

September 23rd, 1915

Mr. Dallas T. Herndon, Secy  
Arkansas History Commission  
Little Rock, Arkansas

Dear Mr. Herndon:

I see by the papers that they are getting up a "movie" of the tragedy of David O. Dodd, and as this is the one great individual act of heroism that the state takes the greatest pride in I assume that your Commission is watching to see that the representation now given is accurate, for there can be no doubt that whatever is now perpetuated into a moving picture will hereafter be accepted as authentic by generations to come.

For this reason,-- for your personal information and distinctly not for publication, I want to advise you of some of the inner details of that tragedy that are not generally known, in order that you may at least see that no false incidents creep into the story as finally portrayed.

In the first place my mother, then Mary Dodge, was the one through whom, in some way that we never were able to ascertain, the data found on Dodd was sent to him. A young and ardent little "rebel" she espoused the "cause" with vehemence and, at the same time, was on friendly terms with the Federal garrison then stationed here.

The officers or officers who furnished the information were suspected but were never known. But it became known to General Steele, then in command, that the information passed through my mother's hands and he sent for her father, Dr. Roderick L. Dodge and told him that while he felt sure his daughter did not realize or appreciate the gravity of the offense something had to be done about it.

General Steele, at that time, was being severely criticised for his friendliness to the people of the South, as he explained, and while he could not visit drastic punishment, such as the offense demanded, on a young girl, he could not overlook it entirely.

The result of the interview was that three days later Dr. Dodge and his daughter Mary were put on a Federal gunboat here, taken to Memphis and from there forwarded through the lines to Vermont, where she was forced to remain until the war was over.

You will recall that Dodd was offered his liberty if he would reveal the source of his information, and that he refused to do so. At that time the Federal officers knew the means used to get the information to him, but my mother never even knew what she was sent away "to school in Vermont" for until many years later, when a former officer on General Steele's staff told her this much of the story (Col. A.H. Ryan, who later resided here) and never did know that she carried the information nor where it came from.

Another bit of data connected with the affair is probably

unknown to those who are producing the movie and was not known to many of even those who lived here at the time.

In those days, as is still the custom in many smaller Southern towns, it was the custom to send out printed notices of funerals, on letter paper, heavily bordered with black.

When David O. Dodd was executed his body was taken to his home, a little house, next to the south-east corner of Fifth and Rock Streets (still standing) and a notice such as just described, was distributed broadcast about town by hand.

The Federal officers were ignorant of this custom and believed it to be some form of agitation, or an attempt to create trouble, so when the time for the funeral arrived a file of soldiers was marched up to the house and all but the immediate family were forbidden to come near and were sent away. No gathering was allowed any where near the premises during the brief services.

This incident would make a dramatic as well as accurate scene in the production of the film.

very truly yours

*Arnold Shiff*

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*File with my letter*