

**Some Facts**  
about  
**The Murder Notes**  
in the  
**Phagan Case**

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**HENRY A. ALEXANDER**

### *To the Public:*

The two notes found placed by the dead body of little Mary Phagan, eight or ten inches from her head, purporting to have been written by her to her mother to tell her that she had been killed by a long, tall, black negro, are obviously the most important piece of evidence in the case, and a careful study of them is indispensable in reaching a correct conclusion. There are probably not a hundred people who have ever seen these notes. Of the first, no picture at all has ever been published, probably on account of an expression it contains. Of the second, a small, dim one appeared in one of the papers, but so displayed that it might easily have escaped attention, and, without the first, its meaning and effect could not be well understood. The general public, whose opinion has had so tremendous an influence, has, therefore, reached its conclusions practically without an opportunity of considering the most vital piece of evidence in the case.

The undersigned himself had not seen the notes at all, and did not see copies of them until some time after the case had gone to the supreme court. Remembering the powerful effect they had on his own mind, he has strongly felt ever since that in the interest of justice the public ought to see them.

The first impression was that the notes were incoherent and meaningless. The undersigned never shared that view and always believed that if carefully studied, a clear and definite meaning would stand re-

vealed. On the pages following and opposite the photographs, is given, for the first time, what are believed to be correct and complete readings.

The negro Conley, when arrested on May 1st, five days after the murder, denied that he could write. He maintained this attitude until May 18th, when, confronted with the proof, he admitted he could write. On May 24th, he made an affidavit to the effect that he had written the notes, but claimed that they had been dictated to him by Leo M. Frank. The supreme question in the case, therefore, is: Were they conceived and dictated to the negro by Frank, or were they not?

Speaking for himself, the undersigned must say that after a close study of these notes, he has been unable to detect anything indicating that they were dictated by a white man, or any trace of a white man in them.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to place the question before the public, and give an opportunity for the study of these notes.

HENRY A. ALEXANDER.

The First Note.

ona... Co.

37 & 39 SOUTH FORSYTH ST.

ATLANTA, GA., 190

PUT THIS ORDER NUMBER ON YOUR BILL.

Bell Phone Main 171.

Order No. 1918

Mam that negro  
 fire down here did  
 this I went to make  
 water and paper  
 down the hole  
 a long tall negro dog  
 that has a nose  
 long beam to his eyes  
 a bright white beam with

Written on yellow sheet. Found lying close to the head a few minutes after he arrived, by Police Sergeant L. S. Dobbs, at 3:25 A. M. Sunday morning, April 27, 1913, immediately after the discovery of the murder. The address "Mam" and the crowded condition of the page indicate that this was the note first written.

See its reading on next page.

Reading of note on opposite page with errors uncorrected:

**"Mam that negro hire down here did this i went to make water and he push me down that hole a long tall negro black that hoo it wase long sleam tall negro i wright while play with me"**

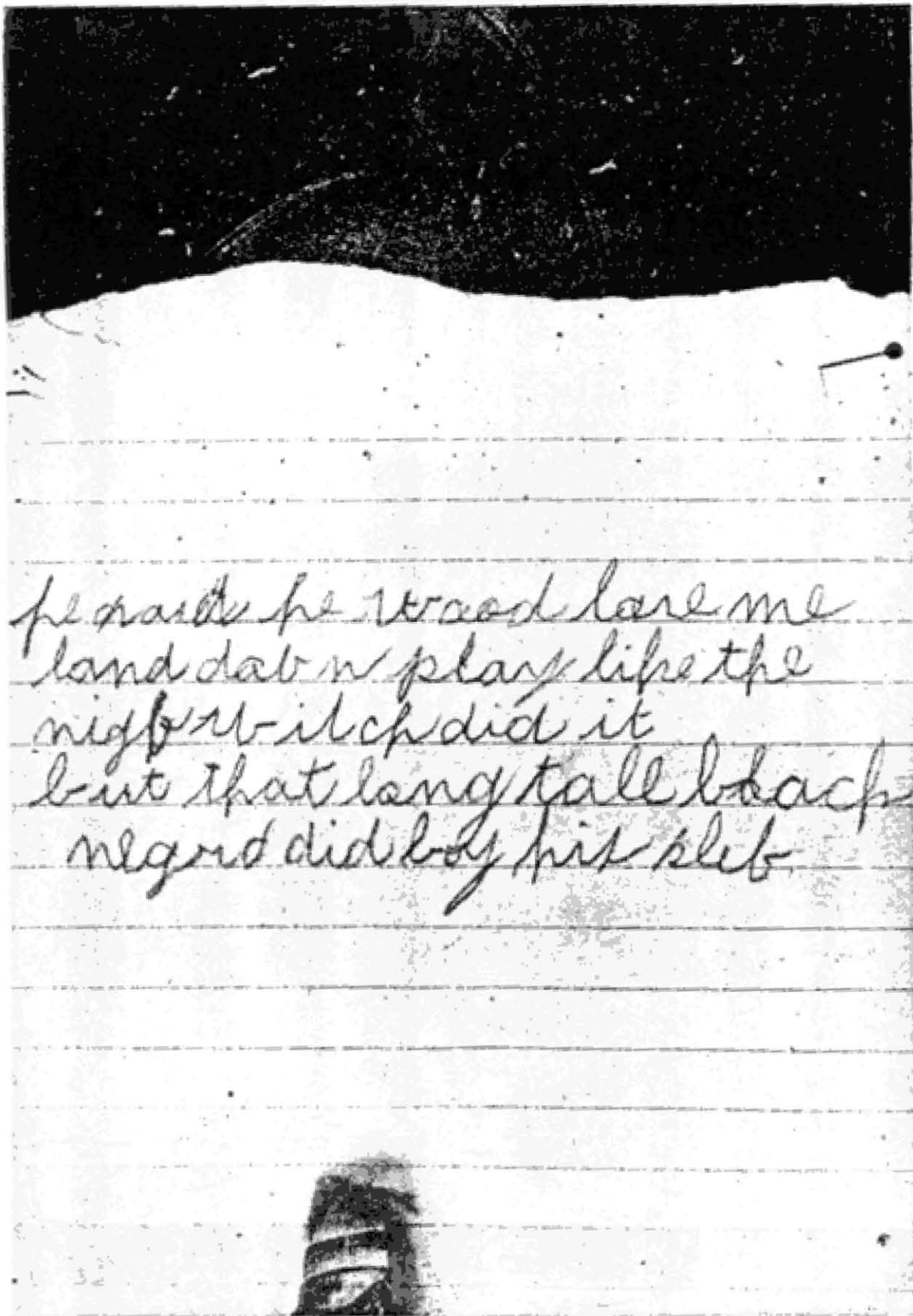
Reading with errors corrected:

**"Mama: That negro hired down here did this. I went to make water and he pushed me down that hole, a long tall negro, black, that who it was, long slim tall negro. I write while play with me."\***

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\*The purpose of the words "I write while play with me" was probably this: Realizing dimly that the question would arise how the girl mortally injured or dead could have done any writing, or how he, the murderer, standing over her and watching every movement, came to permit her to write notes incriminating himself, this was intended as an explanation. In other words, the reader of the notes was expected to believe that she wrote them without the murderer seeing her do it while he was "playing" with her.

## The Second Note.



he said he would have me  
land down play like the  
nigh-witch did it  
but that long tall black  
negro did by his self

Written on a white sheet. Found lying close to the head at same time with the other note. Nearby was found the scratch pad from which the leaf had been torn. The black object in the lower part of the cut is the photographer's clip holding the sheet in position. See reading on next page.

Reading of note on opposite page with errors uncorrected:

**“he said he wood love me land down play like the night witch did it but that long tall black negro did buy his slef”**

Reading with errors corrected, and the two words in parenthesis supplied:

**“He said he would love me laying down (and would) play like the night witch\* did it but that long tall black negro did by himself.”**

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\*It is probable that in reading these words, “night witch” as “night watchman” a fundamental mistake has been made all through the case. The chance remark of the night watchman, Newt Lee, that the note meant him, has probably thrown the public entirely off the track. While the writer of the notes made repeated errors in his spelling, he made none in correctly reproducing the sound of words, and it is extremely unlikely that he intended to say “night watchman” when he wrote “night witch.” The probabilities are that he meant exactly what he wrote, “night witch,” and that if he had intended to write “night watchman,” he would have spelled it as it sounds. If the word “night watchman” was intended, how can one account for the entire absence of any letters corresponding to the syllable “man”?

It seems to the writer of this article that in this expression there is disclosed a piece of superstition characteristic of the negro, and totally foreign to a white man. The idea that the girl was killed by a night witch, or, as the note expresses it, that the “long tall black negro” would “play like the night witch did it” is inconceivable as the thought of a white man.

dear mother langy tall  
black negro did this  
boy pin shelf he told  
me if i wood langy dabr  
he wood have me play up  
the night witchman  
did this boy pin shelf

Specimen of Conley's handwriting made at dictation of the police. A comparison of this handwriting with that of the notes on the preceding pages demonstrates, independently of Conley's admission, that their writer was the same person. Compare particularly the letters: "h," "w," "o," "a," and "b."

Photographs of notes were made from originals by A. K. Hawkes Co., Atlanta; the cuts, by Southern Engraving Co., Atlanta.