

THE J. FRANK NORRIS MURDER TRIAL OF 1927

by

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A THESIS

IN

HISTORY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Introduction	1
I. The Prelude to the Murder	6
II. Setting the Stage	29
III. The Murder	56
IV. After the Murder	89
V. The Trial	102
VI. After the Trial	137
Bibliography	152
Appendixes	159
I.	160
II.	162
III.	164
IV.	166
V.	168

INTRODUCTION

On Saturday afternoon, July 17, 1926, J. Frank Norris, pastor of the twelve-thousand member First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, shot and "killed an unarmed political enemy by shooting him four times in the belly."¹ Norris was charged with murder on the same day of the shooting. He was indicted three weeks later and was acquitted of the charge at Austin in January, 1927, in what was one of the "most sensational murder trials in the history of the Lone Star State."² The murder of D. E. Chipps by Norris and the trial which followed were the result of a long and embittered political, social, and religious controversy which had for months plagued Fort Worth. Much of the controversy was an outgrowth of Norris's personality, his identification with violence, and his tyrannical crusade against various political enemies. The shooting was an outgrowth of the campaign Norris had willingly waged against bootlegging, the Catholic hierarchy, various city politicians, and the city administration of Fort Worth. The incident occurred in the climate of the Twenties characterized by the Ku Klux Klan; the Big Red scare; growth of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy; the rapid increasing of urbanization; the conflict between the

¹"Milestones," Time, LXXV (Sept. 1, 1952), 73.

²The Austin Statesman, Jan. 28, 1927.

protestant ethnic group, the new immigration and the changing attitude toward prohibition. Many of these changes were to be seen in the congressional debate over immigration, the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, the Scopes "Monkey Trial," and in the issues before the Democratic Conventions of 1924 and 1928. These issues were also present in the crusade which Norris had led in Fort Worth and in the Southwest at the time.

Although it was a part of the religious atmosphere of the time, as well as of the social transition then taking place in Texas, nothing has as yet been written of Norris's career in Fort Worth of the 1920's. It is hoped that a study of the shooting of Chipps and the resultant trial of Norris will show the social and intellectual climate of a city of the Southwest and the role of one of her ministers important in the developing Fundamentalism of the day. The trial was covered by thirty out-of-state newspaper reporters, and the New York Times gave it front page publicity.³

Norris was himself champion of the fundamentalist attitude and movement at the time of the slaying, advertising himself as "the Texas cyclone,"⁴ and he was recognized as the leader of the fundamentalist movement in America. As early

³See The New York Times, July 18, 26, Nov. 1, 9, 1926; Jan. 10, 26, 1927.

⁴Ralph Lord Roy, Apostle of Discord (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953), 350.

as 1923 the World's Work of New York stated:

I hear that the Fundamentalism movement lacks a leader, and so it does--at present. Fundamentalism has only started. No one man started it. It is the result of a simultaneous uprising all over the country. Organizations, with accredited leadership, will come later. Potential leaders abound, and among them the strongest, shrewdest, most romantically adventurous is J. Frank Norris, of Fort Worth, Texas.⁵

Norris, who had deliberately sought to gain identity as the leading fundamentalist in the nation after the death of Bryan, at the time of the slaying was engaged in a controversy which had given him publicity as the leading fundamentalist. When he had accepted the pastorate of the First Baptist Church in 1909, there had been 334 votes cast regarding his call.⁶

The New Republic reported of the congregation the year of the slaying, "Since his dramatic entry into the ministry some fourteen years ago . . . he had headed his congregation. He found it appreciably inert and spiritually bankrupt. Today his following exceeds eight thousand persons and the range of his influence through his weekly paper, The Searchlight, and his private broadcast station is state wide."⁷

⁵Rollin Lynde Hartt, "War Among the Churches," The World's Work, XLVI (Oct. 1923), 474.

⁶Louis Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known for 34 Years (Fort Worth: Privately printed, 1946), 3.

⁷Nels Anderson, "The Shooting Parson of Texas," The New Republic, XLVIII (Sept. 1, 1926), 35-37.

At the time of the slaying, Norris was in the process of splitting a number of congregations off of the Southern Baptist Convention to form his own "Independent Fundamental Missionary Baptist Fellowship,"⁸ a movement which was later to expand to \$3,000 affiliated churches, directly or indirectly founded by Norris.⁹ At the time Norris also preached over 27 radio stations and propagated his message through the pages of The Searchlight, which claimed a circulation of over 65,000 subscribers.¹⁰

All the vast publicity which Norris received as an outgrowth of the Chipps affair was to enable him to remain more or less a nationally known figure throughout the remainder of his life. In this role he enjoyed the acquaintance of such men as David Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, the Grand Mufti, head of the Mohammedan World, Sam Rayburn and others.¹¹ Among those who came to hear Norris preach after the trial was Sinclair Lewis who sat in Norris's congregation when he gathered information for the writing of Elmer Gantry.¹² Lewis was

⁸The Fundamentalist, Jan. 28, 1927.

⁹Roy, Apostle of Discord, 350.

¹⁰The Searchlight, June 16, 1922.

¹¹Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 334-341.

¹²Mark Schorer, Sinclair Lewis, An American Life (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 442.

quoted in the Fort Worth paper as saying, "I have satisfied a desire of a great many years standing--I have gone to hear J. Frank Norris preach. I admire the eloquence of Norris."¹³

If we judge Norris by the size and growth of the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth at the time; by the vast crowds which gathered weekly to hear his sensational message; by the national publicity given the controversy and by the influence he had on Baptists at the time, then it would be safe to assert that Norris was one of the most influential religious figures of the Twenties. A study of the controversy which led to the murder of Chipps, and the trial which followed is then a study of the appeal which gave Norris his influence and hence a study of the many social and religious issues which were accepted in the thinking of many people at the time. While it is true that in a complex society an issue which arouses one group in the society may not influence another, at least the appeal of Norris shows the attitude of the rural fundamentalist in the changing society of the Twenties.

¹³Fort Worth Star Telegram, Oct. 31, 1937.

CHAPTER I

PRELUDE TO THE MURDER

John Franklin Norris was born in Dadeville, Alabama, on September 18, 1877. His father, a farmer, was named James and his mother was named Mary Davis. He had a younger sister, Mattie and a brother Dorie.

Norris's earliest recollection had been one of poverty. This poverty he was to know throughout his childhood and early adult years. His mother later told him that on several occasions his father left her and the children in a small house in Dadeville with little means of survival save for the charity of friends, while he vanished in a spree of drunkenness.¹ As the boy grew, he later reported he often remembered these months with an unforgettable impression. "Often," he said, "I have seen the time when the cupboard was bare and there wasn't a thing in the house to eat, because Father was gone away drunk."² The boyhood days of Norris in Alabama, and later in Texas were printed in his

¹J. Frank Norris, "Going Back to the Old Home Place," The Fundamentalist, June 15, 1951.

²J. Frank Norris, "Inside History of the First Baptist Church," The Searchlight, June 16, 1922.

own publications and as personal anecdotes he used in his sermon illustrations.³

These stories generally were given to illustrate a specific point of his sermon. One such example is recorded by Louis Entzminger,⁴ who told the story of Norris when he was seven years old in Alabama. According to Entzminger, Norris followed his father into a barn where he discovered the father had hidden away several bottles of whiskey. Frank broke all the bottles, and when his father discovered what the child had done, he was so outraged at him that he took "a heavy blacksnake whip and nearly beat the seven year old boy to death."⁵ According to Entzminger, the child was rescued by his mother, who heard the boy screaming. Norris's nose was broken, his head lacerated, and his body "cut from head to foot."⁶

It seems that the beating took place the day before Christmas. The next day, Entzminger reported, Warner came in and uncovered Frank who had been treated and put to bed

³Often these were reprinted in booklets of his sermons under various titles, as Gospel Dynamite, Inside the Cup, Norris-Martin Debate, etc.

⁴Entzminger was a long time associate of Norris in Fort Worth, having come to work for him as Superintendent of the Sunday School. Previous to his moving to Fort Worth, Entzminger had been the pastor of the First Baptist Church of New Orleans.

⁵Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 35.

⁶Ibid.

by a local physician. When he saw what he had done, Entzminger reports that he fell beside the bed and cried:

"Daddy didn't do it, Daddy didn't do it! Liquor did it!."

Then he prayed, according to Entzminger:

Oh, God, liquor has ruined my life, and my home. Take this boy that I have been so cruel to, and send him up and down the land to smite the awful curse that has wrecked his father's life and broke his mother's heart.⁷

When Frank was six, Warner moved the family to Mobile, where he worked for a while in the steel mills, but here also the poverty of the family continued. In his adult life, Norris often referred to this as a lonely, impoverished time of his life.⁸ Here he was humiliated by the son of a local banker at a local Christmas tree held in the school, when all Norris received as a Christmas gift was a small white Bible which his mother gave him. The banker's son laughed at Norris for being the son of a drunkard.⁹ His mother consoled him by taking him out of school. She decided to tutor the boy herself. This she did mostly by

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 37.

⁹Entzminger, in giving this incident, is trying to establish why Norris was such a crusader against the liquor traffic. Norris often made reference to this incident which Entzminger cited when he was speaking of his early life. See The Fundamentalist, June 15, 1951; July 15, 1948; July 19, 1946.

reading him history, and the Scriptures.¹⁰ Norris reported that by the age of twelve he knew much of the history of the United States, and especially that of Texas.¹¹

The Norris family moved to Texas in 1888, when Frank was eleven. They settled near the rural community of Hubbard. Other relatives had preceded them to Texas, and Warner Norris came to Texas for the purpose of taking up farming after his work in the steel mills. Here Norris received little further formal education, but continued to read under the direction of his mother. It is reported that he read widely, hoping to become a lawyer.¹²

When Frank was twelve, Mrs. Norris tried to discipline her husband's increasing drunkenness. On one occasion she sent Frank to the local bar, "The Blind Tiger," with a note asking the management to stop selling Warner whiskey. Frank delivered the note as he had been told. The bartender read the note and threw the boy out. When Frank reported the abuse, Mrs. Norris took him back to the saloon and

¹⁰Norris, "Inside History of the First Baptist Church," The Searchlight, June 16, 1922.

¹¹Norris, "A Visit to the Old Stamping Ground," The Fundamentalist, July 13, 1945.

¹²The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), II, 983. The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists was published by the Southern Baptist Convention and often expresses the opinion of various Baptists which are not otherwise available to the author.

proceeded to beat the bartender with a "long blacksnake whip," and then to "break every bottle in sight."¹³

Soon after, the family moved to Irene, Texas, where a tragic incident happened on their cotton farm. Cattle rustling was an active enterprise at the time, and it was considered dangerous to give testimony in court against any member of the gang who engaged in rustling. Warner Norris, however, agreed to testify against certain members of the gang. A few days after he had agreed to testify against the group, two members of the gang appeared on horseback at the front of Norris's home. Here, according to The Searchlight,¹⁴ the two men began to fire at Warner Norris, who at the time was sitting on the front porch of the house. Frank Norris was chopping cotton across the fence from the outlaws when he heard the shots. He reported that he jumped the fence when he saw what was going on and tried to defend his father by attacking the assailants with a knife. One of the assailants then shot the boy three times in the back. Warner Norris received only minor wounds, but where Frank was shot, gangrene set in, then inflammatory rheumatism. As a result

¹³Norris, "Inside History," The Searchlight, June 16, 1922.

¹⁴The Searchlight was a weekly newspaper published by the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, and owned by J. Frank Norris.

of the shooting he remained paralyzed for three years.¹⁵ According to Entzminger, two physicians, Dr. Dooley, and Dr. Roberts, who came from Hillsboro to treat the boy, said that "he can't live, and if he does, he will be an invalid for life."¹⁶ One of the stronger emotional impacts upon the childhood of Norris was when he heard his mother cry, "No, Doctor, No, Doctor, he will get well."¹⁷ Entzminger reported of the boy that:

during three years of most excruciating pain there was born in his soul a determination and ambition, and whatever courage he may have exhibited in after years was born in those three years.¹⁸

Norris's conversion to the Baptist Church took place while the family lived at Irene, Texas. Authenticated details are lacking, and Norris himself gives conflicting stories of the event. Once he reported that he was converted at the age of 13 at a brush arbor meeting when a preacher by the name of Oswell¹⁹ was preaching about Belshazzar's

¹⁵Norris, "Inside History," The Searchlight, June 16, 1922.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹The writer has been unable to find further reference to Oswell, except that he was not a Baptist, but a Methodist preacher; see Norris, Lectures on Daniel (Fort Worth: Privately printed, 1939), 76.

feast. Norris said that at the preacher's invitation, he climbed down from the back of the wagon where he had been sitting during the sermon and went forward to acknowledge his conversion. He was not, however, baptized at the time.²⁰

Generally, however, he gave credit for his conversion to the influence of a local evangelist by the name of Catlet Smith. Norris said of Smith, that he encountered him at the back side of a field where he had been plowing. "There was a spring at the back side of the field, and we went down to that spring and got down on our knees and drank from the cool clean water . . . He turned . . . and said, 'Frank what are you going to do with yourself, what are your plans for the future?'"²¹ Norris said that he wanted to preach, and the next Sunday afternoon he was baptized by Cat Smith in a local stream.²² Norris's baptism took place when he was seventeen, and the following summer he accepted a

²⁰J. Frank Norris, "A Visit to My Boyhood Home and My Mother's Grave," The Fundamentalist, Sept. 16, 1949.

²¹Norris afterward credited Smith with having greater influence on his life than any other man. Because of Smith, he reported that he became a fundamentalist. See Norris, "Cause and Cure of Doubt," The Fundamentalist, Oct. 19, 1945.

²²Bernice Reeves, "Dr. J. Frank Norris Visits Home of Youth in Hubbard," Waco Herald Tribune, cited in The Fundamentalist, July 13, 1945.

temporary position as a teacher in a local school.²³ Soon after, he accepted his first position as pastor at Mt. Calm, Texas, now Mt. Antioch.

In 1899, at the age of twenty-two, Norris was ordained in a rural Southern Baptist Church. Following his ordination, he enrolled in Baylor University in Waco, Texas. When he was asked to introduce himself to his classmates in his first days at the University, he said he arose and announced, "I don't know what you are going to do, but I am going to preach in the greatest churches and pulpits in the world."²⁴

During his freshman year at the university, rules were changed to allow freshmen to participate in the varsity debate competition and Norris took advantage of the opportunity. He won first place.²⁵

The professor having the most influence on Norris while he was at Baylor was a professor James A. Tanner, in whose home Norris roomed while he was at Baylor. Norris said of Tanner, "I was scared of him . . . to my mind, he

²³Norris, "Enlarge the Place of Thy Tent," The Fundamentalist, April 4, 1946.

²⁴Norris, "Inside History," The Searchlight, June 16, 1922.

²⁵Ibid., June 23, 1922.

was the most brilliant man I have ever met, and I have met several presidents, diplomats and premieres, on both sides of the Atlantic."²⁶ Tanner seemed also to have a strong impact upon Norris's ambition. When Norris graduated from Baylor in 1903, after having married one of the professor's daughters,²⁷ Tanner had done much to encourage him in his ministry. Norris said on one occasion, "He took me into his room . . . put his large hands on either shoulder, and looked me squarely in the face, and said, "Frank, you have a future before you. It's in your hands."²⁸ Norris said of this encouragement, "He did more for me than any man in my life."²⁹

Though Norris claimed to have graduated with honors, his record is not impressive. His grades included an "F," three "D's" and three "C's."³⁰ Following his graduation from Baylor in 1904 with a B.A. degree, Norris entered the

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Norris married Lillian Gaddy in 1902. She was the daughter of Henry W. Gaddy, who later was the State Missionary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Lillian was a senior in Baylor at the time of the marriage. The ceremony was performed by the famous Baptist pastor, B. H. Carroll.

²⁸Norris, "Inside History," The Searchlight, June 16, 1922.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Transcript Record of John Franklin Norris, in the Registrar's office, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 1904.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Here he received a Master of Theology degree in 1906, and was elected to deliver the valedictory address because of his grades.³¹ He delivered the address upon the "International Justification of Japan in the War with Russia." The Louisville Courier-Journal published the address in full.³²

In 1906 Norris accepted "sight unseen" the pulpit of the McKinney Avenue Baptist Church of Dallas, because "No Roman Catholic Priest ever looked with stronger devotion toward Rome, than I looked on denominational headquarters in Dallas."³³ In 1907 Norris preached the Annual Convention Sermon for the State Baptists, and was then offered the editorship of the denominational paper, The Baptist Standard. He said of his motivation in taking The Standard, "Trouble was brewing in the denomination as usual, and they [the Baptist leadership] wanted some young fellow who could put the lid on, and I told them I could do it."³⁴

As the editor of The Baptist Standard, Norris was

³¹Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 65.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., 66.

³⁴Norris, "Inside History," The Searchlight, Jan. 16, 1922.

instrumental in helping to establish the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. He was able to do this largely through the assistance he gave Dr. B. H. Carroll in the columns of The Standard. In the July 25, 1907, issue of The Baptist Standard, Carroll, then one of the most influential of Baptist leaders, expressed a desire to build a seminary in the Southwest. "God grant me," he wrote, "before I die to see in the Southwest a seminary firmly established, whose control shall be exercised by the Baptist general bodies, immediately through the trustees of their own appointment."³⁵ Opposition immediately developed in the denomination towards the project, but Norris reported that he ignored the opposition, and continued to print the account of the "fund raising success of Dr. Carroll."³⁶ This effort and the fund raising success soon led to the establishment of the seminary under an independent board of directors in May of 1908.³⁷ In return for the support which Norris gave his effort, Carroll wrote words of praise of Norris in the pages of The Baptist Standard. He declared "Norris and

³⁵B. H. Carroll, "A Seminary in the Southwest," The Baptist Standard, July 25, 1907.

³⁶Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 78.

³⁷Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, 1279.

Dawson are young men with the courage, strength and enthusiasm of youth. They are capable men."³⁸

Norris also aided in the establishment of Buckner's Orphans' Home by articles supporting the effort of Buckner, and Buckner also showed his appreciation by the support he gave Norris in further controversies. As late as 1918, Buckner wrote of Norris that ". . . you laid the foundation and others have built on it. More attention has been given to the rattle in nailing on the last shingle . . . but J. Frank Norris did more work as a wise master builder . . . from the bed rock . . ." ³⁹

In 1907 Norris fought his first big fight as the editor of The Baptist Standard, against race track gambling in Dallas. He reported that he first gave attention to the gambling when one day he received a five page letter from a woman in southeast Texas telling of the suicide of her son. The man had been a cashier in a bank and had embezzled to pay funds he had lost gambling at the state fair grounds in Texas. The boy had written his mother shortly before the suicide, "I am sorry, Mother, but this is the only way out.

³⁸B. H. Carroll, "Paragraphs of Interest," The Baptist Standard, Sept. 12, 1907.

³⁹Frank Norris, "Inside History of the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth and the Temple Baptist Church of Detroit (Fort Worth, Texas: Privately printed, 1938), 3.

I would rather be dead than in the penitentiary."⁴⁰ Norris said that he at first wrote his regrets to the mother and paid little attention, "but the thing got on my mind," he said.⁴¹ He finally decided to check into the gambling at the fair grounds, and along with H. Z. Duke went out to see for himself. He reported that he found forty-eight book making stands, and that he saw "five thousand men and women in a drunken, gambling debauch."⁴² Norris further found that the City of Dallas was receiving over \$125,000.00 annually out of revenue for gambling.

He had the gambling at the fair photographed, and then under the title, "Racing at the Dallas Fairground Gambling Hell,"⁴³ he launched his crusade through the pages of the Standard. As a result of his campaigning, Norris reported that an East Texas Baptist layman named Greer, a member of the Senate, joined with Robinson,⁴⁴ a member of the House, jointly to introduce a bill to outlaw gambling at the

⁴⁰Norris, Inside History of the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth and the Temple, 9.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., 10.

⁴³Norris, "Racing at the Dallas Fairground Gambling Hell," The Baptist Standard, Dec. 3, 1908.

⁴⁴Robinson was a Methodist.

Dallas fair. The bill was referred to the Judiciary Committee, and Norris was subpoenaed to testify before the committee.⁴⁵ The gambling interest was defended by the famous lawyer, William Crawford. In a public meeting of the committee, Crawford denied the allegation of Norris, and according to Norris, "made an attack on me, evading the issue of gambling." Norris said, "That was the first public cussing I ever received. I wasn't used to it then."⁴⁶ After Crawford's attack, Norris returned to Dallas to get his evidence. When he returned to Austin, he was joined by a second minister, the Rev. W. D. Bradfield,⁴⁷ and the two presented their evidence before the committee. Two special trains brought delegates from Dallas to Austin representing the gambling interests. At the next meeting of the Judiciary Committee, which was also public, the house chamber was filled with spectators. In addition there were also present at the meeting members of both houses of the legislature, the Supreme Court, and the Governor.⁴⁸ It was to this gathering that Norris and Bradfield presented their evidence. Norris said:

⁴⁵Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 70.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Bradfield was an ordained minister of the Methodist Church who was serving at the time on the faculty of the Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

⁴⁸H. T. Campbell was Governor of the State.

It scared me. They told me what they were going to do to me. For the first time since I have been grown I felt a challenge to become religious. I saw I was into it. What could I do with that crowd?⁴⁹

The session closed at 2:00 A.M. with the statement of Norris. The Judiciary Committee favorably reported the bill, which was later passed into law at the same session of the legislature. The Literary Digest reported at the time, that what Charles E. Hughes had done for New York, "J. Frank Norris and W. D. Bradfield had succeeded in doing in Texas in fighting the combined forces of the book makers."⁵⁰

A resolution was adopted at the next Baptist General Convention by a rising vote, which praised Norris's effort. In a resolution submitted by W. C. Lattimore of Denton, Texas, the convention⁵¹ praised the fearless course of The Baptist Standard in "the protest against . . . race track gambling . . . against the railroad in putting on a special Sunday . . . excursion rates at repeated times during the year to the many resorts in and out of the state where the

⁴⁹Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 27-29.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹The Baptist General Convention of Texas reported in this resolution to represent 300,000 Baptists.

moral atmosphere is opposite to that . . . of the convention."⁵²

The result of the campaign was not only the abolition of race track gambling in the state by the act of the legislature, but also the financial depletion of The Standard because of the expenditures of Norris's campaign,⁵³ and the complete "disillusionment" of Norris toward his brethren, because of the little support they gave him financially in his campaign.⁵⁴ In 1909 he sold the paper to the General Baptist Convention of Texas, moved to Plainview⁵⁵ and was thinking about quitting the ministry.⁵⁶ The same year he was called as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, where he remained until his death in 1952. The First Baptist Church was considered at the time as one of the wealthiest and most influential congregations in the state.

Norris's first year as the pastor of the church appeared to have been rather uneventful until he launched a

⁵²Resolution from the Minutes of the Baptist General Convention of Texas (Dallas: Privately printed, 1906), 28.

⁵³Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 73.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵At Plainview he was offered the Presidency of Wayland Baptist College and was given the degree Doctor of Divinity because of his anti-gambling campaign.

⁵⁶Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 73.

campaign against the legalized prostitution in the city. Prostitution in Fort Worth had been permitted to operate at the time in a protected zone along Calhoun Street. In 1910 Norris, along with the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, began a crusade calling for the closing of the zone. Norris's sermons upon the subject gathered large crowds to his church, but they also led to opposition, both in and out of his church organization. In 1910 his church divided over his method of crusading⁵⁷ and there were threats on his life. One group met for the announced purpose of lynching him.⁵⁸

On January 11, 1911, in the midst of the crusade, the church, then located at third and Taylor streets, was discovered on fire. Two weeks later, on February 4, 1912, the church burned again, and only the blackened walls and charred debris remained.⁵⁹ The following week Norris was indicted on the charge of burning the church. Norris's home was also burned three months later.⁶⁰ In a trial which lasted twenty-one days, and which was given national publicity, Norris was exonerated of the charge in the 67th

⁵⁷The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, 983.

⁵⁸Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 101.

⁵⁹Fort Worth Record, Feb. 5, 1912.

⁶⁰Ibid., May 2, 1912.

District Court. When the verdict was reached there was such commotion that the judge⁶¹ could not dismiss the jury. The Dallas Morning News reported that Norris was not in the court room at the time, but that scores of women and other friends crowded around Mrs. Norris.⁶² In a moment the commotion swelled into what the paper described as "a storm of rejoicing." "Almost hysterical laughter, cheers, hand clapping, the stamping of feet, all contributed to the noise."⁶³ When order was restored for the official discharge of the jury, someone began to sing "Old Time Religion," and everyone joined in the swelling chorus until it "reminded one," according to the same source, "of the singing at a revival meeting."⁶⁴ Many of Norris's supporters were present at the demonstration as an indication of the zeal and number of his supporters and friends.⁶⁵

After the incident of the trial, Norris was able to rebuild the church facilities, this time on a much larger

⁶¹The Judge was the Hon. Tom Simmons.

⁶²Mrs. Norris had been the principal witness for the defense. She had testified that Norris was at home in bed with her when he was reported to have started the fire.

⁶³The Dallas Morning News, Feb. 12, 1912.

⁶⁴The Dallas Morning News, April 26, 1912.

⁶⁵J. Frank Norris, "Inside History of the First Baptist Church," The Searchlight, Nov. 17, 1922.

scale. He also continued to campaign against the liquor traffic. Another incident occurred when Norris claimed that a number of men belonging to the "liquor crowd," gathered in a dining room of the Metropolitan Hotel, on a Monday in September, 1916, and drank to his "death."⁶⁶ A committee of liquor dealers was appointed to visit Norris and threaten him with reprisal if he did not leave town within thirty days.⁶⁷ When Norris refused to leave Fort Worth, some of the group rented the auditorium of the Chamber of Commerce and called a mass meeting. Mr. George Armstrong, who presided over the meeting, asked for fifteen men to go out and "take Norris over," but they, "could not find fifteen men."⁶⁸

The next major controversy in which Norris took the leadership was the evolution dispute beginning in Texas in 1921. The controversy was of a different nature for Norris, since it was an attack upon the Baptist institutions of the State, and less a controversy with those outside the Baptist Church. It was the beginning of a controversy which was later to lead to Norris's expulsion from the Baptist

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Paul Waples was the principal speaker according to William Blevins, the president of the Malt and Retail Liquor Dealers Association of Texas. See Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 131.

General Convention of Texas.⁶⁹ In 1920 the anti-evolution movement was given added impetus by the support of William Jennings Bryan. The popularity of the movement spread as other preachers joined in the dispute. The first legislative victory was gained in Oklahoma. That state, as a part of the free text book law banned from its public schools any book giving a materialistic conception of history, such as the Darwinian theory of creation. Florida followed suit, passing Bryan's resolution. In Texas the controversy was given popularity among certain Baptists and when he discovered that evolution was being taught on the campus of Baylor University, Norris believed that he had found treason within the faculty ranks. In 1920, he proceeded to launch an attack upon Baylor, charging it with "infidelity," and the "teaching of evolution."⁷⁰

The principal issue was a statement in G. Samuel Dowe's book, An Introduction to Sociology then being used as a sociology text book at Baylor. The author claimed that pre-historic man, on the basis of archaeological findings "lay about half way between the anthropoid ape and

⁶⁹Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 131-32.

⁷⁰The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, 983.

modern man."⁷¹ To defend the university against Norris's assault, George W. Truett, pastor of a large Southern Baptist church and a most influential leader in the convention, attacked Norris. Norris went on a verbal rampage. He toured the country, especially Texas, to gain support for his side of the controversy. The pages of The Searchlight were filled with his accusations against the Baylor faculty and the denominational leadership.⁷²

The war on evolution lasted for seven years. During that time the Southern Baptists, according to Norris, did two things every year, "hang Norris, and whitewash evolution."⁷³ On one occasion Norris rented an auditorium in Waco and announced that he was going to "hang the apes and monkeys on the faculty of Baylor University."⁷⁴ The feeling, according to Norris, was so high in the city in favor of the University, that the police chief and sheriff came to his hotel room and advised him to leave the city since they could not guarantee his protection. He said that when he went to the auditorium an hour early, he found the place

⁷¹Samuel Dowe, Introduction to the Principles of Sociology (Waco: Baylor University, 1920), 210.

⁷²For an example of Norris's methods and message upon the evolution question, see J. Frank Norris, "Professor Dowe, and Baylor University," The Searchlight, Nov. 11, 1921.

⁷³Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 167-168.

⁷⁴Ibid.

crowded. He said that he told the crowd that because of their "cat calls, hooting, booing, and yelling . . . you are running true to form and giving the finest evidence that your ancestors were braying asses, screeching monkeys and yelling hyenas."⁷⁵

The controversy over the teaching of evolution was one phase of the antagonistic spirit toward the Southern Baptists which Norris developed in his ministry. Because of his extreme views he allied himself with the fundamentalist segment of the Baptist Convention.⁷⁶ This extreme fundamentalist position caused him to oppose the Texas Baptist missionary program in 1914, and the following year to sponsor the World Christian Fundamental Conference.⁷⁷ Four years later he helped to propagate the Bible Baptist Union of America which championed an extreme fundamentalist position, and made the extreme position a test of fellowship. This was Norris's first effort to alienate churches from the Convention. In 1919, Norris attacked the \$75,000,000.00 campaign of the Convention, after his church had accepted a quota of the budget. The next year, he discontinued the use

⁷⁵Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 168.

⁷⁶Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, 983.

⁷⁷Ibid.

of the Baptist Sunday School literature, and announced that his church would return to the "Bible only method."⁷⁸ In each of these turns Norris was to assume more and more a fundamentalist attitude toward his ministry, and probably conceived of himself as safeguarding his denomination against liberalism and what he felt was apostasy.⁷⁹

Two years after Norris's attack on Baylor University, the local association excluded Norris's congregation because of "his spirit, methods, acts of non-cooperation, and un-Baptist practices of his church."⁸⁰ The same year the Baptist General Convention of Texas refused to seat his delegation. In 1924 the Texas group permanently expelled him; however, efforts in the Southern Baptist Convention toward his expulsion were permanently tabled in 1926. It was at this time that Norris became involved in the political controversy that resulted in the death of Chipps.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Roy, Apostle of Discord, 350.

⁸⁰Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, 983.

CHAPTER II

SETTING THE STAGE

In the 1920's there were present in Fort Worth, as well as the nation at large, certain social conditions and cultural attitudes which made possible the sensational and controversial ministry of J. Frank Norris that led not only to the murder of D. E. Chipps but which enabled Norris to build and maintain what was at the time the world's largest Baptist congregation.¹ Properly to understand the controversial ministry of Norris which led to the murder of Chipps, one must have these various social developments in mind. The murder of Chipps was not an isolated event, but a part of a long and complex controversy in which Norris had been engaged for months. In another environment than that of the 1920's it is doubtful that Norris could have maintained the support of his vast congregation in the controversy. The murder of Chipps was to a large degree a product of this environment of the 1920's. This same environment of Fort Worth and the Southwest provided an atmosphere which allowed a man such as Norris to rise to the heights as a crusader for fundamental protestantism.

¹Hartt, "War Among the Churches," World's Work, XLVI (Oct. 1923), 474.

J. Frank Norris was a violent man who fought Catholics, foreigners, liquor, communism and internationalism. In these endeavors he believed himself to be fighting the battle of "the Lord." His willingness to battle evil in whatever guise it appeared, together with his sensationalism and forceful personality helped Norris gather vast crowds to hear him preach, and one can probably conclude that in an atmosphere calmer than that of the 1920's Norris might have had far less appeal.

Before one can properly understand the background to the murder of Chipps one must recall the social conditions present at the time. It is equally necessary that one evaluate Norris's ministry in the light of this environment before one can appreciate how he was able to assemble and hold his vast congregation. This he was undoubtedly able to do because of a combination of numerous factors, some innate to his own natural ability as a leader, and some because of his appeal to a large segment of his community through the use of sensationalism and controversy.² The murder of D. E. Chipps was just one of numerous sensational controversies which plagued the life of J. Frank

²Haldeman-Julius, "J. Frank Norris, Shooting Salvationist," The Haldeman-Julius Monthly (Sept. 1926), 117. This reference is hereinafter cited as Haldeman-Julius Monthly, and refers to only the Sept. issue, the single issue of the publication available to the writer.

Norris, but it is typical of the tactics and techniques Norris used to gather his vast following.

What was the appeal which Norris used to attain such success? Perhaps most important was his appeal to his following based upon fear³--the fear which many consciously or unconsciously felt toward a changing society which they neither understood nor desired.

Norris, as will be shown, singled out social changes then taking place, and by opposing them often gained the support of those who inwardly desired to return to the rural American culture which they had known prior to World War I. This desire to resist change and to return to the past was probably most appealing to the fundamentalist segment of the society, but its appeal was general enough so as to in no wise limit the supporters of Norris's following. James Truslow Adams, in writing on the presidential elections of the 1920's summarized this feeling, saying:

. . . the fight was really between those of our citizens who realized that as a result of the war both we and the world were entering upon a new era of international relations and those others who frantically desired solely a return, which they did not realize was impossible, to our pre-war conditions of life and policies. The chief issue of the campaign was whether we

³For a description of the mass hysteria of the period, see Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York: Harper-Row, 1943), 668-684.

should go forward boldly into the unknown and untried or pretend to go back to the old and accustomed. The referendum on the war was to prove overwhelmingly in favor of trying to go back, of returning to what the successful Republican Candidate was to term 'normalcy'.⁴

Before attempting to show how Norris championed those who resisted the change of social conditions, and how this change related to the murder of Chipps in the 1920's, some of the more evident changes taking place at the time might be indicated. These changes were numerous, and some were doubtless more self evident than others. The amendments to the Federal Constitution at the time reveal at the least a social transition. The Eighteenth Amendment which was adopted by thirty-six states in January, 1919, led to the passage of the Volstead Act, which made it illegal to "manufacture, sell, or transport" liquor. The Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution brought to a successful conclusion the struggle for woman suffrage which permitted women to vote for the first time in the presidential election of 1920. What may have come with less suddenness, but with more impact were those changes brought about by new technology and mass production. Speed, mobility, and mass transportation were now rapidly becoming a part of the

⁴ James Truslow Adams, The March of Democracy (Six Volumes; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), IV, 262-263.

American scene.⁵ The airplane had been used by the Germans to drop bombs in 1914, the English had flown from Newfoundland to Ireland as early as 1919, and by 1927, Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic from America to France. The speed and mobility of the automobile were even more evident.⁶ Ford had sold his first automobile in 1903, and by 1914, there were 1,500,000 automobiles sold in the nation. By 1920, 8,000,000 automobiles were owned by Americans. The motion picture industry also had reached vast proportions and had by 1920, a weekly audience of 30,000,000. The radio had grown until by 1920 50,000,000 people were listening daily to 10,000,000 radio receiver sets in the nation.⁷

The automobile and better roads led the rural community to a closer contact with urban society. The new means of communication brought the population constantly into contact with new ideas, and further acquainted the provincial mind with urbanization. Of equal importance was the new value which was placed upon education. Between

⁵Edwin C. Hill, The American Scene (New York: Witmark Educational Publication, 1933), 7.

⁶Samuel Eliot Morison, and Henry Steel Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (New York: Oxford Press, 1950), II, 551.

⁷Louis M. Hacker, American Problems of Today (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1938), 160.

1920 and 1926 the number of students in college increased from 460,000 to 800,000, where the students were often acquainted for the first time with theses and ideas foreign to the rural puritan society of the Southwest.⁸ The new technology also led to new scientific discovery. Evolution became a part of the college curriculum, and the great age of the earth became an accepted fact. Communism became a new word to many, and the Communist party of the United States took on a new emphasis after 1917.⁹ Adams concluded:

It is impossible to say how far the . . . changes put us so suddenly under the nervous strain of adjustment to a vast quickened tempo of living and of a barrage of new sensations, and how far the war itself, may have been responsible for the abnormal mental condition in which the American nation found itself in the coming of so-called peace.¹⁰

Too often, too many made this required adjustment too slowly. The 1920's were marked by violent reactions to ideas and events which did not meet with the ideas and accepted traditions of the past.¹¹ Often the period was

⁸Ralph Borsodi, This Ugly Civilization (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1929), 225.

⁹New York Times, Jan. 10, 1920.

¹⁰Adams, The March of Democracy, 272.

¹¹George E. Mowry, The Twenties: Fords, Flappers, and Fanatics (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 154.

characterized by violence, and the murder of Chipps by Norris may be viewed as such a crime of passion where two men, each representative of a conflicting view of a common society were brought into such contention that one felt the need to destroy the other. Chipps represented in Norris's mind much which he opposed in the changing Twenties;¹² and certainly Norris, in the mind of Chipps, represented those forces which he felt detrimental to the peace and prosperity of his community.¹³

This type of violence and an appeal to mass hysteria had long been a part of Norris's ministry, even before it led to the murder of Chipps. Yet there are certain direct elements in the hysteria of the 1920's which can be seen in the controversy which Norris propagated at the time, that led to the murder of Chipps.

In the first place, Norris had championed the growth of the new isolationism which had followed the war.¹⁴ There was in the 1920's a growing distrust by many Americans for

¹²For Norris's testimony concerning Chipps and the interest he represents, see the Dallas Morning News, Jan. 22, 1927, p. 6, and Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 108.

¹³For Chipps's attitude toward Norris, see the Austin Statesman, Jan. 18, 1927, p. 1.

¹⁴Norris, "Roman Catholic Plans, The Searchlight, March 26, 1926, p. 1.

Europe, and for Europeans.¹⁵ Reaction towards internationalism was everywhere present. Wilson had been defeated, the League of Nations denounced, and the World Court rejected. Harding was the last president to advocate that Americans adhere to the World Court. While Coolidge, Hoover, and Roosevelt urged the senate to ratify the protocol of the court, little effort was needed to defeat it in the Congress. It is eminently clear that the American nation was hostile to any involvement in foreign affairs.

The Twenties have been defined as a period marked by narrowness and provincialism, as well as a period of prosperity.¹⁶ After the war there was a movement toward a new isolationism in the nation. There was a wave of nationalism, of "one hundred percent American," and the attitude that the old American beliefs and institutions were unimpeachable.¹⁷ New suspicion was cast upon recent immigrants and unassimilated minorities. Congress expressed this early in 1917, when it passed over the presidential veto the requirement of a literacy test for the new immigration. In 1921 there were, however, 80,000 immigrants

¹⁵Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931), 62.

¹⁶Ibid., 63.

¹⁷Curti, The Growth of American Thought, 667.

who came to the United States; most of these were Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox Catholic, and Jewish. This even heightened the intolerance that many Americans had toward such groups.¹⁸ Much of the violence of the post-war years had been attributed to the coming of hordes of unassimilable immigrants.¹⁹ As will be shown, the sermons of Norris as published in The Searchlight at the time he killed Chipps were filled with such opinions. The preaching of Norris helped to gather the support of his vast following, and it certainly did much to bring him into conflict with Chipps, who opposed Norris in defense of Fort Worth's mayor, and the Fort Worth city manager, Meacham and Carr. In Norris's mind Meacham was a Catholic, a representative of a foreign power, an alien voice, and a danger to American religious freedom.²⁰ At least this was what Norris preached and what he sought to persuade his followers to believe. Week after week from his pulpit, and week after week in his publication he shouted, "Beware of the foreign plot to destroy America," at the same time using every occasion to condemn the League of Nations and any foreign involvement.²¹ It

¹⁸Adams, The March of Democracy, IV, 273.

¹⁹F. L. Paxson, Post War Years, Normalcy, 1918-1923 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 368.

²⁰For a list of Norris's sermons containing such implications, see notes 17-20 of Chapter III.

²¹See The Searchlight, July 9, 1927.

may be doubtful that Norris was sincere in his conviction, but there is little doubt that his following thought him sincere. Chipps was neither a foreigner nor a Catholic, but he was a friend of those who represented these groups. It was in defense of this friendship that Chipps went to see Norris on the afternoon of his death.²² And while Norris pulled the trigger, it can probably be concluded safely that without the attitude of himself and the society around him, Norris would never have faced the challenge of shooting Chipps to death.²³

A second attitude of the Twenties which added to the success of Norris's sensational appeal and led to the murder of Chipps was the anti-Catholic attitude so popular with many. It may be argued that the anti-Catholic attitude was an outgrowth of the spirit of nationalism, but to the ministry of Norris, it was more than this. Norris, as will be shown, had harassed, criticized, and attacked the Catholic power as early as 1913,²⁴ in his Fort Worth pulpit, but he had never used sensationalism of this type as

²²Deposition No. 74489 taken in the case of Mrs. D. E. Chipps vs J. Frank Norris, 96 Dist. Court of Texas (1926), p. 139. Copy in possession of the author. Cited hereinafter as Deposition No. 74489, Mrs. D. E. Chipps vs J. Frank Norris.

²³Norris, "The Conspiracy of Romanism to Rule," The Searchlight, Feb. 26, 1926.

²⁴Norris, Inside History, 8.

successfully as he did in the 1920's.²⁵

More evidence of this intellectual climate of the times can be seen in the rapid growth of the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan, which had been reorganized in November, 1915 near Atlanta, had grown until in 1925, it could boast a following of half a million.²⁶ The real purpose of the Klan was soon perverted to make it an organization of hatred against the Catholics, Jews, and Negroes, and it joined in many tar and featherings and killings.²⁷ The widespread growth of the Klan is indicative of the popularity of the anti-minority attitude,²⁸ and this is the very appeal used by Norris in his Fort Worth pulpit.

A quote from the "Imperial Wizard" of the Klan in 1926 sounds almost like a quote from Norris's sermons at the time:

We are a movement of the plain people, very weak in the matter of culture, intellectual support, and trained leadership. We are demanding, and we expect to win, a return of power into the hands of the everyday, not highly cultured, not overly intellectualized, but entirely unspoiled and not de-Americanized, average citizen of the old stock.

²⁵Adams, The March of Democracy, IV, 273.

²⁶Allen, Only Yesterday, 16.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸J. M. Mecklin, Ku Klux Klan, A Study of the American Mind (New York: Harcourt, Brace Co., 1924), 244.

First in the Klansman's mind is patriotism-- America for Americans. He believes religiously that a betrayal of Americanism or the American race is treason to the most sacred of trusts, a trust from his fathers and a trust from God. He believes, too, that Americanism can only be achieved if the pioneer stock is kept pure.

The third of the Klan principles is that Protestantism must be supreme; that Rome shall not rule America. The Klansman believes this not merely because he is a Protestant, nor even because the Colonies that are now our nation were settled for the purpose of wresting America from the control of Rome and establishing a land of free conscience. He believes it also because Protestantism is an essential part of Americanism; without it America could never have been created and without it she cannot go forward. Roman rule would kill it.²⁹

Thus it will be seen that the attitude of the Klan was in general the attitude of Norris. The rapid growth of the Klan is indicative of the opportunity for the appeal of Norris in his anti-Catholic crusade which led directly to the murder of Chipps. Without the support which Norris generated through his attacks on the Catholic hierarchy, it is doubtful that he would have so persisted in his controversy with the Fort Worth city officials.³⁰ A study of the murder will reveal that without this

²⁹Hiram Wesley Evans, "The Klan's Fight for Americanism," The North American Review, CCXXIII (March, 1926), 49-54.

³⁰Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 117.

anti-Catholic atmosphere, Norris would not have been called upon to take the life of Chipps, nor would he have found such popular sympathy in the act.

A third factor in the social environment of the 1920's which was directly involved in the murder of Chipps, as well as being a vital part of Norris's ministry at the time, was the controversy over prohibition. As will be pointed out, prohibition had long been a part of the ministry of Norris, even before the Volstead Act. What made him even more emotionally involved in the prohibition issue at the time, as well as throughout his ministry, was his deprived childhood, which he credited to the drunkenness of his father. That Norris was himself a prohibitionist is probably not so important in the controversy which led to the murder of Chipps as the fact that Norris sought to prove that those in the Fort Worth city government were anti-prohibitionists who opposed his type of ministry.³¹ To Norris, judging by his testimony, Chipps was a drunkard. Chipps represented in Norris's mind the liquor industry and was sympathetic with those who would repeal the Eighteenth Amendment.³² Norris repeatedly preached on the subject of

³¹J. Frank Norris, "Carr Loses Head," The Searchlight, July 9, 1926, 17.

³²J. Frank Norris, "Six Members of First Baptist Church Fired," The Searchlight, July 16, 1926.

"Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion," and he sought to show that Meacham, Carr and later Chipps were in sympathy with views contradicting his own.³³ To Norris, any weakness in prohibition lay not in the law, but in the failure of officials to enforce the law. Just as he found popularity in attacking Catholicism, he found support in attacking the city officials for protecting bootlegging in Tarrant County.³⁴

Norris's brand of fundamentalism denied that such factors as a complex personality and social problems could be the cause of drunkenness; rather it insisted that alcohol itself was the single cause of drunkenness, and that those who sold alcohol, or permitted it to be sold, were also alone responsible for its evil.³⁵ This was the appeal he made at the time. If the Volstead Act is accepted as evidence of popular support for prohibition, then Norris was popular in this appeal.³⁶ At least Norris felt confident in his criticism of Meacham and Carr when he accused them of being anti-prohibitionist. This confidence encouraged him in his controversy, and this controversy was a

³³Ibid.

³⁴Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 22.

³⁵Ibid., 35.

³⁶See The Searchlight, Jan. 1924 to Jan. 1927.

vital element in the murder of Chipps.³⁷ Chipps saw no wrong in the legal sale of alcohol, and he was sympathetic toward the Catholic Church. Because of these beliefs, so radically different from Norris's, Chipps apparently despised Norris, and even boasted of his hatred. Chipps may have been more honest in his conviction, and Norris more utilitarian in his circumstances, but they both represented opposite opinions which were very much present in the 1920's.

A fourth element of the 1920's which was vital to the controversial ministry of Norris was the violence which accompanied the Big Red Scare. At the beginning of the decade because there was a vastly exaggerated belief in the strength of communism in the United States many people had become alarmed. Further, as an outgrowth of the Bolshevik Revolution, the organizing of the third Communist International as an agency for world revolution, and the communist gains in Germany, Hungary and the Russian frontier, there was a growing fear on the part of many that communism was an internal threat to the security of the United States.³⁸

³⁷Norris, "More Information Needed," The Fundamentalist, August 3, 1928.

³⁸A. Mitchell Palmer, "The Case Against the Reds," The Forum, LXIII (Feb. 20, 1920), 63.

Morris himself was one of the most aggressive in the spreading of such hysteria,³⁹ which was almost national in its scope and was not unique to Morris's ministry. The much publicized work of radicals added to this feeling. Examples of this may be seen when in April, 1919, thirty bombs were found in the mails addressed to various prominent Americans who had spoken out against communism, and in the bomb that exploded in front of the J. P. Morgan Company office in 1920 and killed thirty-six people.⁴⁰ In all of this there was a reaction which caused the older nationalist groups to dislike the radical. This dislike was often projected against Catholics, Jews and most American minorities. Strikes, for example that of 1919 called by the Seattle Central Labor Committee to support the shipyard workers, added to the hysteria. This was exceptionally true in this strike, when the mayor, Ole Hanson, blamed the Reds and used troops to subdue the strike.⁴¹ Opponents of the League of Nations were also quick to condemn the internationalism of the "Red Conspiracy." James F. Byrnes of South Carolina warned that the communists were

³⁹J. Frank Morris, Worldwide Sweep of Russian Bolshevism (Fort Worth: Privately printed, 1929), 153.

⁴⁰Morison, The Oxford History, 883.

⁴¹Ibid.

inciting a Negro revolution in the South. The "witch hunt," however, reached its apex when it was given the personal support of Attorney General Palmer, who used his department, as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation to prosecute various "aliens and radicals."⁴² Although Congress refused to pass Palmer's sedition bill, it did not keep the Attorney General from initiating a series of raids, which resulted in mass deportations.⁴³ The greatest effort came in January of 1920, when six thousand suspects were arrested on suspicion of subversion and sent off to prison to await trial.

When Palmer's alleged revolutionary plot failed to materialize it helped end the Big Red Scare. But the hatred of aliens was to continue, which may be seen in the trial and conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti and the eventual electrocution of the two in the year of the Norris murder trial. To Norris the Big Red Scare never ended,⁴⁴ and he sooner or later, in one way or another, tried to associate most of his enemies with a communist conspiracy. One writer stated that he even went so far as to assail almost every major religious leader, even in his own denomination.⁴⁵

⁴²Adams, The March of Democracy, 272.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴J. Frank Norris, New Dealism, Russian Communism Exposed (Fort Worth: Privately printed, 1933), 6.

⁴⁵Roy, Apostle of Discord, 351.

Norris did not accuse Chipps of being a red; nor did he in so many words accuse those Chipps defended of being reds. But it is important to note that the same social condition which permitted the success of Norris's appeal also nurtured the conditions that permitted the Red Scare. This type of social climate helped lead to the murder of Chipps. The Big Red Scare showed the violent emotions of the times⁴⁶ and the murder of Chipps in the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth was committed by a man whose sensibilities had been inflamed by his continued hammering at the theme of subversion of American ideals and the need to destroy the enemies of the country. The fact that the murder of Chipps in no apparently visible way hindered the ministry of Norris or the growth in size of his constituency,⁴⁷ shows that violence was at least in some degree and to a certain type of person an acceptable thing.

In Norris' brand of fundamentalism there was little difference between the Catholic, the communist, the wet, or the modernist.⁴⁸ They were in the mind of the

⁴⁶Adams, The March of Democracy, 272.

⁴⁷Wilburn S. Taylor, "J. Frank Norris," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, 983.

⁴⁸In J. Frank Norris's theology, all these forces were the personal workings of a personal Satan, set upon the destruction of the true church (fundamental Baptist) and the infallibility of the Scripture: see J. Frank Norris, "Shall We Have Peace on the Devil's Terms?" The Searchlight, March 18, 1927, 1.

fundamentalist all a part of the same evil conspiracy,⁴⁹ and Chipps was a representative of such an evil in the mind of Norris; hence Norris had little hesitation in shooting such a man to death.⁵⁰ Perhaps, it can be concluded that in a less violent era than the 1920's a controversial ministry such as Norris's would not have permitted him the success he had; nor would it have produced such an act of passion as the killing of an unarmed assailant by a famous clergyman in his church facilities.

A fifth element which was vital to the ministry of Norris and which gave popularity to his use of controversy at the time was the modernist-fundamentalist controversy.⁵¹ Norris, at the time he killed Chipps was endeavoring to become the national spokesman for the fundamentalist movement,⁵² a movement dedicated to the difference of a literal interpretation of the Bible. The year after he killed Chipps, he was to change the name of his publication to The Fundamentalist, and he was to wear the name fundamentalist with great

⁴⁹According to Marcet Haldeman-Julius, Norris boasted over the radio that he would not hesitate to defend his church with arms, even before he was called upon to shoot Chipps. See Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 6.

⁵⁰The pages of The Searchlight are filled with little else for the period of 1923 to 1929 except such attacks as those upon "dangers" of one kind or another as Norris saw them almost weekly developing.

⁵¹For a definition of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy, see Curti, The Growth of American Thought, 685.

⁵²The World's Work, LXVI (Oct. 1923), 474.

pride for the remainder of his life.⁵³ The fundamentalist-modernist controversy had come to the denominations of the South primarily as a controversy over the teaching of evolution. More than sixty years after the publication of The Origin of Species, long after many had sought to reconcile Darwinism with Christianity, the controversy began to rage with new violence in the southern part of the United States. To many protestant fundamentalists, the teaching of biological evolution was a direct attack upon the Bible. They argued that the Bible must be accepted literally, or that it was futile to accept it at all, since no one could know which part of it was literal and which figurative.⁵⁴ In the post-war years Norris had been closely associated with William Jennings Bryan⁵⁵ in his anti-evolutionist attitude, and, as has been stated, helped to raise funds for Bryan in the prosecution of John T. Scopes. Norris, as has been pointed out, had been most instrumental in the expulsion from the faculty of Baylor University of those who accepted evolution. Because he was so aggressive in his

⁵³J. Frank Norris, Infidelity Among the Southern Baptists Endorsed by Highest Officials (Fort Worth: Privately printed, 1950), 1-83.

⁵⁴J. Frank Norris, The Norris-Martin Debate (Fort Worth: The Fundamentalist Publishing Company, 1929), 18.

⁵⁵See The Searchlight for 1923.

persistent attack on the evolutionists,⁵⁶ he was turned out of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.⁵⁷ He continued to use the evolution issue in his endeavor to found his own Baptist denomination. One writer has stated:

With the Twentieth Century came several major upheavals within the Baptist ranks. One cause was the Darwinian theory of evolution, slowly but surely pervading the teaching of science. It seemed to many religious leaders, Baptist and otherwise, to conflict with the Genesis account of creation, and thus to cast doubt upon the verbal infallibility of the Bible. This brought vigorous attacks upon the schools and colleges teaching the theory of evolution, and the war against Darwinism grew in intensity. It slowed down for the damning of the German Kaiser, and shouting for victory in World War I and began again at the war's end with fundamentalist leadership in full cry.

.....
 Thus began the crusading career of the Rev. J. Frank Norris, the man chiefly responsible for founding the so-called Baptist World Fellowship.⁵⁸

The dispute over evolution was less a national controversy after the Scopes trial,⁵⁹ but it continued to be a

⁵⁶J. Frank Norris, "Address on Dawsonism, Fosdickism, Darwinism," The Fundamentalist, March 4, 1938.

⁵⁷Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, 983.

⁵⁸O. K. Armstrong and Marjorie M. Armstrong, The Indomitable Baptists (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1967), 231.

⁵⁹Bryan, the national spokesman for the fundamentalists, had to admit in his testimony that the creation took centuries, and that a "day" in the Bible might be an aeon, hence the Genesis account could not be literal. This admission cost the fundamentalists their argument.

vital part of the ministry of Norris, and was often the subject of his sensational sermons at the time he killed Chipps.⁶⁰ Modernism had, to Norris's brand of Fundamentalism, produced a decline of faith in the Bible as holy, reliable and infallible, and it was then also partly responsible for a decline in the "morals" of the nation. Such a moral decline produced drunkenness and compromise with such "evil" forces as Catholicism and infidelity.⁶¹ A fundamentalist felt that his defense of the literal Bible also compelled him to oppose what he felt was "moral deterioration" and compromise of the area, and thus the fundamentalist was a prohibitionist, against foreign ideas and often against the alien himself.⁶² The fundamentalist felt that he was called upon to defend the Bible, and in reality, God. At least this was what Norris had taught his congregation in Fort Worth to believe of his ministry. It will be shown that when Norris shot Chipps to death, he thought he was making such a defense, at least this he testified.⁶³ The conclusion is not that the modernist-fundamentalist

⁶⁰See The Searchlight, 1926.

⁶¹J. Frank Norris, "Address on Darwinism, Fosdickism, Dawsonism," The Fundamentalist, March 4, 1938.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³J. Frank Norris, "Impromptu Address," The Fundamentalist, Jan. 28, 1927.

controversy actually caused the murder of Chipps, but that it was a vital factor in producing the type of sensationalism and controversial ministry as that of Norris which produced the circumstances that led to the murder of Chipps.

The modernist-fundamentalist controversy helped to produce such a type of mind and man as Norris, who thought that he must defend the Bible against attack. The defense led constantly to controversy. Controversy was an essential element to the ministry of Norris, and such controversy led to the murder of Chipps. The modernist-fundamentalist controversy, just as the Big Red Scare, the prohibition atmosphere, the anti-Catholic crusade, and the isolationism, was a part of the climate, and directly or indirectly involved in setting the stage for the murder of Chipps, just as for the lynching, beatings, and other acts of violence in the 1920's. The atmosphere may have been little different from the Inquisition, witch burnings and Holy Wars, which have so often brought men into violence and conflict. The murder of Chipps was then an act of passion, but it was an act which must be understood and considered in the era of the 1920's, which was a period unique in the history of the American nation.⁶⁴

Next let us turn from the background and historical

⁶⁴Max Lerner, America as a Civilization (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 707.

development which permitted, or tolerated a sensational and controversial ministry like that of J. Frank Norris at the time he killed Chipps, to draw some conclusions of Norris himself. Norris, like the sensationalism of his ministry was a product of the changing rural society.⁶⁵ He grew up in his environment, was acquainted with violence as a way of life from his early childhood,⁶⁶ and was taught in his parental training to accept the Bible and the concept of fundamentalism as absolutely infallible truths.⁶⁷ He had been taught to accept the Bible literally, and his father had been often condemned by his mother because of his drinking.⁶⁸ With this background, Norris was doubtless sincere in his defense of the Bible, in his protestant attitude, and he was doubtless emotionally involved in the whole affair that led to the murder of Chipps. Probably his background could have left him little less than sincere in many of the doctrines he preached, but Norris was an intelligent, educated man who could not have been insensitive to the changing world around him. He could, no doubt, have

⁶⁵See Chapter 1.

⁶⁶Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 35.

⁶⁷J. Frank Norris, "The Cause and Cure of Doubt," The Fundamentalist, Oct. 19, 1945.

⁶⁸Norris, "Inside History," The Searchlight, June 16, 1922.

rationalized as did many of his contemporaries and adjusted to the changing world,⁶⁹ but he did not. The study of the murder will show that he rather chose to resist the changes, to use the issue as breath for his sensationalism, and to build his ministry upon controversy. Norris knew how to use sensationalism and controversy to his own advantage,⁷⁰ especially in gaining a large following and maintaining it throughout most of his ministry. By his own confession, Norris was an ambitious man,⁷¹ and he used controversy as a means of fulfillment of this ambition. His sensationalist appeal in 1926, which led to the murder of Chipps, is an example of how he used controversy. That Norris was sincere and a man of conviction, may be concluded by some from his confession and from the fact that he was the product of the fundamentalist background. Others may conclude that Norris was insincere in many of his views because of the fact that he changed what he preached to fit the occasion.⁷² He never ceased to declare that he was a fundamentalist, but he constantly continued to give a new interpretation as to what a

⁶⁹Armstrong, The Indomitable Baptists, 238.

⁷⁰The Fort Worth Press, July 19, 1926.

⁷¹J. Frank Norris, "Enlarge the Place of Thy Tent," The Fundamentalist, April 5, 1946.

⁷²Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, 983.

fundamentalist was. He always declared that a fundamentalist was one who believed in a literal Bible, but to him in the 1920's this meant that he was aggressively anti-Catholic, anti-wet, and anti-almost everything new. Later, to him, a fundamentalist meant that he was anti-denominational⁷³ to any church movement and opposed to the Federal Council of Churches.⁷⁴ He was against almost all effort to reform society, and especially against the New Deal.⁷⁵ Still later in his life a fundamentalist according to his profession was almost pro-Catholic in his attack upon communism,⁷⁶ and he declared that humanity should not look back to hope, but forward to the return of Christ. In the depression years he made premillennialism the principle issue of his controversy with many Baptists.⁷⁷ Perhaps the best commentary on the character of Norris was his constantly changing attitude as the appeal of the subject on which he preached changed in popularity, yet he always managed somehow to associate his message with the Bible and Christ. The single consistent

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴J. Frank Norris, The Federal Council of Churches (Detroit: Privately printed, 1939), 11.

⁷⁵Norris, New Dealism, 6

⁷⁶J. Frank Norris, Gospel Dynamite (Fort Worth: The Fundamentalist Publishing Company, 1933), 3.

⁷⁷Roy, Apostle of Discord, 356.

factor to his long ministry was controversy,⁷⁸ and this was the always successful tool in his hands. The murder of Chipps is but an example of how Norris used controversy and sensationalism, which was so vital to his ministry, as well as to fundamentalism as a movement. After his death, others of his disciples have endeavored to carry on the same type of fundamentalism, but none with his success.⁷⁹ The issues he used are no longer a source of such appeal, nor does the sensationalism he used any longer have its attraction. If Norris were alive today, he might still be controversial, but he would have to use other issues than those he did. Norris, then, as well as fundamentalism, was a product of the time. A study of the murder of Chipps helps one better to understand these times. As one writer has stated of Norris and the fundamentalist as a movement:

Their great contribution to the spiritual progress in America is this--they teach us the supreme importance of understanding the other person's viewpoint, and sifting the true from the false.⁸⁰

⁷⁸The pages of The Searchlight and The Fundamentalist from 1917 until Norris's death are filled with little except Norris's personal attack upon some person, denomination, or political effort. The different people and issues he attacked in the publications would number into the hundreds.

⁷⁹Armstrong, The Indomitable Baptists, 232.

⁸⁰Joseph M. Dawson, A Thousand Months to Remember (Waco: Baylor University Press, 1964), 130.

AUGUST

CHAPTER III

THE MURDER

The controversy which led to the slaying of D. E. Chipps by J. Frank Norris had in it the elements of Norris's crusade against Catholicism, bootlegging, and corrupt politics--those elements which had for years been a vital part of Norris's pulpit personality. Almost weekly Norris had made some reference to these subjects from his pulpit. The pages of his publication from 1911 until his death are filled with comments and insinuations of this nature.¹ But the elements of his controversy against Catholicism, bootlegging, and various city officials had been given a renewed emphasis in the controversy which he had with the city administration of Fort Worth in 1926.

The controversy began with a dispute Norris had with a newly hired Fort Worth City Manager, H. B. Carr. Early in 1925 the members of the Fort Worth City Council had hired Carr, because "they thought an outsider . . . free from the stirring of old affiliations could best straighten out the city of its various kinks."² Carr, who came from Niagara

¹Norris's speeches and comments may be found largely through the weekly papers he published: see The X Ray, 1911-1913, The Fence Rail, 1914-1919, The Searchlight, 1920-1929, The Fundamentalist of Texas, 1929-1933, The Fundamentalist, 1934-1952. Copies of these papers are in the Baylor University Library, Waco, Texas.

²The Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 16.

Falls, New York, was paid \$13,000.00 in his new position, and began his job by announcing that he would set about to equalize the city taxes. With Carr's arrival in the city, Norris had criticized the City Council for "importing a manager."³ He said little more, however, until Carr announced his new tax policy, which was to affect Norris's congregation.

Carr had in his tax investigation found that the large First Baptist Church, which covered a city block in the heart of Fort Worth, was not entirely used for the religious activities of the church. The ground floor of over half the church property was rented to various department stores, the largest of which was the J. C. Penney Company. Carr had also found that the church was receiving in rent from the properties over \$1,000.00 a month; yet, all the property had been declared non taxable on the city tax roll, on the pretense that it was used for public worship. When Carr brought the matter to the attention of the church, Norris refused to acknowledge that the properties were not a part of the church activities.⁴

Carr insisted that because these properties were used for business rather than for public worship, they

³J. Frank Norris, "New City Manager," The Searchlight, August 18, 1925.

⁴Ibid.

should be put on the tax list, and that those parts of the properties used for charitable and educational purposes "should be declared non taxable."⁵ In July of 1925 the City Council voted to tax the property.

The decision to tax the property of the First Baptist Church brought an immediate denunciation by Norris and the First Baptist Church board of deacons; they declared that they would not pay the taxes. Norris, who had often accused various city officials of prejudice against the First Baptist Church, used the occasion to declare that the tax was not only unjust, but that it was a deliberate persecution against the congregation.⁶ In August, Norris stated, "about September first a major operation will be performed upon the city management."⁷ When the taxes were due on the church property in October, Norris and the Church Board again refused to pay them. In January of 1926, the taxes on the church property became delinquent, and it was asserted that the First Baptist Church owed the City of Fort Worth \$1,447.17 upon \$63,750.00 which had been taxed. The entire property of the church was valued at over a million dollars.⁸

⁵Ibid., 116.

⁶Norris, "New City Manager," The Searchlight, August 18, 1925.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 116.

It was just while the issue over the taxing of the properties of the First Baptist Church was in the process of litigation that the citizens of Tarrant County in November, 1925, voted a rather large revenue bond for a number of city street improvements. Included in the improvements was the widening of a downtown alley into a one way street, in such a manner as to make a sixty foot thoroughfare out of it. There was little dispute over the project when it carried as a part of the street improvement bond; however, the whole project took on a different complexion when in June, 1926, the local Real Estate Board of Adjustment appraised the right of way necessary to the project. The right of way included a part of the St. Ignatius Academy, an old and generally unkept Catholic property needed to widen the alley. Sixty two thousand dollars was set aside to purchase the right of way. This sum was to purchase a part of the Catholic property, but not the entire plot. When the City Council met to approve the purchase of the Catholic property, they voted, however, to add another \$90,000.00 to the original \$62,000.00 set by the board of adjustment, and to purchase the entire holding by the Academy.⁹

As soon as the intention of the Council was announced it started a bitter controversy in Fort Worth. Various

⁹The Council stated it proposed to sell the remainder of the property for a profit.

citizens accused the Council of using tax money to subsidize the Catholic Church. A number of citizens sought to get an injunction to stop the purchase of the Catholic land. Norris used the controversy to perform his predicted "operation on the City Management."¹⁰ In The Searchlight of July 9, 1926, Norris began his crusade against "the Meacham-Carr Graft on the Tax Payers of Fort Worth."¹¹ Norris said of the city manager, "that he is just an ordinary fool, and there is no chance for him."¹² He asserted that the proof of this lay in the recent action by the city council to purchase the St. Ignatius Academy for the benefit of Mr. Meacham's store. Norris claimed, "There can be no other interpretation, . . . and if the people want proof all they have to do is see the old ramshackled building, which it is proposed to pay them four times its value."¹³ Norris also stated that the rendition scheme which Carr and Meacham were proposing would never go over. He declared " . . . We suppose that this is a part of the scheme that the imported manager brought with him from the North, and it smacks of Carpet Bagger days."¹⁴

¹⁰J. Frank Norris, "The Meacham-Carr Graft on the Taxpayers of Fort Worth," The Searchlight, July 9, 1926.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

Norris further insinuated in the same article that Carr was not entirely honest in his relations toward the city. He emphasized this claim by asserting that the city manager had several miles of sewage pipes, water mains, paving, and sidewalk constructed at tax expense, in a new addition with not a house in sight. Norris claimed that the new addition belonged to one of the city councilmen, though he did not name the councilman. He also charged that the mayor had defrauded the City of Fort Worth of \$3,500.00 on a recent trip to New York.¹⁵ Norris further charged the mayor with seeking to buy the St. Ignatius property so that the money would benefit the Catholic Church.¹⁶

The anti-Catholic element had been an important part of Norris's ministry for months before this dispute with the Mayor. He had preached upon such subjects as "Shall the Catholics and Bootleggers Elect the United States Senate?";¹⁷ "Roman Catholics vs Protestantism, That's the Issue in Tarrant County Today";¹⁸ "Shall Roman Catholics Rule Tarrant

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶J. Frank Norris, "Six Members of the First Baptist Church Fired," The Searchlight, July 14, 1922.

¹⁷J. Frank Norris, "Roman Catholics vs Protestantism," The Searchlight, July 14, 1922.

¹⁸Norris, "Should Roman Catholics Rule," The Searchlight, July 28, 1922.

County Today?"¹⁹ "Knights of Columbus Try to Bluff Norris"; and "Roman Catholics Plan High Broadcasting System to Make the United States A Catholic Country."²⁰ He would advertise the subjects of his various sermons through the use of advertisements in the local newspaper, the distribution of handbills, broadcasts, and through his press. Once he had delivered the sermons before his vast congregation, which often numbered 25,000 in church in a single Sunday,²¹ he would proceed to publish a stenographic copy of the sermon in The Searchlight, and mail copies by the tens of thousands. In this way Norris presented himself as a fearless crusader.

Norris's anti-Catholic crusade often took the form of articles with which he would fill the pages of The Searchlight, in addition to his sermons. He would assert that there was "conclusive evidence that New York, the commercial

¹⁹J. Frank Norris, "Shall Roman Catholics Rule Tarrant County?," The Searchlight, July 30, 1922.

²⁰Norris, "Roman Catholics Plan," The Searchlight, March 26, 1926.

²¹Norris claimed as early as 1924 to have 12,000 church members and to report his Sunday School attendance at 5,628 in his Sunday School; see The Searchlight of April 25, 1924. He would add together Sunday School, Morning Worship, Afternoon Evangelistic Service, and Sunday Night Service, and he would claim a total of over 25,000 attending his services in a single Sunday. The average size of his congregation at a single service was between five and six thousand; see The Fundamentalist, Jan. 18, 1929, The Fort Worth Star Telegram, Oct. 17, 1933.

capital of the world, was now under the complete domination of the Catholic hierarchy."²² "What would you say," he asked, "if some morning you woke up and beheld flaming headlines declaring that a foreign power held complete control over our border cities . . . My friend, that is exactly what is taking place and worse."²³ By midsummer of 1926 he was saying that the Catholics were not only an alien power sent to capture America, but that the Catholic leader chosen to capture America was Al Smith.²⁴ He said of Smith, "he has most of New York in his vest pocket," and ". . . the biggest set of fools on earth are the Southern Democrats who support Smith . . ." and "it is impossible for a Roman Catholic to be a true loyal president."²⁵ Norris always ended his criticism against the Catholic hierarchy by an apology to the individual Catholic layman. He would say, "I have known multitudes of them, and many of them are my friends, and I am glad to say I know them to be devout Christians."²⁶

²²J. Frank Norris, "The Conspiracy of Rum and Romanism to Rule This Government," The Searchlight, Feb. 5, 1926.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

It might also be noted that Norris associated Catholicism not only with Al Smith's record of anti-Prohibitionism, and concluded that Catholics were "wet and boot-leggers," but he also associated Catholics with the growing power of Mussolini and concluded that the "Iron Hand Dictator of Italy is hand in glove with the Pope."²⁷ "This is proven," he stated, because "it was at the behest of the Papacy that he [Mussolini] kicked the Masonic Fraternity out of office under his rule."²⁸ At the same time Norris attacked the League of Nations, saying, "look how often you find in the European press, and occasionally in the American press that the Pope is the final arbitrator in the League of Nations. What right has the Roman Catholic Church to be represented in the League of Nations?"²⁹ he would ask. Norris's fundamentalist theology finally led him to conclude there is no denying it, the devil is raging because he knows his time is short. He is spewing out a flood of wickedness, of liberality, of Sabbath desecration, and of ecclesiasticism."³⁰ He also preached and distributed thousands of copies of his

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

message, "Fifteen Biblical Reasons why Peter was not the First Pope."

While Norris was anti-Catholic in his crusade of 1926, he was neither anti-Semitic nor racist. He felt, "the Jews were the source of the world's salvation and sorrow,"³¹ and that "many Christians are awaiting with interest and concern the next development of the . . . chosen race."³² When he started the Bible Baptist Institute in the thirties, he started it as an integrated school, and it was attended from the first by Negro ministerial aspirants. The utilitarian and pragmatic use that Norris made of the Catholic issue in 1926 may be seen in the fact that in his later ministry he turned away from his attack to almost a "Catholic fellowship."³³ One writer has observed of the change,

. . . Norris was much more tolerant of Catholicism than most of his friends . . . during his early ministry Norris generally became known as

³¹J. Frank Norris, "The Jew," The Searchlight, April 2, 1926.

³²Ibid.

³³Norris became even more tolerant towards the Catholics after a 1947 trip to Europe in which he had a 15 minute audience with Pope Pius XII, and said of the Pope, "He was the only power in Europe standing like a Gibraltar against Communism." In his later life when his older son, Jim Gaddy Norris, was suddenly stricken with a cerebral hemorrhage, Norris called on the Catholic Church to conduct a Mass in his behalf that he would recover from his illness; see J. Frank Norris, My Fifth Trip to Palestine (Fort Worth: The Fundamentalist Press, 1948), 27.

A zealous anti-Catholic for hammering relentlessly at the Papacy and the American hierarchy. By the middle Thirties, however, he claimed to have stopped attacking the Roman Catholic Church in the interest of better understanding between friends.³⁴

This was a far cry from Norris's attitude in 1927. Once he had begun his criticism of the city administration he continued with little diversion in his effort to force the city manager out of office. In a second article published in The Searchlight of June 29, he further charged the city manager with "losing his temper and fretfully giving up in despair and refusing to solve the problem." Norris asked the city manager:

Why there was a secret and closed meeting of the council when the council voted to purchase the St. Ignatius Academy property; why was the transaction left out of the minutes of the city until forced there by an injunction; why was the usual forced condemnation procedure not followed; why did the City Manager approve the construction of miles of water and sewage pipe into an area owned by one of the council members; how could he justify the use of tax money to construct a dance hall at Lake Worth, and why he the [city manager] had . . . given such a low rate to certain big oil companies that are known to be the Standard Oil interests.³⁵

The questions, which were circulated through The Searchlight, were published a week earlier as a paid

³⁴Roy, Apostle of Discord, 356.

³⁵Norris, "Carr Loses His Head," The Searchlight, July 9, 1926.

advertisement in The Fort Worth Press.³⁶ When Carr was asked to comment upon the charges, he said it was a result of Norris's bitterness arising out of unpaid taxes. Also, he said that Norris had "refused to pay for the water used in his church--for the two big swimming pools, and for baptismal purposes."³⁷

Carr said, with bitterness, of Norris:

I have dealt with the red-light outfit in New York State when I was City Manager of Niagara Falls, and with crooked controls when I was City Manager of Dubuque, Iowa, but I have never met a man, who in my judgment uses his intellect more viciously against the betterment of the community in which he lives than J. Frank Norris.³⁸

At the same time Carr was able to answer Norris's insinuations by stating that he was not a Catholic and had never been one. He was raised a Baptist, had married a Baptist, and was at the time attending the Congregational church.³⁹

Meacham, however, was raised a Catholic, as Norris alleged, and while neither Carr, Meacham, nor the City Council publicly answered Norris's allegations, Norris continued his criticism. In a sermon delivered on the Sunday

³⁶The Fort Worth Press, July 1, 1926.

³⁷Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 117.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 118.

after Norris's members had been fired by Meacham he said to a crowd of five thousand:

. . . I don't believe now that in a city that is already overburdened with taxation, taxes so high that legitimate businesses are groaning under it, and so high it is a hard matter for every home owner to pay them--I don't believe it is the proper thing for the gentleman--the imported manager--and Mr. Meacham, the Mayor and others who join him, to take one hundred fifty two thousand dollars of the taxpayers money of Fort Worth, and give it to the St. Ignatius Academy, a Roman Catholic school--and open an alley in order to benefit Mr. Meacham's business.⁴⁰

The impact of Norris's sermon was probably not felt so strongly when it was delivered as it was in the week following. Norris had copies of it printed and circulated to each home in the city of Fort Worth. Probably even more infuriating to the mayor was the fact that Norris stationed boys at the entrance to Meacham's Department Store with instructions to give a copy of the paper to anyone who went in or came out of the store. The head of Meacham's store, Mr. Haughey, "fired from the employment,"⁴¹ every employee who was a member of the First Baptist Church, giving each one the alternative of leaving the First Baptist Church or losing his job. As soon as Norris heard the news that the members of his congregation had been fired by the

⁴⁰Norris, "Six Members," The Searchlight, July 16, 1926.

⁴¹Ibid.

department store, he began immediately to advertise that the next Sunday night he would expose "How six members of the First Baptist Church were fired by L. B. Haughey, the Roman Catholic manager of Meacham's Dry Goods Store."⁴² Norris cried that the firing of these members of his congregation not only proved his charges of Catholic persecutions, but that it smacked of suppression of freedom of speech and religion, and he used the accusation to warn that the Catholic hierarchy would certainly persecute any who refused to embrace Catholic principles.

When the crowd gathered to hear the expose the following Sunday evening, Norris had carefully arranged chairs at the front of the platform to best show those whom Meacham had fired. He was careful to give them an air of importance.⁴³ When the crowd had been led through the customary preliminaries, he called one after another of the ex-employees to tell why they had lost their jobs. He would quiz them in detail about their experience.

"Mrs. Baker, where were you working up to the time you got fired?"

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Norris continually sought to create a spirit of a crusading multitude for his congregation. As an example of this, when a member of his congregation would die, he had taps played at the funeral service.

"For Mr. H. C. Meacham and Company."

"How long had you worked for them?"

"Eight Years."

Tell whether like the others, Mr. Haughey said to you in essence what you have heard-- that you would have to take your choice between the First Baptist Church and the H. C. Meacham Company.

He said there were other churches in Fort Worth besides Frank Norris's church. He said they had nothing against the First Baptist Church, nobody but Frank Norris, and I told him that I would not give up my Sunday School Class for any job, and he asked me--he said there were other churches besides Frank Norris's church. He said, 'You can't be loyal to Mr. Meacham and to Dr. Norris . . . 44

After Norris had questioned the witnesses in detail, he launched into his sermon, once again accusing the mayor, the city administration, and especially the city manager of graft and Catholic favor. When he reached the climax of his denunciation against the mayor, he shouted:

. . . Mr. Meacham's record is well known up here in Judge Bruce Young's court. A few years ago--it is a matter of public record that H. C. Meacham had to pay one of his employees--a young lady--five thousand five hundred dollars, and he gave ten thousand dollars besides to settle it. The lawyers representing H. C. Meacham were McLean, Scott and Syers. My friends, I say to this great audience that it is a shame in the name of Fort Worth that a man of this kind should be Mayor for one minute's time. There is no dispute about it, it is a matter of court record,

⁴⁴Norris, "Six Members," The Searchlight, July 16, 1926.

but if he wasn't guilty as hell, why did he pay it? He paid it, he isn't fit to be Mayor of a hog pen.⁴⁵

Again the words of the sermon were recorded, broadcast, printed, and distributed across Fort Worth. Again boys were stationed to give copies of The Searchlight containing the message to each person entering the Meacham Department Store, while countless numbers were passed out up and down Fort Worth streets and from door to door. Norris also announced that he would speak again on the same subject the following Sunday night.

When he was asked by a reporter why Norris was not sued for libel, the city manager, " . . . shrugged his shoulders and said, sue a beggar and get a louse."⁴⁶ He said after the murder:

The plain fact is that the people of Fort Worth are afraid of Frank Norris. From newspapermen to merchants and bankers, he has them bluffed. They are afraid of him in precisely the same way one is afraid of an insane man, or one who is violently drunk. There are no tactics they feel to which he will not stoop--nothing too low or vile, true or untrue that he will not say about any of his enemies.⁴⁷

It was just at this point in the controversy that D. E. Chipps became involved in the dispute in defense of

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 116.

⁴⁷Ibid.

his friend Mayor Meacham. Chipps was a long time resident of Fort Worth and was at the time of his death in the lumber business. He was a large bald man who weighed over two hundred pounds, and was forty nine years old at the time. He was a "warm hearted fellow and free with his time . . . fond of a good game of poker, liked his liquor, and knew a pretty face when he saw one."⁴⁸ Chipps was a university graduate, a member of the Fort Worth Club, a Mason, a Shriner, twice divorced, and the father of one son fourteen years old.

He had been charged with child desertion in Alabama after he had moved to Texas, and his second wife had divorced him two years earlier because of "mental cruelty."⁴⁹ At the time he was living as a bachelor in a downtown hotel. Chipps had the reputation "of using his fists for his friends at the drop of a hat . . . and didn't mind telling anybody to his face just what he thought about him."⁵⁰ He had often been jailed for abusive assault, had attacked one police officer while the officer was on duty, and was frequently arrested for drunkenness.⁵¹

⁴⁸Ibid., 117.

⁴⁹Deposition No. 74489, Mrs. D. E. Chipps vs J. Frank Norris, p. 8.

⁵⁰From the testimony of the trial as reported in the Austin Statesman, Jan. 17, 1927. Several papers presented the testimony in full.

⁵¹Austin Statesman, Jan. 18, 1927.

At the time Norris was criticizing Meacham and Carr, Chipps had been in close association with the two because he had been chosen chairman of a committee of the Fort Worth Club appointed to raise money for a portrait of Amon G. Carter. Acting as co-chairman of the committee was the mayor. This association brought Chipps into contact with the mayor several times a day, and Chipps became involved in the emotional strife which was developing between Norris and Meacham. It was Chipps who boasted to the mayor that he was "not afraid of Norris," and that if Norris did not stop he would "tend to him."⁵²

Meacham himself was not a man given to violence. He was fifty seven years old at the time. He had lived in the city of Fort Worth for over twenty years, after having moved to Texas in 1888. He had engaged in the mercantile business in various small towns near Fort Worth before moving to that city. The Meacham Department Store in 1926 had 157 employees, with 30-odd departments and was the largest in the city.⁵³ Meacham had been elected to the City Council in April, 1925, and was then chosen by the other councilmen as mayor of the city. He was apparently well received in the city before the problem had developed over

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Deposition No. 74489, Mrs. D. E. Chipps vs J. Frank Norris, p. 82.

the taxation question. He had, however, as Norris alleged, been sued in 1920 by a certain Mrs. Mock in the allegation which was settled out of court for \$12,000.00 and the consideration that certain hotel records from Chicago and Niagara Falls be turned over to Meacham's counsel.⁵⁴ The suit was based upon a complaint that Mr. Mock alleged that Meacham alienated the affection of Mock's wife. Both Mr. and Mrs. Mock were members of Norris's congregation in 1926.

Meacham later testified that he had first gained the acquaintance of Norris when he moved to the city, and that he had only developed a bitter feeling toward Norris when the minister had attacked him over the radio. The first time he said he made any criticism of Norris was in a meeting at the Fort Worth Club to discuss the tax problem. He had discussed with those in attendance the attitude of Norris "because about that time, Norris through The Searchlight, and over the radio had accused the City Council of graft, and indicated that all of us were stealing." He also said, "It was my thought that the matter should be investigated by a citizens' committee." He said that he "called their attention to the charges that were going out, and that . . . he thought it was harmful to the City of Fort Worth."⁵⁵

⁵⁴Ibid., 87.

⁵⁵Ibid., 95.

Meacham further stated to the thirty men present at the meeting that he " . . . regarded Norris as a menace to the town, and that he should be supported here by no one."⁵⁶ He further told various bankers present at the meeting "that Norris was insolvent, and that if the bank would cut off his credit and quit loaning him money that it would be a good thing for the town." Meacham also stated to Mr. Zweifel, the United States Attorney, who attended the meeting that, " . . . Norris was circulating his Searchlight under second class postage to people who had not subscribed to it and . . . that it was against postal regulations and he ought to be prosecuted for fraudulent use of the mail, or for a violation of the postal regulations."⁵⁷ Meacham also stated that one of his friends at the meeting had said, "if Norris were to make statements about me as he has made about you, and they were untrue, I would take my shotgun and kill him."⁵⁸ Meacham had replied, "On account of my physical condition, I cannot do it."⁵⁹ When others at the meeting advised Meacham that the best thing he could do with Norris was to let him

⁵⁶ Ibid., 98.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 106.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 113.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 115.

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to the mayor, "looked like he was sort of satisfied, and kind of jovial and good natured."⁶⁵ After their conversation together, Meacham went to the baseball game where he was when he heard that Chipps had been shot to death by Norris.

According to Norris's testimony, he was sitting on Saturday afternoon in his second floor office in the First Baptist Church when he first saw Chipps. About two in the afternoon, while Norris was preparing his sermon expose' on Meacham for the next Sunday night, his secretary informed him that he was needed on the telephone. Later Norris said of the conversation:

It was fifteen or twenty minutes before the trouble. The first words that were spoken when I said 'Hello,' were: 'We are coming up there to settle with you.' I said, 'who is this?' and the voice on the phone came back and said, 'It don't matter, you ---.' I asked him his name. He told me. I first thought he said Little or Halts, and then he said Chipps. I told him he surely did not mean what he said, but he answered back, 'Well, I'm coming up there.' I insisted that he not come. I didn't want any trouble with him. But again he threatened me and said he was coming up to my office and declared that he would not stand it any longer.⁶⁶

Twenty minutes after the conversation with Norris, which was later confirmed by a switchboard operator of the

⁶⁵Fort Worth Star Telegram, July 18, 1926.

⁶⁶Ibid.

alone, Meacham stated, "I will be damned if I will do it."⁶⁰

The meeting, which adjourned with no action taken about Norris, occurred a week⁶¹ before Meacham's Department Store fired six members of the First Baptist Church.⁶²

Meacham had been raised a Catholic, but was not himself a member of any church. And he swore that although he heard much about Catholic conspiracy, he was certainly not himself a part of any such conspiracy. Meacham and Chipps had been friends since Chipps had moved to Fort Worth in 1908.⁶³ The two had played golf together, and were accustomed to meet several times a week at the Fort Worth Club and in Meacham's downtown office, or in Chipps' office in the Wheat Building, where the two often drank together. Chipps had been in Meacham's home twice before the shooting, but the two had never done business together.⁶⁴

On the morning of July 17, 1926, Chipps had appeared at Meacham's store with a "fresh appearance," and according

⁶⁰Ibid., 116.

⁶¹The employees were discharged July 10, 1926.

⁶²Deposition No. 74489, Mrs. D. E. Chipps vs J. Frank Norris, p. 139. Meacham stated that both his parents were Catholic, and he had later joined a protestant denomination, but did not at present consider himself a member of any church.

⁶³Deposition No. 74489, Mrs. D. E. Chipps vs J. Frank Norris, p. 125.

⁶⁴Ibid., 124.

Westbrook Hotel from where Chipps had called, Chipps appeared in the downstairs hall of the church. He paused and asked a janitor how he could find Norris, and how he could recognize him when he found him.⁶⁷ He was directed to the Searchlight office and then through it to Norris's office.⁶⁸ H. L. Nutt, a local bookkeeper and Sunday school worker in Norris's organization was talking to Norris when Chipps appeared in the pastor's office. Chipps entered the office unannounced, according to Norris and Nutt, and started threatening Norris. Later in the afternoon Norris declared in his sworn statement before the District Attorney:

Soon Mr. Chipps came into the office. He did not knock. He came busting in. He was very angry. He talked that way and I could see he was mad . . . 'I'm going to kill you for what you said in your sermon, damn you,' he said to me.

I remonstrated with him, and told him that I did not want any trouble with him. I walked to the door of my office and invited him to leave and as I turned and walked back to my desk he followed me and continued to threaten me.

'I mean every word of it. I mean every word I have told you,' he said, as he threw his hands behind him. There was a gun in the desk the night watchman used. I reached in and got it. I saw nothing else to do but defend myself. He repeated his statement to me again and continued

⁶⁷Fort Worth Star Telegram, July 18, 1926.

⁶⁸The Searchlight offices were not known as such, but rather they were housed in the offices of the First Baptist Church. See appendix number 1 for a diagram of the offices.

to threaten me. I shot him. I do not know how many times.⁶⁹

The claim of self defense was immediately corroborated by the single eye witness, Nutt, who was a "quiet, dignified, partly bald, gray haired man of medium height,"⁷⁰ and had the reputation in the local bank where he was employed as "a straight forward dependable man who could be clear but not quick in his thinking."⁷¹

One writer summed up his impression of Nutt by saying:

People who have known him for years say his business integrity is unimpeachable, but admit that where religion is concerned he has a closed mind to all but the Fundamentalist, and as one citizen expressed it, 'you can just count on it that Mr. Nutt will stand by Dr. Norris as long as there is a piece of Dr. Norris to stand by.'⁷²

Nutt said of the slaying:

When Chipps approached Norris, he stated, 'I have something to say and I mean it. If you make another statement about my friends, I am going to kill you.'

'Who are your friends?' Reverend Norris asked Chipps. 'Mr. Meacham and Austin, and Roach,' Chipps replied. 'I am shooting straight, I am going to kill you.'⁷³

⁶⁹Fort Worth Star Telegram, July 18, 1926.

⁷⁰Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 15.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., 16.

⁷³The Fort Worth Star Telegram, Extra Edition, July 17, 1926.

Norris shot Chipps three times, once through the arm, once through the abdomen, and through the neck. Chipps staggered back into the waiting room and fell near the chair where Norris had been sitting. Norris "handed the gun to someone, . . . he could not remember to whom."⁷⁴ He asked someone to summon an ambulance, and walked into the adjoining room to telephone his wife. Later, because of the quickness with which the police arrived, the defense sought to prove that the city officials knew that Chipps had gone to kill Norris.⁷⁵ Almost immediately policemen climbed the stairs to arrest Norris. When the Chief of Police arrived, Norris told him that he was ready to accompany him to the office of the District Attorney. Police Chief Lee said of the arrest that Norris was "just as cool as a cucumber. He was the coolest fellow! And I have been in this game eighteen years and have answered many a murder call."⁷⁶

Norris was taken first to the police station where he was booked and charged with murder. The desk sergeant did not know who he was. He asked his name and when Norris said "The Reverend J. Frank Norris, the pastor of the First

⁷⁴The Fort Worth Star Telegram, July 18, 1926.

⁷⁵Austin Statesman, Jan. 19, 1927.

⁷⁶Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 12.

Baptist Church, he bit his lip."⁷⁷ He was then taken to the office of the district attorney where he gave the statement of the tragedy and pleaded self defense. He was arraigned before the court the same afternoon and held in lieu of \$10,000.00 bond.

After the shooting Chipps was carried by ambulance to the St. Joseph's hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival; the body was then carried to Robertson and Muller's Funeral parlor. Meacham said he first heard of the shooting at the baseball game where he heard that "Norris had killed the president of the Mississippi Hardware Lumber Company and . . . that he did not connect it with Chipps"⁷⁸ A few minutes later when he had been told that it was Chipps who had been killed, he left immediately with the city manager, Mr. Carr, and drove back to the intersection in front of the First Baptist Church where a patrolman told him that Chipps had been carried to the hospital. He and Mr. Carr then proceeded to the hospital from where he sent Carr back to the City Hall while he look after the body of Chipps and the family.⁷⁹ He then instructed Carr

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Deposition No. 74489, Mrs. D. E. Chipps vs J. Frank Norris, p. 27.

⁷⁹Ibid., 129.

to "attend to the matter of getting evidence, or whatever it is necessary to do."⁸⁰ The Mayor next went by to visit with Chipps' former wife, and to the Westbrook Hotel where he gathered a suit to be used as Chipps' shroud.

Two hours after the murder both daily papers in Fort Worth had brought out extra editions in which they announced the slaying to the city. In bold headlines The Fort Worth Star Telegram stated, "D. E. Chipps, Lumberman, slain by J. Frank Norris."⁸¹ The Fort Worth Press stated:

. . . the shooting occurred suddenly and without much warning.

Reports to the police are that Chipps with another man went up the stairs toward The Searchlight office.

Chipps is said to have remarked, 'How am I going to know that man Norris when I see him?'

It was declared that someone heard this remark and ran and told Pastor Norris. The two are said to have gone into the anteroom to the office and then back into Norris's office.

Norris greeted the visitors in his office with shots. Four bullets took effect in the body of Chipps.⁸²

Several thousand copies of the paper flooded the streets while Norris was waiting to be released on bond.

⁸⁰Ibid., 127.

⁸¹The Fort Worth Star Telegram, Extra Edition, July 17, 1926.

⁸²The Fort Worth Press, Extra Edition, July 17, 1926.

Almost immediately after the slaying, various members of the board of deacons and the finance committee of the First Baptist Church began to gather at the court house.

Thirty of the committeemen signed the bond for Norris's release. Norris met with them in a room in the court house after he had been released, where he told them he had done a thing which he thought he would never do, and submitted his resignation to the group as pastor of the large congregation.⁸³ Those present immediately and un-
animously refused to accept the resignation, and it was an-
nounced that Norris would fill the pulpit the following Sun-
day morning.⁸⁴

After further consultation with his attorney, Norris returned to his home, a large bungalow with a garden and tennis court located in the eastern part of the city. Here his family had already been interviewed by a host of newspapermen and reporters.⁸⁵

Norris rationalized the slaying a few days later by saying, "You know Kipling's 'If' . . . the poem expresses

⁸³The Fort Worth Star Telegram, July 29, 1926.

⁸⁴Thirty men, members of Norris's congregation, signed his bond within an hour after he had been charged with murder.

⁸⁵Norris's home was an elaborate ten acre estate which had been given to his wife by one of his converts, a reclaimed alcoholic, who amassed a large sum in real estate after his conversion.

my philosophy" He said, "that he regretted the necessity that had confronted him, but that he could not and did not feel any remorse." "I am not," he said, "a sentimentalist, when it becomes necessary for me to defend my life, I will . . . " and " . . . all life is precious to me . . . I never hunt. I would not kill even a dove."⁸⁶

The wildest rumors and speculation spread through Fort Worth the night following the slaying. One writer stated that there were three theories concerning the slaying:

. . . 1. Norris's own. That he thought that Chipps was going to draw a gun.

. . . 2. That Norris thought he might be going to get a licking, and rather than risk it, he shot Chipps.

. . . 3. That as Chipps was leaving, Norris shot him down . . . ⁸⁷

The Fort Worth Press, in a front page editorial expressed a similar attitude:

. . . compassion has never been a part of J. Frank Norris's makeup. He has pretty generally struck out to any opposition that has risen against him . . . while the present tragedy has come to his experience suddenly, it is not a thing unexpected by Norris nor anyone who has observed him . . .

.
He would be no less a service to his church if he would throw away his gun and be more

⁸⁶Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 12.

⁸⁷Ibid., 14.

Congenially a preacher and less a fighter. He would be infinitely a greater service to his people if he would forget his continual personal bickering and approach more readily that mind which is in Christ Jesus.⁸⁸

The Fort Worth Mayor and other members of the City Council took immediate steps to finance the prosecution of Norris. On the morning following the slaying, Meacham himself employed the firm of McLean, Scott and Sayer to assist in the prosecution. He personally contracted to pay the firm \$18,500.00 for their assistance, and was sure "his friends in Fort Worth would not permit . . . him . . . to do this by himself."⁸⁹

Later the Austin firm of Shelton and Shelton was also employed to assist in the prosecution. When asked why he was so deeply interested in the prosecution of Norris, Meacham stated, "For the reason that he killed my friend, who was trying to serve me, was he not?"⁹⁰ Meacham also testified that if necessary he would pay as much as \$100,000.00 to see that Norris was convicted.⁹¹

Eighteen days filled with the wildest assortment of reports followed the slaying. Norris stated that never for

⁸⁸The Fort Worth Press, July 17, 1926.

⁸⁹Deposition No. 74489, Mrs. D. E. Chipps vs J. Frank Norris, p. 132.

⁹⁰Ibid., 152.

⁹¹Ibid., 169.

a minute did he think he would be indicted, and if he were indicted, he certainly would not be convicted. At ten minutes past eleven on the morning of July 29, 1926, the Grand Jury reported a bill of indictment stating that Norris did "unlawfully and with malice aforethought murder and kill D. E. Chipps."⁹² Again the newspapers reported the story with extra editions and bold headlines. Immediately upon the return of the indictment, the defense asked for an early trial, which was delayed by a change of venue.⁹³ The date of the trial was set for the second week in January, 1927, in Austin, Texas.

Following the indictment The Searchlight announced to Norris's constituency that he would take a prolonged rest in his former home at Hubbard City, Texas. His own publication reported little of what he may have thought or felt, and only after a week's rest did the paper report that he:

. . . could not eat nor sleep for eight days and his closest friends were anxious about him. But in a marvelous and miraculous way, he was rapidly regaining his normal healthy attitude . . . and everyone who heard his sermon Sunday night on Catholicism felt a challenge and realized his force and courage was as of old . . . ⁹⁴

⁹²The Fort Worth Star Telegram, July 29, 1926.

⁹³Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 109.

⁹⁴J. Frank Norris, "Appreciation for Messages," The Searchlight, July 30, 1926.

The report was probably written by Norris himself and was probably only an explanation to those who required of him some evidence of remorse.⁹⁵

What Norris really felt about killing Chipps is left to conjecture, but judging from what he said and preached, he felt the murder was only a result of the attack he made against political corruption and Catholicism.

The murder of Chipps may not have shown the attitude of the people of Fort Worth toward Catholicism and their fear of the growth in influence of a foreign authority, but it did show that Norris thought this was the attitude of many of his community. Norris was not only bold in his criticism of the city officials, whom he accused of being influenced by the Catholic hierarchy, but he showed little fear or later resentment that he shot down with three shots a man who he thought represented such an influence in his community. If we accept Norris's own words, he never thought that he would be brought to trial for the murder, and if he were brought to trial that he would ever be convicted. He was so confident in his opinion that he had the support of his community that he even disregarded the warning which had been given to him on the previous week that Chipps would try

⁹⁵This conclusion is based upon interviews by the writer with Norris's staff who said Norris always dictated the articles of his paper himself, and that this article was unsigned.

to kill him. Whether Norris was on the popular side of the issue may be questioned, but there seems little doubt that Norris thought he was on the popular side of his dispute with the city official whom he accused of being Catholic. As it turned out, Norris was indicted for the murder, but he was not convicted. Norris proved to be right, in at least this part of his evaluation. Chipps, as it turned out, was unarmed when Norris shot him, and Norris shot him three times, with another bullet entering the ceiling in his office. Norris also shot Chipps in his own office, in the presence of his church member, a strong man, and in an office which was adjacent to many of his helpers, any of whom could have been summoned for aid, even after Norris had shot Chipps the first time. Instead of calling for aid, Norris shot Chipps twice more. This, he said, he did out of fear for his life and it remained for the trial to show what Norris really felt. The long and sensational trial which was to follow shows not only Norris's attitude and thinking, but the attitude and thought of many Fort Worth citizens both for and against Norris concerning his dispute with the Fort Worth city administration.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER THE MURDER

In 1927, The First Baptist Church edifice, a large, gray cut stone building stood in downtown Fort Worth. The building had been constructed in 1912 under Norris's ministry after the previous building had been destroyed by fire, and it had been enlarged again in 1926 to house Norris's growing congregation.¹ The main auditorium seated over six thousand people in three balconies and the lower floor.² In addition to the regular seating in the auditorium there was a circular choirloft which encased the front of the auditorium and contained several hundred seats. In regular service, the choir was filled, not only with the choir, but with a large, stringed orchestra.³

The whole of the structure was designed to give the first place of prominence to the dark pulpit which was raised eight feet above the auditorium floor.⁴ The interior of the church was painted battleship gray and the pews had

¹For a description of the fire of 1912 see the Fort Worth Record, Feb. 5, 1912.

²New York American, June 27, 1927.

³Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 122.

⁴Ibid. See appendix No. II.

been stained dark oak. From the center of the oval ceiling hung the single ornamental cut glass chandelier.

The auditorium was described at the time by one of the critics of Norris as "the ugliest church I've ever seen. Moreover, it is downright dirty looking . . . It . . . badly needs painting, the whole place needs to be swept, scrubbed and dusted."⁵

On the Sunday following the slaying of Chipps in the church annex, the church auditorium was packed to standing room only, with many hundreds standing outside.⁶ Before Norris began his message, the large choir sang "song after song," while the overflow crowd waited to see what would be the reaction toward Norris after the murder.⁷ Not only had much local publicity been given the murder, but the national wire services had given the murder nation-wide publicity. There was national interest in the reaction toward Norris's ministry after the murder.⁸ Norris, no doubt, sensed this and played it to the fullest in his appeal to his congregation.⁹

⁵Ibid.

⁶The Dallas Morning News, July 19, 1926.

⁷Ibid.

⁸See Time Magazine, XLIX (July 26, 1926), 18.

⁹Ibid., 19.

Before Norris read his text he called on the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan in Texas to come to the front and offer prayer. After Bloodworth had given the prayer, he was asked to be seated on the platform as a guest of Norris. In his prayer, Bloodworth prayed about how thankful he was for the life and boldness of Norris. According to one reporter there was much apparent approval in the congregation--many choruses of amen.¹⁰ Norris knelt at the front of the platform, his head in his hands, while the prayer was offered. After the prayer, Norris announced the subject of his sermon to be delivered that night and he also reported that he was meeting his "usual engagements" for the week. The collection was taken in "cooking pans."¹¹

Just before the sermon, Norris stated to the congregation that "it [the murder] is a great sorrow, but I have no apology for what I have done. I could not have done otherwise. I was forced to defend myself, my wife, and my children."¹² He then presented his resignation to the church, and "the congregation leapt to its feet and refused to accept it."¹³ If the congregation had thought to

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 109.

¹³Ibid.

have heard Norris discuss the murder further in his message, they were disappointed. He chose his text from part of the eighth chapter of the Book of Romans which he declared summed up his thoughts at the time.¹⁴ The verse he read as his text stated "All things work together for good to them who love the Lord, to them who are called according to His purpose."¹⁵ Norris left little doubt in his sermon that, to his mind, he was one of those called for a divine purpose. Once he was in his sermon he "became articulate."¹⁶ One of his hearers stated of his sermon that he shouted "that God could take shining stars and roll them out like moth eaten garments and that He who made the mountains could roll them away; that He had but to speak and the tomb would give up the dead."¹⁷ Each of his appeals was always climaxed with a question, "When the Son of Man comes will He find faith?"¹⁸ He demanded the answer again and again, each time stepping forward and rising up on the balls of his feet with uplifted arms and a pointed finger.

¹⁴Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 121.

¹⁵Romans 8:28: This was a scripture Norris used generally when he was asked to autograph a picture, Bible, etc.

¹⁶Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 123.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

The body of the message consisted of Norris's declaration that he was a great believer in predestination and that he was confident that the affairs of men were ordained by God. To prove his premise he used a number of Biblical illustrations to show that those who were servants of righteousness would surely triumph in his life and over his enemies.¹⁹ He also used a number of illustrations from his personal life which he offered to prove his premise. Norris was in theology a professed Calvinist and the tribulations he was called upon to endure, were, according to his theology, to make his faith stronger. In this he boasted that he was a fundamentalist.

While Norris did not refer to the tragedy of the day before, or to the controversy in his message, it may be concluded from the context of his sermon that he was seeking to persuade his vast congregation that somehow the entire tragedy had been divinely permitted. Perhaps this was the attitude of the fundamentalist at this time, or at least Norris's brand of fundamentalism.²⁰

At the time Norris delivered his sermon with a rush of words, often working himself up into a high pitch. He was

¹⁹Ibid., 124.

²⁰When Norris was asked what a Fundamentalist believes, he stated, "A Fundamentalist is one who believes in a supernatural Christ, Who was born in the supernatural

very free in the use of gestures, using sharp staccato exclamations, sweeping gestures, shoulder movements which ended abruptly with the uplifted jerk of the arm above the elbow and the quick circulator twist of the wrist.²¹ He spoke at the time without the use of a public address system, sometimes pausing to sip from a glass of water, and he would take off his coat and collar and pitch them towards the first pew.²² He was emotional in his preaching, at times pausing to cry and he wiped his brow on an oversized handkerchief. When in the pulpit he dressed in a dark suit, and it is reported that in the vast building, he would appear, "to shrink into a much smaller man than he was when one met him in his study. He looks positively frail and while not exactly a muscular man, he is certainly of good physique."²³ This was the way Norris looked on the Sunday after he killed Chipps, as well as from Sunday to Sunday. One writer concedes that "there is no doubt that the memory picture of his

birth, Who lived a supernatural life, Who died a supernatural death, Who arose in supernatural glory, Who ascended in supernatural power, Who interceded in supernatural grace, and Who will return in supernatural majesty to establish upon the earth a supernatural Kingdom." J. Frank Norris, Inside the Cup (Fort Worth: Privately published, 1931), 46.

²¹Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 123.

²²Norris wore at the time a detachable celluloid collar.

²³Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 123.

congregation carries with them Sunday after Sunday certainly adds to his appeal for them."²⁴

When Norris concluded his message he stepped from behind the pulpit to a table on the auditorium floor in front of the platform. From there he bid any new convert who would respond to his message and wished to be added to his church membership to come forward and make known his intentions. "I want to ask," he said, "how many people here are living in Fort Worth but belonging to a church in other cities?" To those who put up their hands he said, "Don't be a bushwhacker . . . Come on!! Say you will join this heroic throng. This is the church that has come through stress and storm and stands on the rock . . . "²⁵ In another minute a vast number of his congregation several hundred,²⁶ moved to the front of the auditorium to shake hands with Norris while he stood on the platform. The Dallas News reported that many embraced him and that at one point Norris showed the only sign that the tragedy had affected him.²⁷ It is reported that he neither smiled, nor nodded, but appeared to be on the verge

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶The Dallas Morning News, July 13, 1926.

²⁷Ibid.

of tears and seemed unable to speak because of emotion.²⁸

Time Magazine summarized its evaluation by asserting: "Down in the Texas Baptist Belt where fundamentalism flourishes under the humid (often illiterate) phrases and hot war whoops of the revivalist--Genesis--trumpeters . . . the prevailing belief of the brethern is that whatever Baptist Norris does is done for the Lord, and is by Him blessed."²⁹

The six persons who were added to Norris's congregation were not indicative of the results which the next few Sundays showed. On the Sunday of the following week there were fifty additions to the First Baptist Church membership. The first Sunday of August The Searchlight reported 15,000 for all services "with one hundred three additions."³⁰ And by the third week of August, it is reported that there was a total of "twenty thousand present."³¹

Norris also conducted the evening service of the church the night after the murder. While there is no record of the message, it was advertised that he would speak on

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹"Religion," Time Magazine, LIX (July 26, 1926), 18.

³⁰J. Frank Norris, "One Hundred and Three Additions," The Searchlight, Aug. 6, 1926.

³¹J. Frank Norris, "Twenty Thousand Total Last Sunday," The Searchlight, July 30, 1926.

the "Roman Conspiracy to Take Over the United States."³² It is evident that the tragedy did not deter his message against what he said was the Roman conspiracy. The Searchlight reported "that all who heard" his message "agreed" that "he was at his best."³³

When Norris was asked two weeks after the murder by a magazine reporter how he could "preach before a congregation when the man he killed was still unburied," he had answered by saying "that when a man is in trouble, he wants to be with the people he loves--with his family."³⁴ He then explained that he felt that the church was his family and that the relationship was a very personal relationship; especially because of the stresses which they had "experienced together over the sixteen years they had been together." He did, however, say that he "regretted the necessity that had confronted him."³⁵ But he asserted that he was not a "sentimentalist." When confronted with the question of how he could be detached in his attitude, he replied to the effect that you cannot always judge a man by his external impression.

³²Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 121.

³³J. Frank Norris, "Appreciation for Messages," The Searchlight, July 30, 1926.

³⁴Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 124.

³⁵Ibid.

He said, "I know a minister who preached his own wife's funeral; yet he was heartbroken, and I've known men who almost collapsed when their wives died, only to marry again within six months."³⁶

In the weeks following the slaying Norris did, however, enter less in the controversy of what he said was the danger of Catholicism and he hardly mentioned his grievance against the city administration at all.³⁷ While he was awaiting indictment and trial, his church congregation continued to grow, both in the number he reported present at services, and the size of the membership. He later said that while his lawyers were preparing his defense he spent his time going from house to house inviting people to attend church services. He said of his activity at the time, "I would go out . . . spend the day going from house to house, and when noontime came I would go to a grocery store and get a dime's worth of cheese, some crackers, and a bottle of pop and eat it and swell up and go on till night came."³⁸ Somehow Norris seemed to believe that the weekly additions to his congregation were the criteria of divine approval upon his

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸J. Frank Norris, "40th Anniversary Sermon," The Fundamentalist, Oct. 15, 1948.

controversy, and that those daily efforts on his part were a token of his dedication, sincerity and humility.³⁹

The trial was set for the second week of January, 1927, in Austin, Texas.⁴⁰ In the first two weeks of 1927, activity and curiosity in Austin began to mount. It was reported that the hotels were filled with reservations made months ahead, and the crowds overflowed into the local boardinghouses.⁴¹ Thirty outside newspapers were represented by individual reporters. One hundred eighty two witnesses were subpoenaed, while "several hundred" less involved spectators gathered to watch the proceedings. Marvin Simpson, David Moses, and Chester Collins represented the defendant, while MacLean, Scott and Sayers, along with the firm of Shelton, and Shelton were employed to assist Robert Henger, the district attorney.⁴³ The trial itself was to last fourteen days, with four days taken to pick the jury.⁴⁴ When it was finished, it was estimated by the press to have cost in excess of \$75,000.⁴⁵ A large part of the defense was paid for

³⁹Norris, Inside the Cup, 4.

⁴⁰Change of Venue was granted on July 30, 1926.

⁴¹The Austin American, Jan. 10, 1927.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴The Austin American, Jan. 28, 1927.

⁴⁵Ibid.

by the special collection in Norris's congregation. On one occasion the deacons asked the members to fill a number three galvanized wash tub with offerings for the defense. It was reported that this offering exceeded \$16,000.00.⁴⁶ Norris's congregation not only supported him financially, but the rapid increase in his evangelistic appeal, even while he was awaiting trial for murder, shows not only the influence of Norris's personality, but the popular support which was given to his local anti-Catholic campaign. The fact that "twenty thousand" people would repeatedly gather to hear a local pastor in a single Sunday and that over a hundred new members were added to his congregation in a single service is at the least indicative that his attack upon the Catholic Church and various political personalities was not without some popular support. And apart from the opposition of these whom he had attacked and one editorial which appeared in the local paper, there seemed to have been little locally voiced opposition to what Norris was saying or doing, if we use the report in the local papers and Norris's own publication as evidence at the time. As the trial itself will show, Norris certainly had the support of many respected people of his community, men who held such positions as teachers, bankers, businessmen, peace officers, medical doctors, and many who represented a cross section of his

⁴⁶J. Frank Norris, "Twenty Thousand," The Searchlight, Aug. 20, 1926.

community. Although many gathered around him out of curiosity and the sensationalism in his preaching, the fact that several hundred new members were added to his congregation, and that his church had over 12,000 members indicates that Norris had won the approval of at least a segment of the population of Fort Worth. The many who joined his organization at least showed some approval of what he said and the opinion he voiced in the 1920's.

CHAPTER V

THE TRIAL

The J. Frank Norris murder trial was conducted with all the fanfare of one of the most sensational trials in the history of Texas. The trial itself revealed little new in Norris's controversy with the Fort Worth city administration, just as it revealed little new concerning the ministry of Norris at the time. What the trial did show, however, was the details of the controversy and the murder. The trial showed that Norris had publicly attacked the friends of Chipps in his sermons, accusing them of being a part of a Catholic conspiracy to mis-use tax funds, that Norris had further sought to link Chipps's friends with drunkenness, foreign influence, and various forces of evil. Most of these implications were made in the testimony rather than directly declared, as much of the testimony was ruled inadmissible by the presiding judge. The prosecution sought to show that Norris in his public attack upon the friends of Chipps had provoked the crisis which brought Chipps to his office and was hence responsible for the murder, while the defense on the other hand sought to show that Norris had only acted to defend his life from a man he was convinced was about to kill him. From the very first, the influence of the Klan, the anti-Catholic attitude, the prohibition

attitude and the crusading spirit of Norris the Fundamental-ist were present in the trial.

The trial began in Austin during the second week of January and in the midst of a rare snow and ice storm. Little time elapsed before the dispute began to center around the controversial attitude toward Norris, and his brand of fundamentalism. The newspaper reported that the district attorney announced that he would dismiss anyone from jury service who opposed the death sentence, or who was associated with the Ku Klux Klan; while the defense attorney reported that he would dismiss anyone who was a member or was otherwise associated with the Roman Catholic Church.¹ Each prospective juror was asked if he owned a radio, if he had ever heard Norris over the radio, or if he had read The Searchlight. Norris sat in the midst of his lawyers, and Mrs. Chipps with her fourteen year old son sat immediately behind him as the four days of jury selection progressed. It was apparent from the testimony that most of the prospective jurors had been receiving The Searchlight for the past several weeks,² but most reported that they had not read it.

¹Dallas Morning News, Jan. 12, 1927.

²The prospective Jurors all testified that The Searchlight had been sent to their home, and that it was unsolicited. See The Austin American, Jan. 12, 1927.

When the jury was finally selected at 4:55 P.M. in the fourth day of the trial, it consisted of two ex-Klan members, one member of the Pentecostal Church, one Nazarene, one member of the Church of Christ, one from the Christian Church, two Methodists, and six who were unaffiliated with any church.³ All denied any close relationship with the Catholic Church, and they all had some prior knowledge of Norris, but all denied any opinion toward his ministry.⁴

While Norris awaited the first day of trial, he spoke at the Wednesday night gathering of a local church. The newspaper humorously reported of the service that the "Baptist Divine" who, "pulled the trigger four times at the homicide victim" told his audience that, "If the wicked, even mine

³The jury was constituted as the following: W. D. Miller who had recently retired as sheriff of Travis County and who was not a church member; C. D. Brown, a machine operator who was not a member of any church; O. D. Moore, who was employed as a peddler and was not a member of any church; Walter Johnson, a twenty seven year old Lutheran; W. J. Dill who was a fifty seven year old retired businessman and not a church member; C. A. Colbreath who was employed as a butcher and was not a church member; W. T. King who was a salesman and a member of the Nazarene Church; G. V. Potter who was employed as a machinist and not a church member; Andrew McAngus who was a self employed grocer and a member of the Church of Christ; T. H. Turney who was employed as a blacksmith, and a member of the Christian Church and a former member of the Klan; Lee Caldwell who was employed as an automobile salesman and was a member of the Methodist Church: see The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 12-14 1927.

⁴The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 14, 1927.

enemies, and my foes come upon me to beat my flesh, they shall stumble and fall."⁵

The jury was sworn at nine o'clock on the morning of January 14, and the district attorney read the indictment. When he finished, Norris stood, and said, "I am not guilty."⁶

The State presented its case in one day of testimony after it had called six witnesses to the stand. The first of these merely established the fact of the slaying, and the surroundings in which it occurred.

The first principal witness in the case was a city employed detective, C. D. Bush,⁸ who reported that he had just returned to city hall four blocks from the scene of the slaying when he heard there had been a shooting in the First Baptist Church. He testified that he immediately got into an automobile with four other officers and drove to the church offices where he saw Norris and Nutt standing together in the room adjacent to the room of the slaying. Bush said Norris seemed undisturbed, and he had asked Norris

⁵The Austin Statesman, Jan. 14, 1927.

⁶Ibid.

⁷The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 15, 1927.

⁸Bush had been employed by the city of Fort Worth for nine years, and was knowledgeable of the various elements of Norris's controversy with the City Administration.

what the trouble was. Bush testified that Norris said, "I just started to the district attorney's office."⁹

According to Bush's testimony, he then went into the room of the slaying where he found the body of Chipps lying on its right side, A chair had been turned over near the body, next to his right shoulder. A second detective then proceeded to search the body. He found, according to the testimony, a cigarette holder, money, a package of tobacco, etc., but he said he did not have a weapon of any kind.¹⁰ Bush continued to repeat under cross examination that he did not find any weapon.¹¹

The next principal witness for the prosecution was an employee of the Moor Rubber Company located below the

⁹The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 15, 1927.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹This was always a source of contention with Norris who declared that Chipps had a pistol with him, and that it was taken by someone in the investigation. See Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 108. Entzminger said, "Chipps went out into the hallway and the manager of the city and some others who had sent Chipps to Norris's office were waiting in the car across the street in front of the First Baptist Church office building where Norris's office was. No doubt Chipps' mock pride got the best of him and he whirled around and started back into Norris's office and said, so the testimony shows, 'I will kill you, . . .'" and quick as a flash it was over. Immediately the mayor, the city manager, and other henchmen were up the stairway. Norris had gone into the larger office to phone his wife. Testimony shows there were two guns found on the floor in the room and they were never presented in the trial. And why?"

First Baptist Church offices,¹² H. R. Raines. Raines said that after he heard the shots he went up the stairs where he saw four men, two of whom he did not recognize. He said he heard Norris distinctly say, "I have killed me a man."¹³ Under cross examination Raines described the dress of the four men in detail, but he wouldn't change his testimony that he heard Norris boast, "I have killed me a man." Raines said that he was about three feet away when he heard Norris make the statement.¹⁴

The single eye witness which the State produced, was Mrs. Roxie E. Parker.¹⁵ Mrs. Parker reported that she had gone to the church office the day of the slaying to discuss business with Norris. She said that as she was about to enter she saw a man coming from the study into the anteroom, his right hand in the air, holding his left side with his left hand. She said that the minister then fired at him.¹⁶

¹²This was part of the facilities on which Norris refused to pay City taxes which led to the dispute. The facilities were rented to J. W. Moor and Raines was manager of the business where he had worked since 1925. He moved to Fort Worth in 1919.

¹³The Austin American, Jan. 15, 1927.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵The Dallas Morning News described Mrs. Parker as "a gentlewoman of the old Southern School."

¹⁶The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 15, 1927.

The first day of testimony closed as Norris was informed that a damage suit of \$150,000.00 had been filed against him by the Chipps family.¹⁷ Norris, upon the advice of his counsel, who at the time refused at first to discuss the case, finally described the second day at the trial what he said he was feeling at the time by stating,

I can't believe it. There is hate written all over the State's case. Hate you know, defeats its own purpose. Hate undermines the nerves, it gives one a bad heart, it clouds ones vision and memory, and if it has nothing else, it fumes in its own grieving flesh. There isn't anything it will not strike down. We are prepared.¹⁸

The district attorney replied that, "If Norris takes the stand, you can bring your tents and camp here awhile. We intend to go into the past completely. There is much we should like to have Dr. Norris repeat under oath."¹⁹ Norris did take the stand. His testimony took three hours.

Some of the attitude toward Norris and his brand of preaching can be further derived from the newspaper accounts of the trial as it progressed. The Austin Statesman reported the affair in less objective tones than the other Austin paper, declaring, "J. Frank Norris, the Hell, fire and damnation

¹⁷The Austin Statesman, Jan. 10, 1927.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

preacher was given a volley of damnation at the outset of the State's evidence when a witness reported that he had heard the Baptist minister say as he left the study, "I have killed me a man."²⁰ The Austin American on the other hand, almost defended Norris in an unsigned editorial which stated that while Norris could not tell what he thought as the "law tussled for his life," that the feeling of Norris could probably be seen in the "worn and tumbled Bible of the worn and tumbled life." "They have," the writer stated, "occupied a famous pulpit together, together they have gone to criminal court."²¹ The writer further asserted that to look at the Bible you would never know "that for thirty years it had won a mighty harvest of human souls through the tall figure that now looms across . . . Christendom."²² The same editorial asserted that during the trial in his "supreme hour of trouble, he [Norris] reviewed the story of Daniel in the lions den."²³ Another paper described Norris, stating " . . . most defendants in a murder trial case sometime or other draw on the table nervously with their finger, . . . but

²⁰The Austin Statesman, Jan. 14, 1927.

²¹The Austin American, Jan. 18, 1927.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid. The writer derived this, he said, because he traced the passage which Norris marked with a pencil during the trial.

Norris during all of the testimony sat perfectly still, outwardly composed, his hands folded."²⁴

The State rested its case after one day of testimony, asserting that Norris was guilty because he was himself responsible for provoking the difficulty.²⁵ On the second day of testimony the court room was crowded before daylight, and the crowd was so congested that by the time the trial was begun on the third day, the witnesses were forced to use the windows to get to the stand.²⁶

The defense began its case with an effort to impeach the two principal witnesses for the State, Mr. Raines and Mrs. Parker. Witnesses were brought forth to testify that they had heard Raines on past occasions use vile language in discussing Norris, because Norris had said something about Raines at his wife's funeral, which he [Raines] did not like.²⁷ The defense sought to impeach the testimony of Mrs. Parker with the testimony of H. L. Nutt who the defense declared was the only eye witness to the

²⁴The Austin Statesman, Jan. 14, 1927.

²⁵Ibid., Jan. 15, 1927.

²⁶Ibid., Jan. 16, 1927.

²⁷H. M. Williams, a city salesman for the Moor Rubber Company gave this testimony. He was a member of the First Methodist Church, but had not been attending his own church because he preferred, he said, to stay at home and listen to Norris on the radio.

shooting.²⁸ Nutt also was the first principal witness for the defense.

Nutt said he had reached the church at about 4:30 PM when he first talked with Miss Jane Hartwell.²⁹ The conversation was brief, and then Nutt went into Norris's office. He stood a few minutes, then took a chair just west of the desk. Norris asked him if he knew a man by the name of Chipps.³⁰ He replied that he thought Chipps did business at the bank. It was then, he testified, that Chipps entered the room through the west door. Norris was at his desk. Chipps did not knock, he said. He testified that Chipps said, "I am Chipps," then he seated himself. Nutt said,

²⁸The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 16, 1927.

²⁹Miss Hartwell was one of Norris's closest associates and acted for years as his private secretary. Various people in Norris's congregation later expressed the opinion that she actually shot Chipps out of fear for Norris's life, and that Norris took the responsibility because he could get acquitted. One writer has said of Miss Hartwell, that she was "gracious and blunt, narrow minded and sensitive, emotional and repressed. I believe she would go to any length if she once convinced herself it was for the God whom she worshipped . . . If she had been a Catholic, she would have been a nun. 'She is a big sister,' one of Norris's followers said . . . She is the stuff of which martyrs are made and if for any reason she should decide not to tell anything--if God for instance should instruct her! I believe that no fear of law or punishment could make her reveal the truth. However, how much of it she knows is one of the chief topics of speculation." Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 16.

³⁰The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 16, 1927.

Chipps told Norris, "If you say anything more about my friend Meacham, or Austin and Roach, I will kill you."³¹

Norris said that he was going to preach about them Sunday night, Nutt said, and Norris then invited Chipps to come and hear him. Chipps said once again that if Norris preached the sermon, he would kill him. Nutt said Norris twice ordered Chipps to leave. Nutt said he did not remember anyone opening the door through which Chipps went out.³²

Chipps said, according to Nutt, "I will repeat what I have said, I will kill you." Nutt said that the next thing he saw, was Chipps in the door and saying, "lets go to it."³³ Nutt said he was looking at Chipps and not at Norris. Chipps had his left hand raised, and his right hand towards his rear pocket. Nutt said he then heard a shot.³⁴ He said there were at least three shots fired as Chipps backed almost into the anteroom, stopped, walked over to the east end of Norris's desk and fell.³⁵ When Chipps re-entered the room, Norris was not in it, having gone to the north east office. Nutt said, "Chipps had the appearance of a man who was

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 16, 1927.

angry, determined and dangerous."³⁶ He said of Norris, that he was "cool, and not in any angry mood." Nutt said he did not see the gun in Norris's hand before the shot.³⁷ He further testified that he did not see any witness in the hall, that he did not see any woman in the hall, and that he did not hear Norris say, "I have killed me a man."³⁸ He also said that he did not know if Norris shot Chipps. Under cross examination, Nutt testified that he did not hear Chipps swear during the entire conversation leading up to the killing and that he made no effort to minister to Chipps when Chipps was lying on the floor.³⁹

When court was dismissed for lunch following the testimony of Nutt, The Dallas Morning News reported that there were at least a thousand persons, in the room at the time, and the jury was "carried out through a window."⁴⁰ The second principle witness for the defense was Fred W. Holland⁴¹ who was brought forward to give evidence of the

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Holland was a resident of Johnson County adjacent to Tarrant, and was formerly employed as one of Fort Worth's policemen. He had visited Norris's church.

enmity that Chipps had expressed toward Norris over Norris's political attack. Holland testified that he was in Fort Worth on July 15, 1926, when he happened to overhear a conversation on the street between Chipps and Harry Cornor.⁴²

Holland said he heard Chipps tell Cornor that he was going to kill a"43 He said Cornor had asked Chipps who he was talking about, and Chipps said "Frank Norris." Chipps had said he was going to kill him "tonight or tomorrow." He said Chipps appeared to be drunk.⁴⁴

Holland testified that he went to Norris the next day and reported what he had heard to Norris. Holland also told of the previous trouble he had had with Chipps. On one occasion, he said, Chipps had cursed and abused him.⁴⁵ Holland, at the time knocked Chipps down. He also reported that he had had similar trouble with Chipps at the Westbrook Hotel, and that he had arrested Chipps on a charge of driving while intoxicated and disturbing the peace,⁴⁶ but "never more heard of the case."⁴⁷ He said he had never seen Chipps

⁴²Cornor was an employee of the Fort Worth Police Department.

⁴³The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 16, 1927.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶This occurred in 1925.

⁴⁷The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 18, 1927.

these things Holland testified he told Norris on Friday noon, the day before the murder.⁴⁸

Following the testimony of Holland, the defense called a list of thirty-three witnesses for the purpose of impeaching the character of Chipps.⁴⁹ All but one of these gave similar testimony to Chipps' excessive drinking, his violence when intoxicated, and his reputation for causing trouble. Among those to testify were a merchant, banker and a newspaperman. In the list were also hotel employees, policemen, barbers, and a legislator. Each of these in turn testified of Chipps' reputation and that he was quarrelsome when

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹The witnesses included Dr. Webb Walker, a Fort Worth Physician; Sterling P. Clark, four term Sheriff of Tarrant County; Charles C. Littleton, Cotton seed oil mill business; H. W. Cornor, Fort Worth City Detective; A. B. Hamm, livestock dealer; J. O. Hart, sand and gravel business; J. T. Pemberton, Vice President, Farmers and Merchants National Bank; A. T. Mitchell, automobile salesman; Leonard Worthington, newspaperman and Secretary of the Republican State Elective Committee; E. L. Russell, livestock dealer; W. C. Currey, House detective at the Westbrook Hotel; L. M. Estes, employee of the Texas Hotel; A. D. Harding, State Legislator from Tarrant County; Howard Higbee of the Baker Hotel in Dallas; W. E. Young, house detective at the Texas Hotel; E. G. Jenkins, a barber; H. F. Foster, a farmer; A. M. Walker, a farmer; John Woodruff, a Fort Worth policeman; G. W. Chapman, employed by the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad; W. W. Barr, a service station attendant; A. B. Self, a service station operator; L. C. Wilkerson, a Fort Worth policeman; Herman Williams, a Fort Worth garage-man; John W. Cooley, an automobile salesman; Mrs. Vernon Porter, auto company employee; and Mrs. H. Q. Langrith, retired.

drinking, but polite when he was sober.⁵⁰ Several witnesses testified to the threats Chipps had allegedly made against Norris. The barber said he heard Chipps say that Norris would be killed.⁵¹ A filling station employee reported that Chipps had boasted that he was going to kill Norris, "if he doesn't stop talking about my friends."⁵² Policemen told of the trouble they had with Chipps when he was under the influence of liquor.⁵³ One writer summarized the testimony of the witnesses by saying "the spirit of D. E. Chipps . . . must have staggered into eternity, cocktail glass in one hand, a bottle in the other, quarreling and fighting with all he met on the way, if the defense broadsides on the dead man's character are to stand as a reflection of the deceased's memory."⁵⁴

When court was resumed the following day, it was announced that Norris was too ill to come to the courtroom. Why he was ill, is a matter of conflicting reports. His lawyers said he was "up until after midnight, and he was struck

⁵⁰The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 18, 1927.

⁵¹The barber was R. E. Hancock, Dallas Morning News, Jan. 18, 1927.

⁵²Statement of Herman Williams, The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 18, 1927.

⁵³Statement of H. W. Cornor, Ibid.

⁵⁴The Austin Statesman, Jan. 17, 1927.

with a cough, because all except Norris were smoking like ovens, and the tobacco fumes started his cough."⁵⁵ This was also the story reported in the Dallas Morning News; however, another newspaper told a different story, stating that Norris was seriously ill with appendicitis and "had offered to come to the courtroom on a stretcher."⁵⁶ The judge refused, but one of his critics said, "here is Norris the showman. Anything to get sympathy."⁵⁷

As the trial began its eighth day, the defense turned from the assault on the character of Chipps to an effort to present evidence that Chipps had gone to Norris's office for the purpose of killing him. The newspapers termed this a sensational turn in the trial as the defense called for the testimony of Mrs. Fannie Greer, the telephone operator of the Westbrook Hotel where Chipps lived at the time of his death.⁵⁸ Mrs. Greer said she saw Chipps on the afternoon of the slaying in the Westbrook, and that she listened in over the switchboard to a conversation between Chipps and Mayor Meacham. She said that Meacham had called

⁵⁵The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 19, 1927.

⁵⁶The Austin Statesman, Jan. 19, 1927. Norris later told the jury that because he suffered from chronic appendicitis he could not have tried to physically overcome Chipps.

⁵⁷Haldeman-Julius Monthly, 117.

⁵⁸The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 20, 1927.

Chipps at the hotel and asked him to come over to his store because "Norris was having his Searchlight sold in my store again, with that sermon about me in it, and I have already had one of his boys put out."⁵⁹ She said Chipps told the mayor that, "I will go over there and stop it."⁶⁰

Later in the day she said she listened in again to a conversation between Chipps and Norris when she had called Norris on the telephone at Chipps' request. While she testified that the conversation lasted about ten minutes she reported that she heard only a part of it. Substantially she told the court: "Chipps asked Norris if he was going to be there for thirty minutes and that he wanted to talk to him."⁶¹ Norris said that he was getting ready to leave, but he would wait two hours and thirty minutes if it was necessary. "Who is this?" Norris asked Chipps, and when Norris did not seem to understand the name, Chipps spelled it out. Norris asked Chipps what he wanted to talk about, but Mrs. Greer said Chipps did not answer. When she returned to listen again, she said she could not understand the conversation, but she said that Chipps was talking "in an angry tone."⁶²

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

A second witness to associate Norris with Mayor Meacham was Mrs. Leta Chick, who was one of the ex-employees of Meacham's department store, where she had been employed at the time of the slaying.⁶³ Mrs. Chick testified that she saw Chipps in the Meacham store earlier in the afternoon of the slaying, and that she overheard a conversation between Chipps and Meacham. Meacham, she said, had a copy of Norris's paper. She said she overheard Meacham say to Chipps, "Norris is going to preach about me again and make more trouble."⁶⁴ She said Chipps told the mayor, "Not to worry, I will go over there and stop him or I'll kill him." Whereupon Meacham told Chipps to be careful. Chipps, she said, told Meacham "I won't need you."⁶⁵

The defense then sought to imply that Chipps had a gun with him when he entered Norris's office, and the gun was picked up by one of the city employees to make it appear that Chipps was unarmed at the time. The defense sought to prove this principally through the testimony of Mrs. J. M. Gillian, who said she was on the sidewalk outside the First Baptist Church at the time of the slaying.⁶⁶

⁶³She worked for Meacham from October 1925 to August 14, 1926.

⁶⁴The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 20, 1927.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Mrs. Gillian was a member of Norris's congregation and her husband was employed by Norris as manager of The Searchlight.

Mrs. Gillian said that she was on her way to the office of The Searchlight at the time she heard the shots. She said that Mr. Ridgeway preceded her up the stairs and that when she got to the top of the stairs, she saw the body of Chipps, Miss Heartwell, and Norris. She said that she saw a man stooping over and picking something up in the anteroom after the killing, "but did not know who it was, nor what was picked up."⁶⁷

The defense next proceeded with the testimony of E. L. Redmond who also told of seeing something picked up off the anteroom floor.⁶⁸ He was in The Searchlight office when he heard the shots fired,⁶⁹ and ran to the door and saw a man in the anteroom stooping over. John A. Level also testified that he saw someone pick something up from the anteroom floor.⁷⁰ Level, who was present in the church office at the time of the slaying, said when he heard the shots fired he ran and looked into the anteroom. He said, "Someone was stooping over, picking something up from the

⁶⁷The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 20, 1927.

⁶⁸Redmond was a twenty-four year old ministerial student of the Southwestern Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

⁶⁹The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 21, 1927.

⁷⁰Ibid.

anteroom floor."⁷¹ The defense now presented the testimony of the janitor that he had seen Chipps on his way to Norris's office.⁷² The janitor said Chipps cursed Norris.⁷³ The family physician was next to testify, and said Norris was not strong at the time of the slaying because he had been "suffering from chronic appendicitis for six months before the slaying . . ." and also "that he was suffering from neuritis in the shoulder . . . which . . . tended to make the man nervous." He said Norris was in a "run down condition."⁷⁴

Mrs. P. S. Rains,⁷⁵ the personal secretary of Norris testified that she had left the church office at the time of the shooting, but that she had been present when Chipps had talked to Norris over the phone. She also said she had kept a record of the telephone conversation in a stenographer's notebook. She presented the notes to the jury. Miss Jane Heartwell testified that she had also seen Chipps enter

⁷¹Level was a nineteen year old high school student, the president of the student body and a Sunday School Teacher in Norris's church.

⁷²The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 21, 1927.

⁷³Testimony of Charlie Souls, Ibid.

⁷⁴Testimony of Dr. O. B. Grogan who had been a member of Norris's church. Ibid.

⁷⁵Mrs. Rains had been Norris's secretary for two years and she was also a member of the First Baptist Church. Ibid.

Norris's office acting as though he was angry, and when she heard the shots she had gone to look into the anteroom where she had seen someone stoop over Chipps' body.⁷⁶

L. S. Greunberg, the former clerk of the Westbrook Hotel also gave testimony of Chipps' intent. Greunberg said he was employed at the Westbrook Hotel on the day of the murder. He told of a conversation he had with Chipps on the day of Chipps' death. Chipps, he said, was carrying a package when he went into the room the second time.⁷⁷ Chipps told the bell boy to bring him some ice. About fifteen minutes later Greunberg said, Chipps came down and said he was going to see Norris about the remarks that Norris was making about his friends, Meacham and Carr. Chipps said, "If Norris did not retract, he was going to kill him."⁷⁸ Greunberg said he asked Chipps if he really meant it, that he was going to kill Norris, and Chipps answered "yes."⁷⁹ He also testified that Chipps was considerably under the influence of liquor. Greunberg also said that several days before Chipps had told him that if Norris did not stop attacking

⁷⁶The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 21, 1927.

⁷⁷Chipps occupied room 317 of the Westbrook Hotel where he had lived for several months.

⁷⁸The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 21, 1927.

⁷⁹Ibid.

his friends, "he could kill him and never be arrested."⁸⁰

Norris took the stand at 5:00 in the afternoon on Tuesday, January 21. Immediately there were arguments concerning whether his past criminal indictments could be brought out under examination.⁸¹ Norris told the judge, out of the presence of the jury, "I was acquitted on two cases, and the other was dismissed. The one case was on an instructed verdict."⁸² The defense stated that the purpose of questioning Norris was that "your Honor, may hear testimony that may connect the Mayor of Fort Worth with the homicide."⁸³ With this the court dismissed for the day.

Norris took the stand to testify the next morning.

The news service reported,

All of Austin knew Norris was going to take the stand, and the courtroom had even more spectators than at the previous session. The curious were given a dramatic treat, for the defendant wept as he told of the tragedy, and was so overcome with emotion at times, that he had to compose himself before he could answer.⁸⁴

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Norris had been indicted on the charge of arson and perjury in 1912 in regard to the fire which had destroyed the properties of the First Baptist Church and the church parsonage.

⁸²The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 22, 1927.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 22, 1927.

Norris was questioned by Dayton Moses. The first part of his testimony was little more than a short history of his past life until the time of the controversy with Mayor Meacham. Then the defense counsel sought to lead Norris into a description of the dispute he had had with Meacham and the city administration which finally led to the murder. Norris testified that he had known Meacham since he moved to Fort Worth, but he had not met Chipps before the afternoon of the murder, and that he did not "know him on sight."⁸⁵ Norris told of several controversies which he had with Meacham, the first of which was in 1920. This had to do with the alienation of affection suit which Mott had filed against Meacham. The next controversy which he had with Meacham was when Meacham was foreman of a grand jury before which Norris was a witness.⁸⁶ Norris then said that the mayor had later employed the firm of McLeon, Scott and Sayers, and that of Shelton and Shelton to assist in the prosecution of the present trial. At this point, the judge ruled out such testimony, which forbade Norris to give testimony of his controversy with the mayor.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Norris had attacked the grand jury in The Searchlight because of the nature of the grand jury's investigation into bootlegging in Tarrant County. He and J. M. Gillion, editor of The Searchlight had been subpoenaed to testify before the grand jury.

Norris now continued under cross examination to tell of the first time he had heard of the threats of Chipps. He said he had first heard such threats on Friday, the day before the slaying, from Holland, as Holland had testified. On Sunday, before the tragedy, he said, he had mentioned Meacham's name in the pulpit, which led to the threats by Chipps. He said Holland came to his office and told him what he had heard Chipps say to Cornor, that "I am going to kill" He also said that Holland had told him that Chipps had broken into an apartment house, and that he had attempted to kill one of the officers who had tried to arrest him. Norris further said Holland told him, that on other occasions Chipps had threatened to kill a man at the Texas Hotel, and that on still another occasion he had tried to kill the house officer at the Westbrook Hotel. Norris said he had believed everything Holland had told him, because he knew that Holland was an honest man who had been a member of his church for several years.⁸⁷ He said that, however, at the time of the conversation with Holland, the sermon against Meacham for the following Sunday had already been published.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Mrs. Holland had done sewing for Mrs. Norris for several years.

⁸⁸The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 22, 1927.

Norris next told of the telephone conversation he had with Chipps on the day of the slaying. The story was substantially the same statement as that which he had made in his statement before the district attorney. Norris said that Chipps told him over the telephone that "My name doesn't matter, and I am coming over there to kill you, you . . ."89 At this point, Norris said he called his stenographer to listen to the conversation. After the conversation, Norris said, Nutt came in, but he did not tell Nutt of the conversation with Chipps. He did, however, ask Nutt if he knew who Chipps was. Norris testified that he believed Chipps was a dangerous man and knew that he would carry out his threats, and that he intended to leave as soon as his sermon was ready, as he "didn't want to be there when Chipps came in."90 His secretary had just brought him the sermon two or three minutes before Chipps came in.

Norris now testified of his encounter with Chipps. "Chipps," he said, "came into the anteroom door without knocking." "This is D. E. Chipps," he reported to Norris, "If you say another word about my friends, I am going to kill you."91 Nutt then asked Chipps, according to Norris,

⁸⁹Words were omitted in the newspaper account.

⁹⁰The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 22, 1927.

⁹¹Ibid.

"Who are your friends?" whereupon Chipps replied, "Meacham, Carr, Roach and Austin."⁹² By this time, Norris said, the two men were on their feet, and Chipps repeated, "You've got to retract what you have said of Meacham or I'll kill you." Norris said he held the door open, and Chipps started out, but after a few more words he heard Chipps repeat, "I will kill you." The news service reported that Norris was "weeping," when he gave the testimony.⁹³ He said Chipps' right hand was clenched at his side and that "I opened the drawer of my desk, grabbed the gun, and fired . . . I felt certain that he was going to kill me . . . he was coming through the office door when I fired the shot." Norris said he did not know how many times he fired the gun, "because of my excitement and fright."⁹⁴

Norris now described what he said he remembered after the shooting. He said he went into the office after the shots were fired, and from there to the telephone where he called his wife and told her of the trouble. He said he handed the pistol to someone, he did not remember whom. He did, however, tell that on the day of the murder he was

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 22, 1927.

wearing a blue suit, and then when he put the suit on several weeks later, he found four empty shells which he threw away.⁹⁵ Under cross examination, Norris said that after Chipps had called him over the telephone, he did not call the sheriff, the City Hall, or any place before Chipps came to his office. He said also that the pistol which he used to kill Chipps was not his own, but that it belonged to a night watchman who had left it in his desk.

The court was recessed for the weekend after two other witnesses had appeared at the trial. The defense rested its case when the testimony of Norris was over. Norris visited the Methodist church in Austin over the weekend, while a Presbyterian minister filled the pulpit of the First Baptist Church in Fort Worth.⁹⁶ When the trial resumed on Monday, the State called two rebuttal witnesses. In all, the testimony took twelve days, and the judge allotted each side six hours for the concluding remarks. The Austin paper reported that Norris's hair had literally "turned gray," in the two weeks.⁹⁷ The paper alleged the

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Norris also met with Governor Dan Moody for a short conversation on Sunday morning. The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 24, 1927.

⁹⁷The Austin Statesman, Jan. 24, 1927.

"evolution of the chimp contrasts strangely with the ultra fundamentalist arguments of the lawyers for Darwin's arch enemy."⁹⁸

The judge read the charge to the jury on Monday, January 24, 1927, at 9:45 AM. It contained seventeen lengthy definitions of Texas law, relative to murder, manslaughter, and their applications to the case.

After reading of the charge, which took thirty-two minutes, John Shelton opened the summary for the prosecution. "I have never tried a case in twenty-five years of my experience," he said, "in which if you would believe the story of the defendant, he would have gone free . . . the only thing they have shown to prove that Chipps merited death was that he stepped on a Negro's foot, and that he drank a lot of whiskey."⁹⁹ He said that Chipps was accused of making threats against Norris for five years, but that no effort had been made to carry them out. Marvin Simpson spoke for the defense, which opened at 11:40.¹⁰⁰ He maintained, of course, that there was not a scintilla for which Norris could be held, "because, the testimony shows that he was acting in self defense."¹⁰¹ He pointed out that

⁹⁸The Austin Statesman, Jan. 25, 1927.

⁹⁹The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 25, 1927.

¹⁰⁰Sheldon spoke for an hour and seven minutes.

¹⁰¹The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 25, 1927.

the tragedy occurred in Norris's office, that Chipps was a much larger man than Norris, that he had a reputation of violence, that he was drunk most of the time. Simpson compared the life of Norris and Chipps, stating, "Chipps was engaged in drunken orgies," while Norris was "a spiritual head of 8,000 people." He compared Norris with David and Chipps with Goliath.¹⁰² The newspaper described the hearing, stating of Norris that he sat, "head bowed, and a handkerchief held over his eyes as a lawyer referred to his family."¹⁰³

Simpson then proceeded to state that the testimony showed that Chipps dropped something and that he stopped over to pick it up immediately after he was shot. The defendant further argued that this was more "apt to have been a weapon than anything else."¹⁰⁴ There was one officer who had found and picked up something, but the state would never put him on the stand, he said. He also implied that Chipps had actually fired the gun. "One of the most potent factors," Simpson said, "is the bullet hole in the ceiling." He also argued that the state failed to produce the coat that Chipps was wearing, because, "there were no bullet holes

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Norris's family sat around him during the summarization by the counsel. Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

in it,¹⁰⁵ . . . as Chipps was reaching toward his pocket at the time he was shot." He further declared, "It was the hand of providence that the killing took place where it did." Simpson then retold the story, declaring that Chipps' anger had been so aroused as he was leaving that he turned back to "finish the job."¹⁰⁶ Simpson then pulled one of Norris's sons in a cadet uniform from his seat and pointing to him said, "What would you think of this defendant if his country went to war, and he should have to say, "No, I don't want this boy to go. I have raised him to be a coward."¹⁰⁷

In the rebuttal the prosecution declared the record showed Chipps obeyed Norris's order to leave . . . "it was there," he said, "that the defendant saw that Chipps might get away." The lawyer said Norris's next move was to provoke the difficulty so that he could kill Chipps. The argument of the first day ended, with the adjournment of the court at 5:30 P.M.

The arguing continued and was concluded on Thursday, January 26. The argument of the second day added little new to what had been told. Moore spoke for the prosecution and

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 25, 1927.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

argued that "the Nation had legalized the sale of liquor for decades and that Chipps should not be blamed altogether if he acquired the habit of drinking liquor."¹⁰⁸ He concluded that Norris had not the lawful right to kill Chipps because all a man has to do for his protection is to have the man who threatened his life arrested and the law will protect him. He said, if Chipps had made a "hip pocket play," and yelled, "I'll kill you . . . ," Norris would not have had time to turn to get to the desk, open the drawer, and seize the pistol.

In the final summarization, Dayton Moses spoke again for the defense. "You no doubt wondered what was back of all this," he said, "We tried our best to show you, but the state would not permit us." He declared that the state was not as anxious for the crushing of the defendant as much as one certain individual in Fort Worth was. Then he stated, "Eight special prosecutors were employed by Mayor Meacham, the "man of mystery in the case." The defense attorney closed his argument by speaking of the "love of the father for the son." He told of love of one's country, and concluded that a man's love for his home was just as sacred, and that because of this affection, Norris defended himself. "I thank God in Texas, you don't have to wait until you are

¹⁰⁸The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 26, 1927.

shot down to protect your life. Moses concluded:

You can send this man to the penitentiary. They don't expect you to. They will be satisfied if one fails to agree with the rest of you. You can send him to the electric chair, but you can't take away from him the love and devotion of eight thousand good men and women who call him their pastor.¹⁰⁹

The prosecuting attorney according to Time Magazine, then concluded his remarks with a sneer at Norris, as a "pistol packing parson," and cried, "there has been a frame up in this case. Norris had murder in his heart, and wanted an excuse to kill Chipps and said something to make him turn and then pumped him full of bullets . . . poor old drunkard."¹¹⁰

The jury left for deliberation at 4:40. They took two ballots. The first was nine for acquittal and four for conviction. The second vote was for acquittal. Within an hour they had reported that they were ready with a verdict, but because Norris could not be located, it was 7:50 PM before the verdict was read. One magazine explained the delay because:

James R. Hamilton went for a rest. Defendant Norris and his bodyguards took a walk over to his hotel. A long time would elapse, he thought, before the jury could untangle the splenetic

¹⁰⁹"Religion," Time Magazine, L (Feb. 7, 1927, 26.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

arguments of the lawyers. Two hundred miles away in Fort Worth, Evangelist Norris's followers prayed industriously . . . "111

When the court finally was ready for the verdict to be read, Time said, bailiffs and deputy sheriffs "stood pompously ready to shoot."¹¹² The judge announced, before the verdict was read, "The punishment . . . for anyone creating any disturbance or demonstration in the courtroom will be \$100.00 or three days in jail." When the verdict was read, Norris . . . "warily with an eye toward the judge," held out his arms toward his lawyer. "They embraced each other, and cried."¹¹³ "A crowd of jubilant friends,"¹¹⁴ then crowded around to congratulate Norris and his family. Young D. E. Chipps, Jr. stepped into the district clerk's vault, and had a good cry all by himself. "Later he told reporters, "I am sorry for mother," he said, "it will be hard on her."¹¹⁵

When Norris was asked to comment on the trial, he said, "there was never a doubt in my mind as to the verdict . . . but for the crusade I made there would never have been

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴The Dallas Morning News, Jan. 26, 1927

¹¹⁵Time Magazine, L (Feb. 7, 1927), 28.

an indictment."¹¹⁶ Norris returned to Fort Worth where there was a special gathering of his congregation to welcome him back to the pulpit. The Fundamentalist¹¹⁷ reported that the "station was thronged with multitudes to meet him and the street lined with people from there to the church." It further stated, that despite the cold night, long before his arrival the auditorium was packed with standing room only, multitudes turned away . . . but for the pressure of friends he would not have spoken."¹¹⁸ The New York American stated:

. . . sacred songs boomed forth from the throng estimated at eight thousand inside the big stone house of God, with the stage and Metropolitan opera house platform and its gallery--"Gospel Horse-shoe"--extending from the immense velvet curtains to the church door The throng stood and cheered Norris As he . . . walked across the platform, and peeled off his coat, he seemed to be undergoing an emotional storm. There were tears in his eyes. He asked his hearers to join him in prayer. He asked in his prayers that each member of his church refrain from any violence . . . no matter who persecuted him. Then he requested his flock not to applaud, but they interrupted his talk with hand clapping and cheers, being unable to restrain their joy at having their pastor back again¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶The Austin Statesman, Jan. 26, 1927.

¹¹⁷The name of the publication The Searchlight had been changed to The Fundamentalist of Texas in January of 1927. It was later changed to The Fundamentalist, and is now published monthly by the World Baptist Fellowship at Arlington, Texas.

¹¹⁸Norris, "Impromptu," The Fundamentalist, Jan. 28, 1927.

¹¹⁹The New York American, Jan. 27, 1927.

Norris continued to receive the loyal support of his vast congregation and the size of its membership continued to increase after the murder, with little if any ill effects from the trial. He was immediately invited to speak in numerous large pulpits, in the North and in the South, and everywhere he received a large amount of publicity. After the trial, he continued his assault upon the Catholic hierarchy in America and was soon involved in the election of 1928, using the Catholic issue for an attack upon Al Smith. Vast crowds gathered to hear him speak upon the subject. The appeal of Norris was due in part to his personality and his effectiveness as a spellbinding public speaker, but also to the fact that in his public utterances he appealed to the prejudices, both inherited and acquired, of a sizeable segment of the population of the Southwest at the time. As this attitude later changed, Norris ceased his attack upon the Catholic Church and its officials, but he did in the 1920's find that it gave him popularity with many, and he used the issue to gather a vast following. Norris, his crusade, his popularity and his vindication in the courts are, to say the least, indicative of the attitude of a great many people in the 1920's. It is rather doubtful that Norris, even with his personality, could make use of the same issues today as he did in the 1920's to gather the support of so many for so long a time, under such controversial circumstances.

CHAPTER VI

AFTER THE TRIAL

Whether Norris was a man of deep abiding personal conviction which demanded that he make an attack upon the Catholic danger as he professed he saw it, or whether he was a utilitarian personality who used the popular appeal which these issues gave his ministry in the 1920's may still be debated today. Perhaps the best way to reach a conclusion to this question and also to find some indication of the character of Norris is to compare the later controversies of his ministry with his controversy of the 1920's. Norris for the remainder of his life never ceased to be a controversial personality, nor did he cease to foster controversy and to exploit it to its fullest; but as will be seen, he did change the issues of his controversy and certainly became less anti-Catholic in his ministry.

The ministry of Norris, if judged by the size of his congregation in Fort Worth and later the crowds which gathered to hear him preach, was little affected by the killing of Chipps. It may, however, be debated as to how it affected Norris himself. He never ceased to be apprehensive and angry at any who referred to the tragedy. When in

later years some called him the "shooting salvationist,"¹ or the "pistol packing parson," he was quick in his remonstrations. Newspapers learned that any such reference would immediately involve them in a libel suit.² The tragedy did not, however, seem to influence the continual controversy of his ministry.³ Over the next twenty-five years, until his death in 1952, he was engaged in one controversy after another. The records of The Fundamentalist, which he continued publishing weekly until his death are little more than a record of these controversies. After the murder of Chipps, however, Norris entered less into local political controversies, and more into controversy which had a statewide or nationwide issue.⁴

¹Abilene Reporter News, March 24, 1924.

²Norris actually sued various publications for later referring to him as a "pistol packing parson," as the Abilene Reporter, and the Wichita Falls Herald; see Time, LXX (May 29, 1947), 70.

³Norris occasionally referred to the murder saying . . . "another man, who was known for his hatred of preachers and church, took his spite out on the First Baptist Church, and pastor, and sent a would-be assassin to the study . . . this mayor was driven from office, lost his fortune and the once magnificent store that ran from street to street, and blocks of valuable property . . . He admitted under oath these words, 'I sent D. E. Chipps to the office of J. Frank Norris to kill him . . . ' as to the fate of that mayor-- pull the curtain down." [Meacham was killed when the car he was driving crashed into the side of a moving train.] J. Frank Norris, "Gates Ajar," The Fundamentalist, Aug. 20, 1948.

⁴This is at least indicated by the pages of his publications.

Norris had hardly been freed in the courts of Austin when he became embroiled in a political campaign against Al Smith in Texas. It is generally conceded, at least by Norris's papers, that Norris carried Texas for Hoover.⁵ He thought he saw a dangerous trend in Al Smith's candidacy. He announced that he believed that the Catholic and presidential oaths were in conflict, and no man could honestly take both.⁶ The other issue of the campaign was that Hoover was for prohibition, and Smith had declared himself for repeal. Norris claimed that though it is difficult to justify a preacher's participating in politics, these two issues transcended the "do nothing" philosophy.⁷ Norris said of Smith, "The question of the campaign is Al Smith and his record, his Tammany Hall record, his saloon record, his record as an assemblyman, his vote for, and in defense of gambling, prostitution and liquor . . . "⁸

When the Republican National Convention⁹ suggested it map out an itinerary for him and pay his expenses, Norris

⁵J. Frank Norris, "And the Mule Went from Under Him," The Fundamentalist, Nov. 9, 1928.

⁶Lubbock Morning Avalanche, Sept. 28, 1928.

⁷J. Frank Norris, "Information Needed In the Campaign," The Fundamentalist, Aug. 3, 1928.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Norris remained a Republican the rest of his life. He campaigned against Franklin D. Roosevelt. See J. Frank

refused on the grounds that it was a matter of personal conviction and not a matter of politics. He did, however, receive some funds from the offerings which he raised and from various members of the Masonic Lodge.¹⁰ He would speak two or three times a day, and return to Fort Worth to preach in the mid week prayer services, then immediately go back to his campaign itinerary.¹¹ One of his sons who accompanied him on the tours said he would rent a park--"or something similar," and announce "that J. Frank Norris would speak on the issues of the campaign." "He would," his son said, "have on the platform enough friends to have a choir . . . for all practical purposes it was just like an open air church meeting." His son stated, "He would get some local individual to introduce him, there was a national air about it . . . patriotic music, maybe a band playing, then he would speak for about an hour or an hour and fifteen minutes . . . He spoke without a microphone, and would stick to

Norris, The New Deal Exposed (Fort Worth: The Fundamentalist Publishing Company, 1936). Norris also spoke on a state wide radio hook up 26 times in support of Eisenhower in 1952.

¹⁰Norris was a Mason, though he professed he was inactive.

¹¹For a description of such meetings see The Waxahachie Morning Light, Sept. 28, 1928, and the Lubbock Morning Avalanche, Sept. 28, 1928.

these two issues."¹² At the same time that Norris was stump-
ing the state to gain support for Hoover, he was harassing
in his publication the other Baptist clergy of the state for
not doing the same.¹³ When Hoover carried the election,
Norris said it was "the greatest moral victory in the his-
tory of America."¹⁴

In January of 1929, Norris suffered what was the
greatest setback in his later ministry when the entire prop-
erty of the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, along with
the publishing facilities and radio station¹⁵ was destroyed
by fire.¹⁶ Norris was never able to rebuild the facilities
to their previous proportions. By the time he had reached
a settlement with the insurance company, the market had col-
lapsed and the insurance company had gone bankrupt.¹⁷ For
over three years the congregation of the First Baptist

¹² Interview with J. Frank Norris, Jr., Aug. 12,
1966. Norris, Jr. is now a real estate broker in Fort Worth.

¹³ J. Frank Norris, "Baylor University and the Al
Smith Club," The Fundamentalist, Oct. 26, 1928.

¹⁴ Norris, "The Mule Went," The Fundamentalist, Nov.
9, 1928.

¹⁵ Norris established Fort Worth's first commercial
radio station, Station KTAT in 1925. The station is now
Station KFJZ.

¹⁶ For a description of the fire see, The Fort Worth
Star Telegram, Jan. 12, 1929.

¹⁷ Entzminger, The J. Frank Norris I Have Known, 239.

Church met under a large sheet iron tabernacle in downtown Fort Worth, which Norris advertised as "the Mule Barn."¹⁸ However, the numerical size of his congregation continued to increase. He later accused his enemies of starting the fire, but nothing came of the charge.¹⁹ Norris was finally able to rebuild the First Baptist Church auditorium through contributions, but the building was simple and plain, with unfinished cement floors and unstained benches. He moved into the building in 1933, with a crowd which the Fort Worth Star Telegram reported as numbering fifteen thousand.²⁰

In 1935 Norris branched out from Fort Worth to take over in addition to the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, the 800-member Temple Baptist Church of Detroit, Michigan. Here controversy quickly followed his ministry. When the Detroit School Board canceled the use of Case Tech. Auditorium, he moved into the open air and attacked the school board for their defense of modernism.²¹ When General Motors Corporation granted him the use of Cadillac Square in downtown Detroit, he erected what he said was the world's

¹⁸Roland C. King, "Personal Testimony," The Fundamentalist, Dec. 3, 1934.

¹⁹The Fort Worth Star Telegram, June 13, 1929.

²⁰Ibid., Oct. 17, 1933.

²¹The Detroit News, Dec. 7, 1934.

largest tent, and began a six weeks' campaign in which he preached against the "evil of organized labor," and the "communist affiliation of John L. Lewis and the C.I.O."²² He also led his new congregation in Detroit to disassociate itself from the Northern Baptist Convention. The growth and size of the Temple Baptist Church congregation was immediate, and by 1950 Norris could boast that he was ministering regularly to "22,000 members--the largest combined membership under one ministry in the world."²³ Norris would preach on alternate Sundays in each of the two pulpits, then during the week fly to fundamentalist conferences throughout the country. In this manner, he gained the title of the "flying parson."²⁴ Of his weekly meetings, he said, "he was promoting real New Testament revivals."²⁵

In 1939 Norris further extended his ministry with the organization of his own Seminary which was first housed in the property of the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth. From the inception in 1939 until 1945 it was known as the Fundamental Baptist Institute. Today it is known as the

²²William Fraser, "The Great Fundamentalist Victory in Detroit," The Fundamentalist, Dec. 31, 1934.

²³Roy, Apostle of Discord, 352.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵J. Frank Norris, "Revival," The Fundamentalist, Aug. 28, 1946.

Bible Baptist Seminary.²⁶ By 1950 Norris boasted that the seminary could "boast of over 500 students, faculty of 17 and property at \$2,000,000.00."²⁷ Norris wrote of the seminary that . . . "it is the only seminary in America where the highest degree given is based wholly and solely on the study of the English Bible. The Bible Baptist Seminary stands out like a tall giant among a forest of smaller trees."²⁸

The growth of the Seminary was due to the support of Norris's Bible School, which met twice a year and attracted fundamentalist pastors from throughout the nation. He had the support of such spiritual leaders as Dr. James M. Gray, then president of Moody Bible Institute, Chicago; Dr. R. A. Torrey, president of the Los Angeles Bible Institute; Dr. C. A. Gabeline, who was one of the leading Baptist expositories in the circle of Fundamentalism; Dr. A. C. Dixon, pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, known as "Spurgeon's Tabernacle," in London, Dr. W. B. Riley, President of Northwestern

²⁶After Norris's death the seminary was merged with the Akron Baptist Temple Baptist College of Akron, Ohio. Dallas F. Billington, president of the college is the pastor of the Akron Baptist Temple which boasts the world's largest Sunday School. Later the seminary was moved to a 40-acre site at Arlington, Texas,

²⁷Roy, Apostle of Discord, 350.

²⁸J. Frank Norris, "Seminary," The Fundamentalist, Feb. 3, 1950.

School in Minneapolis, Minnesota.²⁹

In his later years the Southern Baptist Convention was the chief target of Norris's attack.³⁰ He assailed nearly every important Southern Baptist leader. Once he wrote, "The Baptist leaders are trying to do to the Baptist people what the Methodist Bishops have already done to the Methodist people. The Fundamentalist will see to it that they will fight for every inch of ground they take."³¹ Norris accused the Southern Baptist leadership of "modernism, compromise, and infidelity."³² In 1950 he said to his congregation, "the Northern Baptist Convention went over boots, bag and baggage to the Federal Council and now they have put their fangs into the Southern Baptist Convention . . . they are infiltrating just like the Communists."³³ He said of the National Council of Churches' mother group, "The Federal Council of Churches denies every fundamental

²⁹The program for Norris's Bible School which he called at first the World Fundamental Baptist Fellowship, and which later was shortened to the World Baptist Fellowship, was published each May in the issues of The Fundamentalist.

³⁰Roy, Apostle of Discord, 350-351.

³¹J. Frank Norris, The Fundamentalist, Feb, 17, 1949.

³²J. Frank Norris, The Fundamentalist, Oct. 22, 1950, and May 27, 1949.

³³Ibid.

of faith held by the New Testament Baptist."³⁴

Norris's last important attack on the Southern Baptist Convention came in 1947 when he publicly challenged Louis D. Newton in the St. Louis Second Baptist Church before a thousand pastors of the Southern Baptist Convention who had gathered to hear Newton's report on a recent trip to the Soviet Union. When Newton started to address the gathering, Norris also climbed to the platform and attempted to read a list of seventeen questions. As Norris started to read the list, several in the crowd rose with shouts of "throw him out," but Norris persisted.³⁵ Newton then started to lead the congregation in singing "How Firm a Foundation," Norris joined in the second verse, and by the time the police arrived, Norris had taken his seat. The newspapers gave national publicity to the incident.³⁶

Norris accused Newton, the president of the convention of being "red." "Every preacher and every layman in the Southern Baptist Convention hold their noses when they think of Louis D. Newton's record," he said. "They can't ignore Norris when the president of the Southern Baptist Convention

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Time Magazine, LXX (May 19, 1947), 70.

³⁶Ibid.

is cheeking-by-jowl with Bishop C. Bromley Oxnam, who is one of the main fifth columnists of Joe Stalin in America."³⁷

Norris charged in his paper that Joseph M. Dawson, Secretary of the Convention was a modernist. Norris said, "Every time the Baptists of Texas give one dollar a part of it goes to Jodie's ten thousand dollar a year salary, his high powered secretarial force and his fine office with mahogany furniture."³⁸

In 1948 Norris's vast organization had reached the apex of its numerical strength, but it was not a year of growth for Norris's ministry. In that year his organization was "racked by a bitter struggle within its own ranks."³⁹

When the Baptist Fellowship met for its May meeting in 1948, G. Beauchamp Vick, co-pastor of the Temple Baptist Church of Detroit, and President of Norris's school, "led an open rebellion against Norris."⁴⁰ Norris answered Vick's charges by saying that he was "boastful and conceited in his imagination . . . who believed that he could step in and set aside God's servant and take over a movement that God Himself had established."⁴¹ When Vick and his supporters

³⁷J. Frank Norris, The Fundamentalist, May 21, 1948.

³⁸J. Frank Norris, The Fundamentalist, Feb. 17, 1950.

³⁹Roy, Apostle of Discord, 350.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Baptist Bible Tribune, June 23, 1950.

organized the Bible Baptist Fellowship⁴² in a downtown Fort Worth Hotel, Norris accused them of "every kind of vice, including financial manipulation, marital infidelity, sexual perversion, and religious racketeering."⁴³ These charges he propagated through the pages of The Fundamentalist with dramatic cartoons.⁴⁴ In later years, various attempts to reconcile the two groups met with failure and Norris's following continued to diminish in number.⁴⁵

The Fort Worth Star Telegram gave this report of the separation:

Rev. Mr. Dowell, former president of the fellowship who was chosen president of the newly formed Baptist Bible Fellowship at a meeting at the Texas Hotel, Fort Worth, Wednesday, said the first conflict centered around the fellowship constitution's by-laws which gave the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, of which the Rev. Norris is pastor, "veto powers," over the entire organization.

.....

⁴²The Bible Baptist Fellowship later established the Bible Baptist College of Springfield, Missouri, with Vick as president. It met with a body of 1,100 students. See Bible Baptist Tribune, Sept. 23, 1957.

⁴³Roy, Apostle of Discord, 353.

⁴⁴An account of Norris's break with Vick was also carried in the Prophecy Monthly, April, 1948, 22-23, and in The Cross and The Flag, July, 1948, 19.

⁴⁵This attempt was made by Luther Peak in The Evangelist and Bible Teacher of Nov. 13, 1952, and was rejected by Noel Smith in the Bible Baptist Tribune, Dec. 26, 1962.

Rev. Harvey Springer of Denver, Colorado was elected Mr. Dowell's successor in the Fundamental fellowship organization Wednesday.⁴⁶

Norris died of a heart attack on August 20, 1952 while attending a youth camp in Jacksonville, Florida. The newspapers gave his death national publicity. One of his critics later wrote:

He will go down in history as one of the most colorful figures in the entire history of the modernist--fundamentalist controversy . . . a man of powerful physique, craggy features, swift moving deep set eyes, and a picturesque and violent vocabulary. In private conversation he seemed well educated and well read, and he talked with flawless diction. But as soon as he was before an audience he would 'rant and rave,' purposely mispronouncing words and revelling in homely colloquialism. Sensation, excitement, battle--these characteristics marked the life of a man who was curiously named, "Texas Cyclone," "Storm pedler of the Southwest."

.
To his enemies he was a self contained tyrant with a flair for publicity.⁴⁷

The life of J. Frank Norris was long, varied and complex, and the controversy which climaxed in the murder of D. E. Chipps was but one of many controversies which plagued his life. What this particular controversy shows is the way in which Norris used controversy and sensationalism to help gather a vast following of people in the

⁴⁶Fort Worth Star Telegram, May 16, 1948.

⁴⁷Roy, Apostle of Discord, 351.

1920's. In other decades Norris used other issues with the same success, but in the 1920's the issues which he used were these social attitudes so vivid in the transition of the period. He made use of the anti-Catholic feeling to gain support in his controversy with Mayor Meacham and the Fort Worth city administration, though the real issue was probably Norris's refusal to pay the city taxes which he had assessed against his church property. Norris made use of the popularity of prohibition in the same manner; namely, by endeavoring to show that those who opposed his controversy were in sympathy with the repeal of prohibition and as such he declared that they were in sympathy with bootlegging and drunkenness. Before his own congregation, Norris used the element of the Modernist-Fundamentalist in endeavoring to show that his was a fearless crusade against evils which were present in the society and which he felt would destroy belief in the Bible, and hence destroy also the moral fiber of America as a Christian nation. Norris sought to show that his life was such a crusade and that the controversy which he had with the Fort Worth city administration was just another side of this crusade. In the same way Norris championed the bigotry of the period by seeking to show that the Catholics, the Modernists and the wets owed their allegiance to such foreign powers as the Pope, the Communist

International and the League of Nations. Norris may have been sincere in this crusade; he may not have been. The conclusion is not what the controversy shows of the character of Norris, but what it showed of the society in which Norris operated. The conclusion is that Norris was successful in the crusade because he had the support of certain elements in the society which were sympathetic to the attitude which he advocated in his crusade. It is the conclusion of the writer that Norris was more utilitarian than sincere in his crusade, and that he was an ambitious man sensitive to the attitudes of many around him, that he used this attitude to appeal to these people in order to gather a crowd to hear him preach. It is the writer's conclusion that whatever sincerity there was in the character of Norris was a result of a deliberate effort to rationalize and justify his action and not the result of any deep abiding conviction that he was a part of a noble and needed cause or dedicated to a course of right.

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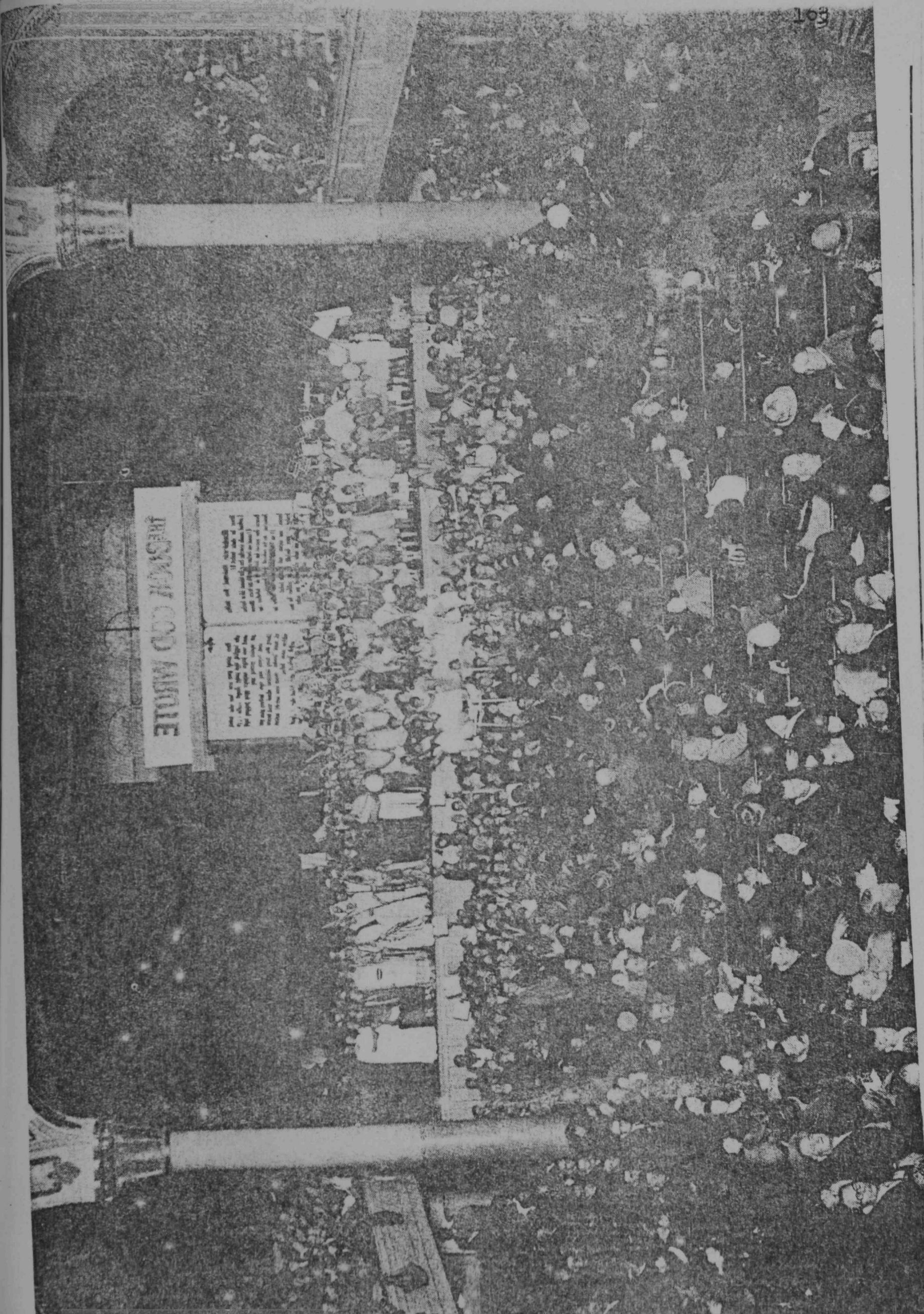
APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

A diagram of the shooting as it appeared in the
Fort Worth Star Telegram, July 19, 1926, p. 1

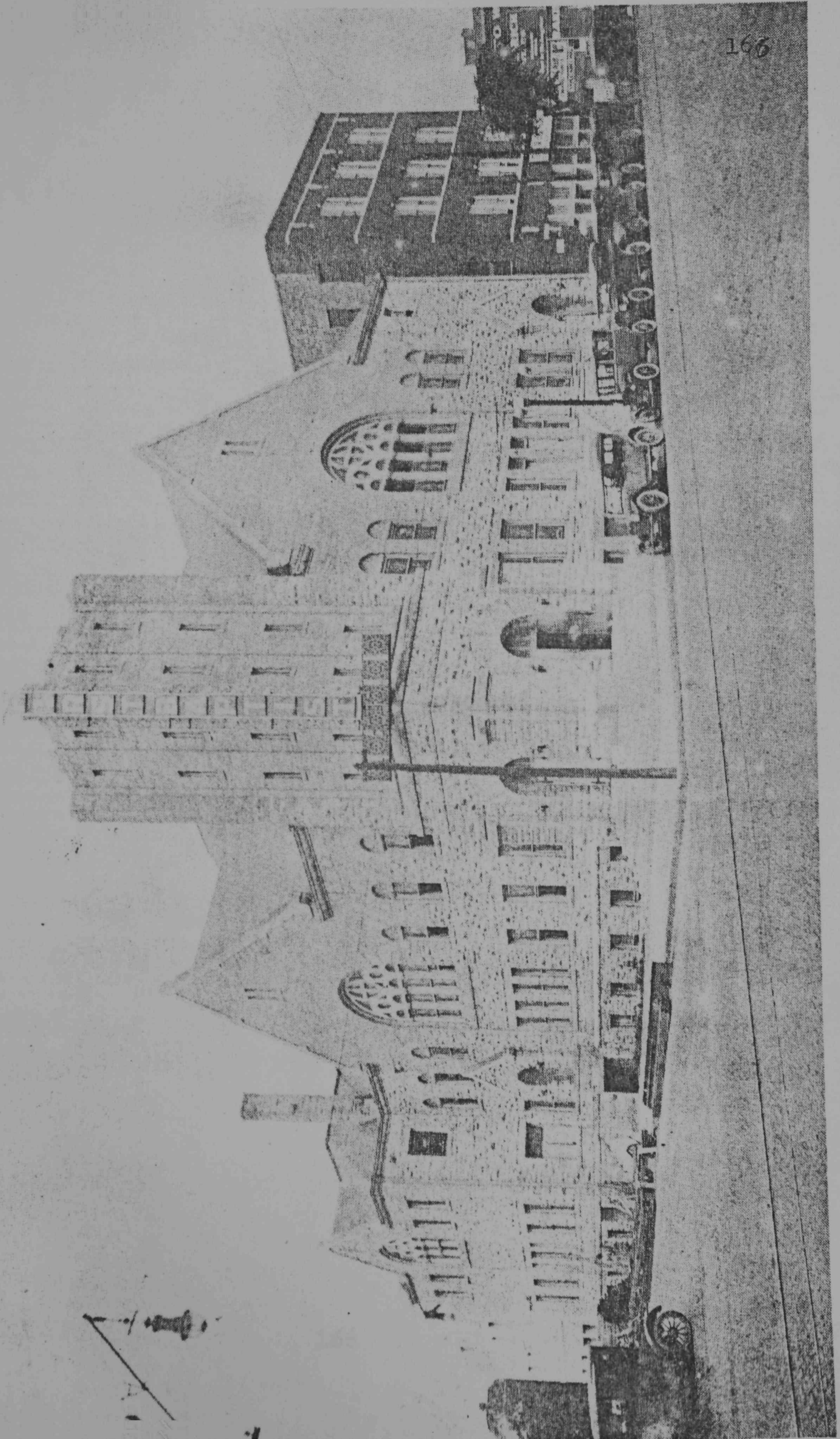
APPENDIX II

A portion of the interior of the First Baptist Church
with the congregation looking toward the pulpit, 1926.



APPENDIX III

The First Baptist Church at the time of the slaying.
Norris' offices were in the north east corner of the annex.



APPENDIX IV

The Searchlight as it appeared
under Norris' direction.

APPENDIX V

Extra edition of the Ft. Worth Press
July 17, 1926, announcing the murder.

EXCLUSIVE LEASED WIRE OF THE UNITED PRESS, WORLD'S LARGEST AFTERNOON PRESS ASSOCIATION

L. 5, NO. 246 TEN PAGES FORT WORTH, TEXAS, SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1926 WEATHER FORECAST: GENERALLY FAIR. FIFTH AND JONES STREETS

J. Frank Norris Shoots D. E. Chipps to Death

J. Frank Norris, pastor of the First Baptist Church, shot D. E. Chipps, lumberman, in the office of the Searchlight late Saturday afternoon.

Chipps died on the way to the hospital, where he was being rushed by a Robertson and Mueller ambulance.

The shooting occurred suddenly and without much warning. Reports to police is that Chipps, with another man, went up the stairs towards the Searchlight office.

A REMARK HEARD.

Chipps is said to have remarked: "How am I to know this man Norris if I see him?" It is declared that someone heard this remark and ran and told Pastor Norris. The two are said to have gone up, into the anteroom to the offices then out, and back into Norris' office.

Norris greeted the visitors in his office with shots. Four bullets took effect in the body of Chipps.

"I shot in self-defense," Norris said obstinately. Norris was taken to the District Attorney's office.

The man who was with Chipps as they went up the stairs was being sought Saturday afternoon by police.

WILD WEST TO BE SEEN IN PARADE

Everything in Readiness for TP Celebration TO RUN FIRST TRAIN Firms Enter Floats in Monday's March

A real wild west flavor will be brought into the railroad anniversary parade Monday by 50 real cowboys loaded to the teeth with blanks. They'll keep the celebration busy by "raising Cain" generally. R. L. Miller, general chairman of Y.M.C.A. committee arranging the affair, promised Saturday.

The parade will be a reproduction of the first railroad engine, a motor car and a motorcade of automobiles. A large delegation, with two bands, will come from Mineral Wells for the parade, W. L. Voely, marshal, announced Saturday.

A striking float is being prepared by J. J. Langner, who was witness on Fort Worth's first fire which wheeled into T&P station a hot July day five decades ago.

A float to be entered by the Junior Barbers' Association will enter the parade at 5:30 p. m. and will be a reproduction of the station as it was in 1871.

BOAT CAPTAIN IS VISITOR HERE

Just to see the city his craft was named after. That is what Capt. A. G. Rodan, of the City of Fort Worth, ocean brigadier, said as the main purpose of his visit here, while talking Saturday with City officials.

Blast Victim



Capt. Burwell H. Clarke, of the U. S. Marine Corps, was one of the gallant officers listed as "missing" after the Lake Denmark Naval Depot explosion.

TORNADO KILLS BOY

Three Communities in Path of Death Wind

ASHLAND, Wis., July 17.—Three persons are dead, a large number of others were seriously injured and heavy property damage was caused when a tornado swept thru the farming community west and south of here last night.

M'PHERSON CASE PROBE MOVED

LOS ANGELES, Cal., July 17.—Los Angeles County investigators left here today for the Mexican border to run down a new clue in the Amee Semple McPherson kidnapping mystery.

PIER OPEN FOR DANCING NOW

Venice Pier, adjoining the many bath houses at Lake Worth, will be open for dancing Saturday night, City Recreation Superintendent Evans announced.

ROCK ISLAND MAY ABSORB T. P. & G.

Official Asks Detailed Report on Line HEARING MONDAY ICC Report Favors Texas Project

WASHINGTON Bureau. WASHINGTON, July 17.—If the Texas, Panhandle & Gulf project to build a railroad from Seymour to Tucuman, N. M., is approved by the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Rock Island may seek to acquire the new line as part of its system.

Baseball Results

Table with baseball scores for National League and American League, including teams like Boston, New York, Chicago, etc.

Pastor Norris



EIGHT THEFTS REPORTED

Several Homes Entered By Thieves

Eight petty thefts were reported to city police and detective offices Friday night, none of them involving a serious loss.

A 16-inch oscillating fan belonging to the Western Union Telegraph Company was stolen from the operating room July 15 between 5 a. m. and 5 p. m., it was reported to detectives.

FRENCH CABINET IN COLLAPSE

Callaux Fails to Get Confidence Vote

SAN DIEGO KICKS INTERESTION IN SAN DIEGO

DRIVERS GET \$50 AUTOS READY TO RACE CATARACT

EVERETT and I made a dare—big we are not going to get away with it. The Cataract is going to be hard pressed in the big Tia Car Marathon next Thursday.

LATE NEWS

PAUL SMITH'S, N. Y., July 17.—President Coolidge is planning even greater seclusion than he now enjoys in his Adirondack camp.

TEXARKANA, Texas, July 17.—A. D. Carr, 66, was held here today awaiting action of the federal grand jury on charges of counterfeiting.

MEXICAN SHOT BY WOMAN

SAYS SHE FOUND HIM IN PEACH ORCHARD

FIRE DESTROYS HOUSTON PLANT

MORE BUILDING PERMITS

GAIN SHOWN IN PERMITS FOR WEEK

THE WEATHER

Table with weather forecast for Fort Worth and vicinity, including temperature and wind conditions.

DRIVERS GET \$50 AUTOS READY TO RACE CATARACT

EVERETT and I made a dare—big we are not going to get away with it. The Cataract is going to be hard pressed in the big Tia Car Marathon next Thursday.

As ourselves, you could have bowed that girl over with a feather.

WE had a distinguished passenger a little after 4 o'clock. Dr. L. H. Martin, city director of health and welfare!