

SERIES OF PHOTOCOPIED ARTICLES

REGARDING THE HERNDON FAMILY MURDERS

IN BRENTSVILLE, PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY.

ARTICLES FROM ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE AND

MANASSAS GAZETTE.

FROM ABOUT

DEC. 9, 1874 TO MAR. 19, 1875

**THE LATE BRENTSVILLE MURDER**—Jesse Fooks, the colored man now in jail at Brentsville charged with the late murder of Mr. Jerry Herndon and his wife and of a colored boy who lived with the old couple, will be tried at the January term of the Circuit Court of Prince William County, Judge Keith to preside, which will meet on Monday next. The prisoner stoutly maintains his innocence, and it is understood, that though the circumstantial evidence of his guilt is strong, there is no positive proof of his being the actual murderer.

The total increase of the funded debt of Baltimore is \$6,619,500.

**THE PRINCE WILLIAM MURDERS.**—Mr. Jesse Herndon, the last victim of the late murderous affair in Prince William county, died yesterday, and the coffin in which he will be interred was sent up to his house on this morning's train. His death had been preceded by that of his wife and that of the colored boy Addison Russell. Mrs. Herndon recovered her senses a short time before she died, and during the time she was rational had her true statement recorded. In it she fixes the guilt of all the murders upon Jesse Fooks, the colored man now in jail.

**THE HERNDON MURDER.**  
**Examination of Jesse Fooks—Dying Declarations of Mrs. and Mr. Herndon—Fooks Committed.**  
 REPORTED FOR THE ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE. BRENTSVILLE, PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, VA., Dec. 15.—This being the day set for the examination of Jesse Fooks, colored, upon the charge of murdering Mr. and Mrs. Herndon, and Addison Russell, a small red boy in their employ, a large crowd, including both white and colored, assembled at the Court House, where the examination was held. Justice Horton and Woolyard were present and asked the prisoner when brought into court whether he had any witnesses he desired to be examined to which he replied that he had none. The dying declaration of Mrs. Herndon was then read, which is as follows:  
 Question by Justice: Will you tell us who murdered you?  
 Answer: Yes, God knows I will tell you all about it, and I won't tell you a lie. On Thursday evening I sent Addison Russell to the kitchen to alter a basket, and in it was a piece of meat which Addison said belonged to us. Jesse Fooks came in after that and swore we had his meat. I told him that I knew it belonged to Mr. Herndon. He then charged on Mr. Herndon, and they came very near a fight. Mr. Herndon had the axe. I ran between them and pushed Mr. Herndon back, telling him not to strike, that there would be murder done. I opened the door and put the stick against the door as I supposed. I do not know whether Jesse struck me or not. He, however, raised a stick or something and swore he would kill us. He did not mind killing two such dams. I got people as us, I told him to go away that the law would protect us.  
 In reply to another question she stated: Mr. Herndon has struck me, but God knows he did not that night, and I won't tell you a lie about it.  
 Mr. Herndon's declaration was then read: I had been to Bristol on Thursday and got back about 4 hours by sun. In the evening was eating my supper, when Jesse came in and commenced abusing my wife about a piece of meat, and he had plenty of money to bear him

out. I told him we had said five times as much as a negro ought to say to a white person and to go on. He then turned round and went on abusing me. I told Add (the colored boy) to get out and hear what he said. Add came in saying that Jesse said if we would say nothing, and if they meant he would not, I made up my mind Jesse came in again about an hour and a half after daylight dawn and said he wanted my handkerchief. I told him it was in the meat house and would have to stay there until morning. He commenced jiving, and said maybe it was his meat. I told him to go out. My wife touched me and said that he said he would not go. I picked up the axe and told him to go or I would split him down. He did not strike me that I know of, nor did I see him strike Mrs. Herndon. The boy Add was lying on the floor with nothing the matter with him.  
 In addition to this there is some other matter of no importance.  
 After reading the declarations the Justice announced that they were satisfied sufficiently to convict the prisoner Fooks, and remanded him to jail to await the action of the grand jury at the January term of our Circuit Court.  
 The prisoner Fooks is a boy about 17 years of age, and was raised about a mile and a half from the scene of the murder. Your correspondent visited him shortly after his confinement and found him in bed covered up close with the bed-clothes, which I understand has been his habit since his confinement. He denies being guilty, and says that he did not see any of the family that evening except the little boy Addison Russell.  
**PRINCE WILLIAM COURT.**—Jesse Fooks, the negro man charged with the late murder of the Herndon family, near Manassas, was sentenced yesterday in the Circuit Court of Prince William county, at Brentsville, Judge Keith presiding. The prisoner was defended by Messrs. Martin and Williams, the State being represented by Commonwealth's Attorney E. R. Kirk, assisted by Judge Nisbol. The jury brought in a verdict of murder in the first degree.  
**SENTENCED.**—Jesse Fooks, the colored murderer of the Herndon family, who has been convicted by the Circuit Court of Prince William county, as stated in yesterday's Gazette, has been sentenced to be hung at Brentsville Friday, the 19th of next March.

**Escape of the Herndon Murderer.**  
 [Correspondence of the Alexandria Gazette.]  
 BRENTSVILLE, Jan. 30.—At about half past six this evening Fooks, who murdered Mr. and Mrs. Herndon and a little negro boy, and was taken out of the same at our Circuit Court about two or three weeks ago, and was sentenced to be hung on the 19th of March, made his escape from the jail of this county. It appears that he turned a hole through the partition of his cell, and got out into the passage where there was nothing to prevent his escape except an iron grated door, which was unlocked and the outer door. On his appearance at the outer door he was met by the jailer's wife, who, with great presence of mind, seized the prisoner and carried her to her room, but he managed to get free, and got away. Neither the jailer nor the guards were present at the time. The prisoner is supposed to have gone in the direction of his sister's. In his escape he left his shoes behind him, and consequently is bare-footed and poorly clad. The prisoner is about five feet five inches in height, copper colored, slightly bronzed, and of slender build.  
 S. J. D.

**Recapture of Fooks.**  
 [Correspondence of the Alexandria Gazette.]  
 BRENTSVILLE, VA., Feb. 1.—Jesse Fooks was captured yesterday evening by the jailer in a straw rick, about five miles from Brentsville. He has since stated that he knew who committed the murder, and implicates in the colored man by the name of Willis Lebbe. No one believes this charge, and it is thought that he will make a clean breast of the whole matter before he is hung.  
 J. J. D.

**Reported Murder of a Family.**  
 It was reported this evening that Jerry Herndon, his wife, and a colored boy, a servant, were all found in the house of Mr. H., about five miles below Brentsville, Prince William county, this morning, Mrs. H. and the colored man dead, and Mr. H. in a dying condition. It having been cut with an axe by some party or parties unknown.  
 The funeral of Merchant Taylor's Dress Suit.

**THE PRINCE WILLIAM MURDER.**—Late intelligence from the scene of the Prince William murder, an account of which was published in yesterday's Gazette, is to the effect that Mr. Herndon and his wife are still alive, though fearfully, and still thought fatally injured. The colored boy, their servant, is, however, dead. There is as yet no clue to the murderers.

**Portrait of a Murderer.**—Jesse Fooks, the murderer of the Herndon family, was yesterday taken up on the 19th proximo, and sent to the jail at Brentsville, on Saturday evening, and at that moment was still at large. He turned a hole through the wooden part of the partition of his cell, and then having run over the brick and mortar part, entered the corridor, the door of which was open. The jailer, Arthur Woolyard, was absent at Manassas, but his wife caught sight of the escaping prisoner, seized and grappled with him. He wrestled strong for her, however, and having knocked her down, rushed out of the open door and made off for the pines, in which he was soon lost, leaving his hands and his shoes on her hands. The sheriff of the county has offered a reward for his arrest. He is described as a tall, copper colored negro, eighteen or nineteen years of age, five feet four inches high, wavy hair, extending low down on his temples, large eyes, with a downcast look when addressed, and speaks with a nasal twinge. He was bare-headed, and had on a blue cap and was dressed in a suit of dark cotton.

**PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY ITEMS.**—Gus Summers, a wandering rascal, whose family for other people's property seems to be his only trait, was arrested and committed to the jail of this county a week or two ago, charged with stealing a hog from a man named Patton, in Loudoun county. Last week Patton and a number of the sons of Susie had Summers put in their hands for the purpose of carrying him to the Loudoun jail, but as it was late stopped at Patton's house to stay all night. Patton says during the night he and Summers went out of the house to get some wood, but Summers went in an opposite direction, having first prepared his carpet bag. He is charged with a number of petty thievings in this county. While in jail he gave Ed and Woolyard a copy of his receipt for "no locations" his delinquent in that line, the stamp of a log from Mr. Z. B. Kankey of Nebraska.  
 A colored man in Brentsville township has been circulating a rumor, hatched in his own brain, that a proposition has been made by colored people, led by a white man, to take possession of the jail and release Fooks, the condemned, for the murder of the Herndon family. We have no idea that the colored people have thought of any such desperate undertaking.  
 Mr. Wm. S. Powell has exchanged seventy-six acres of and including the property near Manassas, now occupied by Mr. Mankins, to Mr. W. W. Davis, taking in part payment the house, and has attached it, now occupied by Mr. Davis in Manassas. Mr. Davis will erect at once a new house on his new purchase.  
 The hog net carrying the U. S. made in this vicinity has been pretty spirited. *Manassas Gazette.*

**Mysterious Murder.**  
 From the Manassas Gazette.  
 One of the most heinous murders we have ever recorded, took place at Harrison's farm, in Prince William County, near the Stafford line on Tuesday night last. A number of the neighbors of this place yesterday evening, were a party to the Gazette, immediately repaired to the scene. In a low and thicket looking hole, or more properly a hut, not far from the banks of Cedar Run, lives an old man, now seventy years of age, well known to his neighbors as one of its richest land owners and wealthy stock raisers. Jerry Herndon, and his wife, a white girl, were living with them as a farm hand was a black boy of small stature, age about fifteen, named Jesse Fooks, and another colored boy about ten years of age, named Addison Russell. Fooks had been tampering with and coming in at night was seen stealing a piece of pork from his employer, which he did and a quarter enclosed. The boy was ordered from the house and required to remain outside in the night was given a good thrashing. Herndon picked up an axe and hid it in the hole in the wall near the house, he would have been caught, had he not been so quick. The man who was at the house, and who was a short distance away, at the time the murder was committed, saw Fooks go into the hole, and saw him come out, and up on coming a glassy and deadly stare, he presented to his view a man lying on the floor of the hole, and the boy

**THE PRINCE WILLIAM MURDER.**—Late intelligence from the scene of the Prince William murder, an account of which was published in yesterday's Gazette, is to the effect that Mr. Herndon and his wife are still alive, though fearfully, and still thought fatally injured. The colored boy, their servant, is, however, dead. There is as yet no clue to the murderers.  
 The preliminary examination of Jesse Fooks, the colored man accused of the late murder in a suit in Prince William county has been postponed until next Tuesday.



# ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE

## BY TELEGRAPH.

### The Herndon Murderer.

MANASSAS, PRINCE WILLIAM CO., VA., March 12.—The Gazette of tomorrow will contain the following:

Major W. W. Thornton, of Brentsville, received a letter from Governor Kemper, a few days ago, stating that application had been made to him to respite Jesse Fouks, sentenced to be hung on the 19th of this month for the murder of the Herndon family, consisting of man and wife and a colored boy, on the 5th day of December, 1874, in the county of Prince William, and requesting the Major to go to the jail and see the condemned man and ascertain, if he could, if such respite would be advisable.

Major Thornton visited Fouks on Wednesday last, and held a conversation with him, to which conversation the prisoner reiterated his guilt, and said he thought he ought to be hung. Maj. T. has sent the result of this interview and also a copy of the Manassas Gazette, containing Fouks' confession, to the Governor.

Fouks, on being informed by Mr. Woodyard, jailer, that an effort was being made to put off his execution for a short time, said he "did not desire it to be put off," but wished the time was nearer at hand. Fouks prays almost continually in his waking hours, night and day, but still says he has no evidence of forgiveness from God, for the crime he has committed. He said in a conversation with the Sheriff and jailer on Thursday morning last, that he desired to see either Mr. Marsh or Mr. Dunn, ministers of the New School Baptist Church, and we have no doubt one or both of these gentlemen will visit him as soon as they get word of his desire.

Fouks was visited on Tuesday last, by a physician of Fauquier county, who requested the prisoner to give him his body after the execution, to which the condemned man readily consented, stating that it would be taken up by some doctor anyhow. He said he cared nothing for the body so he could save his soul.

Fouks will be executed in the jail yard at Brentsville on Friday next, the 19th inst. The gallows will be erected during the coming week. Had Fouks remained in the cell where he was first placed he could have seen the gallows from his window, but having escaped from the cell, when recaptured, was put in a front cell.

### Executions in Maryland.

BELAIR, MD., March 12.—Joshua Griffin, colored, was hanged near this place this morning for the murder of Miss Susan Taylor, near Aberdean, Harford county, Md., on the 12th of October, 1874. Griffin was twenty five years old, and had

Mrs. Bigger, mother of Mr. J. Bell Bigger, clerk of the House of Delegates, died in Richmond on Saturday night.

Gov. Kemper, it is said by the Dispatch, disapproves the project of sending him to Europe as a commissioner of immigration.

A Richmond man has invented an automatic typewriter.

### PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY ITEMS.—The

The jail of this county now contains Jesse Fouks, colored, the condemned murderer of the Herndon family, who is to be hung the 19th of this month. Ed. Stewart, colored, charged with attempting to fire the barn of Mr. Wm. H. Dozan, and Dr. C. Crump, who is confined there awaiting to be received into an insane asylum. Fouks complains of being in bad health and constantly prays, but said on Tuesday last that he did not "feel that his sins were yet forgiven him." But few persons visit him and he has as yet no spiritual adviser, though one or two ministers have had conversations with him. Ed. Stewart is confined in the cell with him, but they converse very little with each other, neither being inclined to talk much. The unfortunate man seems fully to realize his position, and is no doubt fully resigned to his fate, and is doubtless trying the best he knows how to prepare himself for the fatal day. The coffin for his burial, a plain, poplar one, is already made. A blind (?) was registered at the Exchange

### THE HERNDON MURDER.

#### The Murderer—The Approaching Execution—Vindication of the Law.

(Specially reported for the Alexandria Gazette.) BRENTSVILLE, March 12.—There was perpetrated in this community, on the evening of the 5th day of December, 1874, a deed which has no parallel in the annals of crime—no sadder part anywhere in the entire category of savage brutality.

The malignancy and semi-barbarism of vicious Chertliffe never presented in its treatment of the Roman Regulus a spectacle more inhuman in its conception, and more abhorrent in its subsequent execution, or more abhorrent to the sense of common humanity, than the tragedy which occurred on that date in this otherwise peaceful community.

Jereimiah Herndon, a well-to-do farmer, a man who had lived out his three-score years in peace and harmony with his fellow man, with no breath of slander to asperse his integrity, or venomous tongue to assail his character; with no avowed enemy to mar the tranquility of his declining years; his wife, the partner of his joys, his griefs, and of his toilsome life, together with Addison Russell, a small colored boy, between ten and twelve years of age, became the victims of an ignorant, cowardly, passionate, brutal and malignant assassin, who, in the commission of his fell act, had no other motive than a supposititious revenge, no other justification of his crime than a mean and ambitious design to screen himself from a threatened prosecution for petit larceny.

The house where the murders were committed is about six miles southwest of Brentsville, near Cedar Run, and not far from the Stafford line.

On Thursday morning, between the hours of eight and nine, one of the sons of Mr. Herndon, who lives but a short distance from his father's homestead, went, as was his frequent habit, to his father's house, and on entering discovered the doors to be open and the floor of the room (which was used for dining, sitting and bed room by the old people) to be covered with large pools of blood. The colored boy, Addison Russell, (who, with Mr. and Mrs. Herndon and the prisoner, Jesse Fouks, were the only inmates of the house), was lying on his back near the fireplace, with a deep gash across his forehead; about eight feet from the boy lay Mrs. Herndon on the bed, both apparently dead, but his father was nowhere to be seen. Appalled by such a sight, he ran to the house of Mr. J. C. Colvio, the nearest neighbor, and informed him of what he had seen. They, with a colored man, immediately repaired to the house, examined the old lady and boy, concluded both were dead, and made diligent search for Mr. Herndon, but failed to find him. The neighbors were then summoned and the condition of the house examined, but no clue to the murderer was obtained, though the bureau where Mr. Her-

ndon kept his money was open with the keys in the lock, and some money was supposed to have been taken, the gold and silver were untouched. About ten o'clock a neighbor brought in Mr. Herndon on his back, having found him at the foot of a tree from the house on Cedar Run, working in his stocking feet with one of his coat, and scratched. In the morning Mr. Herndon was found not to be dead, though utterly insensible. An inquest was held upon the body of Addison Russell, and Jesse Fouks, who had gone to Miss O'Roar's about two miles from the place, was at first arrested on suspicion, and permitted to remain in the night. His continued manner in giving his evidence confirmed the suspicion heretofore entertained of his guilt. Notwithstanding the subsequent declarations of Mr. and Mrs. Herndon, who in the meantime recovered sufficient consciousness to remember that Jesse Fouks had entered their room about dusk and had paraded with Mr. H., the evidence was only circumstantial and many persons believed in the innocence of the prisoner.

The trial came on, and it was then that the criminality of the prisoner was settled beyond a doubt by his confession to the jailer of having concealed in my which he stated he had picked up where Mr. H. had dropped it.

The prisoner was detained by Messrs. Meredith and Williams, the State being represented by Commonwealth's Attorney Larkin, assisted by Judge Neal. He was found guilty and condemned to be hanged. Judge Keith, in passing sentence upon him, told the prisoner that he had received a fair and impartial trial, and exhorted him to make preparation for the future welfare of his soul.

On the 1st of January last Fouks made his escape from the jail. He burnt a hole through the partition of his cell and got out into the passage where there was nothing to prevent his escape, except an iron grated door, which was unlocked, and the outer door. On his appearance at the outer door he was met by the jailer's wife, who, with great presence of mind, seized him and called for help, but he managed to get free and got away. He was captured on the following day in a straw rack about six miles from Brentsville. On the following day he was sent for the jailer and Sheriff Goodwin, and told them that he could not go to his Maker in prayer with a lie on his lips. He acknowledged his guilt and disclaimed having any accomplices, and stated that he was ready to die. Continuing, he said that on the evening of the murder he took some meat, and that Mr. Herndon threatened to prosecute him that he went into the house to try to induce the old man to promise not to prosecute, but that he refused to retract; and that they then commenced quarrelling, and Mr. Herndon took up the ax and threatened to knock his brains out. Fouks retreated to the door (the door being open,) seized the ax handle, and to use his own words, "Old Satan was upon me." I struck Mr. Herndon and took de ax from him, and den struck de old woman twice and de ax. I didn't

strike with neither side and den I strike de ax (the colored boy) twice wid de ax also.

In reply to another question he said that old Mr. Herndon had his face towards him when he struck him, that Mrs. H. was close by, but he did not interfere he had gotten hold of the ax and struck her down as he supposed. When he killed the old people and the boy he thought it was about eight o'clock. He further stated that he did not strike the old man with anything but the ax handle, but the old lady and the boy were killed with the ax; he was unable to get into the room at the time, but when he had finished his job he got the key of the door, took the money and took the keys of the bureau of Mrs. H.'s pocket; and hid up the bundle of gold but concluded not to carry it, but took the paper money and hid it in a box in the wash-pail, of which he told the jailer. He said he did not kill them for money, but out of sheer madness; that he killed the boy partly because he informed on him that he was the man who had partly because he was afraid he would tell. Since that time he has been visited by Revs. H. M. Strickler, B. P. Dunn, and — Marsh, who have labored faithfully to put his mind in a state of resignation upon his Maker.

Major W. W. Thornton, of the village, received a letter from Governor Kemper, some days ago, stating that application had been made to him to respite Fouks, and requesting the Major to go to the jail and see the condemned man and ascertain, if he could, if such respite would be advisable.

The Major visited Fouks on the 10th, and held a conversation with him, in which conversation the prisoner reiterated his guilt, and said he thought he ought to be hung. Maj. T. sent the result of this interview to the Governor.

Fouks, on being informed by Mr. Woodyard, jailer, that an effort was being made to put off his execution for a short time, said "he did not desire it to be put off," but wished the time was nearer at hand.

In regard to his body which it has already been stated, he had given away to Dr. W. George, of Stafford, it is years that he had consented to such a disposal, but on Wednesday last, when visited by his sister, he changed his mind and at her request announced that he desired to be buried on his old master's place, where, it is understood, he will be carried.

Jesse Fouks, about 19 years old, and was raised by Mr. J. H. O'Roar, about two miles from the scene of the murder. During his trial and the whole term of his imprisonment he has exhibited the most wonderful self-possession, and on Wednesday last, when he was brought into court, that he for the first time burst into tears, and manifested any feeling in his previous trial.

The execution will take place between 11 and 12 o'clock. The gallows will be erected on the north side of the Court House yard, it is built of heavy logs, five feet and a half apart, with a platform seven and a half feet from the ground. In front of the scaffold seats are arranged for the press within the enclosure, surrounding the scaffold.

The execution will take place between 11 and 12 o'clock. Revs. B. P. Dunn and Marsh are in attendance upon the prisoner, and to this hour, he states that he does not believe that his sins have been forgiven.

### The Execution.

BRENTSVILLE, PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, VIA MANASSAS, March 12.—The assemblage at Brentsville this morning fully reached expectations, about one thousand people being present to witness the execution of the sentence of the law upon Fouks.

Every precaution had been taken by the officers to preserve order. A guard of fifteen colored men was placed in the enclosure around the scaffold and a special police force of twenty-four white men were present, having been appointed by the County Judge.

Upon the ascension to the scaffold Rev. Mr. Marsh offered up a fervent prayer for the condemned, after which the minister stated that the unfortunate youth desired to say that he was verily guilty of the crime for which he was to be punished, and exhorted his race and color to escape from the bad effects of passion.

The criminal exhibited the utmost self-possession, and showed no sign of fear as the preparations for his execution were progressing.

At twenty minutes to one o'clock the trap was sprung, and Jesse Fouks was launched into eternity. At the instant the trap fell, but a single convulsive shudder ran through the frame of the culprit, and at eight minutes and a half of one life was pronounced extinct by Drs. Leach and Simpson.

A few minutes after death, the body was cut down by one of the colored guards, and it was found that the neck had been broken.

Thus terminated this dreadful affair which has occupied the attention of the community since the terrible murder of the innocent victims.