

PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY – COURT TRANSCRIPT AND DRAWINGS

Recommended for grades 7-12

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION:

In 1955, the murder of Emmett Till, a Black teenager from Chicago, and the subsequent criminal trial in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, attracted international attention and sparked the Civil Rights Movement.

Injustice: The Trial for the Murder of Emmett Till focuses on the trial through courtroom sketches by Franklin McMahon. The drawings give a visual account of a trial that amplified the inequities Black Americans face within the US court system, including a lack of equal protection under the law.

Such injustices were challenged by the courageous actions of Emmett's mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, and others who took civic actions against racial injustice and sparked the Civil Rights Movement. This exhibition prompts visitors to consider how Emmett's legacy continues in those seeking justice for Black lives today.

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY:

Based on trial testimony and courtroom drawings, students will read and examine key parts of the trial, learn more about the people involved, and consider how the court transcripts and drawings shape our understandings of the trial.

GOALS:

- ◆ Interpret the courtroom testimony from the trial for the murder of Emmett Till and analyze and interpret the courtroom sketches and final pen and ink wash drawings.
- ◆ Consider how these primary sources shape our understanding of the events and people related to the trial.
- ◆ Recognize the legacy of Emmett Till, this trial and its relationship to the Civil Rights Movement, and beyond.

NOTE: We recommend incorporating this activity within a larger unit about Emmett Till, the Great Migration, or the Civil Rights Movement. It's essential that Emmett's story remains part of our national memory as we engage with these histories.

THIS PACKET INCLUDES:

- ◆ Standards Alignment (p. 2)
- ◆ Suggested activity outline (p. 3)
- ◆ Background information, location information, key people involved in the case, and notes on trial transcripts (pp. 4–8)
- ◆ Additional resources about Emmett Till and the trial. (pp. 9–10)
- ◆ Student materials (pages not numbered)
 - ◇ Trial Transcript Analysis Graphic Organizer
 - ◇ Courtroom Drawing Analysis Graphic Organizer
 - ◇ 8 sets of trial transcripts with an accompanying drawing by Franklin McMahon



STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

This packet is aligned the Illinois Social Science Standards, National Council for the Social Studies C3 Framework, and Common Core Anchor Standards.

ILLINOIS STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

Middle School:

- ♦ SS.6-8.IS.2.MC
- ♦ SS.6-8.IS.3.MC
- ♦ SS.6-8.IS.4.MdC
- ♦ SS.6-8.CV.1.MC
- ♦ SS.6-8.CV.2.MCa
- ♦ SS.6-8.CV.5.LC
- ♦ SS.6-8.H.1.MC
- ♦ SS.6-8.H.2.MC
- ♦ SS.6-8.H.4.MC

High School:

- ♦ SS.9-12.IS.4
- ♦ SS.9-12.IS.6
- ♦ SS.9-12.IS.8
- ♦ SS.9-12.CV.1
- ♦ SS.9-12.CV.5
- ♦ SS.9-12.CV.9
- ♦ SS.9-12.H.1
- ♦ SS.9-12.H.7
- ♦ SS.9-12.H.8
- ♦ SS.9-12.H.13

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES C3 FRAMEWORK

Middle School:

- ♦ D1.1.6-8
- ♦ D2.Civ.1.6-8
- ♦ D2.Civ.2.6-8
- ♦ D2.His.1.6-8
- ♦ D2.His.3.6-8
- ♦ D2.His.4.6-8
- ♦ D2.His.11.6-8
- ♦ D2.His.13.6-8
- ♦ D2.His.14.6-8
- ♦ D3.1.6-8
- ♦ D3.4.6-8
- ♦ D4.1.6-8

High School:

- ♦ D1.1.9-12
- ♦ D2.Civ.2.9-12
- ♦ D2.Civ.5.9-12
- ♦ D2.His.1.9-12
- ♦ D2.His.3.9-12
- ♦ D2.His.4.9-12
- ♦ D2.His.11.9-12
- ♦ D2.His.14.9-12
- ♦ D3.1.9-12
- ♦ D3.4.9-12
- ♦ D4.1.9-12

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

(apply to both Middle and High School)

Reading

- ♦ 1
- ♦ 4
- ♦ 7
- ♦ 9

Writing

- ♦ 1
- ♦ 4
- ♦ 7

Speaking and Listening

- ♦ 2
- ♦ 4



PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY – COURT TRANSCRIPT AND DRAWINGS

MATERIALS:

- ◆ Copies of assigned transcript excerpt, drawing, and graphic organizer for each student
- ◆ Writing utensil, highlighter, and markers
- ◆ Larger size paper or posterboard for reporting out; if needed, make an extra copy of transcript and drawing single sided
- ◆ Tape/Glue
- ◆ *Optional:* small Post-it notes for student comments

This packet examines what happened in the courtroom. It is important to ensure that students have an understanding of Emmett's story and how it relates to Southern Jim Crow society prior to doing this activity. To set the larger context, we recommend using materials created by Facing History and Ourselves and other organizations. See the Resources section (pp. 9–10) for more details.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY:

1. Review the story of Emmett Till. As a starting point, you can use information provided in this packet including timelines, key people involved, locations, and the background information (see pp. 4–8). This will help students prepare students before analyzing the testimony. Review basic judicial terms and courtroom procedures (see Resources section, pp. 9–10).
2. Divide the class into small groups (up to 8 unique groups). Assign each small group one witness's testimony excerpt and drawing. It would be helpful for the groups to have access to the additional information on pp. 5–8 while they work.
3. Tell students to read the transcript excerpt first and complete that portion of the graphic organizer. Then look at the drawing and complete that portion.
4. Once students have finished, it's time to prepare their display. They will need the large paper or posterboard, tape/glue, and markers. They should imagine that they are a newspaper reporter writing a story on this witness testimony and drawing.
 - ◆ First, tape or glue one highlighted/circled copy of the courtroom transcript and one copy of the drawing to the top of the paper/posterboard.
 - ◆ Then they can create a headline. Their headline should be short, but attention getting and express the main point of their analysis.
 - ◆ Finally, underneath the headline, they should write a 2–3 sentence summary of their conclusions.
5. Post the student work around the room and do a gallery walk. Using small Post-it notes or something similar ask students to compare their drawing/transcript with their classmates based on the prompts.
 - ◆ This display sheds new light on my transcript/drawing...
 - ◆ My transcript/drawing adds the following new information...
 - ◆ My transcript/drawing agrees with...
 - ◆ My transcript/drawing counters this...
6. Use the following questions to facilitate a whole group discussion or as an exit slip.
 - ◆ What is impactful about analyzing the courtroom drawings and transcript side-by-side?
 - ◆ How does this change your understanding of the people involved in the trial?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Watch a portion of Collaboraction's filmed stage play *Trial in the Delta: The Murder of Emmett Till* (see p. 9). Invite students to journal their reflections on the film and how it complements and contrasts with their experience reading the trial transcript excerpts and studying the courtroom drawings.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Date	
Aug. 21, 1955	Emmett Till and his cousin Wheeler Parker Jr. arrive in Mississippi at the home of their great-uncle Moses "Mose" Wright.
Aug. 24, 1955	Emmett and a group of kids visit Bryant's Grocery and Meat Market. Emmett buys gum from Carolyn Bryant, and some witnesses say he whistled at her.
Aug. 28, 1955	Roy Bryant and J. W. Milam kidnap Emmett from Moses (Mose) Wright's home in LeFlore County.
Aug. 29, 1955	Roy Bryant and J. W. Milam are arrested on kidnapping charges related to Till's disappearance.
Aug. 31, 1955	Emmett Till's body is pulled from the Tallahatchie River. Moses (Mose) Wright identifies the body based on a ring with the initials L.T.
Sept. 2, 1955	Emmett Till's body arrives back in Chicago. His mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, received the casket and she is photographed collapsing in grief.
Sept. 3, 1955	Emmett Till's funeral and visitation is held at Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ. Mamie Till opts for an open casket funeral. Thousands gather to pay their respects and bear witness to Emmett's brutally beaten body.
Sept. 6, 1955	Emmett Till is buried in Burr Oak Cemetery. A grand jury indicts Milam and Bryant for the murder of Emmett Till..
Sept. 19, 1955	The trial begins in Sumner, Mississippi. An all-white, all-male jury of 12 members is selected.
Sept. 20, 1955	Judge Curtis Swango recesses the court to allow for more time to find witnesses.
Sept. 21, 1955	Moses "Mose" Wright openly accuses Milam and Bryant of kidnapping Emmett Till and physically points his finger at them.
Sept. 21- 23, 1955	During this period of the trial, the prosecutors called 12 witnesses, including Mamie Till-Mobley, and a surprise witness, Willie Reed. The Defense called 10 witnesses, including Sheriff Strider of Tallahatchie County and Carolyn Bryant. She testified in front of the court, but not the jury due to objections from the prosecution that were sustained by the Court.
Sept. 23, 1955	After 67 minutes of deliberation, Milam and Bryant are acquitted of murdering Emmett Till. Moses "Mose" Wright and Willie Reed are smuggled out of Mississippi to Chicago for their safety.
Sept. 30, 1955	Milam and Bryant are released on bond; kidnapping charges are still pending.
Nov. 9, 1955	Wright and Reed testify before a grand jury in LeFlore County for the kidnapping case against Bryant and Milam. The grand jury refuses to indict. Bryant and Milam are freed.

LOCATIONS

The Mississippi Delta

The Mississippi Delta's rich soil and large water source made "the Delta" an important agricultural region. Before the Civil War, a third of all the cotton in the world was produced there using the labor of enslaved African people. The Delta is connected to racial injustice, wars, continued activism for reform and citizenship, and it is a starting point for 400,000 African Americans who left the South for jobs and citizenship rights during the Great Migration. The Delta holds complex American stories and it is land of rich culinary, religious, artistic, and cultural heritage that continues today.

Money, Mississippi

A small community near Greenwood, Mississippi. In the 1950s a cotton mill operated in the town and about 400 people lived there. It was a stop on the Yazoo Mississippi Valley Railroad.

Bryant Grocery Store, Money, Mississippi

This store was owned by Roy Bryant. His wife Carolyn often helped run the store. This is where Emmett Till, his cousins, and friends visited before his kidnapping and murder. During that visit, Carolyn Bryant claimed Emmett acted inappropriately.

Moses "Mose" Wright's Home, outskirts of Money, MS

Emmett and his cousin, Wheeler Parker Jr., were visiting Moses Wright and his family near Money, Mississippi. The Wrights' home is where Emmett was kidnapped by Bryant and Milam.

Le Flore County

Rural county in the northwestern corner of Mississippi. This area and surrounding counties make up the "Delta" region of Mississippi. Moses Wright's home and Bryant's Grocery were both located in LeFlore County.

The Milam Barn, Sunflower County

The Milam Barn near Drew, Mississippi, was owned by Leslie Milam, brother and half-brother to J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant. Sometimes just called the Barn, this location is where Emmett was taken by Milam and Bryant. It was here that Willie Reed testified that he heard someone being beaten.

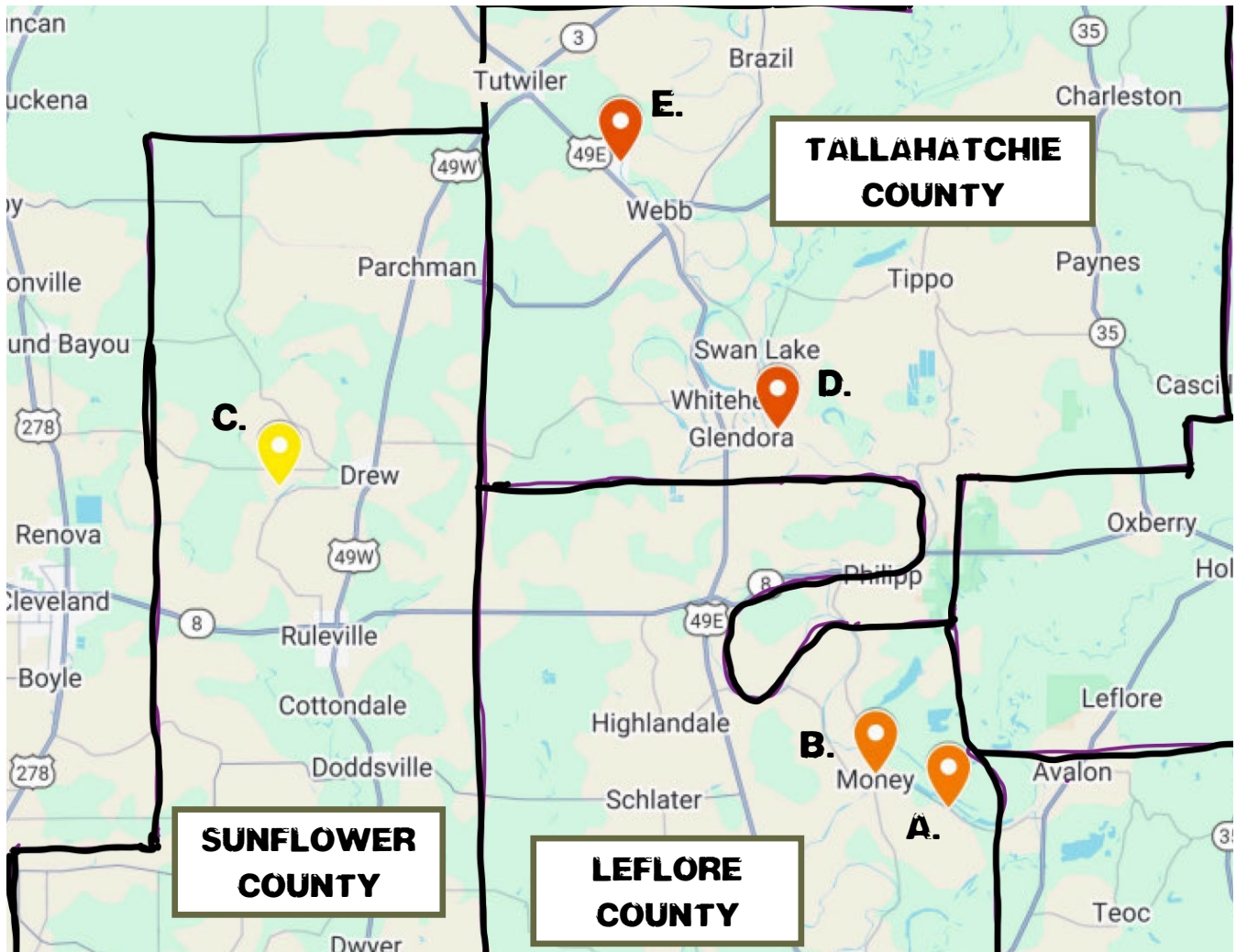
Graball Landing, Tallahatchie River

Graball Landing is known as the location where Emmett Till's body was pulled from the Tallahatchie River near Glendora, Mississippi, though some historians suggest other locations. The memorial signage at this location has been vandalized multiple times and is currently bulletproof and weighs nearly 500 pounds.

Sumner, MS

The Tallahatchie County Courthouse in Sumner, Mississippi, was the location of Roy Byrant and J. W. Milam's murder trial. The trial took place in Tallahatchie County because that was where Emmett Till's body was found.

LOCATIONS



←→ = Approx. 3 miles

LOCATIONS:

- A. Moses "Mose" Wright's Home
- B. Byrant Grocery Store
- C. The Milam Barn
- D. Graball Landing, Tallahatchie River
- E. Courthouse in Sumner, Mississippi

KEY PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE TRIAL

Emmett Till – The son of Mamie and Louis Till, Emmett was born July 25, 1941, in Chicago. His parents had traveled north during the Great Migration. Growing up, Emmett had polio which left him with a stutter to his speech. Despite that, he was described by family as a happy and confident 14 year old with a good sense of humor. In August of 1955, he and a cousin traveled to Mississippi to visit family.

Roy Bryant and J. W. Milam – Roy Bryant ran a small grocery store in Money, Mississippi. J. W. Milam was his half-brother. To make extra money, both men sometimes worked as a truck drivers. Bryant and Milam were arrested for the kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till. They were acquitted of the murder of Emmett Till and not tried for the kidnapping that they had previously admitted to. In January of 1956, in a *Look* magazine article, they admitted to killing Emmett.

Judge Curtis Swango – Judge Swango presided over the court proceedings during the trial. It began on Monday, September. 19, 1955, with jury selection and ended on Friday, September. 23, with an acquittal for Milam and Bryant. In the trial transcript, he is often referred to as “The Court.”

Gerald Chatham, Robert Smith III, Hamilton Caldwell – These men were the three prosecutors representing the State during the trial. Their job was to use evidence and witness testimony to make the case to the jury that Bryant and Milam were guilty “beyond a reasonable doubt.” Unfortunately, convincing an all-white jury was an impossible task.

Moses “Mose” Wright – Moses Wright was Emmett Till’s great-uncle, and Emmett and his cousin were staying with him during their time in Mississippi. Wright testified during the trial that Milam and Bryant were the ones who took Emmett in the middle of the night on August 28. He also bravely stood and pointed at the two men in open court, which was unthinkable for an African American man to do at that time. Following the trial, he was smuggled out of Mississippi to Chicago for his safety.

Dept. Sheriff John Cothran – Dept. Sheriff Cothran testified for the prosecution. After the trial, he arrested Milam in LeFlore County, Mississippi, for the kidnapping of Emmett Till. Milam admitted to the kidnapping, but the case never went to trial. Cothran was a witness for the prosecution during the murder trial.

Mamie Bradley (Mamie Till-Mobley) – Mamie Till-Mobley was the mother of Emmett Till. She advocated for the return of his body to Chicago. She and her father flew down to Mississippi for the trial and to testify. Even though she and the prosecution knew a conviction was unlikely, she and her grief humanized the trial. She remained strong as the defense tried to question her identification of her son’s body.

Willie Reed – Willie Reed was 18 years old at the time of Emmett’s murder. He lived near Leslie Milam’s barn where he testified to seeing J. W. Milam at a nearby well. He also said under oath that he heard beatings and screaming coming from the barn. Reed feared retaliation and left Mississippi after the trial. He changed his name and started a new life in Chicago. He rarely spoke of the murder and trial due to the trauma he experienced.

J. J. Breland, C. Sidney Carlton, J. W. Kellum, John W. Whitten Jr., Harvey Henderson – These were the lawyers defending Milam and Bryant during the trial. They donated their services to the men who were otherwise unable to pay for their defense.

KEY PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE TRIAL

Carolyn Bryant – Carolyn Bryant was the wife of defendant Roy Bryant. On the stand, she claimed that Emmett Till made advances toward and physically touched her in their grocery store in Money, Mississippi.

Sheriff H. C. Strider – Strider was sheriff of Tallahatchie County where Emmett's body was found. He tried to have Emmett's body buried the same day it was found, until Mamie Till requested for the body to be sent back to Chicago. He testified during the trial that the body was in the water for 10-15 days so there was no way it could be Emmett's. He also was in charge of seating and access to the courtroom during the trial.

The All-White, All-Male Jury – J. A. Shaw Jr.; Ed Duvaney; Bishop Matthews; L. L. Price; Howard Armstrong; Ray Tribble; Davis Newton; James Toole; George Holland; Travis Thomas; Gus Ramsey; and Jim Pennington

Juries are selected from voter registration within the county the trial is taking place in. In Tallahatchie County, voter suppression kept most African Americans and white women out of the jury pool. The jury deliberated for just 67 minutes after receiving their instructions from the judge. Jury deliberations often take days or weeks, making 67 minutes a very short time considering the seriousness of the charges and the amount of evidence and testimony in this trial. Jurors later claimed the reason it took even that long was because they stopped to have a Coke. Other post-trial comments from the jurors indicated their racist attitudes. These comments called into question their ability to be "fair and impartial."

James O'Day – James O'Day was the court reporter tasked with taking shorthand notes of the testimony and all court proceedings and then typing them up for the state records.

Franklin McMahon – Franklin McMahon was a Chicago-based artist on his first assignment for *Life* magazine. He documented the trial of Bryant and Milam for the murder of Emmett Till. He sketched the critical moments of the trial and key people involved. He noted the indifference of the defendants and the bravery of many of the witnesses. McMahon made simple pencil sketches and turned them into detailed ink and wash compositions, 6 of which were published in *Life* magazine.

NOTES ON COURT TRANSCRIPTS

No official transcripts were believed to exist until 2005, when the media reported the FBI had located a third-hand copy of the proceedings. The Emmett Till archives at Florida State University has a downloadable copy of the transcript available at <https://repository.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu%3A390158>.

Court reporters try to replicate the exact words, phrasing, and pronunciation of the witnesses. Sometimes mistakes are made. As you and your students read the transcript please note that we have not corrected spelling issues, though in some cases proper spelling is noted in [brackets]. Additionally, some of the witnesses used African American Vernacular English (AAVE) which is an English dialect spoken by many Black Americans. AAVE has its own unique grammar, vocabulary, and accent features.

Chicago History Museum

- *Injustice: The Trial for the Murder of Emmett Till* <https://www.chicagohistory.org/exhibition/injustice-the-trial-for-the-murder-of-emmett-till/>
- “CHM Blog: He Would Have Been 79” by Charles E. Bethea <https://www.chicagohistory.org/he-would-have-been-79/>
- *Chicago History Magazine* Article: “Emmett Tills Day in Court” by Joy Bivins, 2005; <https://issuu.com/chicagohistorymuseum/docs/redacted-2005fall-chm-chicagohistor>
- *Chicago History Magazine* Article: “Get Out There and Make a Change”: The Civil Rights Era Pictorial Reporting of Franklin McMahon by Heidi Samuelson, 2025 <https://www.chicagohistory.org/app/uploads/2025/08/Samuelson-Franklin-McMahon-2024-5Win-ChicagoHistory-Vol48-No2-2.pdf>

Curricular Resources

- **Facing History and Ourselves:** “I Wanted the Whole World to See”: The Murder of Emmett Till <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/i-wanted-whole-world-see-murder-emmett-till>
This is a six-lesson unit with a summative assessment. Each lesson includes activities and student materials designed for 1 to 2 class periods. In addition to the lesson materials, Facing History and Ourselves also provides notes that cover teaching emotionally challenging content, framing the unit for students, and meeting students where they are.
- **Florida State University Libraries:** The Emmett Till Archives <https://guides.lib.fsu.edu/Till>
Includes the trial transcript, images, media coverage, educator resources, and a well-rounded resource page, including an extensive book list.
- **Judicial Learning Center:** Players in the Courtroom <https://judiciallearningcenter.org/the-players-in-the-courtroom/>
This resource outlines the people involved in courtroom trials and their roles and responsibilities. In this circumstance focus on the prosecuting attorney and criminal defendant. There is also a diagram of a modern day courtroom, which is not an exact match to that of the courthouse in Sumner, Mississippi.
- **American Bar Association:** “How Courts Work” https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/resources/law_related_education_network/how_courts_work/cc_trials/
This page contains links to separate pages outlining the various steps of a trial and a diagram to visually represent how court cases usually go. This website is part of a larger set of information about the court system.

Historic Sites and Organizations

- Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument <https://www.nps.gov/till/index.htm>
- Emmett Till Interpretive Center <https://www.emmett-till.org/>
- Emmett Till Legacy Foundation <https://emmetttilllegacyfoundation.com/>
- Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley Institute <https://www.thetillinstitute.org/>

Collaboration “Trial in the Delta: The Murder of Emmett Till”

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/video/top-videos-home/trial-in-the-delta-watch-re-enactment-of-trial-over-emmett-tills-murder/2831612/>

This stage play is a reenactment of the court proceedings in Sumner, Mississippi. A recording of the play is available on NBC Chicago’s website as well as Peacock. Note: the whole play is approx. 1 hour and 30 minutes, the first 5 or so minutes are interviews with members of Emmett’s family.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

Other Resources

- PBS The American Experience, Emmett Till
Film: The Murder of Emmett Till <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/till/> This webpage includes the film in Spanish and English, clips from the film, a timeline, a series of articles on the people involved in the case, and the legacy and impact of Emmett Till.
- PBS The American Experience, Lynching in America
Article: Lynching in America <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/emmett-lynching-america/> This article outlines the history of lynching and its role in maintaining white supremacy.
- “Emmett Till’s Death Inspired a Movement”
Article: Emmett Till’s Death Inspired a Movement <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/emmett-tills-death-inspired-movement> This article by the National Museum of African American History and Culture puts Emmett Till’s story into a wider context of the Civil Rights Movement.
- “All White Jury Acquits White Men Who Murdered 14 year old Emmett Till”, Equal Justice Initiative
Article: <https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/sep/23> This article includes some additional information about the trial and the testimonies of some of the witnesses.
- The Great Migration: Crash Course Black American History #24 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Woh63FIFDBk>
This approx. 12 minute video shares the history of the Great Migration through primary sources and cartoon-like imagery.
- Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA) <https://www.msdeltaheritage.com/>
The MDNHA explores the history and heritage of the Mississippi Delta and its impacts on the US
- National Park Service “Lower Mississippi Delta Region” <https://www.nps.gov/locations/lowermsdeltaregion/history-and-culture-of-the-mississippi-delta-region.htm>
This website created by the National Park Service digs deeper into the land, history, and people of the Mississippi Delta region.

Select Books

Note: The Chicago History Museum and Florida State University websites have extensive book lists.

Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime that Changed America by Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson, 2003

A Few Days Full of Trouble: Revelations on the Journey to Justice for My Cousin and Best Friend, Emmett Till by Reverend Wheeler Parker, Jr. and Christopher Benson, 2024

The Barn: The Secret History of A Murder in Mississippi by Wright Thompson, 2024

For Young People

A Wreath for Emmett Till by Marilyn Nelson and Philippe Lardy, 2009 (Printz Award Winner)

Choosing Brave: How Mamie Till-Mobley and Emmet Till Sparked the Civil Rights Movement by Angela Joy and Janelle Washington, 2022 (Caldecott Honor Book)

TRIAL TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

Read your trial transcript excerpt and respond to the following questions.

Name of Witness: _____

What are two things you learned from this testimony excerpt?

What, in your opinion, stood out most to you in this testimony? Why did you choose that?

Based on the questions asked of the witness, what is the attorney trying to communicate to the jury? If your excerpt has multiple lawyers, choose one interaction.

How does this testimony excerpt make you feel and why?



COURTROOM DRAWING ANALYSIS

Examine your courtroom drawing and respond to the following questions.

Name of Witness: _____

Circle two important elements of the drawings, design/art/feature. Why are they important?

What is the style of this drawing?

☐ Pencil Sketch ☐ Ink and Wash

If pencil sketch, what information is shared in the artist's notes?

If ink and wash, what details are included in addition to the main subject?

How does this drawing deepen your understanding of the excerpt you read?

How does this drawing make you feel? Why?



MOSES "MOSE" WRIGHT (A)



ICHi-038435a



TRIAL TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT – MOSES “MOSE” WRIGHT (A)

1st Witness for the State, Direct Examination by Gerald Chatham for the Prosecution

Question (Q) Now, Uncle Mose, after you and your family had gone to bed that night, I want you to tell the jury if any person or if one or more persons called at your home that night, and if they did, what time was it?

Answer (A) About two o'clock.

Q What was the first thing that attracted your attention to the fact that there was someone about your premises?

A Well, someone was at the front door, and he was saying, "Preacher - - Preacher." And then I said, "Who is it?" And then he said, "This is Mr. Bryant. I want to talk to you and that boy."

Q Do you know Mr. Bryant?

A I just know him since he came up here. I couldn't see him that night so well, only with that flashlight there, and I could see that it was this other man. Mr. Milam. But I know Mr. Milam.

Q You know Mr. Milam, do you?

A I sure do.

Q And then what did you do?

A Well, I got up and opened the door.

Q And what did you see when you opened the door?

A Well, Mr. Milam was standing there at the door with a pistol in his right hand and he had a flashlight in his left hand.

Q Now stop there a minute, Uncle Mose. I want you to point out Mr. Milam if you see him here.

A There he is (pointing)

Q And do you see Mr. Bryant in here?

A (The witness pointed with his hand)

Q Now, Uncle Mose, what did you say J. W. Milam had in his hand that night when you saw him there on your porch?

A He had a pistol in his right hand.

Q And what else did he have?

A And he had a flashlight in his left hand.

Q And what did he say to you?

A Well, he asked me if I had two boys there from Chicago?

Q And what did you say?

A I said, "Yes, Sir."

Q And will you tell the jury who those boys were?

A Wheeler Parker, my grandson, and Emmett Till.

Q How long had they been visiting in your home with you?

A They was there a week that same day.

Q Now, Uncle Mose, after you told Mr. Milam that you did have two boys there from Chicago, and that they were there in your house, what did he say and do then?

A Then Mr. Milam said, "I want that boy that done the talking down at Money."

MOSES "MOSE" WRIGHT (B)



ICHi-038464



CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM

TRIAL TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT – MOSES “MOSE” WRIGHT (B)

1st Witness for the State, Cross Examination by C. Sidney Carlton for the Defense

Question (Q) Did you ever see this man that you pointed out as Mr. Bryant, did you ever see the light shining on his face that night?

Answer (A) I did not.

Q Had you ever seen him before that night?

A Not to know him.

Q Had you ever been in his store?

A I never have.

Q And the first time you ever saw him was in the courtroom this week, wasn't it?

A The first time I saw his face, that's right.

Q Now, let's go back to Mr. Milam -- you testified that he was standing in the doorway of your house with a pistol in his right hand and a flashlight out in front of him in his left hand, is that correct?

A That's right.

Q And the flashlight was sticking out in front about six or eight inches, about six or eight inches in front of the pistol, is that right?

A I don't know about that. I didn't measure it.

Q Had you ever seen Mr. Milam before that night?

A I never had.

Q Did you ever see the lights flashing on his face that night?

A Sure. He had it up to his face. That is the way I know him.

Q Mose, you talked to me over at this law office over here (pointing with his hand) last week, is that right?

A That's right.

Q And do you remember this gentleman here, Mr. Breland, being present at that time?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And do you remember Mr. Henderson being present there that day (indicating another gentleman)?

A That's right.

Q And this gentleman over there in the blue coat, Mr. Kellum, was he present that day also?

A That's right.

Q You remember him being there, do you?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And isn't it a fact, Mose, that you on that day told each one of those gentlemen and me that the, only reason you thought this was Mr. Milam in your house that night was due to the fact that he was a big man and had a bald head? Isn't that true?

A That's right.

Q And the first time that you ever saw him was in this courthouse later on when they came into the courtroom, isn't that right?

A I don't believe I understand.

Q The first time you ever saw him was in this courtroom, isn't that right?

A No Sir. I knowed him that night.

Q And the reason you say you know him is because the man had a bald head, isn't that right?

A Well, I noticed his face and his stature. And I knowed his face just like I see him there now.

Q Then you have changed your story from what you told us the other day, haven't you?

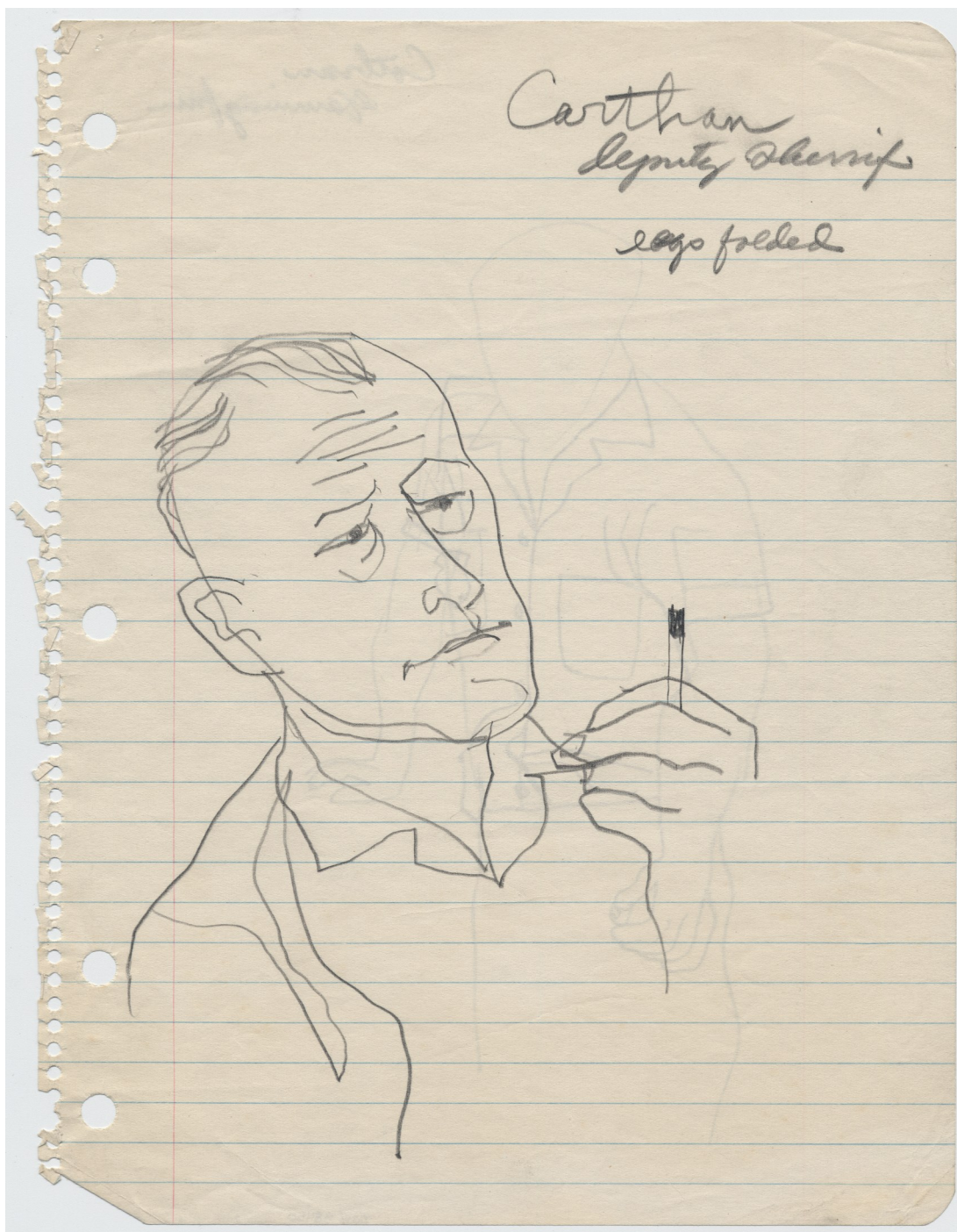
A They was at my house.

Q And the only thing you saw at your house, the only man you saw, was a bald headed man, is that right?

A That's right.



DEPUTY SHERIFF JOHN COTHMAN, LE FLORE COUNTY



ICHi-038450a



CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM

TRIAL TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT – DEPUTY SHERIFF COTHRAN

7th Witness for the State, Cross Examination by C. Sidney Carlton for the Defense

Question (Q) What, if any, official position have you held in that county during the past four years?

Answer (A) Deputy Sheriff.

Q Deputy Sheriff?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And you have been a deputy under Sheriff George Smith, is that right?

A Yes, Sir.

Q In your capacity as Deputy Sheriff, I want you to tell the Court and jury whether or not in the latter part of August, 1955, you had occasion to investigate the murder or disappearance of Emmett Till?

A I did.

Q And in that investigation, did you have occasion to talk to J. W. Milam, one of the defendants in this case?

A Yes, Sir.

Q Where was he when you talked with him?

A In the LeFlore County jail.

Q Do you remember the day of the week it was that you talked with him?

A Monday.

Q You talked with him on Monday?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And had he been arrested that day or was it the day before?

A That day.

Q Who was present in the jail, Mr. Cothran, when you talked with him?

A No one but he and myself.

Q Now, will you tell the jury, Mr. Cothran – and speak out so the last man sitting over here on the back row can hear you, will you state what you had to say to "J. W." that day in the jail and what he had to say to you in regard to the murder of Emmett Till?

A I asked him if they went out there and got that little boy and if they had done something with him. And he said that they had brought him up there to

that store and turned him loose, there at Roy Bryant's store.

Q Did you say they went and got the boy, or did he say we went and got the boy?

A I don't remember whether he said "we" or "I." I wouldn't say for sure.

Q Did he say where they got the boy?

A Over at Mose Wright's.

Q He told you they had gotten the boy at Mose Wright's house?

A Yes, Sir.

Q Did he say what time of the night or morning it was when they went out and got him?

A No, Sir.

Q Do you remember whether you asked him specifically the hour that he got him from Uncle Mose's house?

A No, Sir.

Q What did he say, Mr. Cothran, with reference to what he or they did with the boy after they got him from old man Mose's house?

A He said they brought him up there and talked to him, and then they let him go.

Q Where did he say they brought him to talk to him?

A Up to Mr. Bryant's store.

Q Where is Mr. Bryant's store?

A In Money, Mississippi.

Q And Money is in LeFlore [LeFlore] County, Mississippi, is that right?

A Yes, Sir.

Q Do you know about how far it is from Uncle Mose's house to Mr. Bryant's store at Money?

A I would say around three miles.

Q How long did they say they kept him up there before they released him?

A He didn't say.

Q Did he offer any explanation to you as to why they didn't carry the boy back home, back down to Uncle Mose's house?

A No, Sir.



MAMIE TILL-MOBLEY (A)



ICHi-038438



CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM

TRIAL TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT – MAMIE TILL-MOBLEY (A)

9th Witness for the State, Direct Examination by Robert Smith for the Prosecution; Objections by J. J. Breland for the Defense

Question (Q) Mamie, I will ask you if your son had a ring and frequently wore a ring that was sent along in the effects of your husband that you got?

Answer (A) Yes, Sir.

MR. BRELAND: We object to that, Your Honor, for the reason that she said that the effects were sent to her that were supposed to belong to her dead husband. But it hasn't been shown in evidence anything about the identity of those effects.

THE COURT: The objection is overruled.

Q I now hand you a ring, Mamie, that has engraved on it "May 25, 1943," with the large initials "L. T.," and I ask you if that was among the effects that were sent to you which were purported to be the effects of your dead husband?

A Yes, Sir.

Q What was your husband's name?

A Louis Till.

Q In other words, his initials were "L. T."?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And after you got this ring along with his effects, what happened to it?

A I kept the ring in a jewelry box, but it was much too large for the boy to wear. But since his twelfth birthday, he has worn it occasionally with the aid of scotch tape or string. [He] had to have something else on with it to make it fit his hand tightly enough. But usually though it was kept in his personal jewelry box. And on the morning of September [unclear] of August 20th when he got ready to board the train, he was looking in his jewelry box to get some cuff links, I think it was, and when he looked in the box there, he saw this ring, and he put it on his hand, or on his finger, and he shook his hand, to make sure that it would stay on there and not fall off. And I remember that

I casually remarked to him I said, "Gee, you are getting to be quite a grown man." And then he said to me...

Q Now don't tell what he said. But did he then put the ring on his finger?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And he left Chicago with it, did he?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And you definitely say that was the ring that he left there with?

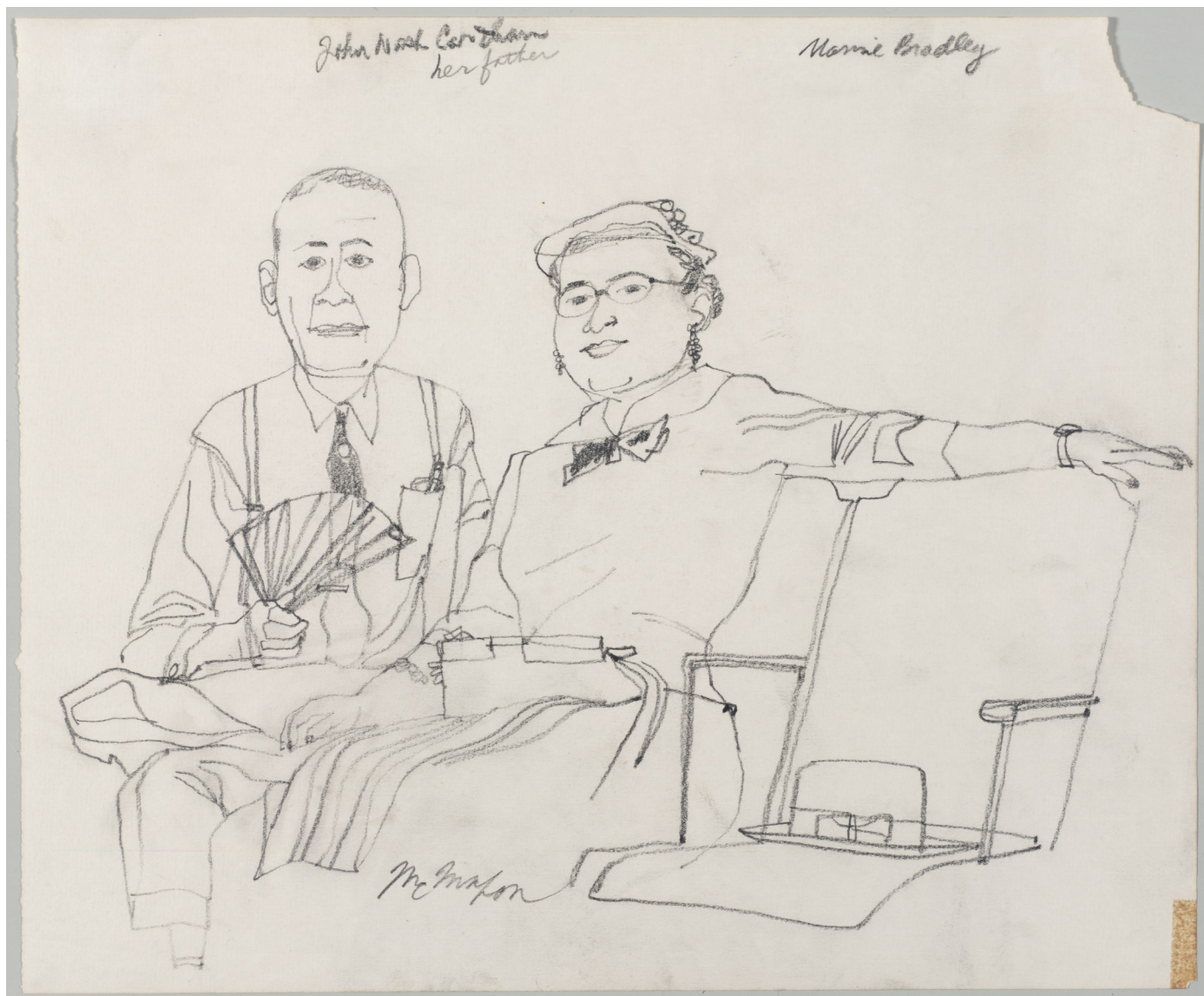
A Yes, Sir.

Q And that was the ring he had when he came down here to Mississippi?

A Yes, Sir.



MAMIE TILL-MOBLEY (B)



ICHi-038466



CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM

TRIAL TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT – MAMIE TILL-MOBLEY (B)

9th Witness for the State, Cross Examination by J. J. Breland for the Defense; Clarifying Questions by Robert Smith for the Prosecution

The Defense began asking Mamie Till-Mobley about the newspapers she read and the Prosecution objected. The jury was asked to go the jury room. The following took place without them present.

Question (Q) Do you subscribe to the CHICAGO DEFENDER?

Answer (A) No Sir, I don't subscribe to the paper, but I do buy it and read it.

Q I will hand you a portion of that particular paper, that edition of that particular paper, and ask you to look at the photograph and see if you have seen that?

A I have seen this picture but not in this paper. I saw a much smaller picture in another copy of the DEFENDER.

Q But is that a likeness of the picture you did see?

A Yes, Sir.

Q Have you a photograph of your son, Emmett Till, with you?

A Yes, Sir, I have.

Q And have you got it on your person?

A It is with my Father in the witness chambers.

Q And did you furnish any of those photographs to members of the press?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And that was for photographic purposes to put in the papers, is that right?

A Yes, Sir.

THE COURT: Can you get the photographs?

THE WITNESS: Yes, Sir. My Father has them in the witness room.

MR. SMITH: What is your Father's name?

THE WITNESS: John Carthan. And he has the pictures with him. They are in this coat.

MR. BRELAND: Tell them to bring John Carthan to the courtroom and to bring his coat with him.

After a short period, an envelope is produced and handed to the witness on the stand.

Q Mamie, will you take out those photographs that are in that envelope?

A Yes, Sir. (Three photographs are given to Mr. Breland by the witness.)

Q Mamie, you have presented to counsel for the defendants what purports to be three separate photographs of your son, one of which has a woman in it taken with him. Is that you?

A Yes, Sir.

Q Mamie, I hand you now what purports to be a photograph of some person. Will you state whose photograph that is?

A That is a photograph of Emmett Louis Till.

Q Mamie, I hand you a paper, being page 19 of the CHICAGO DEFENDER, on the date of Sept. 17th, 1955, which purports to be a photograph of some person. Will you look at that and state whether or not that is also a photograph of Emmett Till or the person who was shipped back to Chicago that you saw at the funeral home there?

A This is a picture of Emmett Louis Till as I saw it at the funeral home.

Q That is a picture of the body as you saw it in the funeral home in Chicago, Illinois?

A Yes, Sir.

Q And being the picture of the same body which you then identified as Emmett Till?

A Yes, Sir.

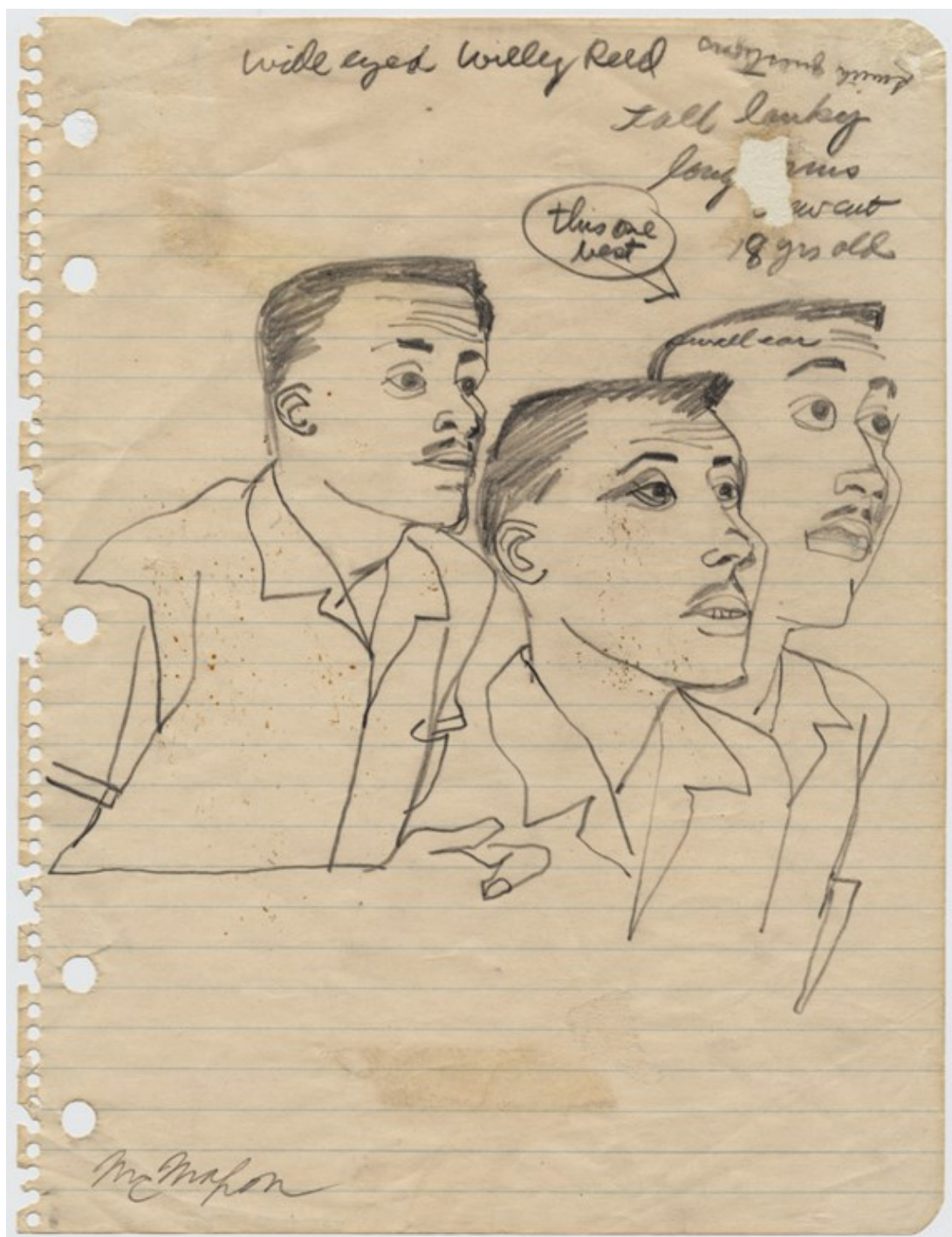
Q And which you now identify as that of Emmett Till, is that right?

A Yes, Sir.

Following some additional questions, the COURT ruled the photos could be shown to the jury, but questions related to the newspapers Ms. Mobley read could not be asked.



WILLIE REED



ICHi-038442



CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM

TRIAL TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT – WILLIE REED

10th Witness for the State, Direct Examination by Robert Smith for the Prosecution; Objections by J. J. Breland and C. Sidney Carlton for the Defense

Question (Q) Now, later on in the morning, did you see Mr. J. W. Milam out there?

Answer (A) Yes, Sir.

Q Where did you see him?

A Well, when I passed by he came out by the barn to the well.

Q And was that Mr. J. W. Milam, the man who is sitting over there (pointing to the defendant, Mr. Milam)?

A Yes, Sir.

Q Will you state whether he had anything unusual on about his person?

A Yes, Sir.

Q What did he have?

A He had on a gun.

Q Was it a pistol, a rifle, or a shotgun?

A He had on a pistol. He had it on his belt.

Q And what did Mr. J. W. Milam do when you saw him?

A He just came to the well and got a drink of water.

Q What did he do then?

A Then he went back to the barn.

Q And as you passed the barn, did you hear or see anything?

MR. BRELAND: We object, Your Honor.

MR. SMITH: If Your Honor please, I believe we have got the defendant right there, going in and out of the barn.

THE COURT: I don't think it has been connected sufficiently, Mr. Smith.

Q Just where did Mr. Milam come from when you saw him that morning?

A He came from the barn.

Q And where did he go when he left there? After he got a drink of water and left the well, where did he go then?

A He went back to the barn.

Q Did you hear or see anything as you passed the barn?

MR. CARLTON: We object, Your Honor.

THE COURT: I think he has got it straight now. I will overrule the objection.

Q Did you see or hear anything as you passed the barn?

A I heard somebody hollering, and I heard some licks like somebody was whipping somebody.

Q You heard some licks, and you also heard somebody hollering, is that right?

A Yes, Sir.

Q What was that person hollering?

A He was just hollering, "Oh."

Q You heard someone hollering "Oh," is that right?

A Yes, Sir.

Q Did they holler once or was it more than once, or was it two or three times, or what?

A They hollered more than once.

Q And what about the licks? Was it just one lick you heard, or was it two, or were there several licks?

A There was a whole lot of them.

Q You heard a whole lot of licks?

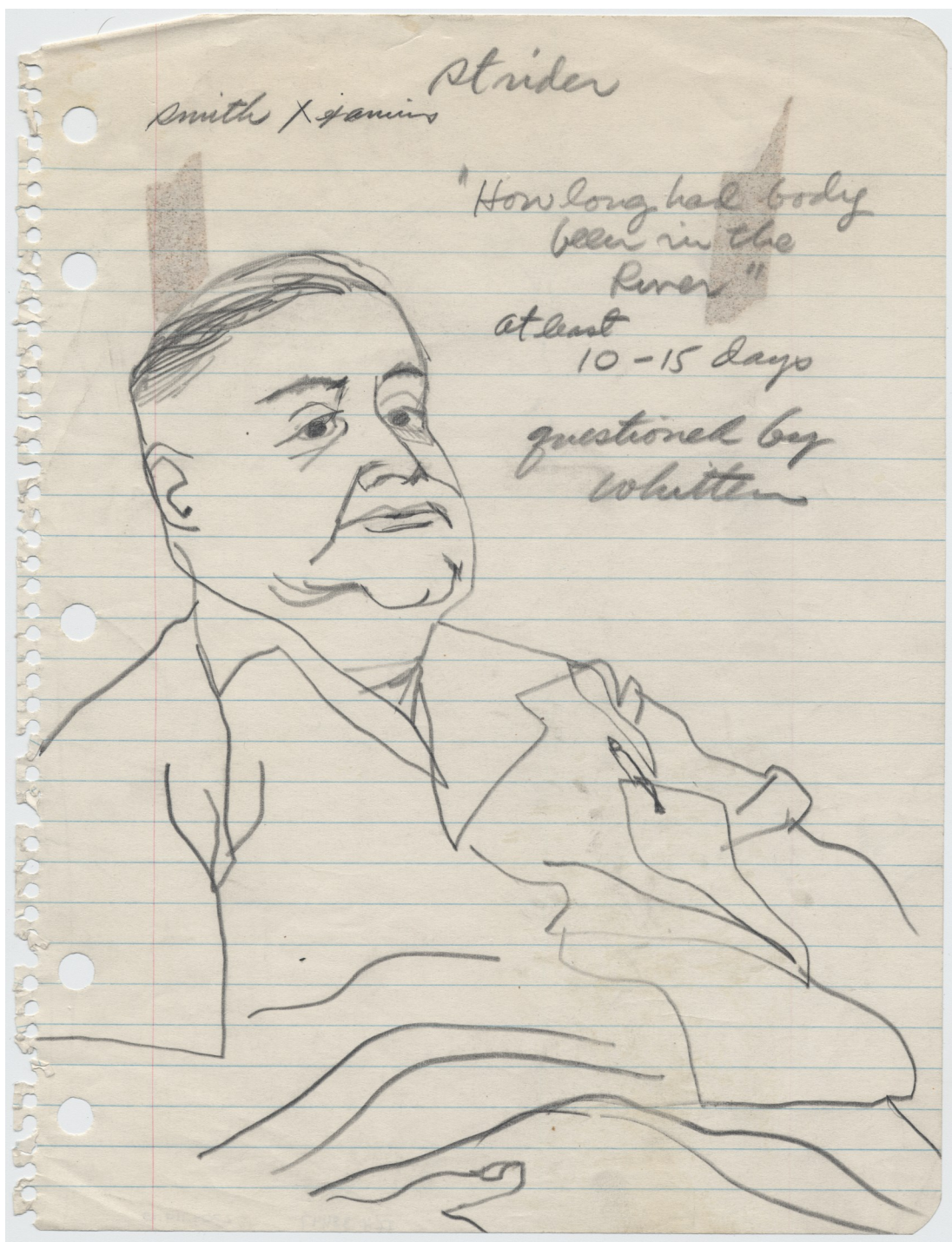
A Yes, Sir.

Q And was that a human being you heard or was it some kind of animal?

A Well, it sounded like a human being.



SHERIFF H. C. STRIDER, TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY



ICHi-038447



CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM

TRIAL TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT – SHERIFF H.C. STRIDER

3rd Witness for the Defense

Direct Examination by John Whitten Jr. for the Defense; Objection by Robert Smith for the Prosecution

Question (Q) Have you ever taken a body from the river that you knew had been there for a period of six days?

Answer (A) I have.

Q Were the conditions under which that body was in that river about the same as the conditions under which this body was taken from the river?

MR. SMITH: We object to that, Your Honor.

THE COURT: The objection is sustained. But you can ask his opinion about the particular time that body was in the river, his opinion from his past experience.

Q What then, Mr. Strider, is your opinion based on your past experience in taking bodies from the river, as to how long this particular body that was removed from the water on August 31st had been in the river?

MR. SMITH: We object to that, if Your Honor please. He is not a doctor, and he is not qualified to testify about that.

THE COURT: He is not qualified as a doctor, but he stated that he has had experience with other bodies taken from the river from time to time. And I think he is qualified.

Q You may state your opinion on that, Mr. Strider.

A I would say at least ten days, if not fifteen.

Cross examination by Hon. Robert B. Smith III for prosecution.

Question (Q) And that death certificate certified the fact that it was the body of Emmett Till, isn't that correct?

Answer (A) No, I didn't certify that body as Emmett Till. I said it was a dead body. I had never seen Emmett Till before, and I couldn't swear it was Emmett Till because I didn't know Emmett Till or what he looked like. And another thing, his body at that time was not identified at the scene, because I asked his uncle at the time there at the scene -- could I just go ahead and tell what happened there?

Q Yes, Sir.

A Well, I called for his uncle. You see, I heard about this boy being gone or having disappeared there, and so I had the sheriff -- well, I got the sheriff's office over at Greenwood, I got them to go by and pick up the uncle. And so then they went by and got the old man, and when he got there, he looked at this boy's body, and I said to him, "Mose, is this the boy that is missing from your home?" And then he said, "I believe it is, but I couldn't say it is for sure. And then I said to him, "What about this ring on his finger?" And then he said, "I don't know. I would have to ask my boys about that." And then I said to him, "Do you mean to tell me, Mose, that he has been staying there at your home for a week with this ring on his finger, and eating there at the same table with you, and you don't even know this ring, or that you didn't notice he had a ring on his finger?" And then he said, "No, Sir. I did not know about that ring. But my boys would know whether he was wearing that ring or not." That is what he said to me.

Q Mr. Strider, do you know whether that death certificate had the name of Emmett Till on it or not?

A No, I don't know.



CAROLYN BRYANT



ICHi-038465



CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM

TRIAL TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT – CAROLYN BRYANT

1st Witness for the Defense, Direct Examination by C. Sidney Carlton for the Defense; Objections by Robert Smith for the Prosecution

The defense began asking Carolyn Bryant questions about the events on Wednesday, August 24th. The prosecution objected because they believed it was not relevant to the case. The Judge was not sure if it would be relevant and excused the jury from the courtroom. The testimony was allowed to continue without them present.

Question (Q) And what did you do then?

Answer (A) I walked up to the candy counter.

Q And what transpired up there at the candy counter?

A I asked him what he wanted.

Q And did he tell you?

A Yes.

Q Do you know what it was he asked for?

A No.

Q And did you then get the merchandise for him?

A Yes. I got it and put it on top of the candy case.

Q And what did you do then?

A I held my hand out for his money.

Q Which hand did you hold out?

A My right hand.

Q Will you show the Court how you held your hand out?

A I held out my hand like this (demonstrating by holding out her hand).

Q And did he give you the money?

A No.

Q What did he do?

A He caught my hand.

Q Just what did he say when he grabbed your hand?

A He said, "How about a date, baby?"

Q When you freed yourself, what happened then?

A I turned around and started back to the back of the store.

Q You did what?

A I turned to get to the back of the store.

Q Did you do anything further then?

A Yes. He came on down that way and he caught me at the cash register.

Q You say he caught you?

A Yes.

Q Now, Mrs. Bryant, will you stand up and put my hands just where he grasped you? Will you show the Court and jury?

A It was like this (demonstrating by putting [Def. Attorney] Mr. Carlton's hands on her body).

Q He grabbed you like that, did he?

A Yes.

Q Did he say or do anything at that time?

A He whistled and then came out in the road.

Q Can you give a sound something like the whistle that he made there? Was it something like this? (Mr. Carlton demonstrated by giving two low whistles.)

A Yes.

Q When you got your pistol, Mrs. Bryant, where was this boy then? Or I should say where was this man?

A When I turned around, he was getting in a car down the road.

Q Did you rush back in the store then?

A Yes.

Q Had you ever seen that man before?

A No.

Q Have you ever seen him since?

A No.

When the questioning was done, the Judge ruled the testimony was inadmissible (not allowed) and the jury never heard it.

