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A Notable Murder Trial

Proceedings in the Trial of C B Skipper, Charged With the Murder of Jas B Caskey, Held in Winnsboro This Week.

Winnsboro, Feb. 28.—Special to the News and Courier: All this part of the State is interested in the trial now in progress here. As far back as Christmas of 1903 James B. Caskey was killed by Charles B. Skipper. The case has been hanging fire for one reason and another in Lancaster county, where the killing occurred, until the last term of the Court, when Judge Waits directed a change of venue to this county. From all accounts the case has occasioned a great deal of feeling in Lancaster county and it became an issue in the last primary in that county.

The Caskey family, to which the deceased belonged, is one of the largest and most influential in Lancaster county. It is estimated that the direct and collateral branches of the family number more than five hundred people. Altogether the family is one of prominence. On the other hand Mr. Skipper has for ten years been the superintendent of the successful Lancaster Cotton Mills, and he, too, has large influences back of him. Aside from the feeling that has grown out of the case and the suggested entrance of politics into the case, which largely brought about the change of venue, there is very little unique or unusual in it. The testimony today was neither sensational nor remarkable, and the promise is that tomorrow's testimony on the part of the defence will be equally prosaic.

The whole of the matter seems to be that there was absolutely no feeling or cause for feeling between Caskey and Skipper. The cotton mill, as usual, gave a ball on Christmas Eve, Mr Skipper being present to see that order was kept and to give his countenance to the enjoyment of his employees.

Caskey, while not in the employ of the mill, attended the dance, and in some way became so objectionable that he was ejected. In fact, it developed today that he was about to be thrown off a balcony about twenty feet high, and that Supt. Skipper insisted that Caskey should not be hurt. The next morning Caskey met Skipper and insisted that he should return to him his pistol and a bottle of whiskey taken from him at the dance. Skipper told him that he did not have the articles, or at least gave him no satisfaction, whereupon Caskey told him that he was going to get even with him, and they had a good fashioned row. The State claims that Caskey said that he was willing to let the matter drop then and there if Skipper thought it was not right to return the pistol and whiskey that had been taken from him at the dance. The State further claims that Caskey had made up his mind that the matter had ended, and that when Skipper fired upon Caskey with a shotgun and killed him it was a renewal of the quarrel. They contend that Caskey had no thought of trouble, and was seated on a

box in front of Plyler & Dees' store when shot. The State even suggests that Caskey was asleep and undertakes to prove that the deceased was unarmed when Skipper came up with two of his friends and shot his victim without warning. Several of the witnesses for the State claim that the only words passed at the scene of the tragedy were that one of Skipper's friends remarked "There he is," and without another word the shooting was done.

WHAT THE DEFENSE CLAIMS

On the other hand, the defence has already undertaken to show in the cross examination of the State's witnesses that Caskey was in the habit of carrying arms, that he made threats against Skipper, and that he was of a quarrelsome and disagreeable disposition. The defence will undertake to show that early on the morning after the dance Skipper and Caskey had a quarrel and that Caskey, together with a friend, lounged around Skipper's home to the alarm of his immediate family. They will then undertake to show, so it is stated, that Superintendent Skipper went to the mill store and directed the distribution of one thousand presents to the mill hands, and that while there he received fully half a dozen warnings that Caskey was hunting him and meant to kill. After the distribution of the presents, which was about 11 o'clock, Skipper was notified that Caskey was at his home, and he, accompanied by two friends, started towards his home to see if Caskey was there. Upon going out he noticed that Caskey was in front of Dees's store, and he went there to notify him to keep away from his house, and upon his approaching Caskey, the deceased, made a motion to rise with his hand on his hip pocket, and, fearing bodily harm, coupled with the repeated warnings that had been given him during the morning, Skipper shot and killed Caskey.

There will be a great deal of contention about Caskey's disposition, his quarrels and whether he bore arms. It has already been contended that Caskey for two years was a constable for the magistrate at Lancaster, and for eighteen months was a dispensary costable, and by virtue of these two offices for almost four years had the right to carry arms. The State will pursue this line, whereas the defence will contend that he was a dangerous man, and will further try to show that Skipper was one of the most conservative and even-tempered men in the community, and one who always avoided trouble if there was any way out of it.

When the Court met here this morning practically the entire audience was made up of people from Lancaster, and when Solicitor Henry asked that the witnesses, excepting the immediate members of the family, be excluded until called for, the antiquated court room was almost deserted.

WOMEN IN THE AUDIENCE.

One peculiarity of the audience was that a large number of young women, and especially school girls, were present. What in the world they wanted at

such a hearing it is hard to say. If they expected something sensational they were disappointed. Perhaps the array of legal counsel led them to believe that there were going to be a great deal of legal pyrotechnics, but Judge Purdy kept the machinery of the Court working at a pretty fast gait, and at the close of the day, with the co-operation of the counsel, the jury was made up, eighteen witnesses examined and the State closed its case.

The State is represented by Solicitor Henry, who is assisted by Mr. W. H. Newbold, of the Chester Bar. The defence is represented by Messrs Yancey Williams, W. C. Hough and Rance Williams, of the Lancaster Bar, and Mr. J. E. McDonald, of the Winnsboro Bar. The jury is about as good and as representative as could be gotten together in this State in a largely agricultural county. There are nine farmers and three clerks upon the jury, and from all that can be understood it is a first-class jury.

A SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE.

One curious phase of the evidence bore upon how Skipper carried the shotgun. Some of the witnesses said he carried it on his shoulder, others insisted that he held it in front of his person and in his hands, and still another of the eyewitnesses insisted that he carried it swinging in one hand. Messrs Dees and Young, who were in the store in front of which the shooting occurred, swore that they heard Mr. Barron say to Mr. Skipper: "There he is," and that the shot was immediately fired. The defence will contend that what was really said was: "Lookout, there on your right." Some of the witnesses, who were supposed to give testimony as eye-witnesses, had their backs turned and say that they saw nothing of the tragedy.

The state undertook to establish a dying declaration, but Judge Purdy held that the proper evidence had not been adduced to offer the dying declaration.

AN INTERESTING WITNESS

was Dr. W. M. Crawford, of Lancaster, and much stress will be placed on his evidence. The State contends that Caskey was sitting on a bench on the piazza of Dees's store when shot, and that the gun was fired at Caskey while he was in a reclining or sitting posture. Dr. Crawford testified that the shot entered the neck to the front and ranged upwards. Now the state contends that this upward range is possible, even with a man sitting down, by the ducking of the head, while the defence will insist that Caskey was shot while he was rising and that he was as high as was the gun, and that the wound could not have been inflicted had he been sitting as is claimed.

Dr. Crawford simply gave the facts and left the jury to draw its own conclusions as to the relative position of the two men, except to show that the point of exit was higher than the point of entrance and that the bone of the neck was struck and that there was almost complete paralysis of the body.

W. J. SNIPPS,

the brother-in-law of the deceased man, made a very good wit-

ness, as did his wife. Mr. Snipes testified that there was no weapon on Caskey when he took charge of him and took him to his home, where he died twelve hours after the shooting. Snipes also testified that he went out of his house on Christmas morning with Caskey, and that Caskey ran ahead to overtake Skipper, and that by the time he joined the party they had talked for a moment or two, but he heard Caskey say that they had taken his money at the dance and that he ought to have been allowed to remain. Skipper told him that if he had acted like a human being there would have been no trouble, and that Caskey said that there were others who had acted more like brutes than he had, and that they had not been trouble. Caskey asked a second time for his pistol and whiskey, and finally told Skipper that he would attend to him. Before leaving, however, Caskey said, so Mr. Snipes testified, that if Mr. Skipper thought that was the way to treat a man, he had nothing more to say about the matter.

MINOR KNIGHT,

a thirteen-year-old, would have made a very good witness, but he seems to have had his back turned on the participants and saw nothing of the tragedy.

BENJAMIN GHENT AND ANDREW WRIGHT

were the chief eyewitnesses on the part of the State. Their evidences agreed almost as to details, and in chief was that Skipper shot just as soon as Mr. Barron said, "There he is," and that Caskey was sitting on the box when fired upon. Neither of these witnesses testified at the coroner's inquest or gave evidence in the habeas corpus proceedings, and only within the last few weeks have been known in the case, and give their evidence today for the first time. They both held that Caskey made no attempt to get up. Ben Massey, Pink Massey and K. M. Knight were also eye witnesses. The Masseys claim to have seen the actual shooting from across the store. The two Masseys were inclined to give the impression that Caskey was sitting with his head leaning over as if he might be asleep when fired upon.

Mr. Williams was rather severe in his cross-examination of these two witnesses because of the suddenness and mysteriousness of their becoming such important witnesses in the case at this juncture.

OTHER WITNESSES.

K. M. Knight said he heard nothing but saw the shooting plainly from where he was standing. James F. Hunter, J. H. Knight, W. G. A. Porter, John Caskey, and James A. Knight were introduced to identify the gun, and a pistol which Skipper borrowed on his way to the jail after he had surrendered to the deputy sheriff. There was considerable ado about admitting the pistol in evidence, as it figured only after the killing. Mr. Knight, who was a deputy on Factory Hill, testified that he had warned Skipper to look out for Caskey when they were putting him out of the dance hall. Mr. Knight testified that on the way to the jail Skipper had asked Dr. Poovey

to hurry to Caskey and help him if possible.

Former Sheriff Hood testified that Caskey had been in several difficulties, that he had the reputation of bearing arms, and on the re-direct examination testified that he had been a constable for the magistrate and for the constabulary force for nearly four years.

One of the most pathetic scenes of the day was the examination of Mrs. Snipes, the sister of the deceased. It was undertaken to prove by her that Caskey thought the whole difficulty had been ended in the morning, and that her brother expected no further trouble with Mr. Skipper and that he did not expect to be shot. The State failed to show that Caskey regarded himself in imminent danger of death and this evidence was not submitted to the jury.

Thanks to the Court and the business-like disposition of the counsel in the case this morning, and it is expected to go to the jury on Thursday at the latest.

Mrs. Skipper and her children were attentive listeners to every word of the evidence. A. K.

SECOND DAY'S PROCEEDINGS.

Winnsboro, March 1.—The Skipper case today developed several most interesting phases and has been detected from any beaten track. Mr. J. G. Garris, one of the witnesses for the defence, suggested that he had told Caskey, who was killed, that country folk were not wanted at the cotton mill dances and the State seemed to emphasize this point, that people from the country were not wanted at a cotton factory ball.

The next point that is out of the usual was that almost about the first question that was asked on the cross examination of the cotton mill witnesses for the defence was: "Where did you come from?" The idea seemed to be to bring out that they were not from this State, and when the defendant was put on the stand his lawyers called attention to the fact that he had been named Charles Beauregard Skipper, the middle name being in honor of Gen. Beauregard, and one of the first questions asked him by the State was: "How long have you been in the South?"

Mr. Skipper was born and raised in Baltimore, and testified that he had been in charge of the Lancaster Mills about nine years. Most of the help testified that they were North Carolinians.

Yesterday the State made out its case. Today the defence established a chain of threats, and by several very clear witnesses undertook to show that Caskey was rising from the bench and was almost erect, and had his hand under his overcoat pocket, at or near his hip pocket, when Skipper was warned to look to his right, and, believing that his life was in danger, fired upon Caskey.

The character witnesses were most numerous. Sheriff Hunter, who had known the deceased since childhood, testified that he was quarrelsome, and of a violent disposition, and had the reputation of bearing arms.

Chief of Police I. T. Hunter swore that Caskey generally went armed and was of a quarrelsome disposition.

H. B. Pardue, a policeman, and

W. B. Cauthen both agree that Caskey's reputation for bearing arms and for peacefulness and quiet were bad.

TESTIMONY OF TWO MAYORS.

The most important character witnesses, however, were Mr. Waddy C. Thomson and Mr. R. E. Wylie, the former having been mayor from 1895 to 1901 and the latter holding a similar position from that time to the present. They both came armed with documents of the Mayor's court and after considerable legal quibbling, Ex-Mayor Thomson showed that Mr. Caskey had been tried by him three times on three different charges for violation of city ordinances, and Mayor Wylie developed that Caskey had been tried by him once for carrying concealed knives and for drunkenness and for resisting an officer; on another occasion for cursing and disorderly conduct, and finally, in September, before the killing, he had been tried for being drunk and for fighting.

Under the rules of evidence the witnesses were not allowed to testify what disposition was made of the cases and whether there had been conviction or not.

The defence had quite a string of witnesses who indicated that Mr. Caskey had a general reputation for carrying arms and being disagreeable.

The State, in reply, has presented thus far three or four such witnesses, but out of the number only one,

Dr. Thos. J. Strait made an unequivocal character witness and insisted that Mr. Caskey's reputation for peace and quiet was good. He and Mr. Yancey Williams, who conducted his cross-examination, had it hard and fast as to the sources from which Dr. Strait drew such a conclusion, and then in rounding up his attacks Mr. Williams wanted to know if Dr. Strait knew that Caskey had been tried three times by Mayor Wylie and as many times by Mayor Thomson, and then he asked him if he knew that Caskey had been kept in jail for twenty or thirty days as a penalty, that he had had a difficulty with J. Bart Sims, that he had a row with W. B. Cauthen, that he had struck J. C. Elliott over the head with a pistol, that he had threatened to cowhide his own uncle, and that the uncle had asked for police protection; that he had handed a pistol to Beauregard Conner in one of his difficulties; that he got into a row with Eubanks and that Eubanks had shot him; that in Mayor Thompson's Court a pistol had been taken from his person; that he had shot a negro prisoner. To all of these questions Dr. Strait said that he had heard nothing of them, and that he had been attending to his own business, and that he had never heard anything against the young man who had been killed.

Mr. J. F. Nisbei testified that he regarded Mr. Caskey's reputation for peace and quiet as measurably good, and that he did not think he carried weapons except while an officer.

Reid Clayton, the master mechanic of the mill, and G. B. Barron, who at one time was a book-keeper at the mill, and who accompanied Skipper at the time of the killing, made clear statements.

A REMARKABLE WITNESS.

One of the very best, one of the