

LYNCHINGS REDUCED TO 3 FOR WHOLE COUNTRY IN '39

Mob Violence in Eighteen Other Cases Was Prevented by Increased Precautions, Report Compiled in South Says

By **GEORGE HATCHER**

ATLANTA, Dec. 30—Only three lynchings, the lowest number since records were begun fifty-eight years ago, occurred in the United States during 1939, it was disclosed today in annual reports of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation in Atlanta and Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

R. B. Eleazer, educational director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, pointed out that the 1939 figure is 96 per cent less than the average and 99 per cent less than the peak year of 1892, when 231 lynchings were recorded.

"The nation can well be proud of the progress that has been made in efforts to eradicate the mob-violence evil," Mr. Eleazer said. "While the expansion of law-enforcement agencies in recent years has been a major contributing factor, most of the credit must fall to religious and civic agencies which have crusaded against it."

Lynchings Prevented

During 1939 there were reports of eighteen instances in which lynchings were prevented. This was accomplished either by the transfer of suspects to secret jails or by the augmenting of guards and "other precautions."

"A total number of twenty-five persons—five white men and twenty Negro men—were thus saved from the hands of mobs," the reports state.

Of the persons lynched, two were

Negroes and one was white. Two of the lynchings were in Florida and the other one was in Mississippi.

The year's first lynching occurred at Panama City, Fla., on April 1, when Miles W. Brown, a white man, was shot to death after being taken from the Bay County jail by a band of "four or five" masked men. Brown had been convicted of the first-degree murder of a former employer, with a recommendation for mercy, which carries a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment. Brown's jail guards quoted the masked men as expressing resentment that Brown had not received the death penalty, and saying that "the law didn't do justice but we will."

Another Florida Case

The second lynching took place on April 29 near Daytona Beach, Fla. An automobile driven by Lee Snell, Negro taxi driver, struck a bicycle ridden by Benny Blackwelder, 12. The boy was killed almost instantly. Snell was immediately taken into custody by Daytona Beach police and held for county authorities. A few hours afterward, Constable James Durden swore out a warrant for Snell, charging him with manslaughter. He took the prisoner in custody and started for Deland, the county seat. When he had got about four miles from Daytona Beach, Constable Durden said he was overtaken and passed by an automobile occupied by Everett and Earl Black-

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The institute headed by Dr. F. D. Patterson aids in compiling an annual report on lynchings.

welder, brothers of the boy killed.

According to Constable Durden, the Blackwelders swung their car across the road, blocking it. When Snell got out of the constable's automobile, several shots were fired into his body, the officer stated. The brothers were indicted on a first-degree murder charge but were acquitted.

The third victim of lynching was Joe Rogers, a Negro sawmill worker at Canton, Miss. Rogers allegedly engaged in an altercation with a white foreman of the sawmill. The foreman, according to witnesses, was struck on the head and knocked unconscious. Several days later the Negro's body was found in Pearl River near Canton, bound and badly beaten.

According to Mr. Eleazer, there have been 4,689 recorded lynchings in the United States since 1882.