

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, The events began on April 22, 1897, when Richard Lacy accused Joseph McCoy, an African American teenager who had worked for Lacy for sixteen years, of sexually assaulting his daughter. McCoy was arrested, and he denied the charge; and

WHEREAS, McCoy was locked in a cell at the Alexandria Police Station House, the current location of Alexandria City Hall. He was interrogated by Lieutenant James Smith who reported McCoy confessed to the crime, despite the earlier denial; and

WHEREAS, On the evening of April 22, a mob attempted to break down the door of the Alexandria Police Station House and were repulsed by the officers on duty. The Mayor of Alexandria never took action after being informed of the first attack, and at 1 a.m. on April 23, a second attack overwhelmed the officers at the Station House; and

WHEREAS, Joseph McCoy was pulled from his cell and dragged to the South East corner of Cameron and Lee Streets. The devastating effects of the assault upon his body were described in a Washington Post article: The body of McCoy was left hanging to the lamppost for 15 minutes before it was cut down. Three bullet holes were found, one in the left shoulder and two bullets in the left thigh. The left eye was much swollen. As he was strung to the lamppost, he was struck on the head with a cobblestone... A pool of blood was at the base of the post; and

WHEREAS, between 1882 and 1968, 100 African American Virginians, including 11 in Northern Virginia, and 2 in Alexandria, were lynched. The lynchings were among 4,743 reported nationwide during the same period. Just two years after Joseph McCoy was murdered, 16-year-old Benjamin Thomas was lynched at the southwest corner of King and Fairfax Streets on August 8, 1899; and

WHEREAS, The City of Alexandria condemns these acts and apologizes for its lynching history. The city seeks to lay bare past inequities, expose our troubled racial history, and to bear witness to these atrocities. Alexandria is committed to restorative justice, so our community emerges stronger and more inclusive. In this way, the deaths of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas will never be forgotten.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JUSTIN M. WILSON, Mayor of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, and on behalf of the Alexandria City Council, do hereby recognize today, April 23, 2022, as a day for us to remember the life, spirit and legacy – exactly 125 years after – the death of:

“JOSEPH MCCOY”

In the City of Alexandria, and I call observance to the attention of all our citizens, that the City of Alexandria shall continue to place the rights of all humanity first and foremost, on all occasions, that our City might be an example to all.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have here unto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Alexandria to be affixed this on the 23rd day of April 2022.




MAYOR JUSTIN M. WILSON
On behalf of the City Council