

FRANK EX-EMPLOYEE IDENTIFIES BLANK

Form "Death Note" Was Written On Was One He Himself Had Used, Says Becker.

RECOGNIZES THE "CKER"

Becker Sent It to Cellar with Other Waste, and It Couldn't Have Come from Frank's Office.

Henry Friedrich Becker of Irvington, N. J., has thrown new light on the testimony on which Leo M. Frank, the young pencil factory Superintendent of Atlanta, Ga., was convicted of the murder of Mary Phagan, a 16-year-old factory employe, on April 26, 1913. Frank was convicted on the testimony of "Jim" Conley, a negro sweeper in the factory. Conley swore that the two "death notes" found beside the body of the girl were dictated to him by Frank, and that one of them was written on a new blank used for ordering factory supplies. He swore that the blank had been taken from Frank's desk.

A microscopic scrutiny of the blank made since the trial showed that the blank was an old one, and had been written on before, and that apparently an attempt had been made to erase the writing. In the middle of the blank appeared the vague outline of a word, the only one which was not written over in the "death note." Five of the letters looked like "cker."

Henry Friedrich Becker was the master mechanic at the National Pencil factory of Atlanta, in the basement of which the Phagan girl's body was found, from September, 1908, to December, 1912. He was found at his present home, 41 Maple Avenue, Irvington, N. J., by a reporter for THE NEW YORK TIMES last evening.

Mr. Becker said that when he worked in Atlanta he signed all of the factory orders. He readily acquiesced when asked to sign his name hurriedly in the fashion in which he said he always signed the factory orders, ending the last letter of his name with a flourish back over the signature.

"I always make that curl at the end of the 'r,'" he said.

Comparison of the Becker signature and the puzzling word on the reproduction of the blank revealed a striking similarity in every detail, even to the flourish at the end of the name. The "B," of which only part of the outline on the "death note" was complete, was of almost identical formation as that of Mr. Becker's signature. The word was the same length as his signature, and part of the outline of his initials could be traced.

Sent Old Blanks to Cellar.

"Shortly before leaving the Atlanta factory," Mr. Becker said, "I packed up all of the old orders which I had written and sent them down to the cellar. In the date line of my old order blanks the figures '190' were printed, but I had just about used up the supply of blanks when I left and new ones had to be bought. That was in 1912, and I think the new ones had '191-' in the corner."

The reproduction of the note bore the numerals "190-" on the date line. This, Mr. Becker pointed out, would tend to show that the negro Conley was lying about having gotten a new blank from Frank's office for the note which the girl had written it and which described her assailant as a "long, tall negro," and would indicate that the blank was picked up from a pile of rubbish in the basement and did not come from Frank's office.

"I knew Mr. Frank very well during the whole four years I was employed in Atlanta," Mr. Becker said. "I was thrown into intimate contact with him every day at the office, and I can testify that he was almost distant toward the girls employed in the factory. I knew him both before he was married and after, and his conduct was always beyond reproach."

Another detail of Conley's testimony which Mr. Becker's interview tends to discredit is the statement, quoted in the interview with Conley which appeared in THE TIMES last Sunday, that the first time he recalled seeing Mary Phagan was the day of her murder, when, he said, he kept watch in the hall while Frank was in the office above.

"That doesn't sound probable to me," said Mr. Becker. "I knew the negro Conley for several years and know that he roamed all over the factory and saw practically everybody in it often."

"It was I who hired Mary Phagan. That was about a year before I left, or about the last of 1911. While I was there she worked in two different departments, first at a machine on the fourth floor and later directly under my supervision in the metal department on the second floor. The girl was exceptionally pretty. She was one of the most modest little girls in the factory."

Frank in Love With His Wife.

"We hire about 125 girls and women in the different departments. During the entire time I was there I never once knew Mr. Frank to make any advances toward any of the girls. During my second year in Atlanta he married. He had introduced me to his fiancée a long while before. The charge that there was a breach between him and his wife is, I believe, untrue. Certainly there was no breach up to the time I left, a short time before the murder, for Mrs. Frank came to the office with him nearly every Saturday afternoon, and I never saw a couple who seemed more in love and more confident of each other. I wish it were in my power to do something for the man, for I am absolutely confident he is innocent."

Asked if he would identify the signature of the blank, Mr. Becker said that he would be glad to have the authorities call on him for this or any testimony he could give regarding Frank's character.

"From a mere photographic reproduction of the signature, I can't be absolutely certain, of course, that it is mine," said Mr. Becker. "but if a way could be arranged for me to see the original I am sure I could tell whether it was one of the blanks I had thrown in the basement."

Mr. Becker said public indignation in Georgia had influenced the jury to find Frank guilty.

"The people and press of Atlanta are beginning to realize their mistake," he said. "I've just received a letter from an intimate friend there who says that both are awakening to the fact that popular clamor has driven an innocent man almost to the gallows! and that the demand for a new trial is making itself felt."

Part of the letter to which he referred read:

Inclosed you will find an editorial from The Atlanta Journal. It is the first real expression of the newspapers declaring that Frank had not had a fair and impartial trial. Affairs in the last two weeks here plainly show that a new trial is the only proper means of seeing that justice is done the man.

Yellow journals created, by what they heard from these cheap detectives, a hatred for Frank, and now it is up to them to change the public's opinion as much as it is in their power.

You cannot realize how nauseating the tales that have been told on Frank have been, though, of course, the better element here now realizes that the stories were despicable lies. The mass of the people couldn't see through them at first, and didn't know that it was impossible for a man of Frank's social position among his race to even attempt things he was reported as having done.

A Letter from Frank.

Mr. Becker also produced a letter he received from Frank himself last year after he had been taken to the Tower in Atlanta. Becker had written a note of sympathy for the prisoner.

"My dear Mr. Becker," Frank's letter read. "Your kind words of sympathy and confidence touched me deeply and

were very much appreciated. The outcome of the trial was a surprise to all. The heated passion of the Atlanta mob did it. No one every heard of such a 'frame-up' to bring about the undoing of a decent man."

"Truth and justice, however, will prevail in the end. We have just begun to fight. In the end I will be vindicated, as I had no more to do with this thing than did you."

The letter was written before the Supreme Court had upheld the trial jury's verdict.

Mr. Becker's son, Frederick Otto Becker, is still living in Atlanta and has written his father frequently regarding the Frank case. He expresses the confidence the rest of the family feels that Frank is innocent, and severely arraigns Frank's accusers.

"Don't quote anything from any of Fred's letters," Mrs. Becker pleaded. "He is working there, and feeling against anybody who says a word in Frank's favor has run so high in Atlanta that it would not be good for Fred if the people who are condemning Frank heard his views. Last year it was dangerous for anybody to question even the fairness of the trial."