

Join the Metro Historical Commission
for a

COMMUNITY MEETING

to discuss a proposed historical marker
for the 1924 lynching of Samuel Smith

TUESDAY, JUNE 22

6:00 PM

Open to the public!

Cane Ridge Community Club

6043 Cane Ridge Road, Antioch, TN 37013

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY



Metropolitan Historical Commission
Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
3000 Granny White Pike
Nashville, Tennessee 37204
Telephone: (615) 862-7970

Historical Marker for the Lynching of Samuel Smith COMMUNITY MEETING Tuesday, June 22, 2021 6:00 PM

- I. Welcome
MHC Director Tim Walker and MHC Chair Dr. Clay Bailey
- II. Remarks from Council Member
CM Joy Styles (D32) **
- III. Brief Synopsis of Marker Text and Historical Context
Twana Chick and Jessica Reeves
- IV. Community Comments
- V. Questions
- VI. Adjourn

**CM John Rutherford (D31) will not be able to attend due to a scheduling conflict. He has signed off on the meeting and will review the meeting recording to hear the public's comments.

Samuel Smith marker text and bibliography

Side 1- Racial Terror Lynchings in America

After Southern states overthrew Reconstruction and began undermining the gains newly freed African Americans achieved during the era, white supremacists used racial terror lynchings to intimidate African Americans and enforce segregation.¹ Thousands of Black men, women and children were lynched in the United States between 1865 and 1950.² White mobs often committed these lynchings close to the scenes of alleged crimes to intimidate and terrorize the local Black community.³

¹ Christopher Waldrep, ed., *Lynching in America: A History in Documents* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 99; Shawn Leigh Alexander, ed., *Reconstruction Violence and the Ku Klux Klan Hearings* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015), 12-16; Douglas R. Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America's Most Progressive Era* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), 287; Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings* (New York: Humanity Books, 2002), 39; Michael J. Pfeifer, *The Roots of Rough Justice: Origins of American Lynching* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2011), 82; Sherrilyn A. Ifill, *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-First Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 58; Michael J. Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 44; Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 92.

² See *Chicago Tribune* annual lynching tallies 1882-1968; "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror (Third Edition)," Equal Justice Initiative, <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report/>; Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), vii; Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 136; Arthur F. Raper, *Mass Violence in America: The Tragedy of Lynching* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), 1.

³ Michael J. Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 40; Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 21; Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 90; James R. McGovern, *Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 1.

Side 2- Lynching of Samuel Smith

On Dec. 15, 1924, Samuel Smith, age 15, was lynched after being abducted from Nashville General Hospital.⁴ Two days earlier, Smith and his uncle had car trouble and attempted to take parts from Ike Eastwood's garage.⁵ Shots were exchanged; Smith and Eastwood were wounded.⁶ Armed, masked, white men took Smith from the hospital and drove him near this location.⁷ He was stripped, hung and shot.⁸ People watched the lynching from their cars.⁹ The city offered a reward; no one was ever arrested.¹⁰

⁴ "Mob Lynches Young Negro," *Nashville Banner*, page 1, 11, December 16, 1924; "Mob Lynches Negro Boy Who Shot Grocer," *Nashville Tennessean*, page 1, December 16, 1924.

⁵ "Negro Accused of Shooting Caught," *Nashville Banner*, page 4, December 13, 1924; "Mob Lynches Negro Boy Who Shot Grocer," *Nashville Tennessean*, page 5, December 16, 1924; "\$5,000 Reward For Arrest of Mob Offered," *Nashville Tennessean*, page 1, December 17, 1924.

⁶ "Mob Lynches Negro Boy Who Shot Grocer," *Nashville Tennessean*, page 1, December 16, 1924.

⁷ "Mob Lynches Young Negro," *Nashville Banner*, page 11, December 16, 1924; "Mob Lynches Negro Boy Who Shot Grocer," *Nashville Tennessean*, page 1, December 16, 1924.

⁸ *Nashville Banner*, page 11.; *Nashville Tennessean*, page 1; "Sam Smith Accounts," Bob Briley, Grand Jury Investigation, 1925.

⁹ *Nashville Banner*, page 11 (states that shots were fired from automobiles).

¹⁰ "State Moves Against Mob." *Nashville Banner*, page 1, December 17, 1924; "\$5,000 Reward For Arrest of Mob Offered," *Nashville Tennessean*, page 1, December 17, 1924; "Next Grand Jury to Prove Lynching," *Nashville Banner*, page 10, December 31, 1924; "DeBow Instructs Jury on Lynching," *Nashville Banner*, page 1, January 6, 1925. "The Law's Delay," *Johnson City Staff-News*, page 5, February 3, 1925.

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- “State Moves Against Mob.” *Nashville Banner*, December 17, 1924.
- “\$5,000 Reward For Arrest of Mob Offered.” *Nashville Tennessean*, December 17, 1924.
- “Ike Eastwood Dies of Wounds.” *Nashville Banner*, December 18, 1924.
- “Lawyers Employed to Prosecute Mob.” *Nashville Banner*, December 19, 1924.
- “Next Grand Jury to Prove Lynching.” *Nashville Banner*, December 31, 1924.
- “DeBow Instructs Jury on Lynching.” *Nashville Banner*, January 6, 1925.
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