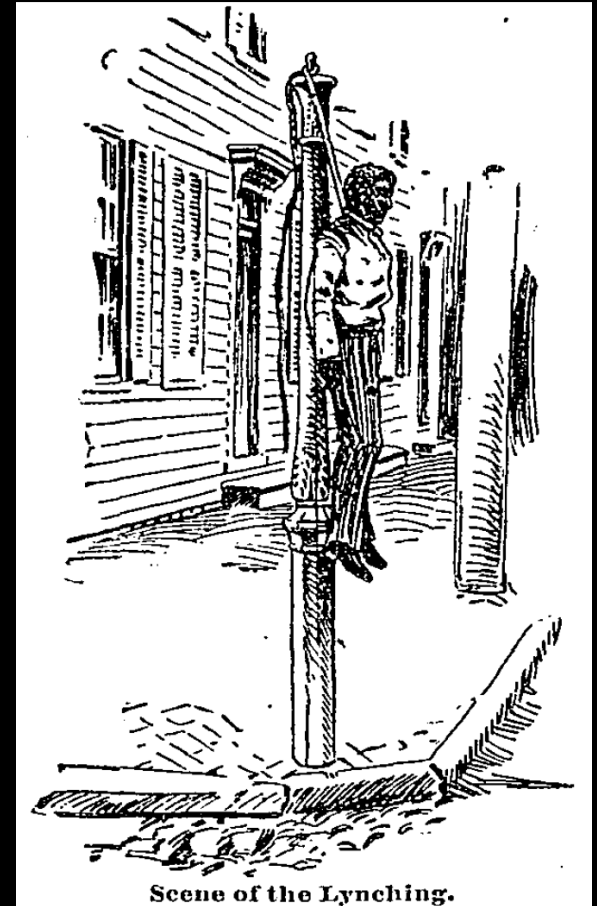


Lynchings in Alexandria

Joseph McCoy

Killed April 23, 1897

- Accused of sexually assaulting young white girl, his employer's daughter
- Held at police headquarters (now east side of City Hall)
- Just after 1 a.m., mob of about 500 forced entry to police station and overpowered police
- Mob abducted McCoy from holding cell and dragged him to corner of Lee and Cameron
- Hanged from a lamppost and shot multiple times
- Mob also took an axe to his head



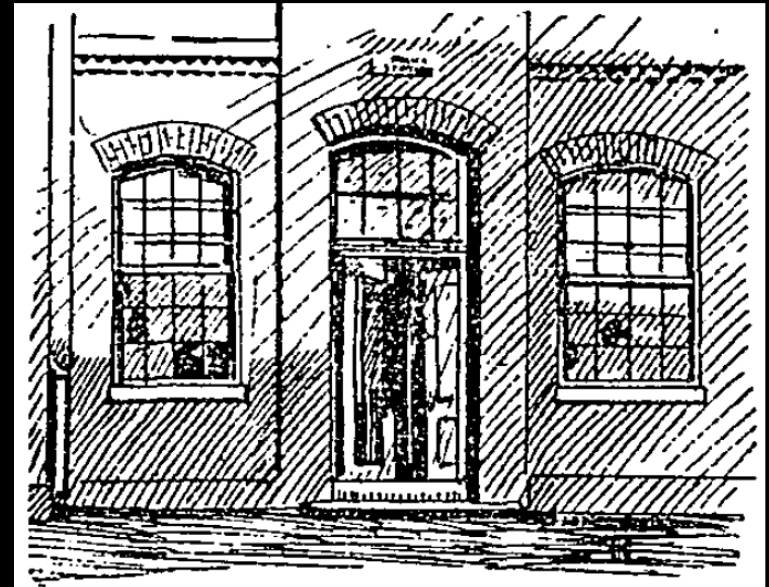
Scene of the Lynching.

**Washington Post,
24 April 1897, page 3**

Joseph McCoy

Killed April 23, 1897

- Coroner's inquest determined cause of death to be strangulation
- Police made no arrests
- Governor ordered investigation
- Investigation indicated initial attack by smaller crowd about 11:15 p.m.
- During earlier attack, police fired dozens of rounds into air and not into crowd
- Crowd dispersed
- Later larger crowd returned, overpowered police and lynched McCoy
- Light Infantry not initially called and then did not respond to police station
- No one ever charged in McCoy's death



Alexandria Police Station.

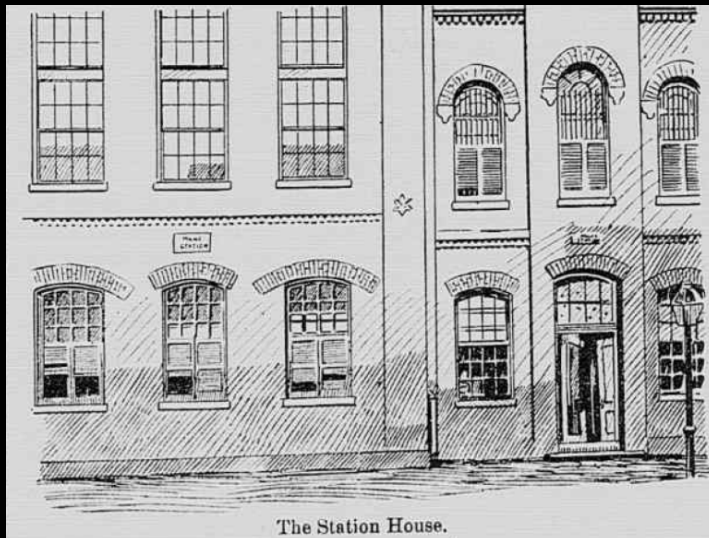
Showing the Battered Doors and Broken Windows.

Washington Post,
24 April 1897, page 3

Joseph McCoy

Killed April 23, 1897

- No family members claimed his body
- Aunt stated, “As the people killed him, they will have to bury him.”
- Buried in unmarked grave at Penny Hill Cemetery
- African American residents attended funeral service at Roberts Chapel (today Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church)
- Reverend William Gains conducted funeral and stated, “I trust that the time will soon come when all people realize the fact that the same judgment which they measure others will be measured to them at the bar of God.”



The Station House.



Old police station, then and now

Benjamin Thomas

Killed August 8, 1899

- Reported to be 20 years old but may have been 16
- Accused of attempting to sexually assault young white girl who lived nearby
- Arrested and initially held at police station
- African American residents concerned for his safety urged Mayor to take action to protect him
- Police later moved him to jail at Princess and North St Asaph
- Additional officers, as well as guards, were posted at the jail
- Just before midnight a mob estimated between 500 and 2000 gathered at the jail
- Mob, led by 40 or 50, overpowered jail guards and disarmed Chief of Police
- Obtained keys to cells and searched jail before finding Thomas hiding in cellar
- Initially escaped but was captured nearby
- Mob dragged him from jail despite efforts of police to rescue him



Washington Evening Star,
9 August 1899, page 2

Benjamin Thomas

Killed August 8, 1899

- Mob put rope around his neck and arms
- Dragged him six blocks, first on his back and then face down, down St. Asaph to King and then to King and Fairfax
- At southwest corner of King and Fairfax, a police officer cut the rope
- Mob retied rope and hanged Thomas from a lamp post
- Multiple shots fired at Thomas
- After 15 minutes, crowd thinned out and police cut Thomas, dead or nearly dead, down
- Some reports indicate he was nearly naked



Old jail, circa 1900

Benjamin Thomas

Killed August 8, 1899

- Coroner's inquest determined cause of death to be gunshot wound to heart
- Also had another gunshot wound, extensive bruising and bleeding, but no broken neck
- Coroner's jury ruled that Thomas "came to his death at the hands of a mob unknown to the jury."
- No one ever charged in Thomas's death
- Buried at Penny Hill Cemetery without church funeral
- Three weeks later, Shiloh Baptist Church held a memorial service with other churches participating
- Reverend Henry W. Warring stated, "Men stand behind counters selling you goods whose hands are stained with the blood of Ben Thomas. Don't spend another dollar with them."
- African American community attempted to raise money to move Thomas from Penny Hill to Douglass Cemetery