

First Lynching of 1926

(From the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.)

Mississippi has the stigma of being the scene of more than one-third of all the lynchings that occurred in the United States in 1925, but it is from Florida, of feverish real estate activities, that the news comes of the first lynching in 1926, accompanied by other reports of race troubles. At Ocala, Fla., last Monday a mob seized a Negro, whom officers were taking in an automobile to be identified, but before the identification had been made they lynched him. It was not mentioned that these officers made any earnest attempt to protect this prisoner from the mob's attack.

Following this barbaric killing on the eleventh day of the new year, three Negro organizations in Tampa have appealed to the city government for protection against "night riders." Not the price of tobacco, which at the outset was one of the reasons behind the "night riders" spreading terror in Kentucky and Tennessee some years ago, but the animosity of real estate agents, who would force the Negroes to sell their holdings and make way for subdivisions, is given as the guiding impulse of these Tampa marauders. One aged Negro told of the burning of a cross before his home and of a warning to leave the city in twenty-four hours. The same band, he said, set fire to another Negro's house.

Such reports somewhat dim the prospect that racial difficulties, which have undergone so marked a decrease in the past two years, will still further decline in 1926. Dropping from forty-three in 1923 to sixteen in 1924, the number of lynchings remained at that minimum in 1925. A still further reduction might be expected, if officers and the public should at all times take a firm stand against these acts of violence and cowardice, as well as against any kind of agitation that is designed to stir up racial animosities. Being the first state to have a lynching in 1926, Florida should be the first state to demand the punishment of its perpetrators.