

August 4, 1901

Murder of Shelby Police Chief Shelton Jones

R. S. JONES SHOT TO DEATH.

Shelby's Chief of Police Killed While Flaking an Arrest.

Shelby, Special.—R. S. Jones, chief of police and tax collector, of Shelby, accompanied by Mr. S. M. Ford, night watchman, raided Sunday morning at 3 o'clock, a house near the South Carolina & Georgia Extension Railroad, where a crowd of negroes were gambling. One window was open where Mr. Ford stationed himself. Officer Jones opened the door, when one of the negroes, James Lowry, commenced to fire upon the chief of police and emptied two chambers of his pistol, both taking effect near the heart and stomach. Officer Jones had a tussle with the negro, after being shot, when he broke loose and escaped from the house. The chief of police shot three times at him, but to no effect, then sank and died within twenty minutes after receiving the shots.

The blood hounds owned by the deceased were at once put on the negro's trail, but the air was so dry that they could not trail him. The sheriff with a posse of seventy-five men armed with guns and pistols, are scouring the country and if caught, he will hardly be brought to jail.

Our citizens are very much wrought up over this dastardly deed. The negro came from South Carolina and has been here about a year. At the time of this deed he was in the employ of the South Carolina & Georgia Extension Railroad as a helper at the freight depot. The chief of police was a native of this town, and aged about 40 years. He has been marshal and tax collector for 10 years and was held in high esteem. He was a splendid officer and as brave as a lion, though very cool and always kept his head.

The People's Paper (Charlotte, NC)
Aug. 7, 1901

Our citizens mourn this sudden taking away of one the cleverest men in this community, and one universally liked. He leaves a wife and daughter, who are almost prostrated by grief. A brave, conscientious officer has been killed while doing his duty.

Mayor Jennigs has issued the following circular:

\$200 REWARD.

The town of Shelby, N. C., offers two hundred dollars reward for the capture of Jim Lowry, colored, who murdered Chief of Police R. S. Jones, of Shelby, N. C., at 1:30 o'clock Sunday morning, August 4, 1901.

Lowry is about 25 years old, about five feet and eleven inches in height, slim, weight 145 pounds, a rather light mulatto, with his right eye-tooth rotted out and niche broken out between his front teeth, one a little dark. A small brown spot on one side of face. Has prominent cheek bones and rather slim chin. W. H. JENNINGS, Mayor.

1,000 Men in Pursuit.

Rutherfordton, Special.—A telephone message received here Sunday afternoon from Shelby states that Chief of Police Jones, of that place, was shot and instantly killed by Jim Lowry, a negro employe at South Carolina & Georgia depot, at 1 o'clock Jones, with a warrant charging Lowry with selling whiskey without license, went to serve it. Lowry ran, firing at Jones, the bullet taking effect in the lung. Jones followed and caught him as he struck a lamp post. In the scuffle Lowry fired again, the bullet going through Jones' heart.

Jones is a well known detective and has a State reputation for bravery.

The last report from the scene at night was that a reward of \$200 is offered for the negro's arrest by the city and a reward of \$500 will be offered by the Governor. Four blood hounds and over 1,000 people are on the negro's trail. One of the blood hounds was shot by the fleeing negro. It is quite likely that if the negro is captured he will never reach the jail. Jones was a very popular man.

Statesville Mascot
Sept. 19, 1901; pg. 3

Not Jim Lowry

A dispatch from Asheville to Sunday's Raleigh News and Observer says: Sheriff Suttle and Mayor Jennings, of Shelby returned this afternoon from Murphy, where they went to identify the negro who was killed by William Watson, and who was supposed to be Jim Lowry, the murderer of Chief of Police Jones, of Shelby. They found that the wrong man had been killed. It is said that nothing will be done with Watson, it being claimed that he shot in self defence. The negro who was shot was known to be desperate and had raised his rifle to fire when Watson shot him. It is believed he was wanted somewhere for a serious crime, as he constantly carried a gun and seemed to anticipate arrest. A merchant at Andrews sold the negro a pair of shoes recently on credit because he was afraid to refuse. Sheriff Suttle said all the officers were entirely at a loss now concerning the whereabouts of James Lowry.

Durham Daily Sun
June 26, 1902

Jim Lowry Caught.

Jim Lowry, the negro, who killed the chief of police of Shelby, N. C., has, it is thought, been arrested at Newport News. A negro answering the description of Lowry, even to the missing tooth and birthmark is under arrest there awaiting identification. There is a reward of \$500 for Lowry's capture. The Newport News negro claims to be Jim Taylor.

Charlotte Daily Observer
Oct. 7, 1901

A Negro Supposed to be the Shelby Desperado in Jail at Norcross, Ga.

Special to The Observer.

Norcross, Ga., Oct. 6.—A negro answering the description of Jim Lowry, wanted at Shelby, N. C., for the murder of Chief of Police Jones, and for whom rewards to the amount of \$700 are offered by the town of Shelby, Cleveland county and the Governor of North Carolina, was arrested here today. The authorities at Shelby were notified that a man who strongly resembled Lowry was in custody and were asked for instructions. The reply was that a man would be sent to identify the negro; that Dr. Gidney, of Atlanta, formerly a resident of Shelby, who knows Lowry, would be requested to come here and see if the right man has been caught.

The last news of Lowry's appearance is said here to have been that he was seen near King's Mountain, N. C., two or three days ago, and if that is true it is regarded as likely that the negro may have come here, as this town is about 150 miles from King's Mountain, and on the same line of railroad, the route from Charlotte to Atlanta.

Daily Concord Standard
July 5, 1902

Think They Have Jim Lowry.

A negro who is believed to be Jim Lowry, the murderer of the chief of police of Shelby a year ago, has been captured and is in Lancaster, S. C., to await identification. It is strongly believed that he is the real Jim Lowry.

Charlotte News

April 1, 1904

IS IT JIM LOWRY?

Negro Arrested at Greers, S. C., Said to be the Murderer.

The News learns this afternoon that a negro was arrested near Greers, S. C., yesterday afternoon that answers fully the description of Jim Lowry, who is wanted at Shelby for the murder of Chief of Police Jones. This crime was committed in 1902 and since that time all efforts to locate the negro have proved futile.

There is a heavy reward for Lowry, both the State and Cleveland county offering good round sums for his capture.

The authorities of Shelby were notified yesterday afternoon of the capture of the negro.

Cleveland Star

Jan. 11, 1905

Not Jim Lowery.

Considerable excitement was aroused in Shelby last Tuesday night from the tenor of a 'phone message coming from West Virginia and stating that a negro corresponding to the description of Jim Lowry had been captured. He had the same tallow complexion, gold tooth, and Indian features. News spread rapidly around town, and Jim Lowry was the chief topic of conversation that night in the drug stores and other gathering places. Many were in high hopes that it was the genuine Jim this time and no counterfeit. But all hope vanished when the picture arrived. It had not, we are sorry to say, the slightest resemblance of Jim Lowry. While this is another failure, it at the same time goes to show that vigilance and a determination to see justice meted out, are still on the look for this murderer, and that there will be a time when he will die the death he deserves.

The Morning Star

(Wilmington, NC)

Jan. 7, 1905; pg. 3

— Charlotte Observer, Jan. 6th: The story is that Jim Lowry, who killed R. S. Jones, chief of police at Shelby, more than a year ago, is dead. Jim was a Croatan, with Caucasian and Indian blood in him, and was said to be related to Henry Berry Lowry, whose name was such a terror in Robeson county soon after the war. The report is that some time ago two Croatans had a desperate fight in Robeson county and one of them was killed. The marks and scars on the dead man were found to correspond closely to those by which Jim Lowry was distinguished. Col. Red Buck Bryant, who recently returned from Robeson county, says that the inhabitants firmly believe that the dead man was Jim Lowry.

Cleveland Star (Shelby, NC)
Apr. 10, 1931

Jim Lowery In Limelight Now

Photos Sent Here Of Negro Thought
To Be Killer Of Shelby
Chief.

Shelby's oldest man-hunt is being talked again as local citizens believe that there is a possibility of locating Jim Lowery in Georgia.

Almost 31 years ago a negro, Jim Lowery by name, shot and killed Police Chief Shelton Jones of Shelby. He escaped and has never been caught, but scores of times men thought to be Lowery have been caught and investigated.

A month or two ago Police Chief Poston and Sheriff Allen received a message from Gabbettville, Georgia, man stating that he believed an aged negro working on the gang there was none other than Lowery. Officers investigated it some, but due to so many fruitless chases in the past did nothing about it.

This week there came another letter from the Georgia man. "The negro's time on the gang there will be out April 24, and the man urged that someone who knew Jim Lowery in the old days here go to Georgia and see him before that time. "He told another negro on the gang, who is now gone, that he was wanted in Shelby for killing a policeman," the letter informed. With the letter came two clear photographs of the negro there, both showing him in his convict stripes. It is the picture of a negro man well along in years, and older citizens here, whites and blacks, say that there is some resemblance to Lowery. None will be certain, however, since 30 years have elapsed since they saw Lowery. There is enough resemblance, though, to cause numerous older citizens to think some investigation should be made.

It is likely now that some local officer and a citizen who remembers Lowery well will go to Georgia within the next few days.

Cleveland Star (Shelby, NC) Sep. 15, 1933

It was in 1903, as we recall off-hand, that the negro Lowery shot and killed Shelby's police chief, Shelt Jones. For several years an active search was made throughout many states for the fugitive, but for more than two decades it has been an off and on matter. Nevertheless, every two or three years a letter or message comes from some spot that a negro answering Lowery's description has been found.

In the years that have passed since the killing, which stirred Shelby perhaps more than any other, hundreds of dollars have been spent checking up these clues. The majority of them failed to pan out. It was only three or four years ago that officers were pretty well convinced that a suspect in the Mobile section was Lowery, but again hope faded when a definite check-up was made. A big percentage of local people, those old enough to recall minute details of the killing, believe that Lowery has been dead for years. Even if living, he is an old man by now, and the odds are that it would be a difficult matter to identify him positively. He was a young negro when last seen here and, without doubt, it would be a long risk to take a witness stand and swear under oath that a man of 60 or more years was the same man last seen when in the early thirties. Men can change a lot in that time.

But it was only recently, to bring these observations up to date, that another message came informing as to Lowery's whereabouts. Newspapermen were taken into the confidence of officers and told the story. Once again it seemed to be a hot clue, once again hopes were revived. In the meantime, officers have carried on their investigation, working on the "mum." At last reports this tip was beginning to fade away as had the others. An officer in another state, miles from here, wrote that he believed—in fact, was convinced in his own mind—that he could lay his hands upon Lowery at any time. To date, however, he hasn't. With the faint hope that this last clue may yet materialize into something of value, the state is not to be named, nor anything else of a definite nature made public just now.

Anyway, the fleeing will o' the wisp chase continues, and every time the topic bobs up the old-timers about Shelby get-together and rehearse the events the night of the killing and in the hectic weeks thereafter. Middle-aged men, who were just boys then, also recall what a terror the name of Jim Lowery was to them then. He was believed to have secreted himself about Shelby for weeks after the killing, numerous people reporting that they saw him, and every time a youngster was out a little after dusk he sped by alleyways and dark spots, "hitting only the high places," with the fear that Jim Lowery might reach out and grab him.