

***The Columbiana Chronicle***  
**Thursday, February 25, 1897**

HUNG.

WALTER MCADAMS PAYS THE PENALTY UPON THE GALLOWS.

“Jesus Save Me, Save My Dying Soul”  
Were His Last Words as He Dropped to Eternity.

MADE FULL CONFESSION OF MURDER.

The first legal execution since the war took place in Columbiana Friday, it having been 33 years since a gallows was used in Shelby County [The People's Advocate indicates "This is the first execution in this county since 1863."]. Walter McAdams, colored, aged 24 years, who murdered his wife near Wilsonville in the spring of 1894, gave his life as a penalty for the horrible crime. A short time before the execution a Chronicle representative, through the courtesy of Deputy H.M. Norris, was allowed an interview with the doomed man. We found him in a lower cell of the jail alone, quietly smoking a cigar having just taken a stiff toddy to steady his nerves. His mind seemed wholly occupied with thoughts of his near approach to death. He seemed a little disposed to talk, but answered our questions readily. He stated that he was guilty of the crime with which he was charged, but that he had no fear for the future. He had made peace with his Maker and was ready to die. At the conclusion of our interview two colored preachers, Revs. Lee Jones and James Farrier, of this place, were permitted to enter the cell. A chapter from the Bible was read and commented upon, after which Rev. Farrier prayed most earnestly for the prisoner that he might be given grace to sustain him through the trying ordeal before him. At the conclusion of his prayer he asked McAdams this question: "Walter, you have only a few moments now to live and before you die I want you to tell me on your honor if you have ever committed any other crime save the murder of your wife, and is there now or ever has been any one convicted of a crime you committed?" "No, sir, never," was Walter's reply. Rev. Farrier explained his object in asking the question that he had heard that a negro was now serving out a sentence for a crime of which many thought he was guilty. Previous to this time Sheriff Vest and Deputy Norris having arranged all the details at the gallows, came in and unlock the massive door to the cage and announced that the hour had arrived for the execution. The doomed man stepped from the cell, and started toward the gallows, followed closely by the officers and Guards N.M. Mosteller, J.W. Pilgreen and E.L. Crumpton. As the foot of the stairs leading up to the gallows was reached the prisoner faltered, staggered and would have sunk to the ground but for the timely assistance of Deputy Norris and the sheriff was almost carried the trembling and now thoroughly frightened man to the top. He was placed on the trap facing the small group within the enclosure and was asked if he had anything to say. None of his relatives being present, he called up, one by one, several of his acquaintances, white and colored, and bade them good bye, all the while trembling violently and calling on his Maker at every breath.

He made no confession upon the gallows, the time being occupied in leave-taking and prayer. He expressed anxiety to see his photograph taken early that morning by T.J. Weaver. A proof of the picture was produced and shown him, upon which he looked for several moments with evident satisfaction. With a new suit of clothes, provided by Sheriff Vest, the picture doubtless showed him to be better advantage than ever before in life. At 12:45 p.m. the rope was adjusted his feet and hands bound and the black cap placed over his head. Up to this moment McAdams evidently had indulged some faint ray of hope that possibly the governor might save his neck, but when the cap was drawn over his face all hope faded and he began to pray fervently. In his petition he remembered the judge and jury before whom he was tried, the sheriff, Deputy Norris, those who had prayed in his cell, and the colored preachers who had stayed with him to the last. In the mist of his prayer he asked to see R.E. Mixon, a colored preacher in the group below. Mixon ascended the stairs and was asked if he would preach the funeral sermon. Being assured that he would on next Sabbath or the fourth Sabbath in March, McAdams proceeded with his prayer, which consumed one minute. At its conclusion he was asked if he was ready. He replied that he was. Sheriff Vest and Deputy Norris said, "Good-bye Walter," and a moment later, 12:46, the sheriff sprung the trap. "Jesus save me: save my dying soul" cried McAdams as he shot by the reporter in his fearful plunge of nine feet. He drew up his feet a few times, but made no other movements. Drs. H.C. McAdams, J.H. and H.I. Williams and J.J. DuBose watched his pulse closely and pronounced him dead in 11 minutes, or at 12:57. At 1:04 he was cut down and placed in a coffin preparatory to burial. A thorough examination was made by the physicians and they agreed that his neck was not broken but that he died from strangulation. Soon after the body was taken to the county grave yard at the poor farm and interred. Sheriff Vest and Deputy Norris performed their unpleasant task with a coolness and precision that was commendable, and The Chronicle is ready to accord them there just dues.