

Shot by Claude Pruitt at Police Station

Difficulty Arose Over a Possum

Which Pruitt Brought into Station

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A very distressing tragedy was enacted at police headquarters in this city about midnight last night, when Mr. John A. Simms, one of the most highly regarded officers of the law in the city and county, was shot and instantly killed by Claude Pruitt.

As nearly as the facts could be obtained before going to press today, they are about as follows:

Claude Pruitt and Bob Crotzer went to the city lake last night to fish. They had borrowed a flashlight at the police station, and when they came in about midnight, they drove to police headquarters to return it. They caught no fish, but picked up a large possum, which they took out of the car and put down on the floor of the office. The animal was dirty and a nuisance and Night Sergeant Simms ordered it taken out. Pruitt was reluctant to remove the animal, and Simms directed Patrolman Fred Emmerson, who was in the office, to remove both animal and Pruitt, which he proceeded to do, and the possum was turned loose. In the attendant scrimmage Simms thought he saw a gun in Pruitt's pocket, and ordered the patrolman to arrest him and take charge of the gun. Thereupon Pruitt jumped into his car and drove to the corner of A and First streets, where he turned around and came back to the station, stopping out in front. Simms came to the door and advanced toward the car with apparent intention of arresting Pruitt. The latter warned him not to come near the car, but Simms kept walking toward it. Pruitt drew an automatic and fired nine shots, five of which stuck Simms, killing him instantly. Two of the bullets barely missed Emmerson. Pruitt was at once placed under arrest and taken to jail, and the body of Simms was taken to an undertaking establishment.

John A. Simms is an old resident of this city, and has served as an officer of the law for many years. During the term of W.F. Freeman as district judge, Mr. Simms served as bailiff of his court, and when Judge Freeman was elected mayor of the city, Mr. Simms was appointed as night sergeant at the police station. He was widely known, and highly respected by everyone who knew him. He leaves a family, but before going to press their names and place of residence could not be accurately obtained.

Pruitt belongs to a family of boys who are not infrequently before the courts. Claude Pruitt was arrested and tried some time ago for shooting a man named Monroe Mahuran, and received a two year sentence, which appeal is now pending in the higher courts.