

CONYERS TELLS FACTS ABOUT RIOT

One of Leaders in Brownsville Shooting Names Those Who Fired.

TWENTY MEN INVOLVED

Warned of Threats of Brownsville People—Negro Troops Deliberately Shot Up Town With Stolen Ammunition.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14.—Boyd Conyers' story of the Brownsville riot is given here in narrative form. The rumors of trouble over the assignment of colored troops to Brownsville were circulated before the troops left Fort Monroe and preparations were made among the men to "set even with the crackers," as the whites were called. Some cartridges were held out at tangle practice, but more en route to Brownsville.

Holloman Was Ringleader.

John Holloman, the money lender of Company B, was custodian and distributor of the cartridges, but his plans could not have been carried out had not Sergeant George Jackson, of Company B, in charge of the keys to the gun racks in B barracks, and Sergeant Reid, in command of the guards, co-operated both before and after the shooting.

All Turned Out at Signal.

The party crossed the wall of the fort down near the end of A barracks, went to the roadway, where the signal shots were fired. These shots were immediately followed by the alarm shots of Joseph B. Howard, No. 2, and the alarm shots of the sergeant referred to by Mrs. Katie E. Leahy, of Brownsville. Her testimony is further borne out by the statement that he got under the hood of the engine at the guardhouse rack would not attract attention and their own absence would be ascribed to a visit to the latrine, which was back of the guardhouse.

Twenty Fire First Volley.

Beyond the possibility of a doubt the racks had been opened and the inside drawers were ready to pour out the signal shots. There were scarcely 20 seconds between the last of the signal shots and the first general volley from B barracks. The number is not positively known, but perhaps 20 men were mixed up. It will be remembered that one of the witnesses testified to hearing some one of the group of soldiers shouting, "Here they are," whereupon these men leaped over the wall and ran up the alley.

All Over in Five Minutes.

Less than five minutes elapsed from the time the first shot was fired until the time these men were back in the fort. Conyers stated that Reid was told that they were going to shoot the town and he had laughed and said, "Don't go out there and let the crackers get the best of you."

How Lawson Got Confession.

William Lawson, being sworn, deposes and says: On the June 3, 1906, I was sent to Monroe, La., to interview Boyd Conyers, one of the soldiers who were stationed at Brownsville, Tex., in August, 1906. I was sent by Mr. Baldwin to get in with Conyers and ascertain if he had any information at that point. I was not given any information, except that any of the members of either of the companies stationed at the time of the shooting had any other information, except that the shooting occurred at the time and place above mentioned and that Boyd Conyers was suspected of knowing who did the shooting.

FORAKER FRIEND OF NEGRO

ville affair, transmitted today, follows in part: "To the Senate: I inclose herewith a letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting a report of the investigation made by Herbert J. Brown, employed by the department in conjunction with Captain W. G. Baldwin, to investigate as far as possible what happened at Brownsville on the 13th and 14th of August, 1906. The report and documents contain some information of great value, and some statements that are obviously worthless, but I submit them in their entirety. This report enables us to fix with tolerable definiteness at least some of the persons who were the leaders in the murderous shooting of private citizens at Brownsville. It establishes clearly the fact that the colored soldiers did the shooting, but upon this point further record was unnecessary, as the fact that the colored soldiers did the shooting has already been established beyond all possibility of doubt. The investigation has not gone far enough to enable us to determine all the facts, and we will proceed with it, but it has gone far enough to determine with sufficient accuracy certain facts of enough importance to make it advisable that I place this report before you.

All Guilty or Accessories.

"It appears that almost all the members of Company B must have been actively concerned in the shooting, either to the extent of being participants or to the extent of virtually encouraging those who were participants. As to Companies C and D, there can be no question that practically every man in the companies had knowledge that the shooting was done by some of the soldiers of B Troop, and possibly by one or two others in one of the companies. This knowledge was of itself a grave offense, which was greatly aggravated by their testifying before the Senate committee that they were ignorant of what they must have known. Nevertheless, it is to be said in partial extenuation that they were probably cowed by threats made by the more desperate of the men who had actually been engaged in the shooting as to what would happen to any man who failed to protect the wrongdoers. Moreover, there are circumstances tending to show that these misguided men were encouraged by outsiders to persist in their course of concealment and denial.

Reinstated Innocent Men.

"Under the circumstances, and in view of the length of time they have been out of the service, it is in the interest of the benefit that would have accrued to them by continuous long-time service, we can afford to treat the men who meet the requirements above as having been sufficiently punished by the consequences they brought upon themselves when they rendered necessary the exercise of the disciplinary power. I recommend that a law be passed allowing the Secretary of War, within a fixed period of time, say a year, to reinstate any of these soldiers whom he, after careful examination, finds to have been innocent and whom he finds to have done all in his power to help bring an end to the shooting. "Meanwhile the investigation will be continued. The results have made it obvious that only by the carrying on of the investigation as the War Department has actually carried it on is there the slightest chance of bringing the offenders to justice or of separating not only the innocent, but those who were doubtless hardly any innocent but the less guilty, from those whose guilt was heinous."

CONYERS CONFESSED RIOTING

Then Attempted Suicide in Terror.

Foraker Discredits Confession.

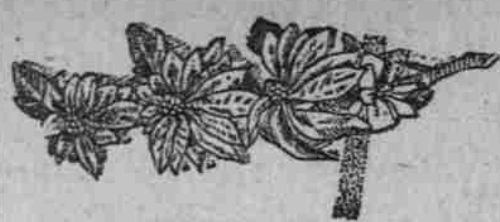
WASHINGTON, Dec. 14.—Secretary Wright simply submits the report of Herbert J. Brown, on the Brownsville affair, to the President without comment. Mr. Brown makes a general report of the case, and then follows with detailed statements of those who aided in the investigation of the riot. Mr. Brown's general report is dated Washington, December 3, 1908. "I submit the affidavit as presented. There are certain discrepancies of a minor character, due to the fact that Lawson is illiterate and had to depend on his memory for details. But it should be borne in mind that Lawson was unacquainted with the details of the Brownsville raid and was given information which could have come only from one familiar with the secret history of the affair. Lawson's first report included the names of Conyers, John Holloman, John Brown and "another man." Subsequently he supplied the name of James Powell, but I think the original name given was that of Herbert L. Collier, Company C, one of the relief guards. This information was corroborated in the presence of witnesses, but before Lawson could finish his work Conyers became suspicious and would give no further evidence incriminating himself. From then on he furnished to A. H. Baldwin, Captain W. G. Baldwin and myself information piecemeal, and reluctantly. The name of Carolina Desmasure, his bunkmate, was the last one obtained.

Advised Not to Confess.

"Conyers tried to commit suicide after he found he had made his statements to a detective, declaring that the other negroes would kill him when it got out. He finally wrote to Senator Foraker and received a reply, a copy of which is annexed. That reply he construed to mean that he should stick to his original story, told before the Senate committee at all hazards, and there he stands. I have every reason to believe that his confession is genuine and gives for the first time the true secret history of the Brownsville raid. "The list of participants given in this report Conyers furnished me personally. I believe it is substantially correct, but with the influence shown by his false testimony given before the Senate committee still being exerted, he cannot be relied upon to support his own confession until it is thoroughly sustained from other sources. "Evidence of similar encouragement to stick to the lies told at Brownsville and before the Senate committee were found in many places, and subsequent to the date of the Foraker letter they became stronger and more obstructive than ever.

Has Become Race Issue.

"The investigation has been conducted with strict recognition of the advisability of preserving secrecy and with discretion. No promises of immunity were made. The knowledge on the part of the ex-soldiers that the Government could not punish them after separation from the service, coupled with the belief that by preserving silence they would aid in the passage



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William B. Baldwin, of Roanoke, Va., that he and three (or four) other men of the Twenty-fifth Infantry were the leaders in the Brownsville raid. This information was obtained at different dates during the month of June, 1908. "I submit the affidavit as presented. There are certain discrepancies of a minor character, due to the fact that Lawson is illiterate and had to depend on his memory for details. But it should be borne in mind that Lawson was unacquainted with the details of the Brownsville raid and was given information which could have come only from one familiar with the secret history of the affair. Lawson's first report included the names of Conyers, John Holloman, John Brown and "another man." Subsequently he supplied the name of James Powell, but I think the original name given was that of Herbert L. Collier, Company C, one of the relief guards. This information was corroborated in the presence of witnesses, but before Lawson could finish his work Conyers became suspicious and would give no further evidence incriminating himself. From then on he furnished to A. H. Baldwin, Captain W. G. Baldwin and myself information piecemeal, and reluctantly. The name of Carolina Desmasure, his bunkmate, was the last one obtained.

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