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## News from the Dark Corner

As published in Greenville Newspapers  
Greenville County, S.C.

Transcribed by  
Cathy Griffith

### Sources:

1. Microfilms; Greenville News, Greenville Daily News, Greenville News Piedmont (newspapers)  
Publisher: Greenville, S.C., Greenville News Piedmont Co., Greenville Co. Library, Greenville, S.C.

This is installment 3 of some articles published in Greenville Newspapers.  
These follow Hendrix Rector, a native of the Dark Corner, his work as sheriff of the county and his murder.

Special thanks to Cathy Griffith for her interest and efforts in the transcriptions of these articles.

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SOURCE: Greenville Daily News

DATE: Saturday, June 19, 1915

### RECTOR CAPTURES BIG BLOCKADE STILL AND IS PLUGGED AT WITH GUN TWO MEN WERE BUSY OPERATING STILL WHEN SHERIFF RUSHES IN WITH HIS PISTOL EXCITING TIMES AS BLOCKADERS SHOW A FIGHT

Despite the fact that .44 bullets were singing about his ears and crooning songs that would put one to sleep forever, Sheriff Hendrix Rector yesterday afternoon, near 3 o'clock captured a 45gallon illicit distillery nears Taybrs and brought the whole contraption into the city after destroying a quantity of beer and mash which had been prepared for the next "run".

That he was not killed is due to the poor sight of one of those who were supposed to have been engaged in making the whiskey and who left sometime before the "next run" was made. Sheriff Rector stated that he recognized his assailant and would swear out a warrant for him today. The still, which was carried to the Imperial garage last night, will be turned over to Revenue Agent R.Q. Merrick today together with such evidence as the Sheriff has.

The still was reported to the Sheriff yesterday and as he was going out he picked up a few of his friends, two in fact, to go with him, believing that it was a false alarm and that nothing would come of the raid.

The machine was guided near the spot by a Constable at Greers and while he and another man sat in the automobile the Sheriff and a rather timid young man went down the branch to see if there was "anything doing". When within about 20 yards of the still, the "tump-tump-tump" of the paddle was heard as the mash for the next run was being prepared.

"You wait here", said the Sheriff to the timid young man as he crouched behind a friendly pine tree near the still.

The Sheriff rushed in, crouching low with his pistol in his hand and before the workers, and there were two, knew what was the matter, the Sheriff was there and had hold of one of them. "Oh, my God!" yelled one of the men, "don't shoot Sheriff", he cried and the Sheriff said, "I've got you Bar.

"I'll die before I'll go with you", said the blockader.

"Come and help me" yelled the Sheriff, indicating the timid young man behind the pine tree. In the meantime, however, sad but true, the young man referred to, was watching an old ballheaded man run up said hill and all the time said Sheriff was yelling for help but the timid young man couldn't get away from that pine tree to save his life. He made efforts all right, but every way he turned, that pine tree was right in front of him and he couldn't get around it to save his life. "Bam!" (and then some panting) Bam!" went a gun and the second time the gun fired the man who was running from the Sheriff fell and groaned; but quickly he regained his feet and departed over the crest of the hill and was gone.

About the time the Sheriff returned the timid young man had examined the blockade still, one of 45 gallons capacity and had found, much to his surprise and pleasure, a pint or two of stuff that looked like spring water. He rummaged around some more and when the Sheriff returned from the quest for his man the timid young man was no longer timid.

"Show'em to me," he said: "I'll get'em, gun or no gun. I'm a better man than any of them!" Then the Sheriff went to kook for the two runs of whiskey, probably some 30 gallons or more and when he returned, the timid young man, who had been guarding the still, and the three pints, was no longer timid. Oh! He was game all right; he was willing to stand around without any gun and arrest, single handed, the whole tribe of blockaders. Strange isn't it, how a felkoWs courage rises on occasion?

Directly the Sheriff went out to look for the whiskey again and while he was walking along, looking under bushes "Bam!" went a gun and "zing" went a .44 as it embedded itself in a tree next to the Sheriffs head. "Bang! Bang, Bang!" rang out the Sheriffs pearl handled .38 and the fleetfooted blockader burned the wind over the hill.

Poor aim, or the moving of the man, accounted for the fact that Greenville has a Sheriff acting today instead of a Coroner. The bullet splintered a sapling just three inches over Rector's head.

By this time the timid young man, who was guarding the still and the three pints of blockade com, was game enough to guard the still all night and had rummaged around and found the cooking utensils of the outfit.

The still, a copper outfit with cap and condensor, was brought to the city and two boxes of beer were turned over. Four boxes of mash were left there to be used for whatever cause might be necessary, probably the pigs. This furnace, still smoking and sending forth heat in plenty was left as it was.

A blockade still is a funny looking contraption; there is first of all a long trench, carrying the section of the branch necessary for the condensation of the liquid joy. This runs into a barrell containing a copper, water jacketed cylinder through which fumes from the still pass. The still, an ordinary copper utensil of 45 gallon capacity, sets in a rock furnace and this is surrounded by a copper cap which fits into it and which terminates in a pipe, emptying through the copper cylinder in the barrell of water at the bottom, the "joy" percolates in drops as it is condensed in the cylinder by the cold branch water.

Just where the "other" 20 odd gallons were is a matter of mere speculation, it was hid somewhere or carried away and hadn't been found. But it wasn't and so what's the use to argue.

At the outfit yesterday were two men working and both escaped, though Rector brought back the "gallus" and shirt sleeve of one and the hat of the other. Raiding blockades might be all right for revenue officers and Sheriffs, but a timid young man hasn't any business around one of them until after the still is captured!

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SOURCE: Greenville Daily News, Page 1

DATE: July 5, 1919

### SHERIFF RECTOR SHOT TO DEATH BY JAKE GOSNELL IN COURT STREET GARAGE ASSAILANT SPIRITED AWAY TO SPARTANBURG SHORTLY AFTER SENSATIONAL TRAGEDY

#### INQUEST TO BE HELD AT 11 O'CLOCK THIS MORNING

#### SHOOTING FOLLOWS BRIEF PASSAGE OF WORDS - FUNERAL SUNDAY

#### AFTERNOON

One of the most sensational tragedies in the history of this section was enacted yesterday afternoon at 12:00 o'clock when Hendrix Rector, Sheriff of Greenville County, was shot and almost instantly killed by Jake Gosnell, a Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue at Briscoe's Garage on West Court Street, a short distance to the rear of the County Courthouse. Five shots were fired from a .32 calibre pistol, 3 of them entering the body of Sheriff Rector, causing his death before he reached the city hospital, where he was taken in an ambulance shortly after receiving his wounds. One of the bullets entered the side of the head, one penetrated the side and the third the shoulder.

Gosnell was taken to jail by W.B. Keller and Hugh Wood, who were near the garage when the shooting took place, and who rushed to the scene as soon as they heard the shots. Mrs. Gosnell, wife of Jake Gosnell, was with her husband at the garage and accompanied him to the jail. Upon arriving there, Gosnell asked to be locked in a cell on the second floor instead of on the first, although the latter is the place where white prisoners are usually placed. He remained in jail about forty minutes before Coroner J.H. Allison, who automatically became the Chief Peace Officer of the County upon the death of the Sheriff, fearing possible mob violence, sent him out of the county in an automobile for safekeeping. He was taken off by D.H. Jones and R.M. Deshazo, who were deputized for the mission by the Coroner. It was not definitely stated whether they took him to the Spartanburg jail or to the State penitentiary in Columbia, though it was reported on reliable authority that Gosnell was taken to Spartanburg.

#### NO EYEWITNESS FOUND

So far as it is known, there were no actual eyewitnesses to the shooting, although at least three persons, CZ Galloway and C.V. Owensby, mechanics employed at the garage, and W.B. Keller are known to have been present. The latter could not be interviewed yesterday, but Messrs. Galloway and Owensby stated briefly to a reporter what they knew of the affair.

"I was bending over the engine of Gosnell's car and Owensby was under the car", said Mr. Galloway. "I heard the shots, but did not hear the conversation between the Sheriff and Gosnell. When I looked up from my work, Sheriff Rector was lying flat on his back on the floor. I did not see him fall, as was reported."

#### DOES NOT THINK SHERIFF DREW GUN

When asked as to whether or not the Sheriff drew his pistol, Mr. Galloway said that he did not think so, as he saw the pistol protruding from his hip pocket as he lay on the floor.

Mr. Owensby also stated that he heard no conversation between the Sheriff and Gosnell before the four shots were fired and that he, too, did not see the Sheriff until he lay prostrate on the concrete floor in the garage.

C.A. Calloway, who is a partner of B.B. Ray in the garage business which is being operated under its old name and who is a brother of the mechanic who was working on the engine of Gosnell's car at the time of the shooting, said yesterday that he was not in the garage and did not witness the occurrence.

#### BAD FEELING FOR MANY MONTHS

A report that was freely circulated on the streets during the afternoon was to the effect that Sheriff Rector walked into the garage and there run across Gosnell. Words, the significance of which are not known, were exchanged and the shooting followed almost immediately afterward. There had been bad feeling between the two men for many months and it had found vent just a year ago last night when they had a fight near the corner of Main and Washington Streets. According to the best information available, no shots were fired by the Sheriff before he got his death wounds, his pistol having fallen from a hip pocket after he was lifted from the garage floor.

After arriving at the jail here, Gosnell would not be interviewed, his wife, who remained there until he was spirited away stating that he would see his attorney before he has talked of the affair.

#### INQUEST THIS MORNING

A inquest to determine by what means Sheriff Rector came to his death will be conducted this morning at 11 o'clock by Magistrate J.L. Ballenger at his office in the courthouse. Magistrate Ballenger yesterday afternoon drew the following to act as jurors of inquest: Lee Cosby, W.P. Vaughn, Avery Vaughn, J.L. Ivester, W.O. Carnes and Sam M. Snow. They viewed the body at the Ransour-McAfee undertaking establishment soon after being organized so that it could be removed to the residence, where it will remain until the funeral Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock. It is not probable that many details of the shooting will be brought out at the inquest, as it will be held merely to ascertain the means by which death was brought about.

#### ALLISON ACTING SHERIFF

Coroner Allison has already assumed the duties of Sheriff, in which capacity he will continue to act until a successor to Sheriff Rector is appointed by the Governor. The unexpired portion of the Sheriff's term of office is a year and a half. It is expected that an appointment to fill the vacancy will be made shortly. Mr. Allison stated yesterday that the present deputies, George B. King and E.M. Patterson will continue to serve and that the affairs of the Sheriff's Office will be administered by him to the best of his ability.

#### NEWS SPREADS RAPIDLY

News of the killing of Greenville Counties Chief Peace Officer spread like wildfire over the city, county and entire Piedmont section, and the holiday crowd which thronged the city was joined by hundreds who came from mountain, hillside and plain to gather around the scene of the shooting and the undertaking establishment where the body was taken from the hospital. There was some talk of mob violence, but no apparent effort to put it into execution. No shooting affray that ever occurred here attracted such a crowd or became the subject of so much discussion.

#### GOSNELL A DEPUTY COLLECTOR

Jake Gosnell has been a Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue for the United States Government for something over a year, and his activities have been confined to curbing the manufacture of illicit whiskey in this section of South Carolina. He has worked mostly in the mountains of Greenville and Pickens counties and has been successful in destroying a number of illicit distilleries and arresting not a few persons for operating them. He was one of the several such Deputies who have their headquarters here and with whom he worked on raids. Gosnell is married and has several children and a large family connection in the county. He is a cousin of Reuben Gosnell, formerly Chief of the rural police and at present a Magistrate's Constable here. Prior to taking up the position he now occupies, he operated a farm several miles from the city near Camp Sevier. He is about 45 years of age.

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*SOURCE: Greenville Daily News*

*DATE: July 5, 1919*

#### AN UNUSUAL CAREER

Hendrix Rector was born in Glassy Mountain Township, this County, 34 years ago, and was the son of John Rector, a well-known farmer of that section. At the age of fourteen he was left fatherless and worked for the education he acquired at the North Greenville Academy. After growing to manhood he came to Greenville and got a position on the local police Department. Where he served for about eight years. In 1912 in one of the most bitterly contested elections ever held in Greenville county, he was elected sheriff being at that time 30 years of age. In the election of 1916 he was re-elected in the first primary over five opponents for a second four year term, which would have expired at the end of next year. He had only recently announced that he would be in the race again next summer

#### A FEARLESS OFFICER

Sheriff Rector was regarded as a fearless officer having acquired that reputation while a policeman and maintained it throughout his service in the sheriff's office. His activity in capturing criminals who temporarily escaped in the toils of the law and in destroying illicit distilleries and arresting persons for operating them was well known throughout this section.

He was probably the most active man in politics in Greenville County, not only on his own behalf, but for others whose cause he espoused. He was regarded as a leader in this County in what has come to be known as the "reform" party in South Carolina politics, and as such he has spoken to a number of audiences in the interest of the various candidates who have run for office of that faction. On several occasions he has been mentioned as a possible candidate for railroad commissioner and for congressman from the fourth district. He never, however, sought any office other than that of Sheriff of Greenville County.

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*SOURCE: Greenville Daily News*

*DATE: Sunday, July 6, 1919*

#### SHERIFF'S FUNERAL TO BE HELD TODAY SERVICES FOR HENDRIX RECTOR TO TAKE PLACE AT GRACELAND CEMETARY

The funeral of Hendrix Rector, late Sheriff of Greenville County, will be held this afternoon at four o'clock at Graceland Cemetary, and will be conducted by Rev. S.P. Matthews, Pastor of Central Baptist Church, of which Sheriff Rector was a member. Interment will follow immediately after the conclusion of the services. The Woodmen of the World, of which he was a prominent member, will have charge of the secret order part of the funeral.

Owing to the popularity and wide acquaintance of the deceased, it is likely that a crowd that will be numbered in the thousands gather at the cemetary for the funeral. There will be present several hundred members of the various fraternal orders to which he belonged, while people from all over this and adjoining counties are expected to attend.

#### COUNTY OFFICERS ATTEND IN BODY

All county officers are requested to meet promptly at 3:15 o'clock at the undertaking establishment of Ramseur-McAfee and Company and attend the funeral in a body. Arrangements for transportation to and from the cemetary will be made at the meeting place.

#### KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS

The request is made by F.D. Coward, Chancellor Commander, that all members of Blue Ridge Lodge, Knights of Pythias, meet at the entrance of Graceland Cemetary at 3:45 this afternoon to attend the funeral of their brother.

#### RED MEN

W.H. Riddle, Chief of Records of Tallulah Tribe No. 23, Improved Order of Red Men, requests that all members meet in their wigwam this afternoon at 3 o'clock to arrange for attending the funeral in a body.

#### ELKS

Members of the local lodge of Elks, of which Mr. Rector was a member, are requested to meet at the Elks home at 3 o'clock this afternoon, for the purpose of attending the funeral. Conveyances will be provided to take the members to the cemetary.

The other orders to which Sheriff Rector belonged have made arrangements for having their members go en masse to the funeral.

#### TRIAL PROBABLY IN AUGUST

All indications yesterday were that Jake Gosnell will be tried on the charge of murder of Sheriff Hendrix Rector at the regular term of General Sessions which convenes here late in August. The indications were that the prosecution will press for a trial of the case as soon as possible.

Speculation expressed yesterday as to a possibility that a change of venue might be asked for the trial of the case were given little credence yesterday among persons closely in touch with the case. It is not believed at all likely that a change of venue will be considered by Attorney's interested in the case. Even should one be secured, it is understood, the case could only be tried in Pickens, since this is the only other county in this circuit, and the change of venue could not take the case out of the circuit.

#### GOSNELL IN SPARTANBURG

Gosnell is still in Spartanburg where he was taken Friday following the shooting, according to reliable information last night. It was reported yesterday that he had been taken from Spartanburg to some other place, but this does not appear to be correct. How long he will be kept in Spartanburg is a matter upon which no official will comment.

#### HAD MANY FRIENDS

Personally, he was a very popular man, especially with the people who live in the mountainous section of the county and in the cotton mill villages. He also had many friends in the city even among those who disagreed with him in politics, and who did not vote for him.

Hundreds upon hundreds of people, many of whom came from outlying sections of this county and from other counties viewed the body of Sheriff Rector at the undertaking parlors of RamsuerMcAfee and Co. yesterday afternoon after it had been embalmed and made ready for burial.

#### SURVIVING RELATIVES

Sheriff Rector is survived by his widow, who before her marriage was Miss Evie Fleming. He had no children except an adopted son, Linwood. He is survived by four brothers, as follows: Rome Rector, a farmer living near the city; Jeff M. Rector of the United States Army, now stationed at Camp Merritt, New Jersey; Jim Rector, a well-known farmer of the upper part of the county, and Carlos A. Rector, a Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue with headquarters in Columbia. One sister, Miss Birdie Rector, also survives, as does his aged Mother. He had a number of more distant relatives, many of whom live in the northern part of the county. The two brothers who live in New Jersey and Columbia were notified yesterday of the Sheriff's death and they are expected to come to Greenville in the quickest possible time.

Sheriff Rector, during the time that he was Sheriff, sent several of his nephews and nieces through school, and took them to live with him in his home about a mile and a half from the city, on the Laurens Road.

The funeral services will be held Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock at Graceland Cemetary, and will be conducted by Rev. S.P. Mathews, Pastor of Central Baptist Church, of which Sheriff Rector was a member. He was a member also of the Woodmen of the World, Knights of Pythias, Red Men and Elks, and the secret order part of the service will be in charge of the Woodmen. The members of all the orders to which Sheriff Rector belonged are invited to attend the funeral. It is probable that the Sheriffs of six counties in the Piedmont section will act as pallbearers.

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