

3 Red Clay Heroes Pay in WWI Era Houston Riot

(Georgia Soldier Hung, 2 Others Get Life Imprisonment) Series #3

By Johnette Brooks

101 yrs ago almost to the day, three (3) Georgia soldiers were standing up for what they believe, self respect who were court martialed and hung. The 24th Infantry was one of the very first all black infantries formed in the WWI Era. The Houston TX community, like the rest of the country was on edge wondering if colored soldiers would surmise they would be mistreated no longer and turn their guns on their fellow **B.E.A.P. (Bad European American People)**. On August 24, 1917 that it exactly what they did.!

The 24th went into town on furlough. A *B.E.A.P.* police officer sited the infantryman for **disturbing the peace**. The New York National Guard of which the 24th was original entrained were *G.E.A.P. (Good European American People)* and sided with the 24th. Hence, the Houston Officers; the overzealous Houston community members tangled with the 24th & the NY Guard. When the settled., Twelve (12) white men, civilians, police officers and National Guardsmen were killed and more that a score of persons, men, women, and children were wounded. They were convicted on mutiny, murder and assault.

Within weeks, 13 infantrymen of the **24th's, Company I** were hung and 50 received sentences between 10 years of hard labor to life imprisonment. The (3) identified from Georgia to date are **Pat McWhorter** of the Buckhead District of Madison's Morgan County; **Nathan Humphries** and **Luther Tucker** both of Atlanta.

Sentence: HANGED, Pat(rick) McWhorter, an rifle-toting soldier was born the son of Henry McWhorter (originally Taliefero Co) and Julia Washington (Morgan Co), Georgia on June 25. 1894. Here was the 9th born of 16 who lived. He was previously enlisted in the (RA) Regular Army and stationed at Columbus Barracks OH as a member of the 25th Infantry of the 15th division of the Harlem NY National Guard. He was discharged from the RA on Apr 23rd and re-enlisted in WWI on Apr 24th of 1913. They were sent to Houston to guard the new recruits from Chicago's famed Illinois 8th Division National Guard. After the hanging at Camp Travis in San Antonio on 25 AUG 1917, he was buried was buried there. Camp Travis (adjacent to Ft Sam Houston). Camp Travis closed and founded in Ft S. Houston in 1922. All bodies were re-intermed on May 24, 1927. Headed to St. Louis to review Court Martial Case #1299; this fall.

Luther Rucker, (not the Elbert, GA one!) another rifle-carrying, exuberate soldier was born the son of Abram Rucker and Susan Grimmett from Atlanta, Georgia on June 30. 1893. He was originally enlisted in the (RA) Regular Army and stationed at Columbus Barracks OH as a member of the 24th Infantry of the RA on 6 JAN 1913. After being found guilty during the court martial, Luther was dishonorably discharged on 10 DEC 1917. Forfeited all pay and pension, then he was sentenced to life in prison. All of them were tried under the same Court Martial Case #1299. As of the 1920 census, Luther was serving time in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary as a orderly.

Nathan Humphries, Jr, a Bellman turned Cook from Atlanta is the third and final Georgia we have identified to date. He and Luther Rucker were sentenced and found guilty. Nathan, Sr became a father in Columbus GA circa 1892. Like Luther Rucker, Nathan Humphries was still imprison in 1920. Several civic organizations are actively pursuits to appeal the sentences of the 50 colored soldiers at Leavenworth. Read the next issue of the WWI Heroic Gems of the Red Clay. To assist w/ research email GaAncestors@gmail.com.

Sources: *Ga Discharge Serv Rec Cards; Hstn Chronicle 12 Dec 1917; 1910/1920 Census; Leavenworth Penitentiary Rec*