

Prison Commission Witnessed Kidnapping; Chairman Exonerates State Farm Officials

MILLEDGEVILLE, Ga., Aug. 17.—Prison officials here are held to be blameless in connection with the kidnapping of Leo M. Frank from the State Prison Farm in a statement given out tonight by R. E. Davidson, Chairman of the State Prison Commission. Mr. Davidson, with Commissioners Rainey and Patterson, was here to inspect the penitentiary when Frank was seized.

Mr. Davidson's statement said that the band worked so quickly and was so well organized, and immediately upon its arrival at the prison so completely controlled the situation, that "no responsibility rested upon either the commission or anybody at the farm." Commissioners Rainey and Patterson voiced the same view.

Some comment was heard here today as to why the lynchers had to deal with only five men—the Warden, the Superintendent, two guards, and a "trusty" in charge at the gate.

That Warden J. F. Smith and Superintendent J. M. Burke were powerless with the facilities they had at hand when the band arrived is not questioned here. Burke says the mob completed its work in five minutes; Smith says five or six minutes. First, all wires were cut at the prison. Then Warden Smith was made prisoner while another squad handcuffed Burke and led him to the gate they wished to enter. A command to the "trusty" to open the gate was demurred to, but a threat to kill him quickly gave the gang easy access to the inside. As the gate was opened a guard came up, but he was overpowered, as was the second one encountered. Frank was seized by five men, according to most reports, hurried outside, and thrust into an automobile, along with a long rope that dangled before his eyes.

He did not utter a word, and what he said, if anything, during the long ride from Milledgeville to the outskirts of Marietta probably never will be generally known.

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