

PARDON

On April 26, 1913, Mary Phagan, a thirteen-year-old employee in an Atlanta pencil factory, was murdered. Georgians were shocked and outraged. Charged with the murder was the factory superintendent, Leo M. Frank.

The funeral of Mary Phagan, the police investigation, and the trial of Leo Frank were reported in the overblown newspaper style of the day. Emotions were fanned high.

During the trial a crowd filled the courthouse and surrounded it. While the verdict was read, Frank was kept in jail for protection. He was convicted on August 25, 1913, and subsequently sentenced to death.

After unsuccessful court appeals the case came to Governor John M. Slaton for his consideration. The Governor was under enormous pressure. Many wanted Frank to hang, and the emotions of some were fired by prejudice about Frank being Jewish and a factory superintendent from the North. On June 21, 1915, the Governor, because of doubts about Frank's guilt, commuted the sentence from death to life imprisonment. Thus Frank was saved from the gallows, and his judicial appeals could continue, or so it seemed.

On the night of August 16, 1915, a group of armed men took Frank by force from the State Prison at Milledgeville, transported him to Cobb County, and early the next morning lynched him.

The lynching aborted the legal process, thus foreclosing further efforts to prove Frank's innocence. It resulted from the State of Georgia's failure to protect Frank. Compounding the injustice, the State then failed to prosecute any of the lynchers.

In 1983, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles considered a request for a Pardon implying innocence but did not find "conclusive evidence proving beyond any doubt that Frank was innocent." Such a standard of proof, especially for a 70-year-old case, is almost impossible to satisfy.

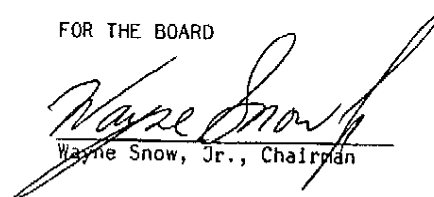
Without attempting to address the question of guilt or innocence, and in recognition of the State's failure to protect the person of Leo M. Frank and thereby preserve his opportunity for continued legal appeal of his conviction, and in recognition of the State's failure to bring his killers to justice, and as an effort to heal old wounds, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, in compliance with its Constitutional and statutory authority, hereby grants to Leo M. Frank a Pardon.

Given under the Hand and Seal of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, this eleventh day of March, 1986.

STATE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

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FOR THE BOARD


Wayne Snow, Jr., Chairman