

was that it would open to traffic October 15. Van B. Curry and L.W. Howard got the contract to hard-surface the Fel'da road.

Duncan V. Fletcher and Jerry W. Carter, candidates for state senator, published their platform statements. Editor Davis had called for all candidates to come out with a platform. F.S. Crews, running for the school board, accepted the challenge. His platform was to make teachers sign affidavits swearing they would stay on school property during lunch hour.

Other candidates were J.O. Clark for election registrar, Alicia Bailey for school board and B.A. Bales for state attorney.

C.C. Cochran ran an ad: "Notice to one who knows. Please return the cross-saw you borrowed of me some time ago and save the trouble of my coming after it." The ad ran for weeks.

The paper wrote up the death of Dr. John W. Hall, father of F. Watts Hall. Born in 1841, Dr. Hall had moved to Florida in 1855. He was the only practicing physician along the Caloosahatchee river valley for many years, following the cattle paths and hog trails through the woods in pioneer days when there were no roads and few settlements.

May 14. It happened on May 11, 1926. The day's events are told best in the words of Mary Hayes Davis:

"Tuesday, a quiet, peaceful, village on the eve of big developments of modern civilization, law and order. An hour later and fifty excited men and boys armed with guns of every kind are in possession of the street, sending posses into the woods in every direction, telegraphing for bloodhounds and drinking moonshine to nerve themselves for what is to follow, and the peaceful community is plunged into the primitive savagery of a man-killing hunt. In this fearful mood which has been augmented by several rounds of moonshine anyone in the woods becomes immediately in danger of death.

"The cause -- a woman in the outskirts of this village became alarmed when a negro came to her back door Tuesday forenoon. Both she and her husband stated that he did not enter the house, but she screamed hysterically and ran out another way. The negro also frightened, ran in the opposite direction. Marshall Edwards and two other men soon captured him and were driving in a car to Sheriff McLaughlin. The negro stated as his reason for coming to the door of the house that he wanted to

ask for a drink of water. As the marshall's car passed a palm-wood thicket the negro jumped out of the car and escaped.

"Four o'clock and the human hunt is over. The negro went to his road camp for clothes and the foreman, it is reported, turned him over to Marshall Edwards who permitted the mob to take him.

"A dozen or so cars of armed men are near him. Every man in the mob is tense and the small arsenal of guns have willing fingers near the triggers while as you pass through the crowd the rank odor of moonshine shows one cause of the thirst for the negro's blood which has deformed the faces of the men into something of that terrible mob spirit that shouted, "Crucify him!"

"They stopped at a street corner with their prisoner and waited a few minutes for the eight or ten cars with forty or fifty men and boys to round up from the chase. The negro is pleading for mercy with tears streaming down his face. 'Ah only wanted a drink of water. Ah never did nobody harm. Ah only came to the door for water.' This was corroborated by both Mr. and Mrs. Crawford, Tuesday within an hour after the alarm. 'Ah've got a good ole mother up in Memphis. You all say you goin' shoot me and I done nothin'. Please don't kill me, give me a trial.' He now looked over to a white man whom he evidently knew and asked -- 'When I was at your house in your family dinn't I always behave myself?' And the man nodded and said, 'Yes, you did.'

"Please don't kill me,' pleaded the black man. 'Give me a trial, boss.' 'Aw. shut up,' said the white man guarding him as the grim procession of cars and gun men drove south on Bridge Street. About opposite Rep. Doty's home they stopped and a few seconds later the negro who had been shoved out of the car and told to go (according to many reliable eye witnesses) started towards the Doty garage. A dozen shots aimed at the back of the negro, witnessed by scores of people, followed. Then the helpless victim was subjected to the most sickening tortures of savagery, while little children and young boys looked on. His eyes were gouged out, his body cut and mutilated. He was thrown on the fender of the car and with one standing on his body the ghastly procession drove a short

distance and stopped and again subjected the dying victim to brutality unspeakable. The procession circled and came in again at Bridge street, the negro lying on the fender with one leg dragging on the ground part of the time. They stopped before a restaurant and a cannibal suggestion was made to the shocked proprietor. The victim tried to raise his head and was stamped in the face by the one who held him. He was then taken south on Bridge street to a nearby subdivision and, it is reported by scores that a little boy about ten years old climbed up the tree and put the rope around the limb of the tree. The victim was then hanged and shot after shot poured into his quivering body -- more than enough to satisfy any lust for blood."

Yet, even with the afternoon's grisly climax, the day's horror was not at an end. In a separate article, Editor Davis wrote: "Tuesday night the streets were given over to drunken excited men who raced their cars up and down and shot guns in the air. No sign of law and authority on the streets. Lawlessness had its day and Tuesday it had its night. The better citizens were conspicuous by their absence on the streets. At twelve o'clock midnight, the lights are put out and about two o'clock a.m. two bloody circles were drawn in warning on the Hendry County News' door. A man who was guarding the property heard the stealthy noise and came to the scene just in time to see two men jump over the fence and disappear in the darkness. The next morning's light revealed the two bloody circles and a chisel sticking through the door."

By Thursday the National Guard had come. Battery F, 116th Field Artillery, had been sent by Governor Martin. A unit of 50 men and vehicles arrived from Arcadia under the command of Captain S.C. Smith.

A coroner's inquest was held behind the closed doors of the courtroom in the Everett Hotel. It was said witnesses were reluctant or afraid to speak out.

The Biblical admonition of giving a cup of water in Christ's name did not go unremarked. It appeared in a letter published by the chamber president, John F. Webber, who exhorted citizens as Christians to declare for Christ and justice.

In an editorial, Ms. Davis wrote of receiving repeated

warnings not to publish the facts of the murder. Those making the threats, she wrote, failed to realize that dozens of newspapers had sent representatives and the facts were already known by hundreds of people.

Tragedy notwithstanding, there was still the news of everyday life. C.B. Wegman and J.R. Bradford had bought the Henry Ford lot on which to build the Ford sales and service station. Revenue stamps showed that the land at the corner of Hicpochee and Bridge sold for \$5000. The paper was already carrying an ad for Ford salesmen.

Word of Clewiston's zoo provided some light relief in a dark time. The zoo's two monkeys didn't get along; they fought constantly. So one monkey moved next door, into the wildcat's cage, through a crawl space it found. There was no problem yet but the keeper was worried. He said he had considerably more respect for a wildcat than the monkey had.

Names had been submitted for the cross-state highway. They included Sugarbowl Road, Seagulf Highway and Fatlands Road -- which may have been a typographical error. And L.H. Johnson of Clewiston chose that week to throw his hat in the ring for county commissioner.

May 21. The lynching victim's name was Henry Patterson, it was finally disclosed. News readers expected and got a follow-up on the lynching story. Under a headline *Court of Inquiry Finishes Investigation of Lynching*, Ms. Davis wrote, "The nerve-racking trial of judge, attorney and jury, in an effort to administer justice in Tuesday's lynching tragedy is at an end. The troops have gone and quiet and the ordinary pursuits of life have been resumed.

"The result of the probe is that seventeen men are now in jail in Fort Myers and Arcadia charged with first degree murder, held for appearance before the grand jury.

"The presence of the soldiers in the park and the captain in the court room gave protection and courage to the witnesses as well as giving something of the strength and dignity of the law of State and Nation to the court proceedings. One incident in the court room gave interesting evidence of the spirit of sacrifice offered by the court in performing the unwelcome task. A witness on being questioned admitted that he knew

what had been done but stated that if he told it would mean danger not only to himself but to judge, attorney and possibly some of the jury. "You may say to these people who are attempting intimidation," said the judge, "that so far as this court is concerned I know of no better death than to die while doing the highest duty before God and man. The future of LaBelle and the continuance of its better class of citizens here depends on justice, law and order being preserved."

In an editorial Ms. Davis wrote, "The harvest of hate and threats in a small community from the many open sympathizers of those who assisted in last week's lynching is almost unbelievable."

That there were those who would have prevented or impeded prosecution taking place was told in a statement by Capt. Smith prominently displayed on page one -- two columns wide and bordered. It read:

"Certain amount of resentment against the investigation to the coroner's jury into the death of Henry Patterson has been in evidence in and around the City of LaBelle. It is the purpose of this article to dispel this resentment, if any still exists.

"To the writer's knowledge there have been four lynchings in the State of Florida during the last six weeks of which LaBelle's is the last. Any thinking man or woman, knowing that the eyes of the nation are, and have been for the past year at least, focused on the State of Florida can readily perceive that the Governor of the State could hardly pass over such a total of lynchings without exhausting every means available to him, of investigating the cause of aforementioned and of preventing the occurrence of any further case.

"Whenever this case was brought to the attention of Governor Martin he immediately ordered Battery F, 116th F.A. from Arcadia to LaBelle with instructions to assist the civil authorities in maintaining law and order and to ensure the full investigation of the case by the coroner's jury.

"Had Judge W.C. Richards and Prosecuting Attorney H.A. Rider or either of them, failed to make a complete and thorough investigation in this case the investigation would have been made by the state's attorney and the City of LaBelle very likely would have been placed under martial law, and at a far greater

expense to the county.

"In brief the Governor of the State would not have accepted other than a complete and thorough investigation and it was the duty of Judge Richards and Attorney Rider to conduct this investigation regardless of the fact that such duty was distasteful and painful to them both as it was to the coroner's jury which was empaneled of necessity. These men and the men who composed the coroner's jury therefore performed the duties which they were powerless to escape and, in so doing, saved the county an enormous expense which would have resulted from the outside investigation which was sure to come had this body neglected its duty.

"The citizens of LaBelle, whether implicated in the lynching or not, whether in favor or not of that lynching should thank these men who performed this thankless, distasteful duty and who conducted the investigation in an impersonal manner and took no action except as the evidence from the testimony of the witnesses dictated, for the investigation would have been made in any event.

"This is written by a party who is absolutely disinterested and with the sole desire of righting any erroneous impression of the public as to the motives of those conducting this investigation."

After that it was back to life as usual but the news was mostly an updating of ongoing events.

LaBelle Motor Co. announced in a half-page ad that it was the authorized sales and service dealer for Lincolns and Fords. E.L. Cornette was to be in charge of sales.

The city's first apartment house was going up in Belmont subdivision. It was two stories high with four 4-room and bath units. LaBelle teachers named for the coming year were: Berenice Graves, assistant to Principal D.E. Timmons; John S. Sloan, Madeline Ayers, Maude Magill, Signe Hendricksen, Nettie Hampton, Nell Jackman, Mrs. W.C. Richards, C.O. Thomas, H.C. Ketring, and Marie Ketring.

More political candidates stepped forward. J.W. Myers of Clewiston, for re-election as county commissioner; H.C. Avant of Clewiston, school board; W.C. Hooker, county commission; E.M. O'Bannon, District 2 school board; and L.H. Johnson of

Clewiston, county commission.

May 28. Judge Whitehurst called a special session of the circuit court in Hendry county for May 31 and a grand jury was summoned. His decision to hold the special term of court was reached after a conference with State Attorney S. Watt Lawler and Louis O. Gravely, attorney for the defendants, who both said they preferred a special term of court to a hearing on a writ of habeas corpus. The News relied on the Fort Myers *Tropical News* for its report on the proceedings.

Mr. Gravely stated his chief concern was to show that some of the men arrested were innocent so they could be released from jail. Several prisoners were ill, he said. State Attorney Lawler said he wanted to finish up the trials as quickly as possible so he agreed a special term of court would be the best procedure for handling the cases.

When Mr. Lawler said he was going to show that a grand jury qualified to hear evidence couldn't be obtained in Hendry county, Mr. Gravely disagreed.

"Oh, yes, we can get a grand jury in Hendry County," said Mr. Gravely. "Not in LaBelle alone perhaps but from other parts of the county."

Mr. Lawler repeated his doubts.

"Anyhow," said Mr. Gravely, "I don't believe you can have 17 men indicted, or even 12, for murder in the first degree."

"Not in Hendry county, you can't" replied Mr. Lawler.

"Nor anywhere else," was Mr. Gravely's retort.

The judge interrupted to ask the state attorney how many witnesses he would need.

"Ordinarily I would say the state would need about six witnesses," the state attorney said. "If the witnesses are going to be intimidated by their fellow townsmen we might need 50 witnesses and not get anywhere then." Mr. Lawler insisted he was going to seek a change of venue.

The prisoners indicted on first degree murder charge were held without bail until they came up for trial. The others, facing less serious charges, were released on bail.

At the request of County Judge Richards a grand jury was drawn with Judge Richards, Sheriff Dan McLaughlin and Dan Hull, clerk of the circuit court, present, as required by law.

The grand jury names drawn were J.W. Rimes, Walter McNally, R.N. Luckey, Albert Dyess, H.A. Altman, James F. Ray, Jack Buton, A.C. Wright, L.S. Fitzhugh, Alto Hires, Morris L. Taylor, Grover A. Hill, J.B. Thomas, W.P. Avery, R.M. Brannoy, F. Watts Hall, Marvin N. Taylor, D.C. Green, C.C. Hiers, W.M. Stallings, Frank B. Potts, Oscar Luckey, Robert Howard, D.W. Woodley, H.S. Dyess, Blas Oluchno, L.W. Wethington, George M. Hendry, G.H. Graham, Raleigh Dyess, W.M. Williams, C.P. Green, Emery Taylor, Edward G. Ffluge.

The grand jury was first to study a transcript of the evidence taken by the coroner's jury and then call witness whose testimony at the inquest was deemed important.

There was little else of news that week. Not surprisingly, the city of LaBelle got a new marshal. He was E.C. Powell, a former Arcadia policeman.

LaBelle High School graduated 11 girls and three boys; 20 graduated from the eighth grade. The high school graduates were Addie Louise Blount, David Cook, Ruth Cook, Addie Crews, Mima Fenwick, Cleo Hand, Inez Hisler, L.M. Jennings, James Ketring, Frieda Magill, Annette Rogers, Mildred Seagraves, Alma Stokes and Leila Walker.

Joseph Maslanka sold his Bridge Street office building to Talbot Lane of Tampa who expected to open "a thoroughly efficient abstract office." A half-page ad notified customers that after June 1 cash payments only would be accepted by LaBelle Garage, LaBelle Overland Co., Main Street Garage and LaBelle Motor Co.

Anybody who's wondered why some city sidewalk blocks came to be heaved up by tree roots can trace it to the plea of a LaBelle pioneer woman. Her house was underneath a majestic oak and she asked that the walk go around the tree rather than take it down. Her plea was published in the paper and many of the old majestic oaks lived on.

June 4. Two court hearings were held this week into the lynching death of Henry Patterson. On Tuesday a special session of the grand jury was called by Judge Whitehurst in LaBelle. It resulted in the jury's investigation being moved to Fort Myers. The motion for the change was made by the state and supported by 28 affidavits. The defendants' attorneys

contended the witnesses should be called and sworn then the court recessed to reconvene in Lee county.

The object of the session was to determine if a fair and impartial grand jury could be secured in Hendry county. Joe Clark, city commissioner, the first witness called, said he thought it unfair to both sides to hold the trial in Hendry county.

"On what do you base your opinion?" Prosecuting Attorney Phillips asked.

Mr. Clark answered that the small population of the county (about 1500) and the large number of men involved in the case made it a certainty that the matter had been generally discussed and opinions formed.

It also came out as opinion that the number of people for and against the lynching was about equally divided. Judge Richards, asked if he believed it possible to secure a fair and impartial jury here for this case, replied positively that it was not. Asked how it was that the coroner's jury and witnesses had been fearlessly able to do their duty he replied that the state militia being here at the time had occasioned some respect for law and order.

Joseph Maslanka told of threats against his life and admitted he was afraid to testify now the soldiers were gone. W.D. Blount told of threats against members of the coroner's jury and held the opinion that it wasn't practical to try to secure a jury here now. C.C. Cochran had stated before a coroner's jury that he was afraid to testify.

W.P. Gregory stated he had 30 years experience in selecting juries and thought it a highly impractical procedure. Others testified to local feeling that justice was not considered in killing a negro. Clifford Richards, N. Blount, Dan Blount and Perry Hull were in favor of a Hendry county jury although Mr. Hull said there was practically a civil war after the lynching affair.

Prosecuting Attorney Lawler presented a statement of the population of LaBelle according to Clerk Hull's estimate, which indicated a greater number than the 500 usually reported. He believed that with 17 men charged with murder among so small a population it would be difficult to secure an impartial

jury, especially in light of the many intermarriages among the families.

Judge Whitehurst concluded the testimony was conflicting and there was a lot of feeling out there. "This court is of the opinion that these men are entitled to have a speedy trial and we'll hear the writs of habeas corpus and determine if there is sufficient evidence so they will be admitted to bail."

The habeas corpus trial before Judge Whitehurst was held Thursday in Fort Myers.

Among those called as state's witnesses were Joseph Maslanka, Mr. Doty, E.L. Rogers, Mrs. Davis, George Howard, Rollie Dyess, Doris Fulghum, Lee Yeomans, C.L. Brandes, Dr. Seebold and J.P. Crews, a nine-year-old boy who insisted J.P. was his full name. He had been present during the whole affair, gave a complete account, and was able to identify 12 of the defendants. But afterwards he admitted he'd gone over his story beforehand with Attorney Rider.

Dr. Seebold testified to the number of gunshot wounds found in the victim. He estimated there were between 50 and 100, maybe more, and it would be impossible to say which of them were fatal shots. He denied seeing any evidence of mutilation.

The Tropical News described the courtroom as crowded with some 35 negroes sitting in the gallery. Among them were said to be men who'd been employed on road work with Patterson and who fled the city after the killing.

The trial came to a swift climax. It was so sudden that 17 men found themselves released before hardly anyone realized what had happened.

The judge had suddenly stopped the proceedings to say he was convinced that a grand jury hearing the evidence presented would indict some of the men. "These I shall hold in bonds of \$10,000 each," he said. "The others may be released."

There were no charges against the eight men released outright although a grand jury could indict them at a later date.

Those placed under bond faced charges as serious as first degree murder. Among the men released was Marshal Edwards. The men freed on bail included Hurd L. Reeves, Ham Smith, Lemuel Howard, Driz Curry, Norman Warriner, Stanley

Aultman, Harney Aultman, Duane Cox and Colin Godbolt. Several people in the courtroom offered to go bond for the men.

The week's editorial was reprinted from the *Tropical News*. It commended the courage of Attorney H.A. Rider and Judge Richards who, "under the guns of the hideous race prejudice and terrorism which pervaded LaBelle and Hendry county proceeded with forthright simplicity and high-minded determination to the ungrateful task set for them by the mob." To which Editor Davis appended: "And how about the six fearless county men who did an unpleasant duty for the State of Florida when they served as coroner's jurors?"

This was the week ACL began daily service. J.L. Stanford was the new Goodno station agent. LaBelle's first twins were born, boys to Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Sheppard. R.M. Luckey and Tiffin Bros. of Moore Haven were building a filling station and garage with display rooms for Dodge, Nash cars on Bridge Street.

In Clewiston the first two occupancy licenses were issued. One was to W.H. Alexander for a cigar store and the other to Mrs. J.W. Scott for a 25-boarder rooming house.

Felda's school bond election was declared invalid for technical reasons and it was back to square one. Clewiston voted almost unanimously for a \$50,000 school.

Attorney W.N. Henderson announced for county judge. No more advertisements ran in the News for the two Negro subdivisions and the practice of listing in the city commission minutes the names of arrestees and cases heard by the mayor as police judge was discontinued without a word.

June 11. Hendry commissioners asked the governor to release the county from paying the expenses of the state militia coming here. In fact, much of the meeting was concerned with bills accrued in connection with the lynching case.

The Devil's Garden road was approved, running 16 miles south and three miles east. The 20-acre Pinecrest subdivision was approved.

Under the new city charter two commission seats were up for election in July. Names were drawn to decide which seats would be declared vacant. They were J.B. Clark and Ray Hull.

The county primary election was held but when the polls closed the vote was tied between Selden Stewart and R.H. Magill for county commission. The deadline for mailed ballots was the following Monday. If the votes were still equal the men might have to run again in the fall election.

In the run for the state assembly George Hendry won over the incumbent J.R. Doty, 212-113. Fred Grossman tallied only 61 votes. Boisclair lost his county commission seat to William Murray, 56-50. Incumbent County Commissioner Forrey defeated Perry Hull 51-41. Ed O'Bannon won the school board seat and Henderson took the county judge's post from Richards.

It didn't go unnoticed that each of the defeated candidates had played some role in the judicial proceedings following the lynching. Mr. Doty was an example. The lynching had taken place on a tree in front of his home and Mrs. Doty had been a state's witness.

Boat service from Fort Myers had not improved, the boat arriving only once in three weeks. Freight was being hauled by truck and rail instead.

June 18. Monday came and Stewart and Magill were still even-steven on votes. One vote had come in the mail but the voter lived in one precinct and had voted in another. The vote was no good. The attorney general was asked his opinion.

The Hendry County Band reorganized with Selden Stewart as president and manager. The players decided not to be the county's band. Prof. Mazzeri had returned but was associated with Mr. Attanasio in the movie theater. The funds raised for the cigar factory and band room were in the bank. What the band craved now was a bandstand.

H. Abrahams leased the Royal Palm Hotel from Ivan Andre. Some 73 miles of roads were to be built through the 10,000 acres of the LaBelle Heights subdivision being sold in 10 to 20 acre tracts.

June 25. Editor Davis put out a newsless newspaper by printing up the leftovers.

July 2. The City of Palms made its second trip upriver absolutely empty after unloading a half-ton of fertilizer at Denaud. The captain said about 10 tons of freight for LaBelle lay on the Fort Myers ACL dock, tied up because of railroad

homes.

T.L. Williams of Ortona drove into town from Devil's Garden with a black bear tied to his running board.

An essay by George Woods, a LaBelle High School student, was published in the News, and was certainly based on what he'd been told:

"The main road in LaBelle in 1900 was crooked and rough and wended its way between palmettos and small trees. The other roads leading to and from it were mere paths, and in rainy seasons were sometimes impassable. There was not much need for good roads at this time as people were few and the houses far apart.

"There was only one store, owned by a man named John Frazier. A small school house and a Methodist church completed the 'business' part of LaBelle. There were only 20 pupils in the school and one teacher to teach them all.

"... Nearly all the dwellings were built of palmettos and some few sticks... The chimneys of these huts were built of sticky mud as bricks or cement were not to be had. There were not many window panes as it was difficult for them to be shipped so far without damage."

Young Wood wrote that ox teams and steamboats were the only means of travel and that early settlers came in covered wagons with teams of yoked oxen "across miles of bleak prairie land covered only with palmettos, prickly pears and other small shrubs.

"A small steam boat ran up and down the Caloosahatchee River from Fort Myers to Fort Thompson and brought down supplies of food, clothing and other necessities for the people. They in return, sent back what few products they could raise along with furs from animals which they trapped and some livestock which they let roam widely and freely over the plains. The people could also ride on the steamboat..."

Nov. 19. Nils Olsen of Lakeland came to set the 2414 panes of glass in the courthouse. He and his wife arrived in a house car for camping and parked on the courthouse lawn.

Late published election returns revealed a mostly one-sided election. In the state senate race for the 24th district it was William H. Malone 175, J.R. Doty, 1. George M. Hendry

received all 126 votes for state representative. Former County Judge Henderson was re-elected 199-37 over Judge Richards.

FPL bought out Perry Hull's ice service but retained him as manager. George B. Hills, chief engineer of the Caloosahatchee drainage board, said initial studies were completed and construction could begin in February. Favor's subdivision on the north side was approved by the county commission.

In a Bank of LaBelle ad addressed to "Mrs. Woman" she was reminded her personal success was reflected through her husband's achievements. A community church was organized in Clewiston while meeting temporarily in a school room.

Nov. 26. U.S. engineers came to LaBelle to inspect the work of the Caloosahatchee River Improvement District. Then, aboard the Wilma, the drainage district boat, they went to Moore Haven along with Messrs. Forrey, Manning and Ritchie to see conditions there. The engineers would report to Congress to get the funding for flood control.

Hunters and trappers thronged LaBelle streets, thicker than land developers. For a time no more gas was to be had in town. They came as many as six cars at a time filled with men, cooking and camping gear, Negro cooks, and "ojus" (plenty) ammunition. But Hendry's once plentiful supply of game was dwindling. Experts said only a closed season or two could re-establish the game in quantity. Meanwhile, 500 more hunting licenses were issued.

J.S. Gladney died in Fort Myers. He was the first teacher at the Turners school. The six o'clock whistle of the Sears mill and factory had joined the sunrise chorus of whooping cranes, wrote Ms. Davis.

Dec. 3. LaBelle saw architect Harvey Clark's plans for the Seaboard freight and passenger depot. It was to be 27 feet wide and 134 feet long. The rail-placing machine was advancing a mile a day.

Students took the new Otis Group Intelligence Test and explained it to their parents.

A bid of \$33,895 was let to build the Clewiston school. Beans were being shipped north in record quantities from there.

Dec. 10. The Dec. 4 issue of the *Fort Myers Press* reported the close of the grand jury investigation of the lynching, saying

that during the four last days tension in the courthouse had reached the snapping point. Corridors were filled with Hendry countians awaiting results.

The jury gave its report to Circuit Judge Whitehurst, saying it had not been able to obtain sufficient evidence to identify members of the mob. "The grand jury has made a thorough investigation into the lynching of a negro at LaBelle on the 11th of last May," the report began. More witnesses had been sent for but with few exceptions they testified with great reluctance, the judge was told. "The majority was afraid to make any direct and positive evidence as to the identity of the members of the mob... in an alleged attempted or intended attack on a white woman at her home..."

But the jury had come to one conclusion: the lynching could have been prevented if the sheriff, deputies and peace officers had done their duty. The jury recommended to the governor that the sheriff be removed from office. And the case was ended with no indictments returned.

Attorney Gravely, who'd represented the defense, told the press there'd been a great deal of politics in the matter and the coroner's jury was prejudiced.

Van Curry and J.F. Cross were having their problems completing the Felda-LaBelle road because, they told county commissioners, truck drivers insisted on using the road bed and taking down detour signs. The two men wanted out of their contract but the commissioners promised that future offenders would be arrested.

Moving day to the new courthouse was to be January 1, 1927. The \$3000 electrically-regulated clock for the tower was en route and \$7000 worth of new furniture (*bought \$300 at a time?*) was waiting in storage.

Also scheduled to open was the Fort Myers-Palm Beach highway but the rebuilt section east of Clewiston would not be paved until the rainy season.

The chamber paid an overdue lumber bill for for the arches it had ordered. Tuberculosis Association stamps went on sale. Money was still needed to purchase Seaboard rights of way and pay for condemnations. Messrs. Forrey, Doty and Watts Hall had signed notes for \$8000 but the railroad wanted \$3500

more. It would advance the money if the chamber or someone would guarantee repayment or if the city would agree to levy millage for repayment. The chamber decided to go to the city.

The city approved Carl Royer's Park Place subdivision and raised the marshal's salary to \$100 a month. Rev. Barnes suddenly resigned as the Baptist minister and moved away.

Dec. 17. Prof. Mazzeri was back with the Hendry County Band and playing Sunday concerts in the park. Sam Jacobs, son of Lou, opened the first radio shop in LaBelle and offered used sets at bargain prices.

Dec. 24. Moore Haven was back in the news. Fifty of the displaced would have returned if they'd had help to make their homes livable. The July bank failure had left people without ready money, said D.L. Lence, Glades county commissioner.

The Red Cross came under heavy fire for not meeting the needs and tying applicants up in red tape. Merchants, especially, had given freely during the emergency without keeping accounts but the Red Cross wanted everything itemized. Large amounts of money had been donated for relief and Commissioner Lence wanted to know what happened to it.

His question prompted an open letter to the Red Cross director in Palm Beach from the people of LaBelle, Alva, Fort Myers and Estero, who wanted to know why, after three months, no rehabilitation was in progress, yet Red Cross reported \$2.7 million in its treasury.

Deputy W.M. Norton confiscated 70 quarts of imported Canadian rye whiskey after stopping a suspect who stepped on the gas as the deputy stepped on the running board, grabbed the steering wheel and steered into an embankment. The suspect identified himself as Dutch Futch of Fort Myers.

Dec. 31. It was a merry Christmas of sorts for Moore Haven when more than 500 people from neighboring towns treated the survivors to a barbecue dinner and gifts for all. It had been a memorable year.

THE NEWS OF HENDRY COUNTY
1922-1931

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Ltd. First Edition

*To Beryl Bowden
With Love & Admiration*

*To Mary Hayes Davis
For Her Dedication*

*To Henry Patterson
Let us mourn his death*

*And to the People of
Hendry County
Who made it all happen*