

## **Commonwealth vs. Edward L. Gibbs Records, 1950-1951**

**Object ID: MG0476**

1 box    15 folders    24 items, 1,081 pages to scan    .5 cubic feet

Repository: LancasterHistory (Organization); PV7

Shelving Location: Archives South, Side 11

Scope and Content Note: On 10 January 1950, Marian L. Baker was brutally murdered by Edward Lester Gibbs. This collection contains W. Hensel Brown's copies of the clerk's file, transcripts, appeal briefs, and other court records from the murder trial of Edward L. Gibbs, 1950. Newspaper articles report on the 1950 trial and his 1951 electrocution.

Creator: Brown, W. Hensel, b.1902.

Conditions for Access: Folders 12-15 are restricted. Use photocopies in Folders 8-11.

Conditions Governing Reproductions: Collection may not be photocopied. Please direct questions to Research Center Staff at [research@lancasterhistory.org](mailto:research@lancasterhistory.org). Permission for reproduction and/or publication must be obtained in writing from LancasterHistory.

Language: English

### Biographical and Historical Note:

Edward Lester Gibbs (1924-1951), veteran (98th Bombardment Group, 15th Air Force) and husband of Helen Woodward, was from Gloucester County, NJ. In 1950, he was a student at Franklin and Marshall College.<sup>1</sup>

Marian Louise Baker (1928-1950), the daughter of Walter M. Baker and Helen Beatrice Soule Britcher, was originally from New Bloomfield, Perry County, PA.<sup>2</sup> She had spent much of her childhood in Conestoga, PA with her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy O'Donel.<sup>3</sup> In 1950, she worked as a cashier and secretary in the treasurer's office at Franklin and Marshall College<sup>4</sup> and was engaged to Edward Rankin.<sup>5</sup>

W. Hensel Brown was the attorney chosen to defend Gibbs.

“On January 10, 1950, Marian Louise Baker was brutally slain by being beaten to death with a lug wrench. Eight days later Edward Lester Gibbs, defendant, confessed the killing. Thereafter, he was indicted in Lancaster County, tried by a jury, and convicted of murder in the first degree with the penalty fixed at death. Prior to his bringing this appeal, his motion for new trial was denied and sentence was imposed in accordance with the verdict.

At the time of the killing, defendant, a married war veteran twenty-five years of age, was a student at Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. \*185 In the early afternoon of January 10, 1950, he was in downtown Lancaster when he saw Miss Baker, an employee of the college. He offered to drive her back to the campus in his car and she accepted. However, instead of returning directly to the college, they rode out of town and into the open country. When they reached an isolated spot several miles from the city she commented on the view and defendant stopped the car so that they both might enjoy it. While sitting there he suddenly reached over and began choking her. She broke away and got out of the car. He followed her and after choking her again, he returned to the car, unlocked and opened the luggage compartment, removed the lug wrench, and beat her over the head with it until she was dead. He then left but later returned to hide the body and remove any incriminating evidence. The body was not discovered until four days later.

On January 18, 1950, defendant admitted committing the crime and on that same day he signed a statement setting forth the facts as we have synopsised them here. Neither at the trial nor at any other time did he deny the truth of that confession and substantially all of the facts contained in it were verified by the independent investigation of the Pennsylvania State Police.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Edward Lester Gibbs,” Find A Grave, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/76555590/edward-lester-gibbs>.

<sup>2</sup> “Marian Louise Baker,” Find A Grave, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/76632108/marian-louise-baker>.

<sup>3</sup> “Vintage photos, the 1950 murder of an F&M secretary,” PennLive.com, last modified January 8, 2016, [https://www.pennlive.com/news/2016/01/vintage\\_photos\\_the\\_1950\\_murder.html](https://www.pennlive.com/news/2016/01/vintage_photos_the_1950_murder.html).

<sup>4</sup> “Marian Louise Baker,” Find A Grave, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/76632108/marian-louise-baker>.

<sup>5</sup> “Vintage photos, the 1950 murder of an F&M secretary,” PennLive.com, last modified January 8, 2016, [https://www.pennlive.com/news/2016/01/vintage\\_photos\\_the\\_1950\\_murder.html](https://www.pennlive.com/news/2016/01/vintage_photos_the_1950_murder.html).

<sup>6</sup> “Opinion by Mr. Chief Justice Drew, November 20, 1950,” Justia, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://law.justia.com/cases/pennsylvania/supreme-court/1950/366-pa-182-0.html>.

Source of Acquisition: Gift of J. Richard Gray, 22 May 2008.

Accruals: No further accruals are expected.

Preferred Citation: Commonwealth vs. Edward L. Gibbs Records (MG-476), Folder #, LancasterHistory, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

People:

Brown, W. Hensel

Baker, Marian Louise

Gibbs, Edward Lester

Subject Headings:

Baker, Marian Louise, 1928-1950

Gibbs, Edward Lester, 1924-1951

Murder (LHo-LOC sh 85088613)

Trials (Murder) (LHo-LOC sh 85137369)

Trial transcripts (LHo-LOC sh 89005242)

Trials (LHo-LOC sh 85137328)

Court records (LHo-LOC sh 85033556)

Jury selection (LHo-LOC sh 85071105)

Clippings (Books, newspapers, etc.) (LHo-LOC sh 85027084)

Search Terms:

Murder

Trials (Murder)

Trial transcripts

Trials

Court records

Jury selection

Clippings (Books, newspapers, etc.)

Manuscript groups

Finding aids

Related Materials: Information about photographs used as evidence may be found in the Photograph Collection—many of the photographs are restricted.

ObjectID 2-15-04-01 to 2-15-04-21

Processing History: Processed and finding aid prepared by RC, May 2017. This collection has been documented, preserved and managed according to professional museum and archives standards. Finding aid was created following DACS conventions.

**Folder 1** Clerk's File of the trial. Index includes a copy of the appearance docket entries, complaint, return to Court of Quarter Sessions, petition for order of examination filed by defendant and order, petition for order of examination filed by defendant and order, petition for order of examination filed by commonwealth and order, petition for further order of examination filed by defendant and order, indictment with verdict rendered thereon, motion and reasons for new trial, additional reasons for new trial, brief of Commonwealth, opinion of Court of Quarter Sessions, sentence, certiorari, statement under Supreme Court Rule 22, opinion of Supreme Court, remittitur, letter from governor's office, and subpoenas. (1 item, 116 pages)

**Folder 2** Commonwealth vs. Gibbs, Volume 1, Index & Voir Dire, pp. 1-119. In the Court of Oyer and Terminer, General Jail Delivery and Quarter Sessions of the Peace for the County of Lancaster. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania vs. Edward Lester Gibbs, Indictment No. 1, March Term, 1950, Murder. Index: Examination and Selection of Jurors, pp. 1-119, inclusive – Lists of Commonwealth's and defendant's witnesses, Commonwealth's rebuttal witness, and exhibits. (1 item, 122 pages)

**Folder 3** Commonwealth vs. Gibbs, Volume 2, Index & Voir Dire, pp. 120-251. Continuation of index of vol. 1. (1 item, 131 pages)

**Folder 4** Commonwealth vs. Gibbs, Volume 3, Defendant's Case, Rebuttal, Charge & Verdict. (1 item, 166 pages)

**Folder 5** Commonwealth vs. Gibbs: Pleadings: Opinions. Indictment No. 1 March, Term, 1950; Commonwealth vs. Edward Lester Gibbs: Petition filed January 27, 1950; Commonwealth vs. Edward Lester Gibbs, Petition filed January 27, 1950; Petition for further order of examination of the above defendant; filed February 2, 1950; Indictment: Commonwealth vs/ Edward Lester Gibbs, Murder (Felony), a True Bill March 13, 1950, Defendant being arraigned, plead not guilty; Eo Die District Attorney similiter et issue and which to be tried by God and my country. W. Hensel Brown, Esq., for Def.; 1939 P. C. 701; 18 P. S. 4701; Marion A. Lutz, CQS; Motion and reasons for new trial; Filed 20 March 1950, Rule granted; Additional reasons for new trial, filed 7 June 1950; Brief in support of motion for new trial, filed 26 June 1950; Brief for Commonwealth History of Case, filed June 26, 1950; Opinion, filed August 4, 1950; Sentence; Statement under Supreme Court Rule 22, filed 19 September 1950; Statements, autopsy and other documents of execution. (1 item, 114 pages)

**Folder 6** Briefs for the Appellant and Appellee (2 items, 150 pages)

**Insert 1** Brief for the Appellant Edward Lester Gibbs to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Printed by Murrelle Printing Co, Law Printers, Sayer, Pa.

**Insert 2** Brief for the Appellee Sentence of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, etc., to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Printed by Murrelle Printing Co, Law Printers, Sayer, Pa.

**Folder 7** Appeal from the Sentence of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, General Jail Delivery, and Quarter Sessions of the Peace of Lancaster County Indictment No. 1

March Term, 1950 in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Printed by Murrelle Printing Co, Law Printers, Sayer, Pa. (1 item, 412 pages)

**Folder 8** "News of the Day in Pictures" from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* of 14 March 1950 of the opening of the trial in Lancaster and an article from the *Lancaster Inquirer* of 13 March 1950 describing the human element of the opening of the trial. (2 items, 4 pages)

**Folder 9** Front page of the *Lancaster New Era* of 17 March 1950 containing a number of articles concerning the verdict including "Gibbs, Facing Chair, Plans Appeal, expect defense will object to photos, exhibits"; "Grim scene in courtroom set off by death verdict"; "Death verdict of 4th ballot"; "Wife of Gibbs weeps at news"; and "Reaction is mixed at F&M to death decree for Gibbs". Articles continued of page 6. Most with photographs. Photocopies. (5 items, 7 pages)

**Folder 10** Front page of the *Lancaster Intelligencer Journal* for 17 March 1950 including "Death Decreed for Gibbs, Jury deliberates five hours to return 1st degree verdict"; "Gibbs had planned life in prison, hoped to study theology"; "Father staves off heartbreak until Gibbs quits room"; "Victim". Some with photographs. Photocopies. See microfilm for rest of articles. (4 items, 3 pages)

**Folder 11** Front page of the *Lancaster Intelligencer Journal* of 23 April 1951 including "Gibbs Dies in Electric Chair, Marian Baker's slayer goes to death composed, calm"; "'Would he kill again?' key question of court trial"; "Gibbs electrocution eighth from county and first in last 29 yrs."; "Marian Baker's fiancé will get news in Korea"; "Gibbs dramatic confession ended big manhunt here". Photocopies. See microfilm for rest of "Gibbs Electrocution..." and "Would he Kill again". (5 items, 6 pages)

**Folder 12** *Originals of Folder 8. Do not use. (2 items, 4 pages)*

**Folder 13** *Originals of Folder 9. Do not use. (5 items, 14 pages)*

**Folder 14** *Originals of Folder 10. Do not use. (4 items, 12 pages)*

**Folder 15** *Originals of Folder 11. Do not use. (5 items, 8 pages)*