

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, The events began on April 22, 1897, when Richard Lacy accused Joseph McCoy, an African American teenager who had worked for Lacy for sixteen years, of sexually assaulting his daughter. McCoy was arrested without a warrant, and he denied the charge; and

WHEREAS, McCoy was locked in a cell at the Alexandria Police Station House, the current location of Alexandria City Hall. He was interrogated by Lieutenant James Smith with a reporter present. Smith reported McCoy confessed to the crime, despite his earlier denial; and

WHEREAS, On the evening of April 22, a mob attempted to break down the door of the Alexandria Police Station House, but they were repulsed by the officers on duty. The Mayor of Alexandria never took action after being informed of the first attack, and at 1 a.m. on April 23, a second attack overwhelmed the officers at the Station House; and

WHEREAS, Joseph McCoy was pulled from his cell and dragged to the South East corner of Cameron and Lee Streets. The devastating effects of the assault upon his body were described in a Washington Post article: The body of McCoy was left hanging to the lamppost for 15 minutes before it was cut down. Three bullet holes were found, one in the left shoulder and two bullets in the left thigh. The left eye was much swollen. As he was strung to the lamppost, he was struck on the head with a cobblestone... A pool of blood was at the base of the post; and

WHEREAS, between 1882 and 1968, 100 Virginians, including at least 11 in Northern Virginia, were lynched. The lynchings were among 4,743 reported nationwide during the same period. Just two years later, Benjamin Thomas was lynched at an Alexandria street corner known as Leadbeater's corner (the southwest corner of King and Fairfax Streets) on August 8, 1899. Lynching was never a federal offense; and

WHEREAS, The City of Alexandria condemns such acts and apologizes for its lynching history. The City seeks to inform all of our past and our troubled racial history, and to bear witness to these atrocities. Alexandria is committed to restorative justice so our community emerges stronger and more inclusive. In this way, the deaths of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas will never be forgotten.


NOW, THEREFORE, I, JUSTIN M. WILSON, Mayor of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, and on behalf of the Alexandria City Council, do hereby recognize today, April 23, 2021, as a day for us to remember the life, spirit and legacy – exactly 124 years later – of the death of:

“JOSEPH McCOY”


In the City of Alexandria and I call this observance to the attention of all our citizens, so that the City of Alexandria continues to always place first and foremost the rights of all humanity, so that our City may be an example for all.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have here unto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Alexandria to be affixed this 23rd of April, 2021.




MAYOR JUSTIN M. WILSON
On behalf of the City Council
of Alexandria, Virginia

ATTEST:


Gloria A. Sitton, CMC City Clerk