

## Botched Hanging – Cowlitz County 1900- 1901

“Adventures in Research”  
with Tracy Rebstock,  
Southwest Regional Branch  
Archivist

DATE		Dr.	Cr.	DATE		Dr.	Cr.
1900	10						
	11						
	12						
	30						
	20						

50 Docket and Fee Book, Superior Court, Cowlitz County, Washington.

Plummer, Blodgett and Fowler Co., Tacoma - 1900

No. 1377 State of Washington Plaintiff.

vs.

Defendant.

Plaintiff's Attorney

Defendant's Attorney

10 Transcripts filed

11 Information filed

12 Verdict filed

30 Subpoena filed

20 Journal Entry on arraignment

It is rare to get a request from your hometown of Newark, Ohio while living

here in Washington, but this one was both rare and interesting. I received a request concerning “the imprisonment and execution of Martin Stickle who was hanged at the state prison in Kalama, Cowlitz County, on January 25, 1901.” There was never a state prison in Cowlitz County and the hunt was on.

Martin Stickle was charged with three murders, one occurred in 1899 and the other two in 1900. My researcher already had newspaper articles from the trial and the execution. He was on the hunt for some family information or more information concerning the trial.

The mother testified but the newspaper does not list her name. She is quoted as testifying, “before her son’s birth she was of a surly and morose disposition and that the child was born sick and was always an unnatural child.” The January 25, 1901 *Seattle Times* headline reads, “Hanging at Kalama; Stickles Pays Penalty for Crime, He was singing ‘Jesus Lover of my Soul’ When Drop Fell.”

The outgoing sheriff of Cowlitz County asked the judge to postpone the hanging until the new sheriff took office, according to the Cowlitz County Deputy Sheriff, Darren Ullmann. He writes a blog and is the historian for the department. In his blog article, “Capital Punishment in Cowlitz County,” he talks about the difficulty of hanging and how many sheriffs did not look forward to the task. According to Ullmann, the incoming sheriff was not familiar with the building of the gallows or the proper way to tie a noose. The hanging ended up with a near decapitation. It was a hard hanging to watch. The newspaper articles give vivid descriptions of the reaction of the crowd and the scene of the hanging. If you are interested in reading further, check out the following newspaper articles; *Morning Olympian*, December 20, 1900, *Seattle Times*, January 25, 1901, and *Morning Olympian*, January 26, 1901.

Where does this leave my researcher? Aside from being stunned he was communicating with a fellow Ohioan and one from Newark as well, I was not able to find much else about the family. I found a marriage entry in an index that could be Martin’s parents, many of the original records are with the Cowlitz County Clerk and Cowlitz County Auditor. I also suggested checking with the Cowlitz County Historical Museum. I was able to find the Cowlitz County Clerk docket and fee book which gives the case number. It IS a small world after all.