

## DIED GAME

JOHN ROONEY THE CONDEMNED MURDERER OF HAROLD SWEET MAINTAINED HIS NERVE TO THE END AND SANG A SONG WHILE ON THE SCAFFOLD.

John Rooney, the man who was convicted of the murder of Harold Sweet near Fargo more than three years ago, was hanged by the neck at the penitentiary at Bismarck early last Tuesday morning. He maintained his innocence to the last and repeated several times while on the scaffold that he was not the murderer but refused to give the name of the man who committed the crime, saying:

"The names of my partners on the night of the murder, I never will tell."

"No man will ever say that John Rooney gave away a pal. I am willing to take the consequences, if by so doing I can free both of them. Before God in Heaven I committed the robbery but I did not shoot. The man who fired the shot which killed Harold Sweet was not myself."

He maintained his nerve to the end and stepped upon the scaffold of his own accord and continued talking to those present until the trap was sprung.

Every detail of the execution and the scaffold were perfect and there was not a hitch in the proceedings from the time the warden entered the cell to read the death warrant to the condemned man until Rooney was pronounced as dead by the attending physician.

The crime for which Rooney paid the extreme penalty with his life was committed out on the prairie near the Milwaukee round house about 2:30 o'clock in the morning of August 26th, 1902. Three brothers, W. C. Sweet, H. C. Sweet and R. H. Sweet of White Earth, Minn., had camped on the spot the night before and shortly after 2 o'clock in the morning were engaged in banking their fire preparatory to breaking camp when they were astounded by the command of "hands up."

Two masked men with revolvers drawn confronted the three brothers. Two of the brothers started to run but H. C. Sweet grappled with one of the masked men. The other robber overtook the two boys who had started to run and compelled them to deliver to him about \$7.50 in cash and two watches. Then the bandit disappeared in the night, leaving his partner struggling with H. C. Sweet.

Apparently getting the worst in his encounter, the bandit who has since been identified as John Rooney, shouted:

"Shall I shoot, Bill?"

"Yes" came the reply, apparently from the robber who had disappeared in the darkness.

The two shots followed in rapid succession. H. C. Sweet dropped to the ground, mortally wounded.

Before Rooney could make his escape, the other two Sweet boys sprang upon him and succeeded in choking him into submission.

The revolver, which Rooney had when overpowered, had two empty cartridges in it and this fact went far to disprove the claim of the accused at the trial that it was his partner who had fired the fatal shot. In addition to the revolver Rooney carried a dangerous looking bowie knife.

Rooney was tried and convicted at Fargo in January 1903. Several appeals were taken, the last one was to the United States supreme court on a question of constitutional rights, the highest tribunal in the land affirming the lower court and Rooney had to swing.

Rooney was the son of a New York saloonkeeper. His parents died in his extreme youth and he was sent by a society to the home of an Iowa farmer, where he resided until he was 17. At that age he ran away and soon drifted into criminal habits.

He frequently worked in the early spring and summer and was formerly employed around Hankinson and Lidgerwood, but he followed the holdup business each fall, working the trains in and out of Fargo. His chief victims were harvest hands, who stole rides in freight cars.