

JERSEY JUSTICE

THE STORY OF THE TRENTON **SIX**

CATHY D. KNEPPER

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 1949

On this day Bessie Mitchell wrote a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt asking for help:

My name is Bessie Mitchell, my brother and my brother-in-law and four other men are sentenced to the electric chair and are in the Death House.

Maybe you heard or read of the Horner Murder Case or better known as the case of the Trenton 6, in Trenton, New Jersey.

These men are innocent and the records show that.

Since the time my brother was arrested I have been fighting for him and the other men.

They were arrested without warrants, held five days without a charge. I begged the police to let me see my brother and they would not let me.

Then I went to several organizations, newspapers, Veterans Administration, and even to the FBI. I also wrote to Governor Driscoll, Supreme Court and many rich people, they refuse me in a nice way.

Then I lost faith in the United States of America.

I had always believed before that the people found justice here when they couldn't anywhere else in the world. Then I learned about the Civil Rights Congress.

I begged them to help me. First they start to restore my faith in the American people.

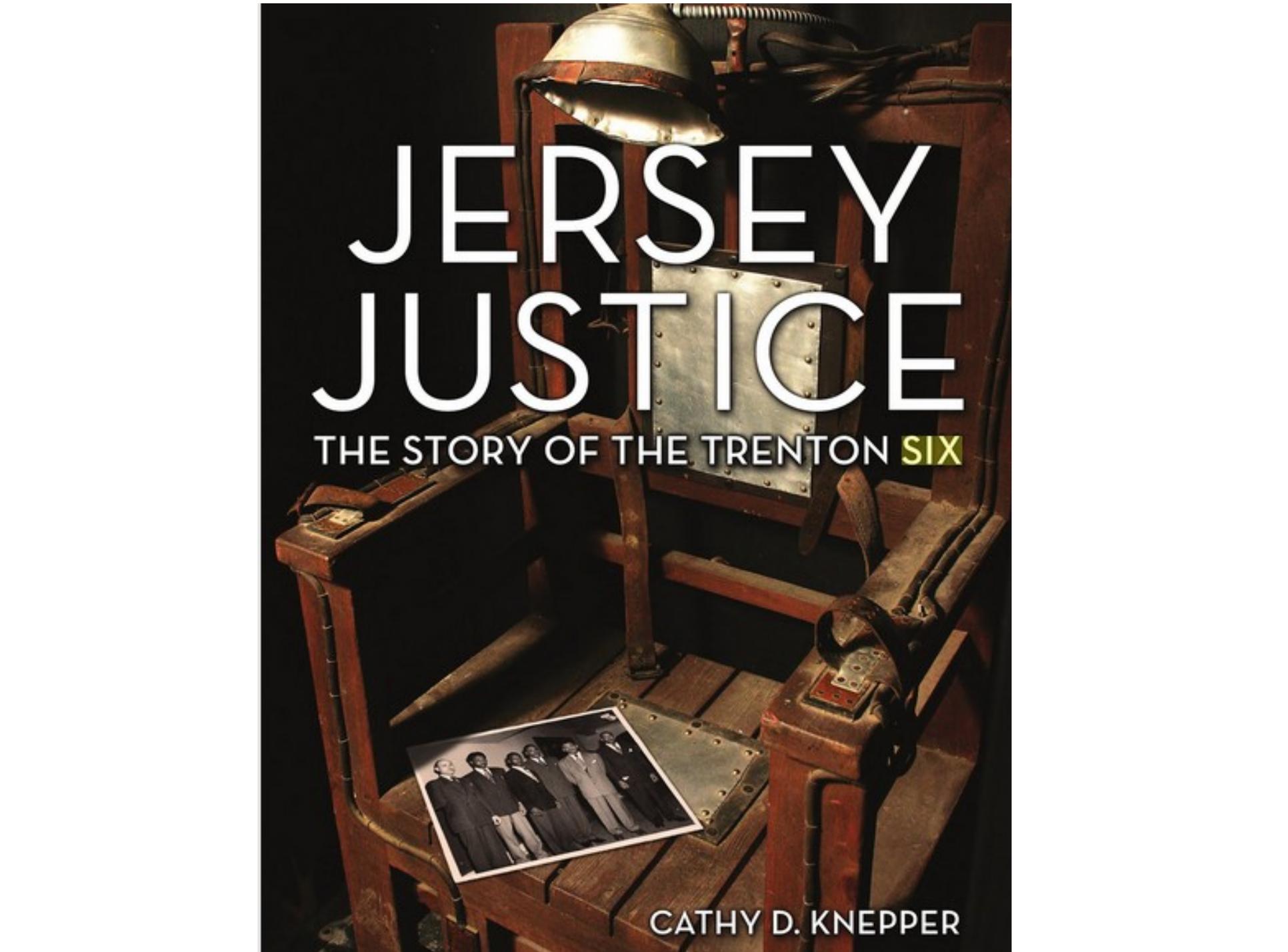
Then gave me courage to keep fighting to win.

I remember you when I was a girl how interested you were in Negro People. Please help us now to restore peace.

My people can't stand these police brutalities much longer.

I remain Humbul, [sic] Bessie Mitchell

P.S. Please answer



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Timeline

January 27, 1948: Death of William Horner.

June 15, 1948: First trial began.

August 6, 1948: First trial ended. Men sentenced to death.

September 1, 1948: Bessie Mitchell finds the Civil Rights Congress.

May 16, 1949: First appeal to New Jersey Supreme Court.

March 5, 1951: Second Trial began.

June, 14, 1951: Second Trial ended.

October 20, 1952: Second appeal to New Jersey Supreme Court.

February 20, 1953: Cooper sentenced to 6-10 years. Paroled August 11, 1953.



Crime Scene – The Horner Store



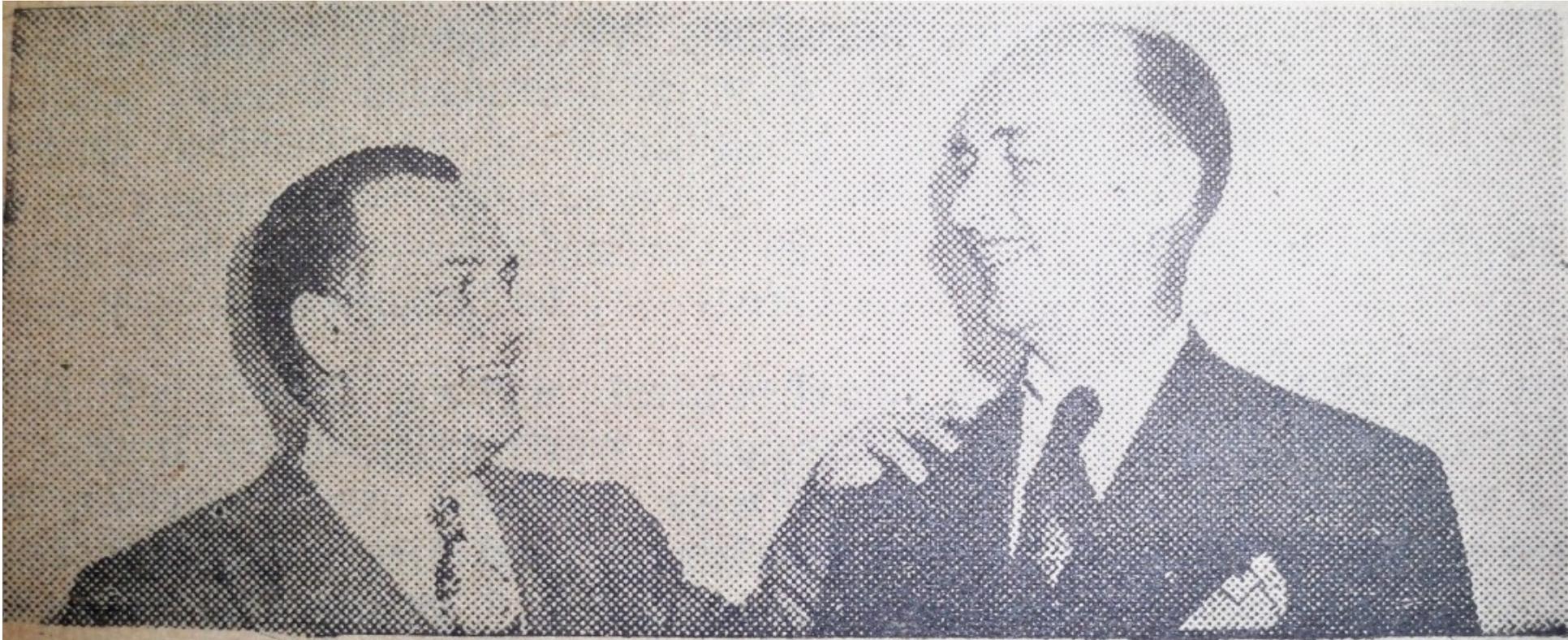
These are five of the six men condemned to die in the Horner murder case in Trenton. Left to right: Collis English, Ralph Cooper, James Thorpe, McKinley Forest, Horace Wilson. The sixth, John McKenzie, had not been arrested when this picture was taken last February in Trenton Police Court.

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It was a great day for them. Prosecutor Volpe (l.) congratulating his assistant Frank H. Lewton after the Trenton Six were found guilty.



MARIO VOLPE
He had a hard time



Thorpe, English, MacKenzie, Wilson, Forrest and Cooper



William Patterson



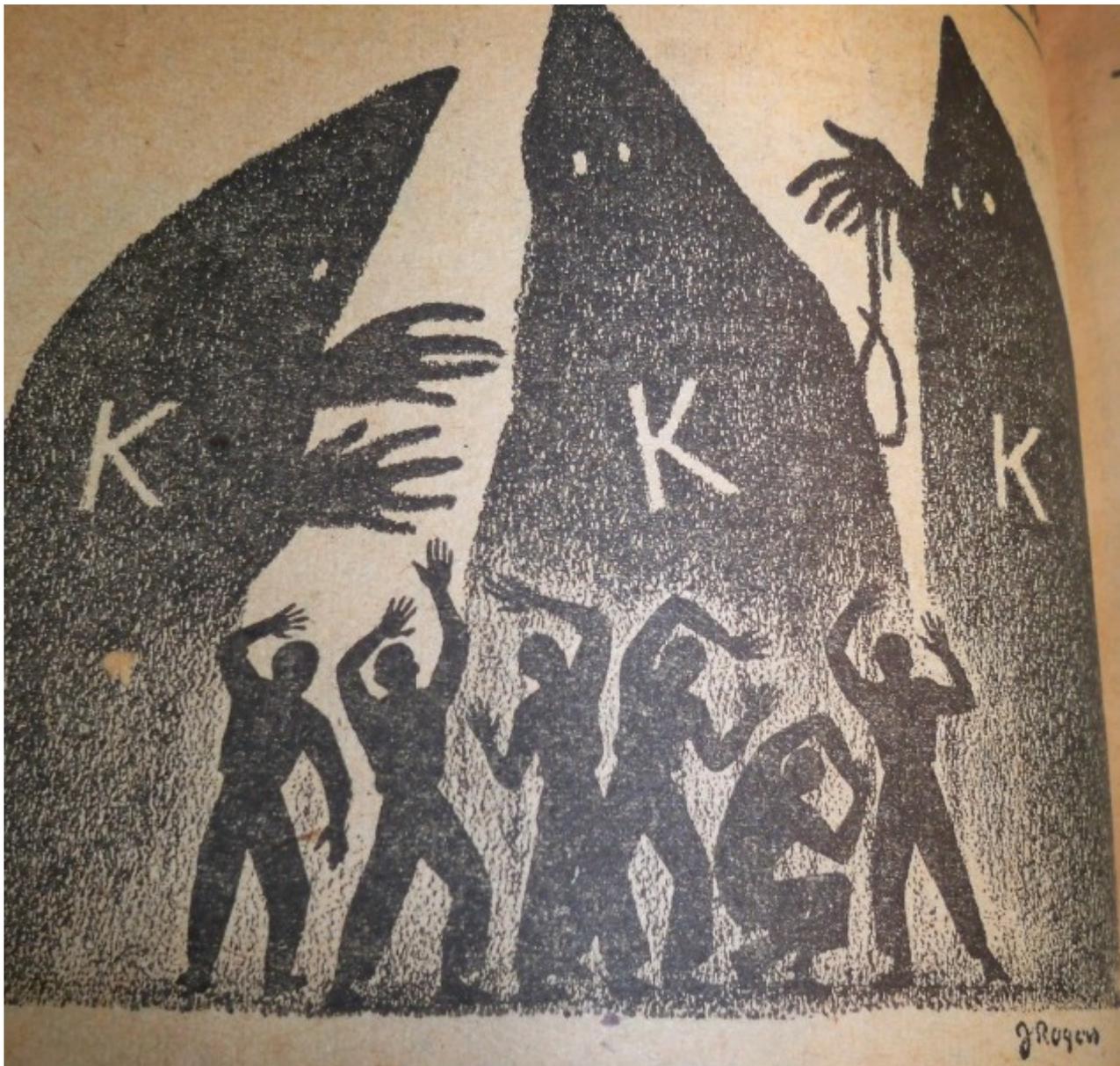
Demonstrators



The picket line at Trenton



Bessie Mitchell with Flyers



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JERSEY JUSTICE

CIVIL RIGHTS CONGRESS



Scottsboro in Trenton

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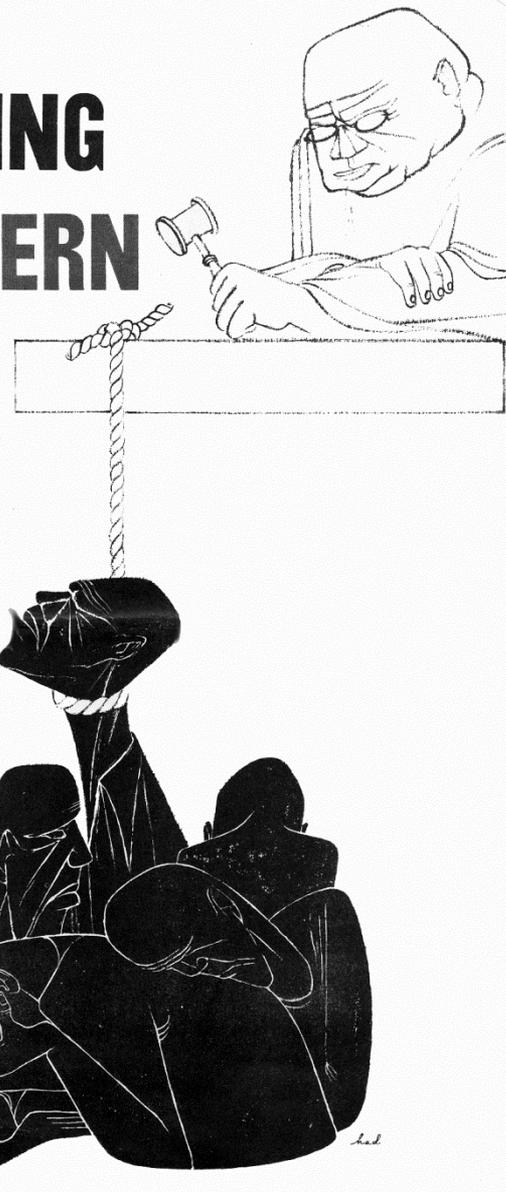
G KORFÉ

From THE NEW COLONIAL, the poem by
Emma Lazarus inscribed on the
base of the Statue of Liberty.



**The press blackout
on the Trenton case**

**LYNCHING
NORTHERN
STYLE**



Civil Rights Congress Pamphlet



The mother and sisters of Collis English reading a story about the case.



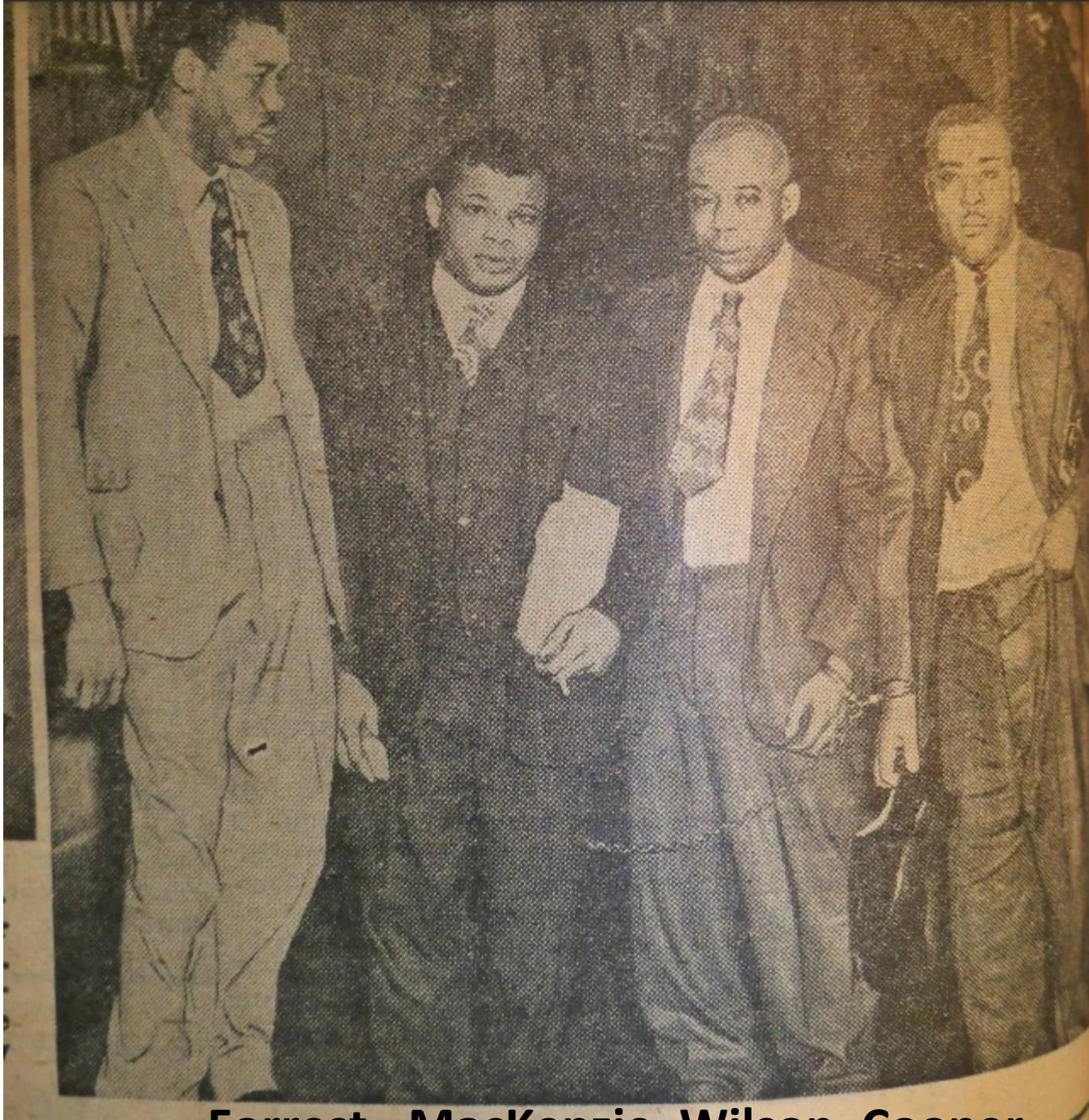
O. JOHN ROGGE



This was the scene at the press conference last Wednesday. From left to right: O. John Rogge; William Patterson; Mrs. Emma English, mother of Collis English; Bessie Mitchell, sister of Collis; James H. Thorpe, father of James H. Thorpe, Jr.



Thorpe, English



Forrest,, MacKenzie, Wilson, Cooper



GUARDIAN's William Reuben (l.), tireless worker for justice for the Trenton Six, shares Mrs. English's joy as Mr. Patterson beams.

NEW YORK, N. Y., JULY 4, 1949.



Have you heard the good news?

Neighbors crowd around Mrs. Emma English (center), mother of Collis English, one of the



**Day: Bessie Mitchell breaks the good news to her mother,
Mrs. Emma English.**





Second Trial – Defense Attorneys

Alexander, Burrell, Katzenbach, Hays, Pellettieri and Moore



**Thorpe, Cooper, English, Forrest,
MacKenzie, Wilson**

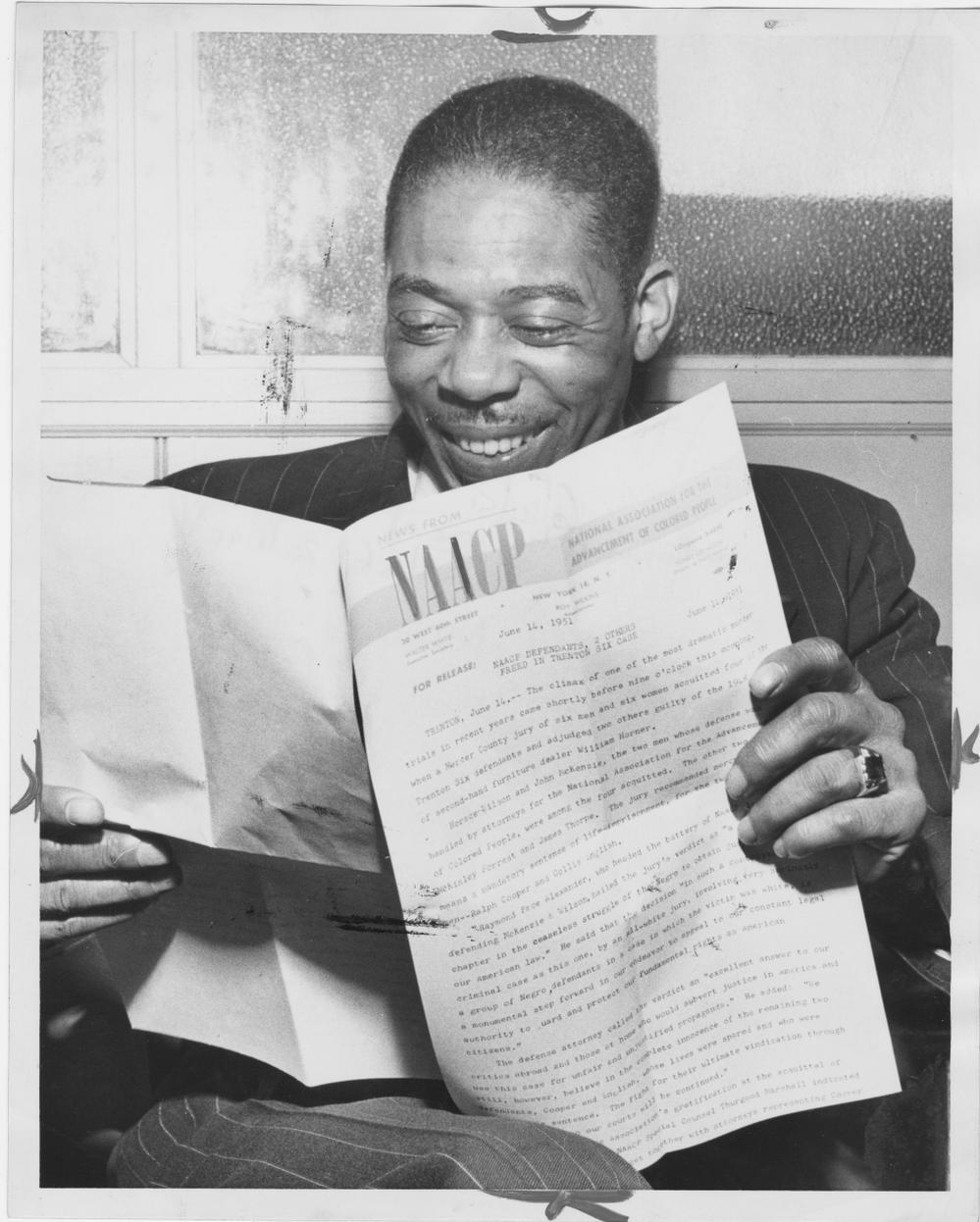


The Verdict
(McKinley Forrest)

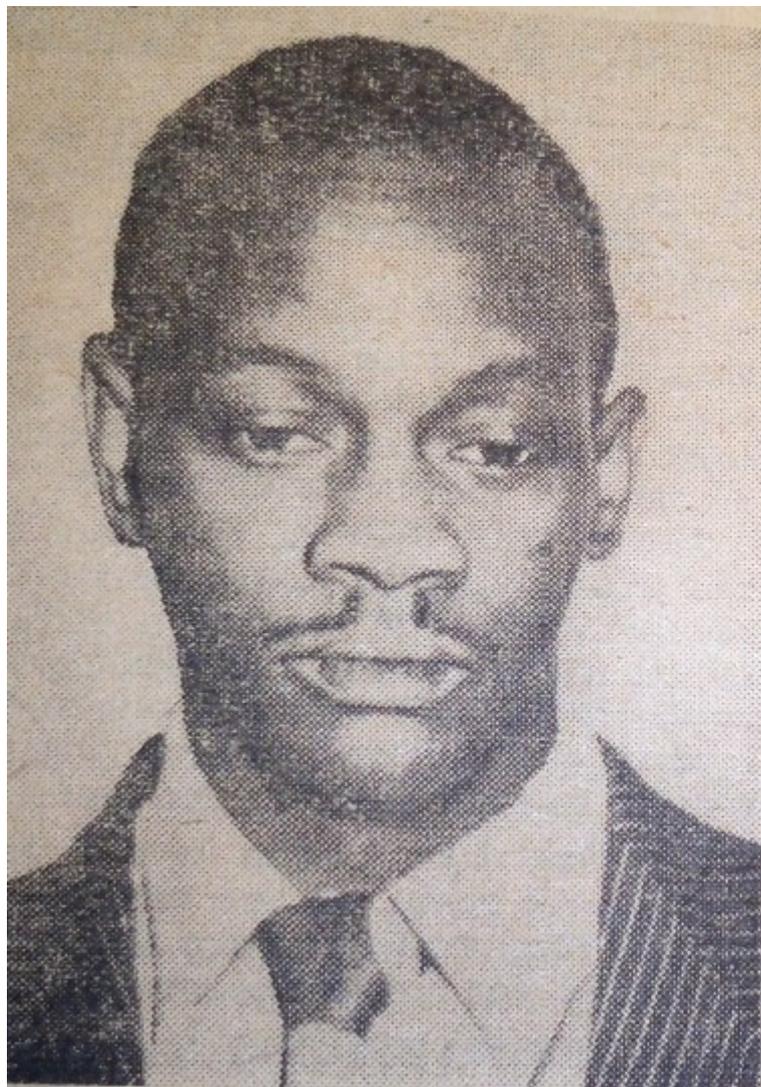


The Verdict

(John MacKenzie)



Horace Wilson



COLLIS ENGLISH

The fight . . .



RALPH COOPER

. . . goes on

Bessie Mitchell: Trenton heroine

BESSIE MITCHELL, 38-year-old garment worker, received news of the acquittal of four of the Trenton Six in her New York home where she is recovering from a serious operation. Her joy at the news was tempered by realization that perhaps the most strenuous chapter of her 3-year fight to save the Six—one of the epics of our time—lies ahead as soon as she recovers.

Her brother, Collis English, is one of the two convicted men who can only be saved from a lifetime behind bars if support for his and defendant Cooper's appeal can be mobilized immediately and on a tremendous scale.

The story of Bessie Mitchell's fight, starting in Feb., 1948, as a one-woman crusade, was told in the July 5, 1949, issue of the GUARDIAN. In answer to a call from her mother, Mrs. Emma English, she arrived in Trenton, where she was born, less than two hours after police arrested



BESSIE MITCHELL

The spirit is strong

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J. Royen





Turned Away from Hearing



Thurgood Marshall