



Bio & Character Sketch of Gertrude (Carter) Scott

1901 – 1955

Age in April, 1923: 22 Age at Death: 54

Age when picture was taken: (est) 22

Lynching Victim's Wife
Gertrude Carter Scott

Gertrude Scott was a native of Columbia, MO. She was the oldest of five children of James and Annie Carter, a well-known family in Columbia. Her father worked as a janitor at the Elks Club and then later at an apartment building. Her mother previously worked as a laundress before staying at home.

After attending Frederick Douglass school in Columbia, Gertrude went on to get her teaching degree at Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City. By 1920 she was back teaching first and second grade at her old school, Douglass Elementary. She was paid \$75 per month, almost as much as the white teachers in Columbia's public schools.

Gertrude may have met James at church, or they may have met at Douglass school as it is possible that Gertrude actually taught either Helen or Carl (or both) who would have been of appropriate age at that time.

In 1921, James marries Gertrude at the Broadway Baptist Church (now the Second Missionary Baptist Church), just a few blocks from where they would settle.

After James was lynched, Gertrude moved back in with her mother and father, having had James' children returned to their mother in Chicago. In 1930 she married a man by the name of Elvis Stephens from Grand Rapids, MI. They are married in Jefferson City. Gertrude ended her teaching career and became a maid at some point before 1940.

Gertrude died in 1955 at the age of 54.



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Character Sketch

Gertrude Carter Scott is happy with her life. She's married to a nice guy who, though somewhat older than her, and accompanied by two of his three children, is honest, hard-working, loving to both her and his kids, respected and fun to be around.

Gertrude works with first and second graders as a teacher. She sees both the "young angels" as well as the children she worries about when they grow up. She socializes freely with her counterparts at the Douglass Elementary School, and she is open to speaking with her students' parents about any of their concerns.

Like her large, well-established family, the Carters, Gertrude is religious and regularly attends the Broadway Baptist Church with James and his two children. She teaches both of them in first and second grade at school, so she knows their character. While Carl is a bit precocious, Helen is sweet and caring. She needs to "work a little" on Carl.

Gertrude knows that James' mother was the key reason he moved to Columbia from Chicago. She's very appreciative because Sarah is the reason she now has James in her life, and she makes every effort to keep Sarah happy. Though her own mother is her key confidant, Gertrude always keeps Sarah informed of important issues with the children and James.

Upon hearing that James had been lynched, very late at night, Sarah immediately throws on a housecoat and shoes and runs in the moonlit darkness to Sarah and Jack's house to personally deliver the horrendous news to Sarah. The next day, Gertrude is so very appreciative to Rev. Caston and the church members for thinking of her and her family.

Gertrude wants to go with Sarah to see Ruby Hulen. She's intent on finally standing up for herself and her husband. While Sarah steals most of the scene's thunder, Gertrude is first to accuse Hulen of "standing by" while the mob took her husband – words she had waited weeks to deliver.



Summary Justice Partners, llc

JACK

So, Gertrude, how's the job at Douglass? The children behaving themselves?

GERTRUDE

It's wonderful, Mr. Brown. The children are little angels. First and second grade—they're still at that age.

101-102

JACK

Gertrude! What is it?!

GERTRUDE

They killed him! They killed him! They killed my James!

Sarah Brown walks through the living room toward the front door. Gertrude composes herself just enough to meet Sarah's eyes and speak in a hushed, breaking voice.

GERTRUDE

Mamma, they took James from the jail tonight. A mob took him to the bridge...

Sarah's eyes widen.

GERTRUDE

And they hung James! They hung him from the bridge!

HULEN

Yes ma'am, I know. I'm so very sorry. We did what we could that night but it wasn't enough. Not nearly enough .

GERTRUDE

I teach children at Douglass School, so I know they make mistakes. I forgive that girl. I feel terrible for what happened to her—she was a child, probably never saw a Black man up close. But you, Mr. Hulen. You and Chief Rowland and Sheriff Brown are adults. Your jobs were to protect him. With your own lives if necessary. People spit on my husband. They struck him with fists and sticks. They laughed and whistled and sang while he begged for his life. (beat) Then they killed him. He was innocent. They were guilty. My husband should be alive and free today. He would be if you had done your jobs.