

Department of Justice

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RECORDS ADMINISTRATION BRANCH

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By order of the Attorney General

THIS FILE HAS BEEN CHARGED AS INDICATED BELOW

TO TRANSFER—Notify the Service Unit, Br. 500

Requested by

Division

Date Issued . Returned

WM 23 1955

FEDERAL RECORDS CENTER **CLOSED**

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT

MOBILE

REPORT MADE AT	DATE WHEN MADE	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE	REPORT MADE BY
Mobile	6/2/54	5/20, 22, 24/54	ROBERT L. CRONGEYER :mem
TITLE	CHANGED: W. M. EVERETT, MATHIS MORGAN ALBERT BLACKMON, REVEREND McCANTAS, JERRY WATSON, LEE THOMAS, REVEREND RINTZ: RUSSELL CHARLEY - VICTIM		CHARACTER OF CASE
			CIVIL RIGHTS

SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:

Complainant JESSE P. TURPIN, Peterman, Ala., advised he had heard that the victim had been lynched by at least four men, one of whom was reported to be a law enforcement officer. Source of this information, T-1, a farmer of Fountain, Ala., related that he had heard that the subjects, with the exception of THOMAS, had lynched the victim near Vredenburgh, Ala., on 5/8/54. T-1 stated that THOMAS, whom he believes to be a policeman, was definitely not involved in the lynching and that none of the other subjects are law enforcement officers. USA, Mobile, advised facts failed to reflect violation of any of the Federal Civil Rights Statutes and failed specifically to indicate a violation of Sec. 241, T. 18, USC. *Monroe Co.
S.D. [initials]*

- C -

DETAILS: The title of this case is marked "changed" to add the name of REVEREND RINTZ as a subject.

Complainant JESSE P. TURPIN on May 20, 1954, contacted SA WOODSON E. DRAUT by telephone and advised that he had information concerning an alleged lynching at Vredenburgh, Monroe County, Alabama, which occurred on May 8, 1954. Complainant

A. B.

APPROVED AND FORWARDED:	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES		
		144-3-108		
COPIES OF THIS REPORT		9	DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE JUN 11 1954 ALBOS BRANCH CRIM. - CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.	R E D
3 - Bureau (AIRMAIL) 1 - USA, Mobile 2 - Mobile (44-328)				

advised that he lived at Peterman, Alabama, and had full information concerning the subjects and the victim but preferred not to furnish the details on the telephone. He further stated that the lynching was done by at least four men and that he believed one of the subjects was a law enforcement officer.

AT PETERMAN, ALABAMA.

The complainant, JESSE P. TURPIN, was interviewed by SA THOMAS B. COLL and the writer on May 22, 1954, at which time he advised that the only information which he had concerning the lynching of the victim was information which was furnished to him by Mobile Informant T-1, of unknown reliability, who resides near Fountain, Alabama. Complainant further reported that the victim, RUSSELL CHARLEY, colored, was found dead sitting under a small bush, and at the same time there was found near his body a piece of rubber inner tube which was believed to have been used in the lynching of the victim. Mr. TURPIN pointed out that he had heard that on the night that the victim was killed one of the subjects, JERRY WATSON, colored, went into the Vredenburgh Grocery Store where he found the victim and told victim that if he, victim, had \$1.50, he, WATSON, knew of a white man who was outside of the grocery store who would sell them a gallon of whiskey for \$3.00. He reported that WATSON told the victim that he, WATSON, had \$1.50 and together they could buy the gallon of whiskey for \$3.00. Complainant said that according to information he had received victim left the store with WATSON and that was the last time the victim was seen alive. TURPIN said that he was not sure that any law enforcement officers were involved. He said that he had heard, however, that one LEE THOMAS, who is employed as a policeman by the Vredenburgh Saw Mill and who he believes is also a policeman for the City of Vredenburgh, was also involved. He informed that he had been told the reason the victim was lynched was because he liked to drink whiskey and he became indebted to the subjects who are all engaged in bootlegging. Mr. TURPIN related that rumor had it that victim was unable to meet his obligations to these people, that subjects got tired of victim's failure to pay what he owed them, and they decided to do away with him. Mr. TURPIN executed the following signed statement which is being retained in the file of the Mobile Division:

"Peterman, Alabama
May 22, 1954

"I, JESSE P. TURPIN, make the following voluntary statement to THOMAS B. COLL and ROBERT L. CRONGEYER, who have identified themselves to be Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

MO 44-328

"I was told by a Mr. _____ who lives between Monroeville and Camden, Alabama, that it was generally rumored that the death of RUSSELL CHARLEY, colored, was not a suicide. CHARLEY was found dead about May 9, 1954, about one mile east of Vredenburgh, Alabama. Mr. _____ told me that according to the rumor CHARLEY was supposed to have been lynched by W. M. EVERETT, white, JERRY WATSON, colored, ALBERT BLACKMON, colored, and a REV. RINTZ, colored. All of these people live in and around Vredenburgh. He said it was also rumored that one LEE THOMAS, a policeman for the Vredenburgh Lumber Co. and the city of Vredenburgh, also had a hand in CHARLEY's death. According to the rumor, Mr. _____ said, EVERETT, WATSON, BLACKMON, RINTZ and THOMAS run an illegal whiskey business and CHARLEY owed them some money. They were unable to collect their money from CHARLEY and decided to do away with him. As far as I know, THOMAS is the only one who is connected with law enforcement.

"Mr. _____ also told me that he had heard that the Sheriff's Office in Monroe County wanted \$6,000 to keep CHARLEY's death listed as a suicide.

"I have no other information concerning this matter.

"I have read this statement and it is true.

"/s/ JESSE P. TURPIN

"Witnessed by:

ROBERT L. CRONGEYER, S/A, FBI, Mobile, Ala.
THOMAS B. COLL, S/A, FBI, Mobile, Ala."

It is noted that the name of the individual who furnished TURPIN with the above information was not included in the above quoted signed statement. His name was omitted in the above signed statement because when interviewed he requested that his name be kept confidential.

AT FOUNTAIN, ALABAMA.

Mobile Informant T-1, who is a farmer residing in the vicinity of Fountain, advised that he had heard through various colored men who work in the Vredenburgh Saw Mill at Vredenburgh, Alabama, that the Victim, RUSSELL CHARLEY, was hung by the subjects. He said he understood that the reason for the victim's being lynched was because W. M. EVERETT, a white man, who is foreman of the Dry Kiln, Vredenburgh Saw Mill, had been keeping company with a colored woman in the quarters, and the victim was also having relations with this same colored woman. T-1 reported that EVERETT had warned the victim to stay away on several occasions, but the victim did not heed these warnings. He stated that on one occasion not too long ago an attempt was made to kill the victim, but the victim had gotten away and returned to his home. He stated that on the night the victim was killed the victim's wife had pleaded with him not to go with WATSON, telling him that she knew he would be killed, but the victim went with WATSON in spite of his wife's warnings. That was the last time he was seen alive. T-1 informed that all of the colored people in Vredenburgh are very much excited and upset about the death of CHARLEY and are afraid for their own lives. He said that they were even afraid to discuss the matter inasmuch as it is generally understood that the Sheriff's Office is making a deal with the subjects to list CHARLEY's death as a suicide in return for the payment by the subjects of \$6,000 to the Sheriff's Office. T-1 said he understood that LEE THOMAS, who is a policeman with the Vredenburgh Saw Mill and who may be a policeman with the City of Vredenburgh, was acting as go-between in paying off the Sheriff's Office. T-1 stated he is afraid for his own life if it becomes known that he furnished any information in this matter and declined to furnish a signed statement regarding the information as furnished above.

T-1 said that LEE THOMAS was definitely not involved in the lynching as he was out of town on the night that this occurred, and he was confident he had no connection in any way with the lynching of this victim. He said he was not sure that THOMAS was a law enforcement officer on public payroll, but he did know he is a policeman with the Vredenburgh Saw Mill. T-1 informed that none of the other subjects in this case are law enforcement officers.

An article appeared on the front page of the Monroe Journal, a weekly newspaper published in Monroeville, Alabama, dated Thursday, May 13, 1954, which had the heading TWO MONROE NEGRO MEN FOUND DEAD. The article states in part as follows:

MO 44-328

"Two Monroe County colored men were found dead during the past week - at different locations - one an apparent victim of suicide and the other having succumbed from natural causes.

"The body of RUSSELL CHARLEY, 45, was discovered one mile east of Vredenburgh near a railroad track on Saturday morning at 7:30, apparently having died from strangulation.

"Monroe County Sheriff E. E. NICHOLAS said a rubber strap cut from an automobile tire tube was found near the body. Dr. NELSON GRUBBS of Mobile, State toxicologist, reported death resulted from strangulation - evidently suicide.

"CHARLEY was last seen alive on Friday night around seven p.m. by his wife, CARRIE. His body was found by his son."

AT MOBILE, ALABAMA.

The above facts were discussed with U. S. Attorney PERCY C. FOUNTAIN, who was of the opinion that the facts did not constitute a violation of any Federal Civil Rights Statutes and specifically did not constitute a violation of Section 241, Title 18, U. S. Code. He pointed out that if a lynching did occur, no law enforcement officer was involved, and, therefore, it was a matter to be handled by local authorities and not a matter over which federal authorities had jurisdiction.

The following descriptions were obtained from T-1, who advised that he was not well acquainted with some of the subjects and was, therefore, unable to furnish adequate descriptions:

Name	W. M. EVERETT
Race	White
Sex	Male
Age	42
Height	5'5"
Weight	155
Hair	Sandy
Eyes	Blue
Marital status	Widower, wife died approximately one year ago.

MO 44-328

Name	MATHIS MORGAN
Race	White
Sex	Male
Age	40
Height	5'11"
Weight	165
Hair	Black
Marital status	Married
Occupation	Laborer
Name	ALBERT BLACKMON
Address	Vredenburgh, Alabama
Race	Negro
Sex	Male
Height	6'
Weight	200
Peculiarities	Has peg leg
Occupation	Drives tractor for Vredenburgh Saw Mill
Name	REVEREND McCANTAS
Race	Negro
Sex	Male
Height	6'
Complexion	Very dark skin
Occupation	Works Vredenburgh Saw Mill
Name	JERRY WATSON
Address	Vredenburgh, Alabama
Race	Negro
Sex	Male
Complexion	Yellow
Occupation	Works Vredenburgh Saw Mill
Name	LEE THOMAS
Address	Vredenburgh, Alabama
Age	50
Race	White
Sex	Male
Height	6'
Weight	200
Hair	Black
Occupation	Policeman, Vredenburgh Saw Mill

MO 44-328

Name	REVEREND RINTZ
Address	Vredenburgh, Alabama
Race	Negro
Sex	Male
Name	RUSSELL CHARLEY, Victim
Address	Vredenburgh, Alabama
Race	Negro
Sex	Male
Age	45
Marital status	Married, wife - CARRIE CHARLEY.

- C -

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Warren Olney III
 TO : Assistant Attorney General
 Criminal Division

RECEIVED

DATE: June 9, 1954
 JUN 14 1954

FROM : Director, FBI

RECEIVED JUN 15 1954

CRIMINAL DIVISION

CIVIL RIGHTS SECTION

SUBJECT: W. M. EVERETT, ET AL
RUSSELL CHARLEY - VICTIM
 CIVIL RIGHTS

(Reference is made to _____ memorandum dated _____.)

There is enclosed one copy of the report of Special
 Agent Robert L. Crongeyer dated 6/2/54
 at Mobile.

A. Please advise whether you desire any further
 investigation.

B. The investigation is continuing and you will
 be furnished copies of reports as they are received.

C. The investigation which has been requested
 by you has now been completed. Please advise whether you
 desire further investigation.

Enclosure

✓
 Read
 6/16/54
 M.W.H.

NEW

144-3-108

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
JUN 11 1954	
RECORD	
RECORDS BRANCH	
CRIM.-CIVIL RIGHTS SEC.	

A.B.

June 22, 1954

The Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Warren Olney III, Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

WO: MWH: svms
144-3-108 *J. P. M.*
Typed 6-18-54

W. M. Everett, et al.;
Russell Charley - Victim
Civil Rights

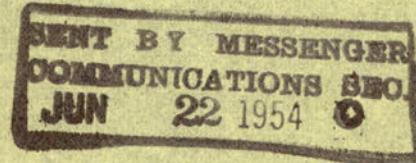
Reference is made to your memorandum of June 9, 1954,
with the report of Special Agent Robert L. Grongeyer attached
thereto.

The information set forth in the report fails in our
opinion to reflect a violation of the civil rights statutes.
Consequently, no further investigation is desired.

cc: Records ✓
Chron.
C. R. Sec.
Hubbard
USA, Mobile, Ala.

MMW
6/18/54

AMC
6/22/54



WO:MMH:VmW

144-3-108

J. P. M.

Typed 6-18-54

June 22, 1954

Percy C. Fountain, Esquire
United States Attorney
Mobile, Alabama

Re: W. M. Everett, et al;
Russell Charley - Victim
Civil Rights

Dear Mr. Fountain:

We are enclosing herewith copy of a memorandum sent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the above matter. Since our conclusion, as expressed therein, appears to agree with yours we are closing the matter.

Sincerely,

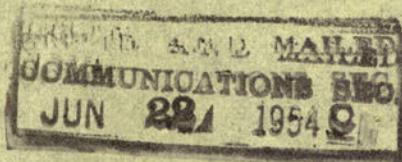
WARREN OLNEY III
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division

By:

ARTHUR B. CALDWELL
Chief, Civil Rights Section

Enclosure No. 170232 ✓

cc: Records ✓
Chron.
C. R. Sec.
Hubbard



NOTICE TO CLOSE FILE

144-3-108
FILE NUMBER

W.M. O'reett et al
CASE TITLE

TO: RECORDS ADMINISTRATION BRANCH

YOU ARE ADVISED THAT THE ABOVE NUMBERED FILE HAS BEEN CLOSED
AS OF THIS DATE.

Maceous Suttard
SIGNATURE

DATE

6/18/54

144-3-108

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
11	JUN 2 1954
RECORDS BRANCH	
D	