

New York Times, Mar 20, 1875

**EXECUTION OF A NEGRO IN VIRGINIA
THE STORY OF HIS CRIME
HE CONFESSES HAVING KILLED THREE PERSONS
SCENES AT THE EXECUTION**

Brentsville, Prince William County, Va., March 19. – Jesse Fouks, the Negro who murdered the Herndon family, consisting of Jeremiah Herndon, his wife, and a colored boy, named Addison Russell, near Cedar Run, in the lower part of this county, on the 4th of last December, was hanged here at 11 o'clock this morning. The circumstances of this murder were horrible. Mr. Herndon, a well-to-do-farmer, was about seventy years of age, his wife was a few years younger, and the colored boy was about eighteen years old. On the morning after the murder Mr. Summerfield Herndon, a son of the venerable couple, who resided not far from their farm, went to pay a visit to his parents; entering their yard he saw bloody foot-prints which led to the door of the dwelling. Passing into the house a ghastly sight was presented to his view. Upon a pallet on the floor the colored boy Russell lay cold in death, with his head split open. Upon the bed lay Mrs. Herndon. A little later the old man was discovered, lying in a field, about 400 yards from the house, barefooted and bareheaded, with his head and face cut and bleeding in many places. On being asked who had wounded him, the old man, who was still alive, said he did not know. He was conveyed to his house and there told of a quarrel with Jesse Fouks, who had been hauling wood for him. It was found, on searching the house, that \$235 had been taken by the murderer. Fouks was arrested on suspicion at the home of a neighbor the day after the murder. Both Mr. and Mrs. Herndon lingered some days, Mrs. Herndon dying on the Wednesday following, and Mr. Herndon on the succeeding Friday. Fouks was found guilty upon a trial, and duly sentenced to be hung. On the 31st of last January he made an attempt to escape from jail. He was captured on the following day in a straw rick, about six miles from Brentsville. On the following day he sent for the jailor and Sheriff Goodwin, and told them that he could not go to his Maker in prayer, with a lie on his lips. He acknowledged his guilt, disclaimed having any accomplice, and stated that he was ready to die. Continuing, he said that on the evening of the murder he stole some meat, and that Mr. Herndon threatened to prosecute him, that they commenced quarreling, and Mr. Herndon took up the ax and threatened to knock his brains out. Fouks retreated to the door (the door being open) seized the ax handle, and to use his own words, "Old Satan was in me. I struck Mr. Herndon." He also confessed having killed Mrs. Herndon and the boy.

There were about one thousand persons present at the execution. Everything passed off quietly. Besides the regular Police a guard of fifteen colored men was on duty. The prisoner exhibited the utmost self-composure, and warned his hearers to escape the effects of bad passions. The drop fell at 12:40, breaking the neck of Fouks and causing almost instant death, but one convulsive shudder being noticed. Last Tuesday Fouks gave his body to a physician of Fauquier County, saying that the doctors would get it anyhow.