

Florence Jones Drake Murder Louis Sentell Trial and Execution 1934-1935

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Shot Gun Attacker Is Captured In Polk

His Girl Victim Saved By Heroism Of Woman Friend

Mill Worker Fires At 4 Girls When One Repulses Him

Woman Drives Him Off; 4
Counties Mobilize Drag-
Net, Capture Sentell.

Within thirty minutes after the heroic act of a middle-aged boarding-house keeper, who flung herself ferociously upon a mad man with a shot gun standing over a bleeding girl, police and county officers of four counties had mobilized, effected a drag net, and early last night the attacker was captured in Polk county.

Florence Jones, 23-year-old mill worker lies critically wounded by Louis Sentell, the admirer she repulsed, and Sentell is in jail here.

Florence, with three other girl employees of the Byrum Hosiery mill, was returning home to lunch at noon yesterday when Sentell, 40 years old and the father of three children, drove by in his car. Sentell invited Florence to ride with him. She refused. Infuriated, Sentell fired one barrel of his 20-gauge gun from the car into the laughing bevy of girls, pursued them when they fled and fired again, seriously wounding Florence and slightly wounding Emily Drake. He struck Florence on the head one time with

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Shot Gun Attacker Captured In Polk

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the butt of the gun as she lay bleeding on the ground and was attempting to reload the gun when Mrs. Joe Williams leaped from the front porch and seized him.

Captured In Polk.

He shook her off, fled in his car and was captured last night near Mill Springs, Polk county, by Sheriff Cline and Chief Wilkins as officers of four counties bottled him up in a police drag net.

Florence is in the Shelby hospital wounded in the side and back. Her condition is critical.

The other girls were Mary and Francis Anderson, sisters, who worked with Florence in the mill. Miraculously, they were uninjured.

Had Repulsed Sentell.

This morning, as background to the tragedy was built up by investigation, it was revealed that Florence Jones too is married, that her real name is Mrs. Drake, and that she is a sister-in-law of Emily Drake. Sentell had been paying attention to her for some time, it was said, and had been ignored.

Sentell, neighbors said, borrowed the shotgun yesterday morning from a friend saying he was going hunting. He went to work at h-

logical mind work beautifully on a project like the scenic highway. will give the state thousands of dollars worth of good advertising before he quits, and will not let up until the advantages of the North Carolina plan for the proposed road are carefully considered. The suspicion that National Park officials are a little biased in favor of the Tennessee plan has aroused the people of the western part of the state.

It is predicted here that the developments of the Tennessee Authority of the great power resources of the Tennessee and other rivers and the Smoky Mountains National Park, with its beautiful drives, and paths, will result in taking a million visitors to North Carolina and Tennessee annually.

loom in the Byrum mill and did not behave oddly. His landlady said that he had been a model boarder ever since he came here some four months ago, but that he had always appeared highly nervous, and that his hands continually shook.

Sheriff Cline and Chief Wilkins started on the trail immediately after the shooting. They praised highly the co-operation of Cherokee, Rutherford, Henderson and Polk county officers who spread a drag net to bottle up Sentell as he fled toward Hendersonville in his Chevrolet. He offered no resistance when captured.

Victim Of Shotgun Attack Succumbs; Seek Death Note

Alleged Threat Made In Note To Girl

Florence Jones, Revealed As Married Woman, Dies In Hospital; Sentell Faces Murder Charge.

The girl who was known as Florence Jones, but whose real name was Mrs. William Drake, died in the Shelby hospital Saturday afternoon, after surviving for ten days and nights from a shotgun wound, said to have been fired by Louis Sentell, whose advances she repulsed.

Her young husband came from Saluda several days ago, with her mother, Mrs. Hamilton Jones.

Hearing Today.

Today, Sentell was to have a hearing in Recorder's court on a charge of first degree murder. In the meantime, police investigated the report that he had written a note threatening her life and left it on her machine at the Byrum Hosiery mill, where they were both employed.

According to eye-witnesses to the shooting, Florence and three girl employees of the mill were on their way to lunch when Sentell drove up in his car, offering to give Florence a ride. She laughingly refused. Infuriated, Sentell grabbed a shotgun from the back seat and fired once from the car into the group of girls. They fled screaming toward the boarding house operated by Mrs. Joe Williams, and Sentell pursued them. He fired again, felling Florence at the threshold of the house. As she lay in a welling pool of blood, he stood over her and struck her once over the head with the gun. He was said to be trying to reload the gun when Mrs. Williams leaped from the porch and struggled with him.

Captured In Polk.

Sentell then fled in his car, and was captured a few hours later in Polk county by Sheriff Cline and Chief of Police Wilkinss, who had spread a dragnet through four counties by telephone.

In the alleged death-threat note, Sentell is said to have used the phrase, "May God have mercy on your soul." This note is believed to have been seen by several of the girls. Mr. Drake said on Saturday night that his wife told him as she lay dying that Sentell had threatened her life.

The remains of the girl were taken Saturday night to Saluda, her former home for interment.

Law Will Retrace Dark Threads Of Weaver's Tragic Romancing

Louis Sentell, the weaver, comes to trial next week as the law seizes the shuttle of his fate, with which he first wove a sorry kind of romance and then spun through his poor design for living a hysterical snarl of bloodshed and defeat.

He killed the girl called Florence Jones, wretchedly shot her down on the threshold of a South Shelby boarding house—so say witnesses who were there the day Florence laughed at him.

Florence Jones was Mrs. William Drake, and Louis Sentell was married too. They worked for the Byrum Hosiery Mill where bright clicking machines make bright-colored stockings. Sentell, they say, had pursued her for weeks, and she, half unwilling, defied him, and that maddening day in February taunted him—so they say—from that embarrassing feminine vantage point, the company of other women.

He killed her. Monday morning,

the July term of Superior Court opened here under Judge W. F. Harding of Charlotte to render decision in a number of lustful unfortunate enterprises. Sentell, his case deferred from last term, will be tried. He has been indicted by a grand jury for first degree murder.

Florence was shot in the back, her cheap coat torn by pellets from a shotgun. Sentell fired from his car into a group of four girls when Florence, one of them, refused to accept his offer of a ride. His first shot felled Emily Drake, his second killed Florence as the girls fled toward Mrs. J. B. Williams' boarding house.

Sentell jumped from the car and, having emptied his gun, raised it to strike the girl as she lay on the ground, but Mrs. Williams, middle-aged and portly, leaped at him from

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Law To Retrace Story Of Sentell

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the porch, trying to wrest the gun from his hands.

He threw her off and tried to escape in his car towards Asheville, but was brought in that night by Sheriff Cline and Chief of Police Wilkins.

Florence lingered in the hospital for several days, unconscious, but just before she died there appeared a young man from Saluda, William Drake, who was her husband. They had separated, he said, and she had taken her maiden name, to help her get a job so they both might live. He said they were happy.

The state will present eye-witnesses to the shooting when Sentell's trial opens, which will very probably be on Monday.

Sentell Meets Death With Smile On Lips; Kisses Electrician

**Shelby Murderer Died This Morning With
Words Of Gratitude For Sheriff
And Mrs. Raymond Cline.**

By WYAN WASHBURN

STATE PRISON, Raleigh, July 12.—While the plaintive strains of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" swelled from Death Row this morning, Louis Sentell walked to his death in the electric chair with a smile on his face and no bitterness in his heart.

Sentell, at his own request, was electrocuted before George Whitfield, Greensboro negro. He entered the chamber at 10:26 and was declared dead at 10:38, after three shocks totalling three minutes and thirty-five seconds.

Burial In Brevard

His attorney, William Breese, who defended him in his trial in Shelby here last January, was here, and is taking the body to Brevard for burial. His wife and two children were not present.

As "Swing Low" died in the throats of Death Row prisoners, they took up an unknown death chant. Sentell, walking bravely, holding his gantframe erect, smiled as they strapped him in the chair.

"Lock me in boys," he said, "and get shet of me. Tell everybody I don't care."

Just before the electrocution, he kissed R. A. Bridgers, who pulled the fatal switch—and then his body leaped forward against its straps as the current smote his lean body.

More talkative than at any time during his long imprisonment, Sentell spoke to me and to Dr. Forest Frezeor.

Praises Sheriff Cline

"I want The Star to express my appreciation for the kindness of Sheriff and Mrs. Raymond Cline," he said. "They were good and thoughtful, and I hope to meet them in Heaven."

"I want you to say in The Star, too, that I hold no bitterness against anyone, even against those who swore lies about me on the stand."

Whitfield entered the death chamber at 10:44, singing and praying, asking that his mother be remembered. He was dead at 10:53 after two shocks had coursed through his body for three minutes and thirty seconds.

Dr. William Wilkerson pressed the stethoscope to the breasts of the two prisoners and pronounced them dead.

Sentell died for the murder of his sweetheart, the girl known in Shelby as Florence Jones, but who was later revealed to be a married woman, Mrs. William Drake. He killed her with a shotgun at noon on February 15, 1934, near the Byrum Hosiery mill.

The Supreme court denied Sentell's appeal some time ago, and the governor and Parole Commissioner Edwin Gill studied his appeal for mercy this week, but decided against him. Whitfield was convicted in Guilford county in October, 1933, for criminally assaulting a white woman. The two men were the 151st and the 152nd, victims of the chair, which was installed here in 1910. Sentell was the twenty-eighth white man to die in it and Whitfield the 124th negro.