson had fired the shot that ended his life. He disclaimed any part in the murder, however, other than accompanying Johnson to the scene of the crime.

Arrington declared Lewis shot the planter, Lewis declares it was Doc Bowman and both Bowman negroes deny any knowledge whatever of the deed. They deny even being near the scene and attempted to prove an alibi, but the other prisoners acknowledge witnessing the shooting.

#### **Met Doc Bowman**

Arrington testified that he and Lewis came in to Montgomery on the morning of October 10 and after making arrangements with an aged negro to sleep at his house that night, proceeded to Hamilton's bar where they met Doc Bowman. The three went from there to Walker's store in Boguehomme, where they

met Johnny Bowman and saw Mr. Underwood. According to the testimony of the witness, the four negroes and white man, whom they had learned had sold several bales of cotton, started out the Norman Bridge Road.

The two Bowman negroes were in the wagon and John was driving. Arrington said and the witness and Lewis Johnson were walking along near the rear of the wagon. After crossing the bridge he declared, Johnson turned out of the road and went to the home of his mother-in-law where he procured a shot gun. Arrington said he was with him and that when the two returned to the road, Johnson shot the white man who was then standing in the road talking with the other negroes.

### **Put Body in Ditch**

Arrington said the negroes then moved the body into a ditch and hid behind a hedge until an automobile had passed. Then, according to his statement, Johnson rifled the pockets of the white man and the two returned to their lodging house in Montgomery where they spent the night.

The witness testified that he had been offered no reward for confessing and that he had not been treated ill by the detectives at headquarters. Several other witnesses were introduced to establish the time of Mr. Underwood's departure from the city and other details.

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*Montgomery Advertiser*

March 15, 1914

## **21 CHARGED WITH CAPITAL OFFENSES**

### **Numerous Murder and Highway Robbery Cases Are Set for Week in Montgomery City Court**

Twenty-one prisoners charged with capital offenses, fifteen with murder and six with highway robbery were arraigned before Judge Gaston Gunter in the criminal division of the City Court yesterday and heard indictments read charging them with the different crimes. Their cases were set for the week of March 23. All are negroes and three of them are women. Nine of the prisoners were without counsel and Judge Gunter appointed lawyers to represent them.

Probably the most important cases are those of Lewis Johnson, Justice Arrington and John and Doc Bowman, who are charged with killing William H. Underwood, a prominent farmer, six miles from the city last year. The negroes all pleaded not guilty and Arrington, who in a confession before the Inferior Court implicated the others, replied to the indictment by saying, "I ain't had no gun."

Their cases were set for March 28 and Attorneys Yarborough, McGhee and Williams were appointed to represent them.

### **Beaten to Death**

Anthony, Mary Emma, Ben, Plank and Sallie Browder who are charged with the murder of Wesley Stewart a white man, who was beaten to death at Grady, Ala. last year were in court and heard their cases set for March 25. They had been arraigned at the last term of court but their case was postponed. Stewart is alleged to have been beaten to death in a fight with the negroes one night and his body was later found near a railroad track. It was at first thought that a train had killed him.

Monroe Colvin, a negro, who is charged with killing Charlie Patterson, another black in order to rob him of \$5, pleaded not guilty and will be tried March 23. By appointment of the court, he will be defended by Strassburger and Vardaman.

George Brown admitted killing Sherman Williams by shooting him but pleaded self-defense in answering the indictment. Tilley and Elmore were appointed to act as his counsel.

Counsel for Susie McGhee, charged with cutting Viola Allen to death with a knife, announced that a motion to quash the indictment on account of it being unconstitutional would be made. The woman is out

under bond. The case was set for March 24.

### **Charged with Murder**

Henry Nickerson will be tried for killing Willie Gunter March 25. He is charged with shooting Gunter to death with a pistol.

Two charges of highway robbery were set out in indictments read against six defendants, three prisoners being named in each charge with Sanders, Lewis Morris and Alonzo Edwards are charged with robbing Jack McGhee and their case was set for (continued on p 2 but not copied)

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*Montgomery Advertiser*

March 24, 1914

## **NEGRO GIVEN LIFE TERM FOR MURDER OF W. H. UNDERWOOD**

### **Justice Arrington, First of Four Defendants in Case, Found Guilty by Jury in City Court**

Justice Arrington, a negro, must serve life imprisonment for the murder of William H. Underwood, Montgomery County planter. Thirty-five minutes after the jury of twelve men had retired, the negro knew his fate and the first of four alleged murderers of the white farmer had been declared guilty. The negro smiled when the verdict was read and seemed satisfied with the jury's findings.

Arrington was on trial all day and the verdict was reached before 8:00 o'clock last night. A severance of the charges against Arrington, Lewis Johnson and John and Doc Bowman, who were indicted with him, was granted when court opened and the negro, who first confessed to witnessing the crime was placed on trial. He did not deny being present when the murder was committed, but based his defense on the claim that he took no part in the murder or robbery.

Arrington told practically the same story of the affair as he did in his confession to detectives late last week. He said he had gone to the scene of the murder with the negroes and had hid in the bushes while the others committed the crime. This story was told at his preliminary hearing last year, but at the trial yesterday he said he had been forced to accompany Lewis Johnson at the point of a gun.

He told the same gruesome story of how the negroes had gone with the white farmer to the lonely spot on the Norman Bridge Road last October and after inducing him to alight from his wagon had killed and robbed him. He placed the blame of the affair on the other three negroes who will be tried later during the week.

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*Montgomery Advertiser*

March 25, 1914

## **NEGRO MUST HANG FOR HIS PART IN FARMER'S MURDER**

### **Lewis Johnson given Death Sentence for Hand in the Assassination of William H. Underwood**

Lewis Johnson will hang by the neck until he is dead for the part he took in the murder of William H. Underwood if a verdict returned in the criminal division of the City Court at 8:15 o'clock last night is executed. After forty-five minutes of deliberation, the twelve men reported and placed the highest penalty of law upon the negro for killing the white planter six miles from Montgomery October 10, last.

Only one ballot was taken. The jury knocked for the baliff and in a few minutes presiding Judge Armstead Brown appeared.

"Gentlemen, have you agreed upon a verdict?" he asked the twelve stern-faced men replied in the af-

firmative. "We the jury find the defendant, Lewis Johnson, guilty of murder in the first degree and fix his punishment at death," the baliff read.

Johnson sat unmoved. He appeared even quieter than he had during his trial of a day and much calmer than when given the terrific gruelling by the solicitor. He inquired at the jail as to how long it would be before he must pay the penalty, and was locked in his cell for the first night as a condemned man.

### **Takes Entire Day**

Johnson's trial consumed the entire day in the court. He denied shooting Underwood, but like Johnson admitted being on the scene and in the plot. His testimony was badly shaken when he was placed upon the stand and especially when asked by the solicitor if he did not think death the proper penalty for the guilty party.

Arrington's testimony offered on the day before to the effect that Johnson had actually fired the gun that took Underwood's life was offered but not directly from the convicted man as his lawyers told him to refuse answers to the State's questions. Detectives Avant and King, who heard the original confessions of the two negroes were placed on the stand and gave damaging evidence in behalf of the State.

### **Blames the Bowmans**

Johnson placed the blame of the shooting upon John and Doc Bowman, negroes, who will go on trial for the crime today. He accused one of them of holding the farmer's mules while the other did the shooting. Johnson's story was gruesome in the extreme as he told of standing by and watching the helpless white man shot to death. His testimony was torn to pieces by the solicitor.

Solicitor Seibles and Assistant Solicitor Arrington called for the death penalty from the moment they opened their speeches before the jury. Solicitor Seibles told the jury that anything that less than a death penalty would be a travesty on Justice and the only thing necessary to hang the negro after hearing the evidence was "nerve" from the twelve men. They had the nerve.

John and Doc Bowman will be tried together today. The four negroes were originally indicted together, but a severance was granted in the other cases.

The negroes will be sentenced Saturday.

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*Montgomery Advertiser*

March 26, 1914

## **BOWMAN NEGROES ON TRIAL TOGETHER**

### **Hear Two Convicted Blacks**

### **Charge Them With Participation in the Murder of W. H. Underwood**

John and Doc Bowman, negroes, are on trail in the City Court for the murder of William H. Underwood, prominent white planter, a crime for which one negro is under death sentence and another must serve life imprisonment. The negroes were placed on trial together yesterday morning and taking of testimony will likely be completed some time today.

The negroes yesterday heard themselves charged with participation in the murder of the white planter near Montgomery last October, when Justice Arrington, sentenced to life imprisonment and Lewis Johnson, sentenced to die went upon the stand and told their story of the crime. Johnson accused Doc Bowman of firing the shot that killed the white farmer and Arrington, who accused Johnson of the murder, told of the Bowman negroes concocting the scheme to get the planter's money.

The two Bowman negroes admit being with Underwood on the night of the murder but declare they left him in Boguehome before he returned home. They had had no trouble with the two accusing witnesses