



**PRESS RELEASE** - For Immediate Release  
March 25, 2021

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**ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY DIGITIZES NEWLY DISCOVERED  
PRISON RECORDS AND FINGERPRINT CARDS OF SCOTTSBORO BOYS**

Montgomery, AL (03/25/2021) – The Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH) has digitized and made available online a group of 1931 state prison records created in the wake of death sentences for eight of the nine Scottsboro Boys. ADAH staff recently discovered the materials in the administrative files of Gov. Benjamin M. Miller (1931-1935) while conducting research in advance of the 90th anniversary of the arrests of nine Black men falsely accused of rape in Jackson County, Alabama. Their subsequent legal battles entailed some of the most infamous racial injustices of the twentieth century and helped to spur the civil rights movement.

On March 25, 1931, Olen Montgomery, Clarence Norris, Haywood Patterson, Ozie Powell, Willie Roberson, Charlie Weems, Eugene Williams, Andy Wright, and Roy Wright were wrongfully accused of raping two white women while traveling on a freight train in north Alabama. They were apprehended in Paint Rock and hastily tried in nearby Scottsboro. On April 9, 1931, eight of the nine young men were convicted and sentenced to death. A series of retrials and convictions followed, resulting in appeals that led to groundbreaking U.S. Supreme Court decisions. Collectively, the Scottsboro Boys served more than 100 years in prison. In 2013, Alabama enacted legislation permitting the posthumous pardoning of the three men whose convictions had not been overturned or pardoned during their lifetimes.

The newly digitized materials are Alabama Convict Department intake records created at Kilby Prison, where law enforcement officials delivered the eight men on April 27, 1931, following their initial trials and death sentences. Each record includes biographical data on the subject, a physical description, next of kin, fingerprints, and a photograph. On all eight records, the prison term is indicated to be “DEATH – TO BE ELECTROCUTED.” The materials do not include a record for thirteen-year-old Roy Wright, whose initial prosecution ended in a mistrial due to his age.

ADAH staff found the materials among Convict Department files in the records of Governor Miller’s administration. Each intake record is marked with a stamp reading “RECEIVED / January 15, 1931 / Governor’s Office.” The date of the stamp is incorrect and presumably the result of a clerk forgetting to change the year at the start of January 1932. The Alabama Supreme Court heard appeals on the eight death sentences on January 20, 1932.

ADAH director Steve Murray said the records offer a compelling connection to an episode that drew global attention nearly a century ago. “The information preserved in these materials exemplifies the power of a record to take us to a specific moment in history. In addition to the physical descriptions of the men and the expressions in their photographs, we see their fingerprints and know that their hands pressed ink onto these cards at a moment when they expected to die as victims of wholly fabricated allegations and a justice system that was cruelly racist.”

Peggy Allen Towns, author of *Scottsboro Unmasked: Decatur’s Story*, on the subsequent retrials of the defendants, called the find “an amazing historical discovery that further unmask the Scottsboro Boys story.”

“Not only does this treasure add to this significant piece of our history,” said Towns, “but the description of each inmate makes one acknowledge that these innocent individuals were human beings. As we observe the 90th anniversary of the arrest, and in times of social injustices, my prayer is that our moral conscience is stirred to do the right thing.”

The records are available to view in the ADAH’s digital collections at <https://bit.ly/ADAHScottsboroBoysPrisonRecords>.

To learn more about the story of the Scottsboro Boys, visit <https://scottsboroboysmuseum.org/>

The Alabama Department of Archives and History is the state's government-records repository, a special-collections library and research facility, and home to the Museum of Alabama, the state history museum. It is located in downtown Montgomery, directly across the street from the State Capitol. To learn more, visit [www.archives.alabama.gov](http://www.archives.alabama.gov) or call (334) 242-4364.

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