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"The Unwritten Law of Maryland": The 1896 Lynching of Sidney Randolph

By Sarah Hedlund





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“The Unwritten Law of Maryland”: The 1896 Lynching of Sidney Randolph

By Sarah Hedlund

At first glance, 19th-century Gaithersburg, Maryland, seemed an unlikely setting for a sensational axe-wielding attack worthy of Lizzie Borden, a complex murder mystery that might have stumped Sherlock Holmes, and the inciting event that led to the last known lynching in Montgomery County: the 1896 murder of an itinerant young Black man from Georgia named Sidney Randolph.¹ The 1880 lynchings of George Peck in Poolesville and John Diggs-Dorsey in Rockville had perhaps faded to a distant memory amongst the white population of Montgomery County, but as those extra-judicial murders occurred within six months of each other, they likely remained an ongoing source of fear and distrust in the minds of the Black people. During the interim 16 years, life had become increasingly more difficult for Black citizens. Multiple post-Reconstruction laws passed over the decades had chipped away at their political and social freedoms, intensifying during the 1890s with the highest rate of lynchings nationwide and the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, which legalized a culture of white supremacy and segregation throughout the country.²

By that time, Gaithersburg had grown into a prominent milling and manufacturing hub on the B&O Railroad’s Metropolitan Branch.³ After a politically motivated redrawing of the county election districts in 1880, Gaithersburg’s population was centralized within Election District 4, rather than split among multiple districts as in previous decades. This new geographic advantage led to a decades-long rivalry with the town of Rockville, which had double the population (in 1900 the populations of Rockville and Gaithersburg were approximately 1,100 and 500 respectively). Gaithersburg had ambitions to claim the county seat, but lost this bid for political power in 1891 when the handsome new courthouse was completed in Rockville.⁴ Despite this disappointment, many Gaithersburg residents considered themselves the high society of Montgomery County: educated, religious, civic minded, politically active, and fond of the finer pursuits in life. In addition to boasting a few fine hotels and the largest mercantile general store in the county, Gaithersburg had installed the area’s first telephone service, which developed into a fully connected network by 1894.⁵ The town had not one but two literary societies, one of which (the Waverly Club) had collected a library of more than 1,000 volumes. Members of its later rival, the Jefferson Club, were dismissive of Waverly members’ penchant for local musical diversions and amateur recitations, and positioned their club as the organization dedicated to more serious scholarly pursuits.⁶



First National Bank of Gaithersburg, est. 1891. A handsome brick building in the center of town established Gaithersburg’s legitimacy as a commercial success. (*Montgomery History*, courtesy of Missy Warfield)

For all the aspirations of its middle and upper classes to be the center of cultural and political life in Montgomery County, Gaithersburg was still, as was most of the county at the time, an agrarian society composed largely of farmers, laborers, schoolteachers, blacksmiths, millers, dressmakers, and shopkeepers. Its complex social landscape included a parallel Black community of people with similar skills: two communities that were in many ways segregated, but also fully intertwined. Sidney Randolph knew none of this as he walked along the road toward Gaithersburg one fine afternoon in May of 1896. He was looking for food, looking for work, looking for a safe place to sleep that night without getting caught trespassing. It was the last afternoon he would walk as a free man.

The Crime

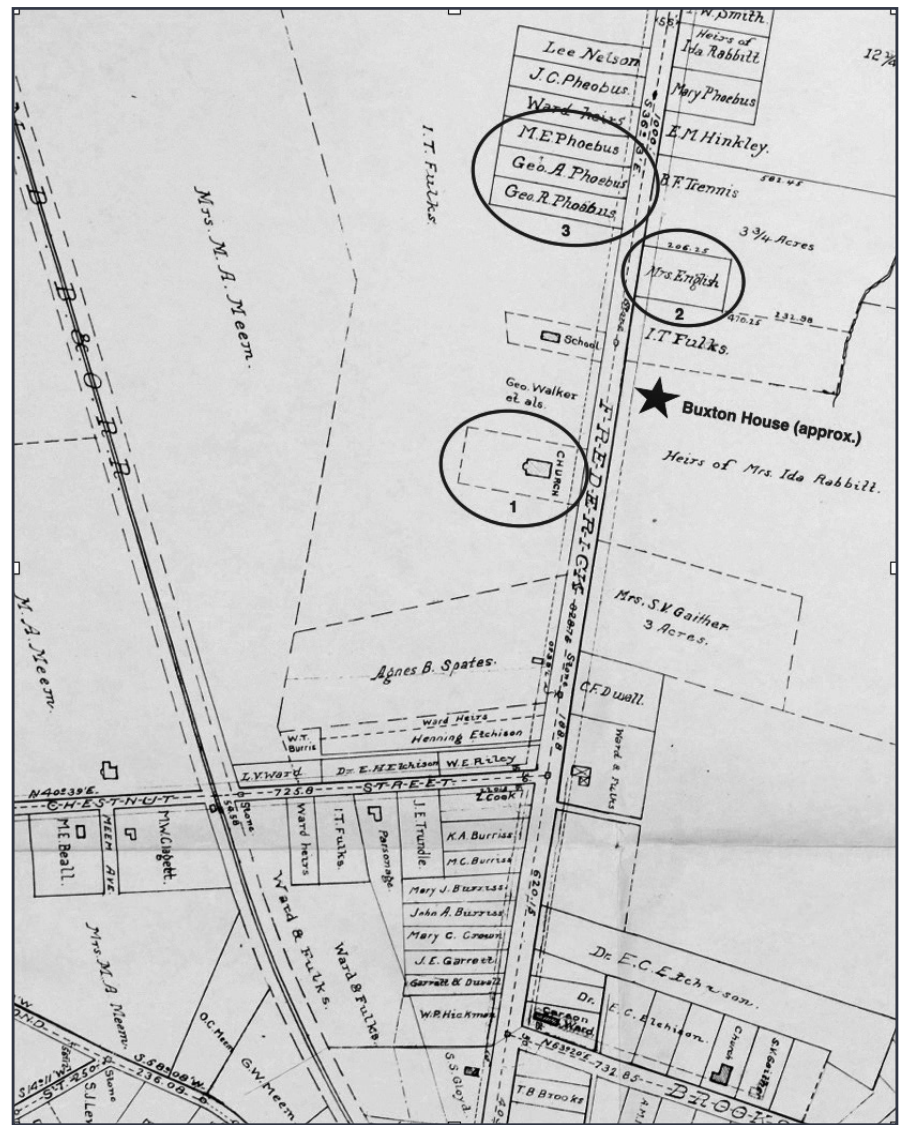
In the early morning of May 25, 1896, an unknown intruder entered the Buxtons' house on Frederick Avenue in Gaithersburg and attacked its sleeping residents, striking four family members in the head with an axe.⁷ The family consisted of Richard Lemuel Buxton (age 36), a miller and recently elected town commissioner, his wife James Anna (age 35, called "Teeny" due to her small stature)⁸, daughters Maud (16) and Sadie (7), and son Carroll (3). According to various accounts from Buxton and his wife given in the first few hours, Richard was hit first and fell out of bed; then Teeny was hit. They both heard the assailant cross the hall and strike the two daughters. Richard fumbled with his revolver, but it misfired into the floor. Teeny attempted to reach her daughters but the intruder strangled her, leaving her insensible. At this point the assailant ran from the house.



Pen and ink drawings of the Buxton family—Richard, Teeny, Maud, Sadie, and Carroll—which appeared in *The Evening Times* during the first few days of reporting. (*The Evening Times*, May 26 and 27, 1896).

The order of these actions and the details surrounding them varied among the early reports and continued to change throughout the course of the investigation. The Buxtons were questioned several times in the weeks following, but their head injuries caused confusion and memory loss that likely impeded their ability to recall events consistently. Both adults had been struck in the head two or three times and their daughters had each suffered one blow to the head with the blunt end of an axe. Sadie was unconscious and Maud was unable to speak. Young Carroll was unscathed—either unnoticed in the corner of the room or concealed between his parents in the bed. Buxton and his wife managed to rouse their nearest neighbors, members of the Phebus and English families.⁹ David Virts, another neighbor, set out to get the doctor. While on this mission, he claimed to have seen a Black man run from the back of the English family's house,¹⁰ which was next door to the Buxtons, or a few doors down, depending on the source. Neighbors now gathering around the scene realized that the English family's house had also been broken into; a window sash was broken and a chair had been moved outside. George English, the 18-year-old son of homeowner Elizabeth English, claimed he awoke and saw a Black man creeping up the stairs toward his bedroom; when he called out to alert his mother, the man ran out.¹¹

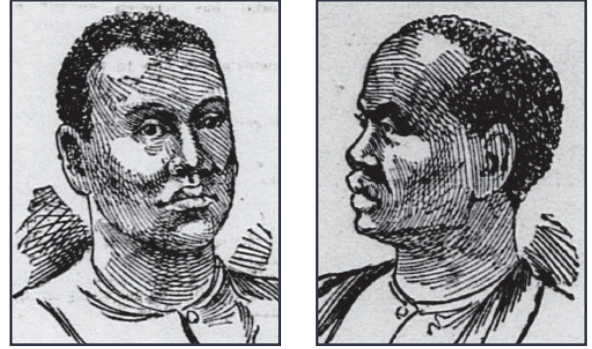
News of the assault spread quickly via both telegraph and telephone,¹² and by 6:00 am, “a large force of men, mounted and afoot, were searching the country.”¹³ The vigilantes included cousins Frank Ward and John Garrett, who recalled seeing a stranger walking along the road between Gaithersburg and Hunting Hill (now called Muddy Branch Road) so they rode out on horseback to locate him. Sidney Randolph, in his mid-20s, happened to be walking there, having arrived on foot from Georgetown the day before.¹⁴ According to his story, given later, he was a stranger to Montgomery County: an itinerant worker originally from the vicinity of Macon, Georgia, who had been working in Pennsylvania, then alternately looking for work in the Virginia, Washington, and Baltimore areas. He said he had slept in a barn nearby the night before and when the two men rode up to him and began asking questions, he was afraid they were after him for trespassing and/or vagrancy—both charges that could be punishable with jail time. When they insisted he come with them without providing a reason, he tried to escape. “They looked so mad they scared me,” he said according to the *Baltimore Sun*, “and I tried to get away and they shot me and rode their horses over me.”¹⁵ Ward shot at him several times, striking him in the hand and grazing his thigh. Garrett ran him down with his horse and tied him up at gunpoint. Randolph declared he had not been to Gaithersburg and had not injured anyone. He was taken into custody and placed in the county jail in Rockville.



North Frederick Avenue (running vertically on the right), just north of Gaithersburg’s business district, as surveyed by Charles Maddox, Jr. in 1894. The center of town is just out of the frame at the bottom. The Buxton house is indicated with a star; across the street (1) is the location of Forest Oak Chapel (also known as M.E. Church South) and Forest Oak Cemetery (still extant); also the relative locations of neighbors English (2) and Phebus (3) who arrived first on the scene.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Louis L. Lloyd, pastor at the Methodist Episcopal Church South, then located across the street from the Buxtons’ house,¹⁶ had appointed himself an investigator. Joined by Deputy Sheriff Horton G. Thompson, he followed multiple sets of tracks through the woods and fields around the Buxton house. One set of tracks allegedly led them to where a local Black man named George Neal¹⁷ lived with his family. They arrested Neal immediately, and questioned him about his whereabouts earlier that morning¹⁸ (two reports state he was arrested while walking on the road toward Boyds Station rather than at his home¹⁹). Neal said he had been at Metropolitan Grove the day before, had come home later that evening, talked with Joe Brooks and his daughters who had come for a visit, and gone to bed around 10:00 pm, where he had

stayed until 6:00 am.²⁰ His family (grandmother Mary Neal, sister Emma Johnson, brother-in-law John Johnson, and nephew John Young) generally agreed with this statement, except for his younger cousin who claimed he had awoken before 6:00 that morning and found Neal absent.²¹ This cousin, 11-year-old James Johnson, also claimed a man had come to their door early that morning, asking Emma something about a bloody shirt; Emma later stated this visitor had been Isaac Frazier²² asking about milk cans, and that James had misunderstood. Newspaper reports in these first few days, probably based on James' story, suggested various bloody garments (shirt, pants, or coat) were found at the Neal residence, or that there was evidence clothing had been burned or concealed.²³ None of this supposed evidence was mentioned beyond the first few days of reporting.



Pen and ink drawings of Sidney Randolph and George Neal, printed in *The Evening Times* on May 27, 1896, following their arrests.

The newspapers also repeated a rumor that Neal had a grudge against Buxton for aiding in his incarceration in the Maryland Penitentiary several years earlier. Neal was accused of an attempted sexual assault on Gaithersburg teenager Jennie Gloyd in 1886. In June 1887 he was sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary, from which he was released (early) in December 1895. According to newspaper accounts and other records from that 1886-1887 case, Buxton was not a witness nor involved with Neal's arrest or conviction.²⁴ Regarding the 1896 attack on his family, Buxton said he knew George Neal but denied he was the assailant.²⁵ Instead, he said his assailant resembled another local Black man named Clem Johnson, but that it was not Johnson who attacked them, either.²⁶ Neal also denied this rumor of a grudge, saying "Mr. Buxton had no more to do with that matter [referring to his conviction in 1887] than any other citizen of Gaithersburg, and how could I harbor any feeling against [sic] him for something he didn't do."²⁷

The Investigation

The Buxtons were transferred by train on the afternoon of May 26 to Garfield Hospital in Washington, D.C. for treatment. Mr. and Mrs. Buxton were not in critical condition, but their daughters Maud and Sadie were both severely wounded. Neither was expected to live long, but seven-year-old Sadie's condition was especially serious. Upon their arrival, resident surgeon Dr. J. Ford Thompson expressed surprise that the three axe blows to the head of Mr. Buxton had produced so little damage.²⁸ All family members had been bludgeoned with the blunt end of the axe, not the blade, a fact also commented on by later investigators puzzled by the relative lack of more serious injuries sustained due to the size and weight of the supposed murder weapon.²⁹

In addition to the two main suspects, five other people (all Black) were arrested in connection with the attack, including George Neal's sister Emma Johnson, her husband John Johnson, and their nephews James Johnson and John Young. They were all charged with being accessories to the crime, on the "oath and information" of Zadoc Easton,³⁰ a brother of Mrs. Buxton who also lived in the Buxton household, but was not in the house the night of the attack. Deputy Sheriff Thompson found a young Black woman named Opera Warfield willing to testify that early that morning on her way to work, she had seen a Black man (whom she later claimed was Sidney Randolph³¹) running across the railroad tracks near the Buxtons' property. Her companion, Haler McAbee, disagreed with her statement; he was arrested as a potential accessory to the crime. The following week, Thompson also arrested Joseph Brooks, the friend of the Neal

family who had visited them the night before the incident, as well as two other members of the Neal family, Charles Neal and John Y. Neal³² (possibly the man known as “Dink” Neal), said to be cousins of George.

After their arrest on May 25, the prisoners Randolph and Neal were initially taken to the Rockville jail, but Sheriff John Collier arranged a hasty transport to Baltimore’s Central Police Station, as he suspected a lynching attempt was imminent in Montgomery County.³³ One paper reported the prisoners were rushed through town to Autrey Park Station in a closed wagon, evading an already-formed crowd shouting “Lynch them!”³⁴ Various Gaithersburg townspeople, acting as an amateur detective squad in the absence of authorities, had collected a large quantity of flimsy and circumstantial evidence bolstered by the rumor mill of a small town. The papers reported every scrap of information in excruciating detail—rumors of bloody clothing found in Neal’s house, Randolph covered in blood (from his own gunshot wounds), Randolph seen having a coat and then missing one, footprints (both shod and barefoot) leading in multiple directions that were used to prove different theories of the suspects’ movements, and townspeople who claimed to have seen Randolph hanging around the house where later an axe went missing.³⁵ The collection and interpretation of this circumstantial evidence was mostly driven by Reverend Lloyd and Deputy Sheriff Thompson, neither of whom was experienced in investigating crime. State’s Attorney Alexander Kilgour appealed to Inspector T.H. Hollinberger of the Metropolitan Police, who sent two of his top detectives from Washington to properly investigate the incident.

Detectives Richard “Ned” Weedon and Edward Horne, arriving in Gaithersburg on the afternoon of May 25, set to work investigating the crime and interviewing witnesses.³⁶ They were not yet allowed to speak to the Buxton family on doctors’ orders³⁷ (though certain reporters seemed to have access to Mr. Buxton in particular).³⁸ Weedon and Horne thought it unlikely that Randolph and Neal, both of whom they interviewed in the Rockville jail, were connected with the crime, pointing out the many problems and inconsistencies with the circumstantial and possibly manufactured evidence collected by the local townspeople. The detectives did not speak in detail to the press about their theories, but they did strongly suggest other directions they wished to investigate. According to their boss, Inspector Hollinger, the perpetrator might “deceive the country people, but not our men, who are trained in criminal matters.”³⁹ Horne had a theory as to the actual motive, suggesting the assailant may have been a white man in blackface, and that “suspicion is directed to persons who do not live very far from the Buxton house.”⁴⁰



Detective Richard Edward “Ned” Weedon, as pictured the year of his retirement in 1921. This picture was published with his obituary in *The Washington Post* in 1938.

The Gaithersburg people were indignant that the detectives were investigating the potential motives and alibis of local citizens (i.e. white men) rather than focusing on finding evidence against the prisoners Randolph and Neal. “Mr. English” (unclear which one, as there were three) and Zadoc Easton (Mrs. Buxton’s brother) were both under suspicion, as well as Richard Buxton himself.⁴¹ After only two and a half days, Weedon and Horne abruptly and angrily left Montgomery County, abandoning the case due to the town residents’ open hostility and lack of cooperation with their investigation.⁴² Kilgour then appealed to Marshall Frey of the Baltimore Police. Frey sent detectives Hermann Pohler and George Siebold, who arrived on May 31.⁴³ The new detectives remained skeptical but seemed to take up with the theories of the Rev. Lloyd (with whom they lodged while in town),⁴⁴ believing there was at least some credible evidence against Randolph. However, no clear motive existed unless he could be linked to Neal. According to one source, Pohler later admitted he had been encouraged by the Gaithersburg townspeople specifically to find evidence against Neal and Randolph.⁴⁵

The Suspects

Most vexing to all the detectives and to the State's Attorney, Randolph lacked a motive for the attack. No one in the Buxtons' neighborhood was wealthy, which was obvious from the size and quality of the houses, so robbery seemed an unlikely motive for a stranger. An early theory, likely proposed by Lloyd, suggested Randolph must have been in the Maryland Penitentiary with George Neal, who ostensibly did have a potential motive, and that the two had hatched their plan of revenge together.⁴⁶ This rumor persisted until State's Attorney Kilgour asked wardens from the penitentiary to visit and identify the men held in Central Station in Baltimore. The wardens recognized Neal as the man who had served eight years and been released the previous December, but they had never seen Randolph there.⁴⁷ However, by then the idea that Randolph and Neal were in collusion was firmly planted in the minds of Gaithersburg citizens and facts failed to dislodge it.

The backstory of Neal's attempted-rape conviction and subsequent sentence in the Maryland Penitentiary started in summer 1886. In June of that year, a 16-year-old Gaithersburg girl named Jennie Gloyd claimed she was sexually assaulted by a Black man while walking home from school along the railroad tracks. More than ten Black men, including George Neal, were detained by the townspeople over the next three days, each one paraded in front of Gloyd for identification, none of whom she could pick out as her assailant.⁴⁸ A few days after Neal was dismissed as Gloyd's attacker, he was brought before the authorities on a separate charge of disorderly conduct and sentenced to serve a year at the House of Correction in Baltimore.⁴⁹ A few weeks later, several Gaithersburg men concluded, based on evidence never mentioned in reports, that Neal was the lead suspect in the Gloyd case after all.⁵⁰ They brought Jennie Gloyd to Baltimore where Neal was serving his sentence, to positively identify him as her attacker. She picked him out of a lineup of men, but he would have been the only one she could recognize from a group of strangers, as she had seen him in a lineup before. In June 1887, Neal was brought back to Gaithersburg and tried before three judges for the attempted assault on Jennie Gloyd.⁵¹ He was convicted largely based on her identification, though more than 20 witnesses were listed in the trial report, and he was sentenced to ten years in the Maryland Penitentiary.⁵² The grudge against Buxton was rumored to have started here, since some said Neal "had threatened to kill Mr. Buxton" when he got out;⁵³ however, Buxton's participation in his conviction is completely unsupported by current evidence.⁵⁴ Neal was released in December 1895, more than a year early for good behavior.⁵⁵ Aside from the rumors of his supposed grudge, no evidence existed linking Neal to the Buxton attacks, and his family members (with the exception of James Johnson) all testified to his presence at home during the time the incident occurred.

Randolph consistently repeated that he had been in Georgetown until the day before (Sunday) and had slept that night in a barn on the outskirts of Gaithersburg; however various local witnesses, multiplying as the days went by, came forward claiming to have seen him in Gaithersburg several days before the attack. The coat he was allegedly seen wearing the day before the attacks, which was missing at the time of his arrest, he stated was stolen from him in Georgetown days before. Rev. Lloyd came up with another theory that Randolph had not been shot while he was being apprehended, but instead had been hit by Buxton's errant shot inside the house. He based this on the opinion of Dr. John McCormick, who bandaged Randolph's wounds around 9:30 the morning of his arrest, and who claimed the blood was too dry to have come from a wound less than two hours old.⁵⁶ The doctor also conjectured the blood on Randolph's shirt



Artistic rendering of the modest house occupied by the Buxton family, published in *The Evening Star*, on May 26, 1896.

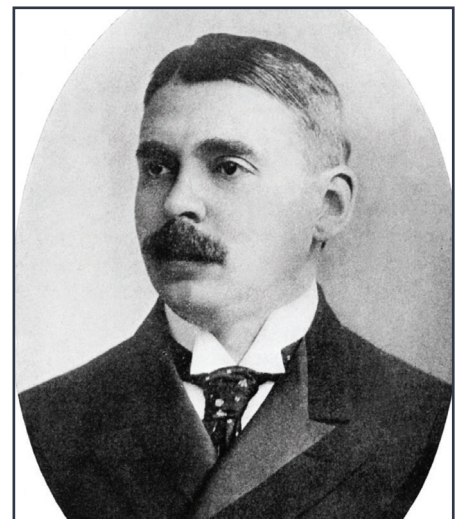
and/or neck looked to be atomized “as if from arterial spatter”⁵⁷ rather than resulting from his own bleeding wounds. Deputy Sheriff Thompson placed Randolph’s shoes into the tracks Lloyd had followed from the Buxton house, and claimed they fit perfectly.⁵⁸ He also did this footprint-comparison testing with Neal, but none of these men were trained investigators and this type of evidence would not have been admissible in court. Even reports of the time considered it flimsy circumstantial evidence at best, fraught with potential bias and misinterpretation.

After his first week in prison, Randolph was brought to Garfield Hospital in Washington and presented before the Buxtons, at which point Mrs. Buxton could not identify him, nor say whether her assailant was white or Black. Mr. Buxton said he “thought he was the right man” but (depending on the source) he also could not be sure.⁵⁹ Almost all the newspaper accounts stated several times over the next ten days that Randolph was subjected to the “sweating process”⁶⁰ while in prison; that is, questioned repeatedly and at length in an attempt to bring a confession. The threat of lynching was also frequently mentioned in the papers, as the Gaithersburg townspeople were convinced Randolph was the culprit. But Randolph persisted in his innocence, never wavering from the story he told from the start. He maintained he had never been to Gaithersburg in his life, and that he had never met Neal before they were jailed together on suspicion of committing this crime.

The First Inquest

Sadie Buxton died in the hospital on June 5, 1896. Before her funeral and burial, a coroner’s inquest convened to determine the cause of her death, which was now considered a homicide. According to a decision by State’s Attorney Kilgour, this inquest would also take the place of a preliminary hearing, to determine if sufficient evidence existed to hold these men for the crime,⁶¹ not the usual course of law at the time. If either Randolph or Neal could have afforded a proper lawyer, this sequence of events would not have been allowed; in fact, a group of Black lawyers and religious leaders in Washington, D.C. had held several meetings by this time, incensed over the handling of the case. Their early plans included calling for habeas corpus to demand the release of Randolph and Neal on grounds of insufficient evidence and lack of a timely preliminary hearing, and raising funds to secure a defense attorney.⁶² Largely because of their advocacy, prominent D.C. lawyer Ashley M. Gould volunteered to represent Randolph at the inquest.⁶³

Due to ongoing concerns for their safety, Sheriff Collier did not bring Randolph and Neal to Gaithersburg for the proceedings, but he did transport them from Baltimore to the Rockville jail. Collier again interrogated Randolph, who revealed a more complete account of his life and movements prior to his arrest in Montgomery County, reported in detail by the correspondent from the *Evening Times*.⁶⁴ Collier was hopeful Randolph would confess under the pressure of another questioning session of more than two hours, but as always, Randolph maintained his consistent story. According to the *Washington Evening Star*, “It was evident also that the sheriff was not as sanguine as he was formerly of convicting Randolph of the crime.”⁶⁵ The *Washington Bee*, a newspaper published by prominent Black journalist W. Calvin Chase, took a darker view, with the acerbic remark, “The unwritten law of Maryland is that if a white person is killed and the murderer cannot be found, some Negro must hang for it.”⁶⁶



Canadian-born Ashley M. Gould, who was retained by a concerned citizens’ group in Washington, D.C. to represent Randolph at the coroner’s inquest/preliminary hearing in Gaithersburg on June 11-12, 1896. (Photo c. 1890, provided by Ward Clemence White).

The inquest continued over two days, on June 11 and 12, 1896. Though originally planned to be a closed affair, the jury decided at the last minute to allow the public to attend. It took place in Gaithersburg's Norman Hall,⁶⁷ a community space upstairs in the building owned by Mayor John A. Belt, which filled to capacity with eager onlookers and reporters.⁶⁸ Local Justice of the Peace Cortice B. Baughman, acting as coroner, presided over a 12-person appointed jury, with five lawyers present: State's Attorney Kilgour, assisted by H. Maurice Talbott, who was additionally hired by Buxton to represent his interests; Ashley M. Gould representing Randolph; Edward C. Peter representing Neal; and George Minor Anderson representing Neal's relatives.⁶⁹ The lawyers asked no questions; instead, the witnesses were questioned mostly by Justice Baughman and by juror Belt. Belt was also providing testimony for the prosecution—an apparent conflict of interest that was called into question but later dismissed.⁷⁰

The assembled heard testimony from 37 witnesses, most of whom claimed to have seen Randolph either running around near the crime scene that morning or hanging about in Gaithersburg in the days leading up to it. The purpose of the testimony was ostensibly threefold: first to prove that Randolph was in the vicinity of the Buxton house on the morning of the attack; second, to prove that he was lying about when he had arrived in Gaithersburg; and third, to establish that he resembled Clem Johnson, whom Buxton had said his attacker looked like. Gould, Randolph's lawyer, stated that he had refrained from cross-examining any of these witnesses, since their



The John A. Belt building at the corner of Diamond and Summit Avenues in Gaithersburg, 1896. The inquest was held in the upstairs room known as Norman Hall, named for Belt's son. (Photo courtesy of Gaithersburg Community Museum)

testimony, if given again in a trial, would not be admissible anyway.⁷¹ One of the last witnesses was Richard Buxton himself, who (in response to questions described as “leading queries” by the defense lawyers) implicated Randolph directly as the assailant of his family: “Yes, I have seen my assailant since then. His name is Randolph and he is now in Rockville jail. I am positive he is the man who assaulted me.”⁷²

Following the witnesses' testimony, the jury—after 30 minutes' deliberation—returned a verdict that Randolph alone was to be held for Sadie Buxton's murder. “We find that Sadie Buxton came to her death by a blow inflicted with an ax [sic], on the morning of the 25th of May, in the hands of Sidney Randolph. We further believe he had an accessory who is unknown to this jury.”⁷³ Washington's *Morning Times* ran a headline of “Randolph Found Guilty,” despite the lack of an indictment, let alone a trial verdict. Renewed talk of a lynching surfaced, promoted especially by the younger men, but Mayor Belt made a speech from the street outside Norman Hall, imploring the people to allow the law to take its course.⁷⁴ Neal was cleared of all charges and released, along with the others who had been under arrest in connection with the case.⁷⁵ Randolph was to be held until the grand jury, set to convene in November, could rule on a potential indictment. The lawyers' group in Washington retained Gould to defend Randolph before the grand jury. If he were indicted, they hoped to remove the subsequent trial from Montgomery County.⁷⁶



Sidney Randolph, as depicted in *The Evening Star* in its reporting on the lynching July 4, 1896.

The Lynching

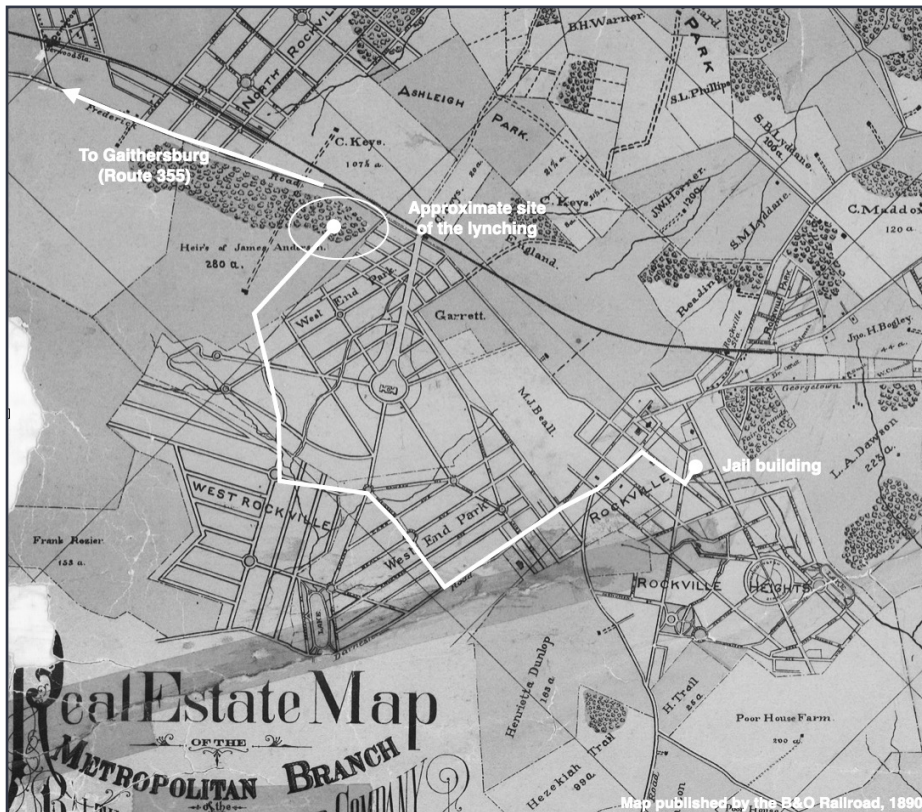
After the coroner's inquest verdict on June 12, only occasional newspaper coverage focused on the case, despite previous daily coverage in many papers for 20 days straight, May 25 through June 13. At least one of the detectives from Baltimore was still investigating the case, and rumors circulated that the Washington lawyers' group had hired the Pinkerton Detective Agency to come to Montgomery County.⁷⁷ The case took another turn when West English claimed one of the recently released prisoners—Dink Neal—had told him (English) that Randolph had confessed to the crime while they were imprisoned together.⁷⁸ Dink Neal had already left town following his release, so the detectives attempted to track him down to verify English's claim. Jailer Charles Peyton and Sheriff Collier both stated it would have been impossible for Randolph and Neal to communicate with each other, as their cells were on different floors. English's story was questioned in the press, as to both veracity and purpose. Newspapers had been reporting "the general feeling" that most people, outside of Gaithersburg, were beginning to doubt Randolph's guilt, and they suggested English, potentially with an ulterior motive, was attempting to fix that suspicion back on Randolph by claiming he had confessed. According to the *Evening Star*, "it would not be surprising if those taken into custody were of fairer complexion than the ones heretofore apprehended."⁷⁹ However, this story received no further mention in the papers.

Several things happened on July 3, 1896. The *Montgomery County Sentinel* (the most local paper) ran detailed coverage of the lynching of Joseph Cocking, a white man who had been the suspect in a similar axe murder case in Charles County.⁸⁰ That lynching had happened the Saturday before, but the *Sentinel*, being a weekly paper, had just run the story on July 3. Also on that day, Maud Buxton and her mother returned to Montgomery County from Garfield Hospital in Washington, somewhat recovered but still obviously afflicted by their injuries, and their arrival elicited much sympathy from those who witnessed it.⁸¹ Some papers later reported the spread of a rumor upon her return that 16-year-old Maud may have been a target for rape, or that she had finally been able to communicate that a sexual assault was a component of the attack on the family.⁸² Later reports also suggest that Maud was so impaired by her injury that she was having to "begin almost as a child and learn the language over again,"⁸³ so she might have been unable to communicate much at this time. With somewhat eerie prescience, the *Washington Bee* published this statement on the morning of July 4, before Randolph's fate was known: "The lynching of Cocking is an indication of what will be done with Randolph. Randolph is innocent, but someone must swing."⁸⁴

Reports indicated that for several nights following the inquest on June 12, Sheriff Collier had removed Randolph from the Rockville jail to undisclosed locations in order to prevent an attempt on his life;⁸⁵ however, in the weeks since he had relaxed his vigilance. In the early morning of July 4, Randolph was in his jail cell when 20 to 30 men wearing red handkerchiefs over their faces aroused jailer Charles Peyton around 1:00 am. They claimed to have a new prisoner for him. When he opened the door and saw the masks and guns, he attempted to lock them out, but the men overpowered him and forced him to relinquish the keys. The crowd seized Randolph, who fought bitterly against them, and literally dragged him out as he attempted to hold onto the floor grating, scraping the skin from his fingers as he was pulled away.⁸⁶ Fellow prisoner Perry Elkhorn stated Randolph screamed, "Murder! Murder!" over and over again.⁸⁷ The attackers had to strike a blow on his head to subdue him enough to take him out through the back of the property to a wagon waiting near the residence of lawyer Edward C. Peter across the street.⁸⁸ Peter heard the men talking as Randolph was loaded into the vehicle. "Any tree is good enough for him,' 'No, we have promised to meet the other fellows."⁸⁹



The Rockville jail building, located on the property where the County Council Office Building stands today. Taken c. 1932 just before its demolition. (*Montgomery History*)



Projected path the lynch mob may have taken, from the jail building on South Perry Street (now Maryland Avenue), to Darnestown Road (now West Montgomery Avenue), through West End Park subdivision and out to the Anderson farm on Frederick Road (now Route 355). The wagon tracks continued from there along Frederick Road toward Gaithersburg.

Randolph was taken through Rockville in the wagon via an indirect route, first out on Darnestown Road (now Route 28), then back through West End Park to a stand of trees at the edge of a large farm on Frederick Road (now Route 355), located about a mile and a half north of town.⁹⁰ Still fighting every step of the way, he was dragged to a chestnut tree, and a noose was forced around his neck. Only the *New York Times* and other out-of-state papers reported that the murderous group attempted to elicit a confession;⁹¹ most local sources indicate Randolph's struggles precluded any such "ceremonies" typically associated with a lynching. It took their combined efforts to tie him up, haul Randolph up from the ground by his neck,

and hold him suspended until he died of slow strangulation. His body was found an hour or two later by local attorney George Minor Anderson and other men who had been alerted to the jail break by Peyton.⁹² They had followed the tracks of the wagon through town, eventually discovering the crime scene and also noting that multiple wagon tracks continued from there toward Gaithersburg.⁹³

Justice of the Peace Charles M. Jones summoned a coroner's jury that visited the crime scene at 9:00 am where the body was still hanging and a rather large crowd had gathered; the jury then reconvened in the courthouse later that afternoon. When the body was cut down, members of the crowd grabbed the rope and shredded it to pieces as they scrambled for souvenirs.⁹⁴ According to the *Baltimore Sun*, "The tree had so many pieces chopped from it that it looked like it had been struck by lightning."⁹⁵ Sidney Randolph's body was taken to Pumphrey's funeral establishment, displayed for a few days, and later buried in the Potter's Field near the Alms House southwest of Rockville.⁹⁶

The Second Inquest

The coroner's jury summoned to rule on Randolph's cause of death didn't render a verdict at the scene of the crime. Instead, an inquest into the identity of those responsible for the lynching continued in the courthouse over several days, as the jury heard testimony from many witnesses. According to newspapers, citizens of Rockville were indignant at the lynching in their town, immediately suspecting Gaithersburg men were behind it. Many thought Richard Buxton himself had organized the event. Buxton quickly made a statement to the press that he condemned the lynching and had desired the law to take its course.⁹⁷

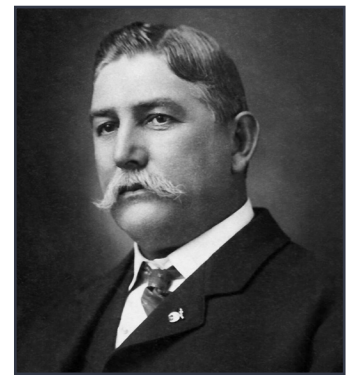
Editorials and letters censuring the lynching were published in several local newspapers in the following days. A writer to *The Evening Times* stated: "The veil covering the mystery of the Gaithersburg tragedy has not yet been lifted. Is it not possible that some one interested in keeping it untouched

instigated the lynching?” The letter writer appealed to the Governor of Maryland for sturdier county jails, more intelligent/capable officers, and fines levied on counties for every prisoner lost to a lynch mob.⁹⁸ An editorial published in the *Evening Star* called the lynching “cold-blooded murder” and pointed out flaws in the case and the investigation.⁹⁹ An editorial in the *Baltimore Sun* published on July 6 claimed no man had a guarantee of safety if lynch mobs were allowed to operate unpunished, concluding, “These lynchings have become entirely too frequent in Maryland, and they should be put down with a strong hand.”¹⁰⁰ The *Washington Bee* had this to say: “Randolph who was so cowardly murdered by the mob of Maryland is enough to excite Afro-Americans to do violence. What can the proud Caucasian race expect? Are we to be murdered and butchered with impunity? Without due process of law?”¹⁰¹

Following the lynchings of Cocking in Charles County and Randolph in Montgomery County only a week apart, Maryland Governor Lloyd Lowndes offered a \$1,000 reward for the apprehension of those responsible. “Such lawlessness is demoralizing to the community and the perpetrators must be punished,” he stated. “I realize the difficulty of arresting, indicting and convicting the guilty men, but propose to take strong measures to secure such a result. There appeared to be serious doubt as to the guilt of Randolph. These lynchings are to be greatly deplored and are a blot upon the fame of the State.”¹⁰²

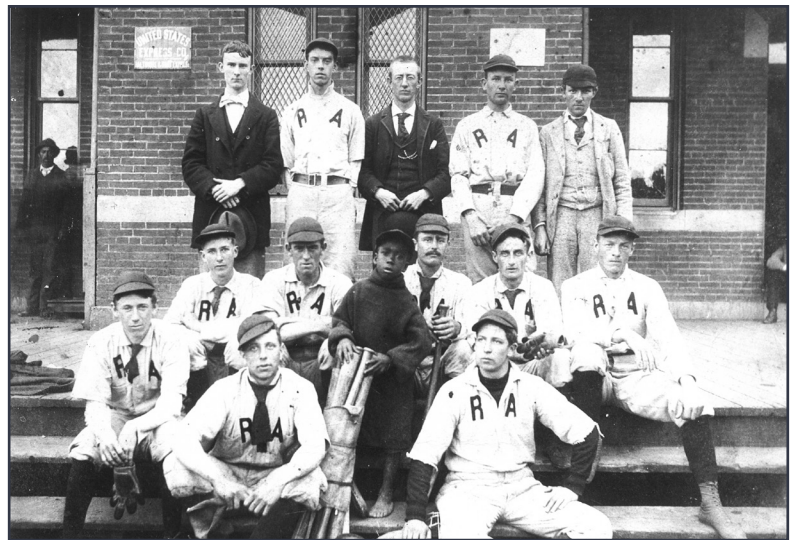
Testimony at the inquest into Sidney Randolph’s death was heard from more than 40 men, some more than once, over three sessions: on July 4, July 7, and July 13. Many of those questioned predictably denied any knowledge and said little, but several of the witnesses revealed additional significant facts surrounding the murder:

- Sheriff Collier said he had no idea a lynching was imminent. He had been moving the prisoner from the jail for weeks to circumvent one, but had stopped doing so, as the men from Gaithersburg—particularly John A. Belt—had assured him they would let the law take its course.¹⁰³ Collier did not live in Rockville and had left town at 6:00 pm to go to his home near Boyds, leaving Randolph and the other prisoners in the care of jailer Peyton.



Sheriff John Collier, c. 1900 (Photo provided by Glenn Wallace).

- Several young Rockville men who caught a train to Frederick the night before the lynching, in preparation for a day of baseball games on July 4, testified that before leaving town, they had heard a rumor that a lynching was planned. Cary Kingdon claimed to have written a quick letter to State’s Attorney Kilgour before boarding the train, warning him of the potential plan (which Kilgour stated never reached him), and James Veirs claimed to have spoken to Deputy Sheriff Thompson on the platform, saying “you shouldn’t let them kill that man,”¹⁰⁴ to which he said Thompson made no reply.¹⁰⁵ Thompson said he thought the rumor was a joke.¹⁰⁶ Somerville Bean, implicated by several as the primary source of the rumor, was called to testify but refused to appear, saying he couldn’t leave work in Washington. He later sent a deposition statement that he had only mentioned a possible lynching in jest and had no information that one was actually planned.¹⁰⁷



1893 Rockville Athletics baseball team. Included in the team photo are Somerville Bean (center row, 3rd from right), next to him (2nd from right) Cary Kingdon, Charles M. Jones (front row left) and Harry Dawson (front row right). (Montgomery History)

- The masks worn by the lynchers were identical red handkerchiefs tied by a particular kind of jute twine used almost exclusively by post offices. John A. Belt both ran a general store that stocked handkerchiefs and held the position of postmaster for the town of Gaithersburg. Belt was angered by obvious insinuations in the press that he was potentially involved, at one point accosting a reporter in the street over what had been printed.¹⁰⁸ However, jailer Peyton had heard Belt threatening Randolph in the jail a few days before the lynching, accusing him of using a false name and saying he “hadn’t many hours to live.”¹⁰⁹ Belt admitted this on the stand. At this point, the jury recalled Deputy Sheriff Thompson to describe a letter he had received from Milledgeville, Georgia, asking if the man they had in custody could be a fugitive from that area known as Ben Temple, wanted for murdering a minister’s wife.¹¹⁰ Thompson had obviously shown Belt the letter, prompting the confrontation.
- Tools used in the abduction of Randolph and found near the lynching site were those issued by the B&O Railroad Company specifically for the Gaithersburg section of the line. Only men who worked for the B&O would have them.¹¹¹
- Several people had seen groups of buggies and wagons heading back to Gaithersburg in the early hours of Saturday morning. In particular, witnesses Francis Hall and Jennie Neal testified that they saw the adult sons of G. Fenton Snouffer, William and John Snouffer, partially disguised in a buggy outside Washington Grove around 2:00 am. Clarence Ennis, who worked at the Snouffer farm, stated that he saw the younger Snouffers returning home later that morning, their horses exhausted, unwilling to say where they had been.¹¹² The witnesses relating this testimony were all Black, and Ennis stated he was threatened for giving testimony against his former employers.¹¹³ G. Fenton Snouffer testified that his sons had arrived home around 12:00 am, before the lynching took place, and had remained home all night.

Initially, the investigation seemed robust, and newspapers reported it likely for perpetrators to be identified. However, after the second session on July 7, a rumor started that a group of Black men were planning to lynch Buxton. Armed white men roamed the streets as guards, and Buxton reportedly hid in Gaithersburg terrified for his life,¹¹⁴ but the rumor proved to be unfounded. In fact, Montgomery County’s Black citizens had organized several orderly meetings, in conjunction with the lawyers’ group in Washington,¹¹⁵ to discuss their views of the lynching and potentially bring to light any information within the community that might lead to the arrest of perpetrators. The testimony of Ennis and Hall was perhaps encouraged by these sessions. After holding meetings in D.C. and in a place “north of Gaithersburg” (likely Metropolitan Grove), a planned meeting at Emory Grove on July 8 was threatened when the white citizens, spooked by the lynching rumor, claimed it could lead to violence against Buxton or Collier. Dr. J. N. Johnson of Washington, D.C. appealed to Sheriff Collier, requesting in a letter that he allow the meeting at Emory Grove to proceed without interference, stating the Black citizens were not contemplating any violence, did not blame Collier for the lynching of Randolph, and intended no ill will toward Buxton.¹¹⁶ Collier responded that he had no reason to prevent a peaceful meeting; however, the meeting at Emory Grove did not occur.¹¹⁷

Between the July 7 and July 13 jury sessions, Dr. Charles Waters and Reverend Lloyd, both respected Gaithersburg men, published their opinions of the case, censuring the lynching, but reminding everyone they fully believed in Randolph’s guilt.¹¹⁸ These publicly expressed opinions may have swayed jury members away from their charge to discover the perpetrators and back toward the status quo. By the third session, enthusiasm for further testimony had waned, and in the end the jurors rendered the usual verdict connected with lynchings: that Randolph came to his death “at the hands of parties unknown to the jury.”¹¹⁹

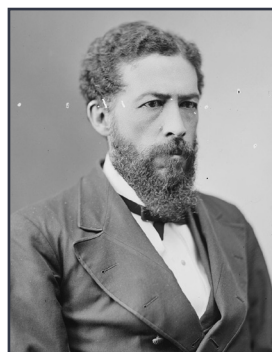
The Aftermath

This continued miscarriage of justice engendered strong statements and a call to action from the lawyers' group and concerned citizens in Washington D.C., who had now organized as the Anti-Lynching Society. At a meeting on July 16, with founding dean of the Howard University Law School and former Virginia congressman John Mercer Langston presiding,¹²⁰ attendees formed several committees to draft resolutions, raise funds to investigate both crimes, and marshal the resources of local churches to denounce lynching and work toward justice for Blacks in every community.¹²¹ Other notable members included lawyer Thomas L. Jones, Colonel Perry Carson, and *Washington Bee* editor W. Calvin Chase.¹²² Though Langston expressed dismay that only 50 people attended the first meeting, the second meeting of the Society reportedly drew a crowd of 1,000 on July 22, less than a week later.¹²³ Dr. J.N. Johnson stated that Rev. Lloyd, "who has played the part of a detective since the Buxton tragedy," should be recalled by the Methodist church.¹²⁴ "The majority of the people in this country are Christians, but lynching is heathenish, and yet it is tolerated by this Christian nation and they should be ashamed of it," said Rev. Dr. George W. Lee, pastor of the Fifth Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. Near the end of the meeting, the officers passed several more resolutions denouncing the practice of lynching, as well as denouncing reckless law enforcement officers and "the silence of religious leaders, politicians, and the public press for allowing these frequent lynchings to pass unnoticed."¹²⁵ Anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett, present in Washington for a women's convention, spoke at the third meeting in late July and suggested the permanent establishment of an anti-lynching organization in the city.¹²⁶

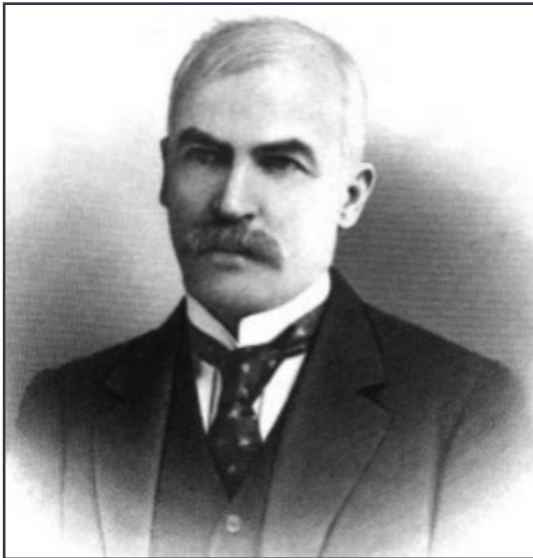
Newspapers continued to use suspicions raised at the inquest that Randolph was connected to an 1892 crime in Milledgeville, Georgia, to suggest he was also guilty of the Buxton attack. Randolph had stated many times he was from that area, having left several years earlier. Before the lynching, Deputy Sheriff Thompson had written to the clerk of the court in Baldwin County, Georgia, asking for news of

any wanted criminals there. Baldwin County Superior Court clerk Walter Gainie replied that a criminal named Ben Temple was wanted for the axe murder of Smithy Leonard, a minister's wife, and to look for scars on Randolph's face.¹²⁷ Thompson apparently examined Sidney Randolph and saw that "a scar, circular in form, was discernable on his right cheek, just below the eye."¹²⁸ Though the newspaper reports suggested further steps would be taken to determine if Randolph did fully match the description of Temple (in the form of taking photographs, inviting officers from Georgia to examine the body, or shipping the body to Georgia), a conclusive finding was never reported in the press, suggesting no connection was ever determined.¹²⁹

In October, a Mr. Ward of Hunting Hill found a man's coat in the woods, reported in two papers as being the "missing link" connecting Randolph to the Buxton crime.¹³⁰ The coat was described as similar to the one Randolph was said to be wearing when he was supposedly seen in Gaithersburg several days before the attack on the Buxtons. When found under a pile of rocks, the coat was stained from mud and moss growth, but also discolored from "what is supposed to be a few smudges of blood."¹³¹ Randolph had maintained he had only been in Montgomery County the day before the Buxtons were attacked, having lost his coat to a thief in Georgetown. Above its reporting on this discovery of a coat, *The Washington Post* ran the headline "Sydney Randolph Was Guilty."¹³² It seems the *Washington Bee* had a premonition of this situation, when it published this statement four months earlier: "Any old coat with blood marks on it, whether found near Gaithersburg or upon the top of the Pyramids of Egypt, will answer for the coat worn by the selected victim."¹³³



Thomas L. Jones, John Mercer Langston, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett, all of whom spoke out against the lynching of Sidney Randolph in the summer of 1896 in Washington D.C. (Library of Congress)



Judge James Barnes Henderson, who presented a lengthy charge to the Grand Jury admonishing them to discover the identities of the lynchers. (As pictured in "Men of Mark in Maryland," c. 1907)

In November 1896, a Montgomery County grand jury heard from witnesses regarding the lynching of Sidney Randolph, before which Judge James B. Henderson strongly admonished the members to discover the perpetrators. "Lynching under any circumstances is deplorable," he stated in a lengthy charge to the jury. "It is a crime which undermines the foundation of civil government [and its] practice is demoralizing to courts, juries and the public morals."¹³⁴ According to the law, Henderson re-iterated, it was not under the purview of the grand jury to ascertain Randolph's guilt or innocence, but to identify those who killed him.¹³⁵ The witnesses who appeared before the grand jury included Mr. and Mrs. Buxton and their daughter Maud, Thomas Phebus, Rev. L.L. Lloyd, George English, and doctors Etchison and McCormick,¹³⁶ all of whom could reasonably give detailed information about the attack on the Buxtons (and their belief that Randolph was the perpetrator¹³⁷), but none of whom could be expected to have information on the identity of Randolph's murderers.

In light of this, the jurors not only upheld the earlier verdict of the coroner's jury of inquest, saying they had "failed to find any evidence to implicate anyone in the crime,"¹³⁸ they also posthumously indicted Randolph as guilty of the crime and (like the coroner's jury) particularly exonerated Sheriff Collier.¹³⁹ No charges were ever brought against any man following the murder of Sidney Randolph, and any lingering investigation into the attack on the Buxtons was dropped.

The Buxton family returned to their house on Frederick Avenue in Gaithersburg, having had it cleaned, painted, and outfitted with state-of-the-art burglar alarms.¹⁴⁰ They were enumerated in the 1900 census along with Zed Easton and their youngest daughter Grace, who was born in 1897. They continued to live in Gaithersburg until Richard's death in 1923, after which most of the remaining family members moved to Washington, D.C. The last descendant of this branch of the Buxton family (Carroll Buxton's daughter Gaile Buxton Crump) died in 2014. Currently, no family connections have been verified for Sidney Randolph, and it is assumed he had no direct descendants. Research is ongoing.

About the Author

Sarah Hedlund holds a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Maryland with a specialization in archives and digital curation. She is currently the Librarian and Archivist for Montgomery History, having previously worked for the University of Maryland Special Collections and the Archives Center at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. She first presented her research on the three Montgomery County lynchings at an event co-hosted by Montgomery History and the Montgomery County Lynching Memorial Project in March, 2020, as well as sharing her research methodology in a presentation to the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission the following June. She is also the author of "At the Hands of Parties Unknown: the 1880 Lynchings in Montgomery County," published in *The Montgomery County Story*, which won the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference's Arline Custer Memorial Article Award in November, 2020.

Notes

1. Randolph's first name is alternately spelled "Sydney." For consistency, the author has retained the former spelling, but no definitive information has yet been discovered to support one version over the other.
2. Alexander, Shawn Leigh. *An Army of Lions: The Civil Rights Struggle Before the NAACP*. (University Press: Philadelphia, 2013), p66.
3. Hutchinson, William E. "Chapter 1: Gaithersburg and the Railroad." Published in *Gaithersburg: Heart of Montgomery County* (City of Gaithersburg, 1978), p23.
4. Christensen, Judith and Ada Beacht. "Chapter 2: Government." *Ibid*, p47.
5. Hutchinson, p23.
6. Christensen, Judith and Jane Harding. "Chapter 5: Organizations and Social Life." *Ibid*, p 117-122.
7. In the 1890s, North Frederick Road was known as "Frederick Avenue" within the town of Gaithersburg (see Survey of the Town of Gaithersburg, C.J. Maddox, Jr., 1894). In other areas of the county, this road (Route 355 today) was referred to as "the Frederick Road" or just "Frederick Road"
8. Buxton, Stephen A. "The Buxton Family: Their Great Tragedy of 1896." Unpublished manuscript, Jane C. Sween Research Library and Special Collections: Lynching Vertical File. December 13, 1984.
9. "He Wielded an Ax," *Evening Times* (Washington): May 25, 1896.
10. "No Good Clew Yet," *Morning Times* (Washington): May 26, 1896, p1.
11. *Ibid*. Early reports refer to "James English" as the homeowner of the neighboring house that was broken into. James English lived in a separate household from his mother and younger siblings: the latter was the house next door to, or in close proximity to the Buxton residence. James was a more prominent local citizen, and had more name recognition, which possibly led to the error of identification.
12. "State of Maryland," *The Sun* (Baltimore): May 26, 1896, p2. According to *The Evening Times* of June 13, "Montgomery County has the most complete house-to-house connection by telephone of any county in Maryland."
13. "Gashed With an Ax," *The Evening Star* (Washington): May 25, 1896, p1.
14. "A Crime for Revenge," *The Washington Post*: May 26, 1896, p1.
15. "State of Maryland." Also quoted in *The Evening Star*.
16. Also known as Forest Oak Chapel, this church once stood on the same property as Forest Oak Cemetery in the 300 block of today's North Frederick Road. That building was dismantled in 1906 when the congregation built a new church at 119 Frederick Road, which stands today as Grace United Methodist Church.
17. This surname is alternately spelled "Neale." For consistency's sake, the author has retained the former spelling throughout, though many sources and records alternate the spelling indiscriminately for all members of this family.
18. "No Good Clew Yet."
19. "A Crime for Revenge." (*Post*) and "State of Maryland." (*Sun*).
20. "No Good Clew Yet," p2.
21. Identified as a nephew of John and Emma Johnson, James Johnson (born 1885) was the son of Henry Johnson and Mary Catherine Neal, married in 1883. This may be the same Catherine Neal who was mother of George and Emma, potentially making James the half-brother of George Neal.
22. *The Morning Times* reported this man as "Isaiah Frazier," but according to census records, the Frazier who lived in Gaithersburg and worked as a dairyman was named Isaac.
23. Statements of this sort were printed in the *Star*, the *Times*, and the *Post* on May 26-27.
24. Numerous articles from the *Alexandria Gazette*, *The Sun* (Baltimore), *The Evening Star* (Washington), *The Washington Post*, and the *National Republican* (Washington) were consulted from the time of the attack on Gloyd, first reported May 26, 1886, through the conviction of Neal in June of 1887. According to Gaithersburg town records, Buxton held no official office at this time. According to the records of the criminal trial in 1887, neither Buxton nor any man from the English family was called as a witness against Neal. This suggests that while the townspeople correctly recalled Neal's trial and incarceration of eight years earlier, they either misremembered or falsified Buxton's involvement then in order to also attach Neal to this current crime.
25. "Mystery Grows Deeper," *The Evening Times* (Washington): May 27, 1896, p25.
26. "No Good Clew Yet." Clem Johnson may have been related to the family of George Neal's brother-in-law John Johnson, but the accounts do not indicate a close family connection.
27. "Mystery Grows Deeper," p25.
28. "Assassin Yet Unknown," *The Evening Times* (Washington): May 26, 1896, p2.
29. "Think Them Not Guilty," *The Morning Times* (Washington), May 27, 1896, p1.
30. Cortice B. Baughman, Justice of the Peace docket 1896-1899. Series: District Court 6 MO (Docket), 1876-1939. Citation: T2488-6. Maryland State Archives (Annapolis, MD).
31. "Assassin Yet Unknown," p2.
32. Baughman, Justice of the Peace docket.
33. "Brought to This City," *The Evening Star* (Washington): May 26, 1896, p3; also in "A Crime for Revenge."
34. "Doubtful of Guilt," *The Evening Star* (Washington): May 26, 1896, p3. The name of this station is spelled differently across many sources, even those beyond newspaper articles. Here is used the spelling from the 1890 "Real Estate Map of the Metropolitan Branch" (B&O Railroad Co.). Autrey Park station was south of Rockville, approximately where the Twinbrook Metro station is today.
35. All newspaper reports from May 26-28 carried details such as these.
36. Weedon and Horne were both featured frequently in the Washington papers for their investigations and solved cases. Weedon in particular seems to have been a minor celebrity in Washington, featured by name in more than 450 newspaper articles there between 1890 and 1900. Both detectives were fresh off solving the case of Elsie Kreglo, murdered on May 5, 1896.
37. "Assassin Yet Unknown," p2.
38. The author of "State of Maryland" from *The Sun* (printed on May 26, so reporting on events from May 25) stated, "Mr. Buxton seems to be stronger than any of them, and in talking to THE SUN correspondent said that he felt very sore and his head pained him very badly..." [emphasis added].
39. "Think Them Not Guilty," p1.
40. "Mystery Grows Deeper," p25.
41. "Times Proves His Alibi," *The Morning Times* (Washington): May 28, 1896, p1; and "A Calm Appeal," (editorial by L.L. Lloyd) in *Montgomery County Sentinel*: June 9, 1896.
42. "Detectives Drop Out," *The Washington Post*: May 29, 1896, p4.
43. "New Man on the Trail," *The Morning Times* (Washington): June 1, 1896, p2.
44. [untitled] Gaithersburg, MD. *The Evening Star*: June 1, 1896, p2.
45. "Sure He is Innocent," *The Washington Post*: June 4, 1896, p10.
46. "Assassin Yet Unknown," p1.
47. "Victims Brought Here," *The Washington Post*: May 27, 1896, p1.
48. Reports from the *The Washington Post*, *The Evening Star*, and *The Sun* (Baltimore), May 29-June 3, 1886.
49. "Charged with the Gloyd Assault," *The Sun* (Baltimore): June 19, 1886, p6. The House of Correction was a workhouse, used as punishment for lighter offenses such as "drunk and disorderly conduct," petty theft, vagrancy, or minor assault. Criminal convicts were sent to the Penitentiary.
50. "Miss Gloyd's Assailant," *The Evening Star* (Washington): June 19, 1886, p2.

Notes

51. "To be Tried for Assaulting Miss Gloyd," *The Sun* (Baltimore): June 7, 1887, p6. Neal's court-appointed defense lawyer, Edward C. Peter, waived the option of a jury trial.
52. Criminal Trial: June 24, 1887. Series: Montgomery County Circuit Court (Minutes), Citation: T413-4. Maryland State Archives (Annapolis, MD).
53. "A Crime for Revenge," p1.
54. See note 21.
55. Prisoner Number 11-579 (Geo. Neal). Series: Maryland Penitentiary (Prisoner Record), Citation: S275-4. Maryland State Archives (Annapolis, MD).
56. "The Buxton Assault: A Theory..." *The Sun* (Baltimore): May 29, 1896, p6. The timeline is unclear here, as sources are either not specific or inconsistent in reporting when events occurred. The attack on the Buxtons took place around 4:30 am; Randolph was shot and apprehended while walking on the road more than an hour later, at the latest 6:00 am. If his wound was not bandaged until 9:30 am, that would make his injury consistent with one inflicted "several hours earlier," i.e., at the time he was apprehended on the road.
57. "Randolph is Held," *The Evening Star* (Washington): June 13, 1896, p3.
58. "Victims Brought Here," p1.
59. "State of Maryland: Investigating the Buxton case..." *The Sun* (Baltimore): May 30, 1896, p6.
60. Late-19th and early-20th century sources seem loathe to define this term, which was used colloquially to mean anything from a period of intense questioning to coercion of a confession by application of extreme physical duress; i.e., torture. Some period sources distinguish between "sweating" (mere questioning) and "the third degree" (physical duress), but these are not consistently distinct.
61. "Suspects Have Counsel," *The Morning Times* (Washington): June 10, 1896, p1.
62. "Counsel for Randolph," *The Morning Times* (Washington): June 5, 1896, p1.
63. "Sure He is Innocent," *The Washington Post*: June 4, 1896, p10.
64. "Ready for the Inquest," *The Evening Times* (Washington): June 11, 1896, p1. This account has been exhaustively researched for potential leads to Sidney Randolph's family, but the reporter garbled many of the spellings of places and people's names, perhaps stymied by Randolph's Georgia accent. Some information has been teased out of this reporting, but many questions and dead ends remain. Research is ongoing.
65. "The Buxton Case," *The Evening Star* (Washington): June 11, 1896, p3.
66. "A Negro to Die," *Washington Bee*: June 6, 1896.
67. Also referred to as the opera house or the town hall, this served as a multi-functional community space within the town.
68. "Inquest Thrown Open," *The Morning Times* (Washington): June 12, 1896, p1. Also reported in the *Star* and the *Post* articles of the same date.
69. "Ready for the Inquest," All of these lawyers, excepting Gould, were Montgomery County men and maintained law offices in the county seat of Rockville.
70. "Maud Anxious to Talk," *The Morning Times* (Washington): June 9, 1896, p6.
71. "Randolph Found Guilty," *The Morning Times* (Washington): June 13, 1896, p1.
72. "Jury Holds Randolph," *The Washington Post*: June 13, 1896, p1.
73. *Ibid*.
74. *Ibid*, but also reported in the *Post*: "several applauded him, but most shook their heads ominously."
75. "Suspects Are Released," *The Evening Times* (Washington): June 13, 1896, p1.
76. "The Buxton Case: Release of George Neal..." *The Sun* (Baltimore): June 15, 1896, p2.
77. "Pinkertons on the Case," *The Evening Times* (Washington): June 24, 1896, p6.
78. "Following a New Clew," *The Evening Times* (Washington): June 16, 1896, p2.
79. "The Buxton Mystery," *The Evening Star* (Washington): June 18, 1896, p14.
80. "Cocking Lynched," *Montgomery County Sentinel*: July 3, 1896, p3.
81. "Will Unmask the Mob," *The Morning Times* (Washington): July 5, 1896, p1.
82. "At Gaithersburg," *The Evening Times* (Washington): July 6, 1896, p2.
83. "Acts Against Lynchers," *The Evening Times* (Washington): July 8, 1896, p2.
84. "By the Way they Say," *Washington Bee*: July 4, 1896, p2.
85. "George Neal Set at Liberty," *The Washington Post*: June 14, 1896, p10.
86. "Avenged the Murderer," *The Washington Post*: July 4, 1896, p1. and "Another Lynching." *The Sun* (Baltimore): July 6, 1896, p2.
87. "Fiends' Fury," *Richmond Planet* (Virginia): July 18, 1896, p1.
88. "Randolph Lynched," *The Evening Star* (Washington): July 4, 1896, p1.
89. *Ibid*.
90. The reports of the *The Sun* (Baltimore) and *The Evening Star* both call the location "the Anderson farm." Other sources, including the *Richmond Planet* and *The Evening Times*, called it "Rozer's" or "Rozier's" place. It may have been on the edge of both properties; also, the two families had intermarried and likely the distinction between the property ownership was blurred.
91. "Lynched a Suspected Negro," *New York Times*: July 5, 1896, p24.
92. "Life Choked Out," *The Evening Times*: July 4, 1896, p1.
93. "Randolph Lynched."
94. *Ibid*.
95. "Another Lynching."
96. "He Met the Avengers," *The Washington Post*: July 7, 1896, p4. This location was also known as the Poor Farm and was the site of many unmarked burials from the late 18th to the early 20th century. Currently the Montgomery County Detention Center stands on the site where the Alms House was located, and the widespread burial grounds have mostly been obliterated by housing developments and road construction. Though some human remains discovered in the 1980s were reinterred at Parklawn Cemetery, the presumed location of burials that would have occurred post-1887 indicates Randolph's were not among them. (See Brian Crane, "The Poor Farm Cemetery: an Overlooked Part of Our Past," published on *The Third Place: a Montgomery County Planning Department Blog*. Retrieved from <https://montgomeryplanning.org/blog-design/2021/03/the-poor-farm-cemetery-a-dark-and-overlooked-part-of-our-past/> on June 30, 2021).
97. "Feeling at Gaithersburg," *The Washington Post*: July 5, 1896, p5.
98. "Getting Worse and Worse," *The Evening Times* (Washington): July 4, 1896, p4.
99. "Punish Every Murderer," *The Evening Star* (Washington): July 4, 1896, p6.
100. "Another Brutal Lynching," *The Sun* (Baltimore): July 6, 1896, p4.
101. "Randolph Murdered," *Washington Bee*: July 11, 1896, p4.
102. "State of Maryland: Investigating..." *The Sun* (Baltimore): July 8, 1896, p7.
103. "Rockville Still Uneasy," *The Morning Times* (Washington): July 7, 1896, p2.

Notes

104. Reported on July 8, 1896 primarily in the *The Sun* (“State of Maryland: Investigating...” p7), *The Washington Post* (“Bean Dropped a Hint,” p3), and *The Evening Star* (“Jury in Earnest, p5).
105. “No Clew to the Lynchers,” *The Morning Times* (Washington): July 8, 1896, p2.
106. “Fiends’ Fury,” p1.
107. “Lynchers Still Free,” *The Washington Post*: July 14, 1896, p2.
108. “Speaks in Denunciation,” *The Evening Times* (Washington): July 7, 1896, p4.
109. “The Randolph Case,” *The Evening Star* (Washington): July 6, 1896, p12.
110. “Will Unmask the Mob,” *The Morning Times* (Washington): July 5, 1896, p4.
111. “Deputies Guard the Town,” *The Morning Times* (Washington): July 6, 1896, p1.
112. “Lynchers Still Free,” p2.
113. “Speaks in Denunciation.”
114. “At Gaithersburg,” *The Evening Times* (Washington): July 6, 1896.
115. “He met the Avengers,” p4.
116. “Speaks in Denunciation,” p4.
117. “Bean Dropped a Hint,” *The Washington Post*: July 8, 1896, p3.
118. “A Calm Appeal,” *Montgomery County Sentinel*: July 9, 1896.
119. “The Randolph Inquest,” *Montgomery County Sentinel*: July 17, 1896 and “A Disgraceful Verdict,” *The Evening Times* (Washington): July 14, 1896, p4.
120. Mr. Langston was one of only five Black men elected to Congress from the South before the 1890s, after which time Jim Crow-era electoral laws passed in former Confederate states effectively barred Blacks from politics. The next Black man in Congress from a Southern state was elected in 1973.
121. “Will Expose the Lynchers,” *The Morning Times* (Washington): July 17, 1896, p2.
122. “Lynch Law Denounced,” *The Washington Post*: July 17, 1896, p2.
123. “To Crush Lynch Law,” *The Washington Post*: July 23, 1896, p2.
124. *Ibid.*
125. *Ibid.*
126. “Lynch Law Must Go,” *Washington Bee*: August 1, 1896, p3; and “Anti-Lynching Agitation,” *The Evening Star* (Washington): July 24, 1896, p12.
127. “The Randolph Case.” *The Evening Star* (Washington): July 6, 1896, p12.
128. *Ibid.*
129. Online access to newspapers from Georgia is limited; however, accessible articles from 1892-1893 report on several suspects that were arrested and charged in the Leonard case. There was no mention of a suspect named Ben Temple during this time.
130. “Sydney Randolph Was Guilty,” *The Washington Post*: October 17, 1896, p3; and “The Buxton Murder,” *The Sun* (Baltimore): October 17, 1896, p7.
131. *Ibid.*
132. *Ibid.*, *The Washington Post*.
133. “The Buxton Tragedy,” *Washington Bee*: June 6, 1896.
134. Judge Henderson’s lengthy charge to the grand jury was published in full in multiple newspapers, including the *Montgomery County Sentinel* and the *Montgomery Press*, and was quoted multiple times in the *Evening Times* and *The Evening Star*. (November 10-13, 1896).
135. “The Randolph Lynching,” *The Evening Star* (Washington): November 24, 1896.
136. Witness Summons, November Term (1896). Series: Montgomery County Circuit Court (Court Papers) 1777-1966, Citation: T-414-96. Maryland State Archives (Annapolis, MD).
137. “A Calm Appeal” published by Lloyd in several newspapers leaves no doubt that he believed Randolph guilty. In it, he uses the opinion of Dr. McCormick to support one of his points of evidence. Richard Buxton identified Randolph as his attacker during his testimony at the June 12 inquest into Sadie’s death. The others’ opinions are not as definitively known, but as Gaithersburg residents and neighbors of the Buxtons, they likely took a similar view to Lloyd.
138. “The Randolph Lynching,”
139. “Montgomery’s Queer Grand Jury,” *The Evening Times* (Washington): November 25, 1896. The sheriff and the jailer in the Cocking case were both indicted by the Charles County grand jury on November 19, 1896 (*The Sun* and *The Evening Star* reports), but those indictments were not pursued by the state. Members of the Cocking family then filed a suit and subsequent appeal against them that lasted from June 1897 until April of 1898.
140. “Buxton House Protected,” *The Evening Times* (Washington): July 27, 1896, p5.

Additional Reference Information

All articles from *The Evening Star* (Washington), *The Morning/Evening Times* (Washington), the *Washington Bee*, the *Richmond Planet*, *The News* (Frederick), and the *Alexandria Gazette* were accessed from the following online database: Library of Congress, “Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers” database. Available at <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

All articles from *The Sun* (Baltimore), *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* were accessed from the following online database: D.C. Public Library, “Go Digital” database, provided by ProQuest. Available at <https://www.dclibrary.org/godigital/> (valid library card required for access)

Articles from the *Montgomery County Sentinel* were accessed from microfilm at Montgomery History’s Jane C. Sween Research Library and Special Collections in Rockville, MD.

Articles from the *Montgomery Journal* were accessed from microfilm at the Enoch Pratt Free Library Periodicals Department in Baltimore, MD, with assistance from the African American Department.

More articles were consulted than are directly referenced here. For a more complete list of relevant sources on this case, see the page <https://montgomeryhistory.org/lynchings-in-montgomery-county/lynchings-sidney-randolph/articles/>



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