

Murder of Chicken Stephens New York Times Article

Murder of Chicken Stephens New York Times Article

Complete transcription of article below.

LIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA.

The Murder of Senator John W. Stephens— A Terrible Scene—Shall His As- sassins Be Amnestied?

Special Despatch to the New York Times.

RALPH, N. C., Feb. 25. The Amnesty bill came up in the House today, and was discussed to adjournment. Messrs. Watson and Morrison, Democrats, spoke in favor of the bill. Messrs. Marley and Bryan, of Alleghany, Democrats, opposed the bill upon the ground that it would encourage crime, retard immigration and capital, and provoke bad blood throughout the State. Mr. Bowman, Republican, made an earnest, dispassionate appeal to the House not to pass the bill. He read from the Amnesty act, passed in 1792 by the Legislature, at Hillsboro, which contained a provision that persons guilty of willful and deliberate murder should not receive amnesty and pardon. He also referred to the hanging of West, an outlaw, on the Court-house green in the town of Graham. He then related from the sworn evidence of one of the parties present the particulars of the murder of Senator John W. Stephens, of Caswell, which occurred in June, 1873, and that warrants had been issued for the guilty parties. He stated that a public Democratic meeting was in progress in the Court-house at Yanceyville, the county seat of Caswell; that Stephens was in attendance on that meeting; that a prominent Democrat of Caswell approached Stephens with a smile, and asked him to go down stairs with him. Stephens assented, and they went into a room formerly occupied by the Clerk of the Court of Equity, that as soon as they entered the room the door was locked, that there were in the room eight white men and one negro. Stephens was surprised to find the room full of men and was struck with horror when a rope, fixed as a lasso, was thrown over his neck from behind, and he was told by the spokesman of the Ku-Klux crowd that he must renounce his Republican principles, leave the country, or die. Stephens said he could not give up his Republican principles; that he believed they were right, and that the Republic would prosper if they were carried out, that he could not leave the country and State, because his wife was there, that the colored people looked upon him as a leader, that they depended on him, and that he could not desert them. Stephens was then told that he must die. He then asked to be allowed to take a last look from the window of the office, at his home and any of his family that might be in view. The request was granted, and when Stephens stepped to the window he beheld his little home and his two little children playing in front of his house. He was then thrown down on a table, two of the Ku-Klux holding his arms. The rope was ordered to be drawn tighter, and the negro was ordered to get a bucket to catch the blood. This done, one of the crowd severed the jugular vein, the negro caught the blood in the bucket, and Stephens was dead. His body was laid on a pile of wood in the room, and the murderers went upstairs, took part in the meeting, and stamped and applauded Democratic speeches.

Mr. Bowman was asked if he made this statement of his own knowledge. He replied that he was in possession of the sworn evidence of one of the parties who was present and assisted at the murder, that the statement was made and sworn to before an officer authorized to administer oaths and to issue warrants of arrest.

This information fell like a bombshell from a battery in ambush. The Democrats were astounded; a death-like stillness pervaded the House, and at the conclusion of Mr. Bowman's speech the House adjourned.

Since the Amnesty bill passed the Senate, the Ku-Klux of Alamance County have been raiding and committing outrages again. About two weeks ago a number of these midnight assassins went, in the night time to the home of Alexander Russell, a peacemaker, honest citizen of Alamance County, and assaulted and stabbed him severely. On Monday night, the 15th inst., a party of disguised men went to the home of a negro woman living on the land of J. W. Blockard, in Alamance County, and with their pistols and threats to kill, drove the inmates of the house from the premises. The spouse of the woman aroused Blockard, who went to the scene of outrage, and upon communicating with the crowd, he was told he would be killed if he interfered with them.

Other outrages of a similar character to these have been committed in Alamance County during the last month. To prove that these outrages actually took place, I have only to say that I have seen the Superior Court Clerk of Alamance County, who informs me that the Superior Court was in session in that county, and that true bills of indictment were found by the Grand Jury against the parties who stabbed Russell and outraged the colored woman on Blockard's land. Such is the effect of the passage of the bill through the Senate.

Citation (Chicago Style):

"Life in North Carolina: The Murder of Senator John W. Stephens -- A Terrible Scene -- Shall His Assassins Be Amnestied?" *New York Times*, February 26, 1873.

Read the related article: Primary Source: The Murder of "Chicken" Stephens
Transcript:

LIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA.

The Murder of Senator John W. Stephens -- A Terrible Scene -- Shall His Assassins Be Amnestied?

Special Dispatch to the New York Times.

RALEIGH, N.C., Feb 25 The Amnesty bill came up in the House today, and was discussed to adjournment. Messrs Watson and Morrison, Democrats, spoke in favor of the bill. Messrs. Marler and Bryan, of Alleghany, Democrats, opposed the bill upon the ground that it would encourage crime, retard immigration and capital, and provoke bad blood throughout the State. Mr. Bowman, Republican, made an earnest, dispassionate appeal to the House not to pass the bill. He read from the Amnesty act, passed in 1795 by the Legislature, at Hillsboro, which contained a provision that persons guilty of willful and deliberate murder should not receive amnesty and pardon. He also referred to the hanging of Wyatt, an outlaw, on the Courthouse green in the town of Graham, he then related from the sworn evidence of one of the parties present the particulars of the murder of Senator John W. Stephens, of Caswell, which occurred in June, 1870, and that warrants had been issued for the guilty parties. He stated that a public Democratic meeting was in progress in the courthouse at Yanceyville, the county seat of Caswell; that Stephens was in attendance on that meeting; that a prominent Democrat of Caswell approached Stephens with a smile, and asked him to go down stairs with him. Stephens accepted, and they went into a room formerly occupied by the Clerk of the Court of Equity, that as soon as they entered the room the door was locked, that there were in the room eight white men and one negro. Stephens was surprised to find the room full of men and was struck with horror when a rope, fixed as a lasso, was thrown over his neck from behind and he was told by the spokesman of the Kuklux crowd that he must renounce his Republican principles; that he believed they were right, and that the Republic would prosper if they were carried out, that he could not leave the country and State, because his all was there, that the colored people looked upon him as a leader, that they depended on him, and that he could not desert them. Stephens was then told that he must die. He then asked to be allowed to take a last look from the window of the office, at his home and any of his family that might be in view. The request was granted, and when Stephens stepped to the window he beheld his little home and his two little children playing in front of his house. He was then thrown down on a table, two of the Kuklux holding his arms. The rope was ordered to be drawn tighter, and the negro was ordered to get a bucket to catch the blood. This done, one of the crowd severed the jugular vein, the negro caught the blood in the bucket, and Stephens was dead. His body was laid on a pile of wood in the room, and the murderers went upstairs, took part in the meeting, and stamped and applauded Democratic speeches.

Mr. Bowman was asked if he made this statement of his own knowledge. He replied [illegible] he was in possession of the sworn evidence of one of the parties who was present and [illegible] at the murder, that the statement was made and sworn to before an officer authorized to administer oaths and to issue warrants of arrest.

This information fell like a bombshell from a batter in ambush. The Democrats were astounded; a death-like stillness pervaded the House, and at the conclusion of Mr. Bowman's speech the House adjourned.

Since the Amnesty bill passed the Senate, the Kuklux of Alamance County have been raiding and committing outrages again. About two weeks ago a number of these midnight assassins went in the night time to the house of Alexander Russell, a peaceable, honest citizen of Alamance County, and assaulted and stabbed him severely. On Sunday night, the 16th last, a party of disguised men went to the house of a negro woman living on the land of J W Stockard in Alamance County, and with their pistols and threats to kill, drove the [inmates?] of the house from the premises. The screams of the woman aroused Stockard, who went to the source of the outrage, and upon remonstrating with the crowd, he was told he would be killed if he interfered with them.

Other outrages of a similar character to these have been committed in Alamance County during the last month. To prove that these outrages actually took place, I have only to say that I have seen the Superior Court Clerk of Alamance County, who informs me that the Superior Court was in session in that county, and that true bills of indictment were found by the Grand Jury against the parties who stabbed Russell and outraged the colored woman on Stockard's land. Such is the effect of the passage of the bill through the Senate.

Usage Statement:

Public Domain

Public Domain is a copyright term that is often used when talking about copyright for creative works. Under U.S. copyright law, individual items that are in the public domain are items that are no longer protected by copyright law. This means that you do not need to request permission to re-use, re-publish or even change a copy of the item. Items enter the public domain under U.S. copyright law for a number of reasons: the original copyright may have expired; the item was created by the U.S. Federal Government or other governmental entity that views the things it creates as in the public domain; the work was never protected by copyright for some other reason related to how it was produced (for example, it was a

speech that wasn't written down or recorded); or the work doesn't have enough originality to make it eligible for copyright protection.

Source URL: <https://ncpedia.org/media/image/murder-chicken-stephens>