

Plaque unveiled to honor lynching victim

By JEFF HORSEMAN
Staff Writer

For 90-plus years, the name Henry Davis had little meaning in Annapolis, relegated to obscurity by a city preferring to forget its racist past.

That changed yesterday when a group of around 50 men and women, African-American and white, dedicated a plaque at Brewer Hill Cemetery to Mr. Davis, a 30-year-old African American who 95 years ago became the city's last lynching victim. The memorial is the first of its kind in Maryland.

The ceremony under sunny skies stood in contrast to the events of Dec. 21, 1906, when a mob of around

50 men assembled behind St. John's College and invaded the Calvert Street jail in the dead of night.

Believing he had assaulted a white woman, the mob dragged Mr. Davis through the streets of an African-American neighborhood and hung him on the banks of College Creek.

The mob then fired around 100 shots at Mr. Davis, took pictures of his mutilated corpse — the photos were later circulated in postcards — and left it to rot. Mr. Davis' body lies buried in an unmarked grave in Brewer Hill Cemetery. No one knows exactly where.

Yesterday, Carl O. Snowden, who

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The Rev. Mamie A. Williams, second from left, gives a benediction yesterday at Brewer Hill Cemetery during a ceremony to dedicate a plaque recognizing the 95th anniversary of Henry Davis' lynching. Mr. Davis was the last man to be lynched in Annapolis. Some of those attending are, from left, former alderman Carl O. Snowden; civil rights lawyer C. Christopher Brown; Hazel G. Snowden, descendant of John Snowden; Mayor Ellen O. Moyer; and author and historian Vincent O. Leggett.

By G. Nick Lundskow — The Capital



ANNAPOLIS MD. FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1906.

**THE ASSAULT ON WOMAN AVENGED—DAVIS
DRAGGED FROM JAIL AND LYNCHED—
MOB RIDDLED NEGRO RAVISHER
WITH BULLETS**

LETTERS TO SANTA

WING TO TREE ON BRICK
YARD HILL AT EARLY HOUR
THIS MORNING.

BRUTE CONFESSED BEFORE
THE CROWD—SAND HE
WISHED TO MURDER
HER AS WELL

PUNISHMENT SWIFT—PLANS
OF LYNCHING CAREFULLY
CONCEALED.

MOB BOMBARDS THE JAIL.

PLAQUE

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helped to organize the event, compared Mr. Davis to John Snowden, an African American executed in 1919 for the rape and murder of a pregnant white woman and granted clemency earlier this year by Gov. Parris N. Glendening.

"They are bigger in death than they ever were in life," said Mr. Snowden, a special assistant to County Executive Janet S. Owens who is not related to John Snowden.

Several city officials, including Mayor Ellen O. Moyer, attended the event. She read a proclamation touting today as "A Day of Justice and Remembrance" in Annapolis.

"In 1906, a horrific act occurred," Ms. Moyer said. "Ninety-five years later, our city has changed. In 1906, women could not vote and African Americans were the victims of racial injustice. Today, our City Council reflects our city and women are now serving on the council."

The John Snowden Memorial Committee, which campaigned for his pardon, uncovered Mr. Davis' story during its research.

No one was ever brought to justice for the lynching, which garnered national attention and outrage.

"The sight must have had a tremendous effect on men of his color," read an editorial in the *New York Sun* on Dec. 24, 1906. "They learned from it that the state of Maryland was incapable of guarding its public institutions."

Mr. Davis, known to locals as

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— *Ellen O. Moyer,*
mayor

"Toe" due to several digits he lost to frostbite, never stood trial for the vicious attack on Annie Reid of Crownsville on Dec. 14, 1906.

While rural, uneducated whites typically carried out lynchings in Maryland, their upper-class brethren did nothing to stop them, said C. Christopher Brown, a civil rights attorney. Rumors of Mr. Davis' impending lynching spread throughout town in the days prior to Dec. 21.

In all, 46 people — all but four of them African American — were lynched in Maryland from 1861 to 1933. The names of 10 victims from 1891 to 1906 adorn Mr. Davis' plaque.

The ebony plaque, paid for with private donations, will eventually be replaced by a permanent memorial that will rest near John Snowden's memorial.

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