

TAMPA MORNING TRIBUNE

TAMPA, FLORIDA

TAMPA MORNING TRIBUNE – WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1910

TWO MEN TAKEN FROM OFFICERS AND HANGED



[PHOTO COURTESY FROM THE USF SPECIAL COLLECTION LIBRARY]

Castenge Ficarrotta and Angelo Albano Victims of Lynch Law While Being Transferred to County Jail by Officers

DRAMATIC NOTES PINNED TO FEET

MEN WERE ARRESTED ON CHARGE OF ACCESSORY TO SHOOTING OF
EASTERLING

LYNCHING PARTY MADE UP OF LATIN CITIZENS

*Ficarrotta Recently Figured in Murder Trial,
Charged with Killing his Uncle*

“BEWARE”

*“Others take notice or go the same way. We know seven more. We are watching you. If
any more citizens are molested, look our Justice”*

This tragic note, written in black ink, on a large-sized piece of paper, was pinned to the trousers of Angelo Albano, Italian, who with Castenge Ficarrotta, Italian, was hanged by a mob last night three and one-half miles from the county court house. The notice was written plainly and each letter of each word was a capital. It found a resting place on the feet of Albano.

Swing in Moonlight

Two human bodies, the forms of the coatless men bathed in a wealth of light given from a full moon sending its days through the luxuriant foliage of a giant Oak and full upon the lifeless beings, was a gruesome picture presented city and county authorities last night.

Two victims of lynch law, said to have been sent to a hurried grave through the reign of lynch law, participated in by Latin-Americans and Americans, who secured their prey through holding up two representatives of the sheriff's office, they showed little signs of violence on their persons. Quite a quantity of new five-eighth inch rope, however, bore eloquent testimony of all things having been prepared for the death trap while the helpless prisoners, handcuffed to one another, gave mute evidence that neither had been able to resist the blood lust possessing their captors.

Back to Back

Back to back the bodies of these Italians depended from a limb branching westward from the giant tree a distance of twenty-five feet, the feet of both being about seven feet from the ground and the limb from which they were hanged being about eighteen feet above the level of the ground.

It was this picture that confronted the view of the many citizens and authorities who journeyed to the scene from Tampa and West Tampa in all kinds of conveyances.

The picture was the more realistic and interesting in that Ficarrotta, a man about 45 years of age, five feet, five inches in height, and wearing a beard of two days' growth and a heavy black mustache, still had his derby on his head and a small pipe in his mouth.

His body faced toward the East – toward Tampa. His shoes were unpolished and his trousers were unclean. His suspenders lowered, lay close to either side of his person. His belt was fastened loosely about his waist and his head found a resting place at an angle of about 60 degrees against the back of his fellow. His shirt was loose at the collar. His feet were tied together but not in the same knot which fastened those of Albano.

Albano, twenty-five years of age, was more neatly arrayed. His white shirt first attracted the attention of officers to the scene of the hanging fifty feet South of the Westerly extension of Grand Central Avenue. His linen was cleaner and he wore collar and four-in-hand cravat of light color, the whole showing him to be much neater in his personal pride than Ficarrotta. His hat, a straw one, had fallen two feet to the side of his body.

The Hold-Up

Albano and Ficarrotta late yesterday afternoon were arrested on a charge of having been parties to the attempted assassination last week of J.F. Easterling, the assistant bookkeeper, now at the Gordon Keller Memorial Hospital as a result of a bullet wound inflicted at that time.

Albano was the first arrested. He was taken from a group of Italians in West Tampa by Deputy James Keaggin, who is constable in the West Tampa district. He smiled when told as the officer of the charge he was wanted on and declares he had no fear as to the outcome of the case.

Ficarrotta was next arrested and as remarked that he didn't "give a d---m" on what charge he was arrested, also intimating that he would come clear.

Marshal Logan of West Tampa worked with Mr. Keaggin in the case. They made the arrests on information from the sheriff's office that H.E. Easterling, son of J.F. Easterling has sworn out warrants for both men.

Sheriff Jackson sent W.E. Evans as a deputy to convey, the men from West Tampa to the county jail and Mr. Evans deputized Captain Bryan, whom he met on the way to go with him after the men. Captain Bryan is in command of Heights Fire Station No. 9 and he willingly asked to accompany Deputy Evans, yesterday being his day off from duties. The two officers rode to West Tampa in a hack driven by Will Lowe.

Get the Prisoners

Ficarrotta and Albano were surrendered to these officers and in the same hack Evans, Bryan, Albano and Ficarrotta started for the return to Tampa. These officers after conference with Marshall Logan and Deputy Keaggin chose the return route via Howard Avenue to Grand Central Avenue and thence direct to Tampa.

Both officers declare that while driving on Howard Avenue and only an eighth of a mile from the intersection of Grand Central and Howard Avenues, and still within the limits of the City of West Tampa they were halted in the shadow of several pine trees.

Lowe, the driver and Evans were in front. Captain Bryan with the prisoner, who had been handcuffed before the start, were in the rear seat. Albano was seated on the knee of Captain Bryan while Ficarrota was at his side.

From the shadow of these pines a score of men halted the hack. The two horses were stopped. The officers with guns at their ears, were relieved of those in their charge and in moment, the crowd had disappeared into the night going rapidly in three autos toward Grand Central Avenue and West on that thoroughfare.

Deputy Evans discharged his revolver four times and then, with Bryan and Lowe, rode rapidly to West Tampa. They secured Marshal Logan and Deputy Keaggin and with Sheriff's Office and the Tampa Police informed the officers started on the hunt for the abductors.

On the way to the intersection of Grand Central and Howard Avenues, the party passed twelve or fourteen people, these speaking in broken English, Italian and Spanish. These declared the abductors had gone West with their prisoners in automobiles and the next people encountered were Police Chief Woodward, C.F. Aulick and others in machine. This was stopped and the Police Chief, Marshal Logan, Deputy Keaggin and Mr. Aulick in auto started out in pursuit.

To Rocky Point

Messrs. Evans and Bryan did not make this trip. The officers in the auto, in the hope of overtaking the people in the three autos, went as far as Rocky Point and it was not until their return trip that they discovered Albano and Ficarrota hanged from the tree.

Albano's white shirt attracted the attention of the officers in automobile. Investigation and discovery followed in a moment.

The news quickly spread. Immediately the scene of the hanging was visited as rapidly as automobiles and other conveyances could carry the occupants.

The hanging occurred between 9 and 9:30 o'clock and it is the supposition of the officers, who made the journey to Rocky Point, that the hanging must have been quietly enacted while they were on their way. The hold-up part must have gotten in their vengeance while hiding in the woods.

All Through the Night

The men were left hanging all through the night. At 9 o'clock this morning Justice Boyett will conduct an inquest. Constable Keaggin last night empanelled the following jury, which viewed the remains through the light given out by a lantern and which will assemble at the inquest this morning: Foreman, Clint Gibbons, A.B. Turner, Steve Kissinger, F.A. Rust, Will Regar and J.F. Lee.

Other than the rope, tracks having been dimmed through the great number of foot prints about the place, officers up this morning had their only clue as to the perpetrators although Police Chief Woodward, Marshall Logan and Deputy Keaggin believe they will be able to get something more like a clue today.

Will Lowe, the hackman, believes he could identify an Italian, who participated in the release of the prisoners. The statements of all the officers appear later in this story.

Leave Relatives

Angelo Albano spoke English fluently. For the past six months he has represented a Tampa insurance agency in West Tampa. He is survived by a mother, brother and sister. He was 25 years of age, about six feet in height and handsome.

Ficarrota is survived by a wife and several children, including a beautiful daughter of about 20 years old, and a number of cousins, resident of West Tampa. The group formed an interesting circle at the two trials in which Ficarrota was on trial in connection with the assassination of G. Ficarrota, former president of the City Council of West Tampa, wholesale grocer and one of the most prominent members of the Latin-American colony.

All these relatives were apprised of the tragedies before midnight.

Among troubles Albano is alleged to have figured in was that of several attempts to burn the home of Mr. and Mrs. Oates in West Tampa several years ago, the attempts finally proving successful and he was also accused of having been implicated in an attempt to poison a small daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Oates.

Ficarrota, so far as can be ascertained, had no regular employment and both he and Albano were regarded with fear among some of the Latin-American population, this being held as possible reason for the hanging of last night in which several nationalities had representation.

It has been intimated frequently that both men had taken an active part in affairs of the so-call "black hand" society.

A Quiet Affair

The quietness with which the capture of the two men was affected by the lynchers is shown through it being within limits of West Tampa. The same silence is shown to have existed through the hanging having occurred on a main artery of travel leading westward from Tampa.

The historic Oak, where the men apparently died easy, the tongue of neither protruding from his mouth, is within half a mile of several homes and within a mile of a well populated section of West Hyde Park.

Easterling Not Informed

J.F. Easterling, who was shot last Wednesday afternoon in front of the Bustillo factory, where he was returning to work, and who has since been confined in the Gordon Keller Memorial Hospital, for the attempt on whose life the two men lynched were arrested, was not informed last night of the exciting events of the evening. He slept most of the night and his nurses did not think it advisable to wake him. He will be informed this morning, when he probably will be shown the newspaper accounts of the affair.

At first hovering between life and death, his life for several days hanging in doubt, Mr. Easterling has steadily improved until it is now certain that recovery will take place in due course of time. Mr. Easterling's condition has been very satisfactory for the past several days. He has slept well during the night and has been able to take nourishment freely. The nurses and physicians attending are satisfied with the progress which their patient is making and are eagerly, as is himself anticipating the day when he can be discharged from the hospital.

Deputy Sheriff W.E. Evans, formerly of the city detective force in whose custody and that of Deputy Sheriff Bryant the prisoners were when they were held up by the mob, made the following statement before going to the scene of the lynching with the coroner's jury:

Statement of Evans

"Following the instructions of Sheriff Jackson and Chief Logan, of the West Tampa Police, Deputy Sheriff Bryant and myself proceeded in a hack with the prisoners toward the county jail, where they were to have been incarcerated. We were all talking together pleasantly and Ficarrotta was joking about being arrested, saying that they hadn't been able to convict him when he was tried for the murder of his cousin, G. Ficarrotta, and he would not be convicted this time either."

"Suddenly the hack was surrounded by twenty-five or thirty people and every man had a gun of some kind. I saw that something was up and shouted to the driver, Will Lowe, to whip his horses up as fast as he could. By that time two men had grabbed the horses, and another man who looked like a Cuban, put his pistol to the driver's ear and made him hold up his hands. I don't know who the man was but the driver says he can identify him if he ever sees him again. Then two big men, bigger than I am, jerked both prisoners, who were hand-cuffed together, bodily out of the hack."

Covered by Pistols

"My companion and myself could not move because we were covered by a score of pistols, but as soon as we could disengage ourselves from the mob, I ordered the hackman to gallop his horses back to the West Tampa City Hall as fast as he could. The place where the mob surrounded us was on Howard Avenue near Grand Central, where a clump of pine trees throws a thick shadow across the roadway. As soon as we could get back to the City Hall I notified Sheriff Jackson and Chief Woodward to send help, and we proceeded back to the place, accompanied by Marshal Logan and Constable James Keaggin."

"We met Chief Woodward and several men in an automobile and began searching the road but could not find any trace of the men or the mob. Some one on the road told us he had heard four pistol shots some time before, but those were the shots fired by myself to summon aid. When we were held up I noticed two automobiles beside the road. We followed their tracks or the tracks of some other automobiles, until they left the main road and went into the woods. Thinking we were on the wrong scent, we returned."

"Those of the mob whom we saw appeared to be foreigners and not Americans. I don't remember seeing an American in the bunch or anyone that I knew."

Surprised at Affair

Marshal A.C. Logan of West Tampa, who came to the City Hall in Tampa in company with Constable Keaggin, Chief Woodward and Deputy Sheriff Evans to secure a coroner's jury said:

"After their arrest we had the men in jail in West Tampa, but it was thought advisable to move them to the county jail. I had Mr. Evans leave with them in a hack about 9 o'clock. We were surprised when Evans returned and reported that the man had been taken away from him. We stopped a group of men by the side of the road in front of the Samuel L. Davis cigar factory and asked them if they knew anything about the affair. They said the mob had gone in the direction of Rocky Point. I know some of the men we were talking to. They were Cubans and Italians."

"Ficarrotta and Albano were arrested in connection with the shooting of J.F. Easterling. We have one eye witness who saw Albano fire the shot which struck him. Ficarrotta ran away right after the shooting. They are charged with attempting murder."

Constable James Keaggin told the following story of the affair:

Did Not Suspect

"I arrested Castenge Ficarrotta and Angelo Albano about 6 o'clock for shooting Easterling. We have been on their trail and trying to get enough evidence for some time. The prisoners were put in the West Tampa jail until such time as convenient to remove them to the county jail, which it was decided to do after dark. There was no demonstration when the men were arrested. No one appeared to be interested. I thought everything was all right and when one or two people asked me what we were going to do with the men I did not hesitate to tell them that they would be removed to the county jail later. The men who asked me about it were Cubans and Italians."

Chief of Police Woodward said: "When I was notified of the hold-up from the city hall, West Tampa, I went to the scene in an automobile, meeting Marshal Logan, Deputy Sheriff Evans. We searched the roadway for some distance, going to Rocky Point and back, but all the crowd had dispersed. Returning we saw the two men hanging to a tree, back to back, handcuffed together. They had not been shot but evidently died from strangulation. Ficarrotta still had his derby on and had an old pipe in his mouth. Then we came back to get a coroner's jury."

An Alleged Murderer

Castenge Ficarrotta was charged with the murder of his cousin, G. Ficarrotta, a prominent wholesale grocer and president of the West Tampa City Council, who was shot down in front of his house at 8 o'clock on the evening of April 10, 1909. The first hearing of the case in Circuit Court ended in a mistrial. On second trial Ficarrotta was acquitted. The State made out a strong circumstantial case but Ficarrotta defended himself with the alibi which is usually made use of in such cases. During the trial Hugh C. Macfarlane, the West Tampa promoter, who is now a member of the Board of Public Works, of this city testified that Ficarrotta had offered to kill man as half payment on a lot worth \$400. Col. Macfarlane was indignant and kicked him out of his office.

Albano was connected with the second Ficarrotta trial because of his persistent attempts to get himself appointed interpreter. State Attorney Phillips was suspicious and would not allow him to serve in that capacity. Albano is alleged to have been associated with Ficarrotta in different ventures. He is said to have left New Orleans very suddenly after the outbreak some years ago in which the Chief of Police of that city was assassinated. Ficarrotta is believed to have left New Orleans about the same time.

Quick Telegraph Service

Within four minutes after a "flash" was sent out from the Tribune last night over the Associated Press wire to all sections of the country, a message had reached Tampa over the wires of the Postal Telegraph Cable Company's wires from the New York Herald to the local correspondent in the office asking for full details of the lynching. Within the space of twenty seconds the "flash" went to every corner of the Associated Press leased lines, and the Herald was quick to respond.

A bulletin giving a brief statement of the facts followed the "flash" over the Associated Press wires, which was followed twenty minutes later by the full story with detailed statements from the officers and a history of the Easterling shooting and the troubles leading up to it. At the same time a complete story was telegraphed to the New York Herald over the Postal lines and was rushed through immediately. That made some of the quickest wire service in the history of the country.