

Birmingham Reopening Inquiry In 1963 Bombing That Killed 4

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Feb. 18 (AP)—“We know who did it,” Alabama’s Attorney General, Bill Baxley, said today as he confirmed that he had reopened the investigation of a church bombing that killed four 14-year-old black girls here in 1963.

Mr. Baxley said in an interview with Radio Station WERC that the list of suspects had been narrowed, but he declined to predict if or when arrests would be made. He said premature published reports about the investigation might have hurt.

“There are some people in Jefferson County who ought to be pretty nervous right now,” Mr. Baxley said in an earlier interview.

The dynamite blast at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church came after the Sunday school hour on Sept. 15, 1963, during a time of racial disturbances in Birmingham. The late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had been leading civil rights protests in the city.

About 200 persons were in the church at the time of the blast, and 23 were injured. There were a score of unsolved

dynamitings in Birmingham at that time.

Mayor David Vann said that he was aware of the new investigation and that the Birmingham Police Department had been told to cooperate fully.

Mr. Baxley was reported to have the names of several persons allegedly connected with the bombing. He said that one of the persons with whom he talked about the case was Gary Thomas Rowe, who appeared before a Senate committee in December.

The Birmingham Post-Herald said Gary Thomas Rowe gave the names to Mr. Baxley before appearing before a Senate committee in December.

Mr. Rowe told the committee that he was a Federal Bureau of Investigation informer in Birmingham during the racial strife of the early 1960’s. He alleged that law officers gave a group of Ku Klux Klan members 15 minutes to assault “freedom riders” at a bus station before the officers intervened.

After that testimony, City Councilman Richard Arrington asked for a reopening of the investigation of the church bombing.