

Murder Will Out! By: Mark W. Griffith

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on November 9, 2015)

This book review looks at a murder that took place prior to Oak Ridge being located along Black Oak Ridge. Mark Griffith brings us the story (and it is FREE to download).

<http://www.thehousinghour.com/general/murder-will-out/>

Notice he found the story while exploring the oral histories in the Oak Ridge Public Library's Center for Oak Ridge Oral History collection of some 400 video interviews.

<http://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15388coll1>

He introduces the story as follows, "I stumbled across the tale at the Center for Oak Ridge Oral History while reading transcripts of interviews of people who participated in the Manhattan Project. Two of those interviewed shared the story about the murder, which happened in 1921 in the pre-Oak Ridge area known then as Robertsville, Tenn. Although some of their details seemed sketchy, a couple things became clear: 1.) A gruesome murder occurred in the nearby woods. 2.) The murder, subsequent trial and state execution, made headlines as a sensational event in the day."

Mark continues, "After some research, I discovered the original plan was to rob the Oakdale Bank and Trust. The bank robbery – foiled in somewhat of a comical way – had a Wild West feel to it. A posse of 300 to 500 men scoured the mountains around Harriman with bloodhounds from Knoxville, trying to locate the four men involved. After the posse and sheriff arrested the defendants in Oakdale, they transported them to the Knoxville jail, which offered a more secure location."

"Many newspapers across the country picked up the story, but only local papers in Knoxville and Clinton supplied details. The Evening Independent, a St. Petersburg, Florida paper, supplied the most sensational headlines after the execution, writing things like, 'Four Slayers Electrocuted,' 'Sit in death chair for foul murder committed in Tennessee,' 'Plotted to rob bank,' 'Cut throats of two men-one of them lived and his story doom of outlaws.'

"Local media also had a field day. The Knoxville paper quoted the defendants several times; each of them, of course, pointed the finger at the other as the guilty party. During jury selection, four jurors admitted to having formed an opinion as to guilt based on the victim's account and the defendants' statements published in the Knoxville paper. However, after closer questioning and obtaining sworn statements of their impartiality and commitment to supplying a 'fair and impartial' judgment, the defense approved and seated all four on the jury."

"The trial began July 18, 1921, and drew many spectators, including mostly "younger women and boys," according to news reports. Tickets sold out daily for the train commute from Knoxville to the Clinton Courthouse. The oppressive July heat caused at least one woman to faint during the proceedings. On July 28, the jury convicted the four men of murder, and the judge sentenced them to death by electrocution. The executions, after an appeal failed, occurred on March 1, 1922. Many consider this case to be the worst crime ever to have been committed in East Tennessee; and the state's execution of four men in one day still holds the dark state record."

"After the capture of one of the men, Roane County Sheriff Walter W. Roberts questioned why he and the others decided to kill. The man's reply was simple: "Dead men tell no tale."

"However, live men do."

"This story is based on Andrew Crumley's testimony to the court and interviews with the press about his horrifying ordeal in the dark woods of Black Oak Ridge, just above Robertsville."

The free to download ebook is located at: <http://www.thehousinghour.com/general/murder-will-out/>

On the ebook website, Mark says, "It seems like every 100 years, or so a sensational trial occurs in communities across the country. Most of them maintain only a local level of interest but occasionally some reach the attention of the national media. The story of George Lewis and Andrew Crumley reached

Murder Will Out! By: Mark W. Griffith

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on November 9, 2015)

a national audience; its horrific tale of a brutally cruel murder and attempted murder caught the ire and sympathy of the nation.”

“After the sensational trial, verdict and death sentence, the country seemed to wait in anticipation for the execution. On March 1, 1922, Tennessee executed four men; national news headlines exploded with the news.”

“In the trials closing arguments, prosecuting attorney W. H. Buttram predicted the trial would be, ‘...remembered a hundred years hence.’ But in reality, with justice being served quickly and inexorably, memories of the horror soon faded.”

“*Murder Will Out* rekindles some of the emotions undoubtedly felt at the time and attempts to honor the memories of two innocent lives that fell victim to such a despicable plot.”

The title to the ebook, *Murder Will Out*, comes from a quote by Alf Taylor, Tennessee’s 34th governor, who stated after the trial, guilty verdict, and customary appeal, as he refused to commute the death sentence of all guilty parties, issued the following statement: “To shoot a man down is horrible, to cut his throat in cold blood is horrible, to tie men’s hands behind them and then gag them and then cut their throats is unspeakable horrible. This is the crime for which four men stand convicted. Lewis begging for his life, died floundering in his own blood, Crumley survived to tell the awful story, Murder will out!”

This quote came from The Athens Banner’s March 1, 1922, edition. Governor Taylor drew upon a verse by Chaucer: “Lo, how Thou dost turn murder out always! Murder will out, we see it every day.”

The gruesome murder took place just west of present day Illinois Avenue and north of Iroquois Avenue.

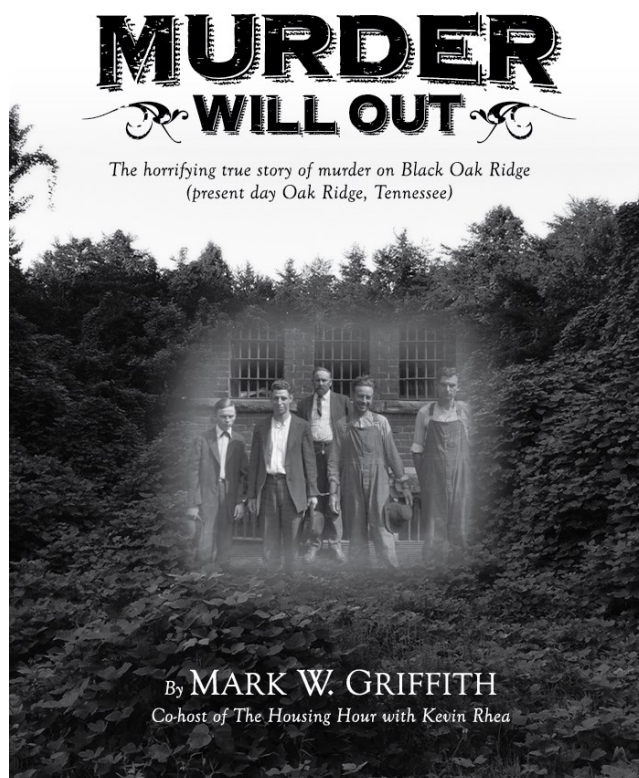
The story is well written and brings to light the details of the execution of four individuals in one day using the electric chair, seems to be the only time this has happened in Tennessee history.

Mark has written a short book featuring this pre-Oak Ridge murder mystery in such an excellent manner that I can assure you once you download it, you will read it to conclusion before stopping.

My thanks to Mark for letting me review his ebook. Download your free copy now by going to:
<http://www.thehousinghour.com/general/murder-will-out/>

Murder Will Out! By: Mark W. Griffith

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on November 9, 2015)



The cover to Mark W. Griffith's ebook, *Murder Will Out!*



Mark stands in front of the murder scene, the Chert Pit near the top of Black Oak Ridge