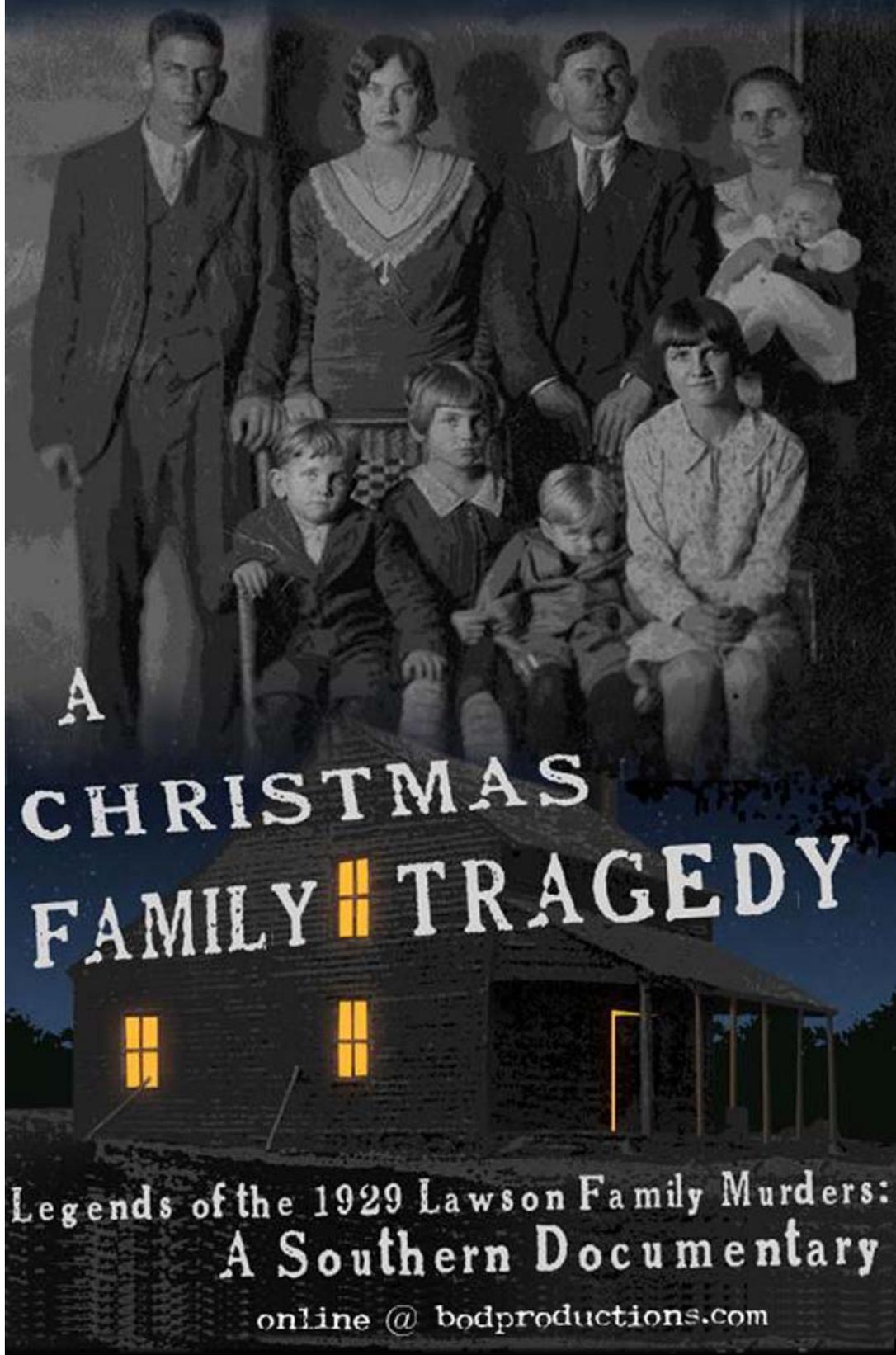


BREAK OF DAWN PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS



A
CHRISTMAS
FAMILY || TRAGEDY

Legends of the 1929 Lawson Family Murders:
A Southern Documentary

online @ bodproductions.com

A Christmas Family Tragedy Legends of the 1929 Lawson Family Murders A Southern Documentary

Now on DVD at www.bodproductions.com is the new film by Break of Dawn Productions, 'A Christmas Family Tragedy', a feature length historic true crime documentary about the notorious Lawson Family Massacre of Christmas Day 1929 in Stokes County, NC, deep in the heart of Mayberry country. The film explores the legends and myths surrounding the murders, and what they mean to the remaining family and community now.

On Christmas Day, 1929, a widely respected, affluent tobacco farmer named Charlie Lawson brutally murdered his wife, 6 of his 7 children, and then himself; his eldest son, Arthur, aged 18, was sent to the store to buy more shotgun shells just before the violence broke out. Never so much a 'who-dunnit' as a resounding 'Why?!', this mystery has inspired classic bluegrass murder ballads, ghost stories, family feuds, and overcapacity crowds for annual retellings of the story.

The ballad is well known by many bluegrass bands, and brought the story to new areas of Appalachia and to new generations. Originally penned in 1930 by the Carolina Buddies after the Christmas Day murders of the Lawson Family of Stokes County, NC, this classic murder ballad was a top 5 hit for Columbia that year and has been covered by such bluegrass heavy weights as the Stanley Brothers and Doc Watson, and now by legendary North Carolina singer Katharine Whalen. In addition, the film features a first time recording of an alternate ballad also written at the time, sung as a haunting blues A cappella by Lauren Myers.

But a heritage of silence follows the mystery, often with deadly consequences, in a bucolic rural community unable to come to terms with its darker side. The ballad used to be sung as a warning to the wives and kids in this area to behave or else; now it is starting to be sung as a warning to abusers, to where their malevolent actions could lead.

To demonstrate our commitment to using history as a tool to build a better future, we're setting aside a healthy percentage of the profits of this film to benefit local domestic violence organizations, beginning with Stokes Family Violence Services, where we look to get the county's first battered women's shelter over the hump and into operation before the beginning of the next school year.

The film is available on DVD at www.bodproductions.com and is currently on tour for special screenings throughout the south. For more information on screenings, the film, or the tragedy, visit the website or contact Eric Calhoun at eric.2birds1stone@gmail.com

Below is what some of the reviewers and audience have had to say about our film followed by bullet pointed info, interview subjects of possible interest, etc.

CrimeBlog Review

“The filmmakers’ approach was pitch-perfect in how they incorporated those local voices in their work... Eric Calhoun and Matt Hodges succeeded in creating a narrative that dug into this viewer’s brain and held on. Hodges, a native of the area where the Lawson murders occurred, has been haunted by the crime since he was a child — this becomes clear in the documentary.

His success was in passing that sense of being haunted on to strangers like me, who have never been through Stokes County... A visual “murder ballad” of sorts. The rhyme scheme slightly off, the details of the murder re-arranged... but the tune and the story combine to hang on, and they trail you into sleep. The tune and the distinctive lonely call of the singer’s voice linger later, and they make you return, sad, and filled with morbid wonder.”

The Mountain Times

“a wonderful treasure trove of southern oral history”

Graffiti Magazine

“No other film I have ever seen shows the long-term influence of domestic violence as well as this one does...I hope that people around the country and world will watch this film to the very end, and learn that contrary to what Hollywood horror movies, TV, and the press preach, domestic violence is not exciting but tragic.”

Crime Scene Blog

“[A Christmas Family Tragedy](#) is a well-made documentary which tells the haunting tale of a family who most likely had many secrets kept inside their little farm house, secrets which may have led to the terrible events of that day. As the documentary points out, this case offers a lesson that domestic violence is not new, and needs to be identified and handled as quickly as possibly to prevent further such tragedies.”

Quotes on Message Boards: Audience Reactions

“The movie was everything i expected and more. It even brought some of the guests i had with me to tears.”

“All I know is that now the song alone doesn't do the story justice, the dvd, however, does. For anyone who hasn't seen it yet and wants to know more you must see this.”

“I really like the "homegrown" feeling of the production. The narration doesn't sound overly dramatic, but rather honest and real. I thought the ideas were grouped well and laid out pristinely--not like a rigid outline, but like a well-rehearsed thought.

I saw heads nodding in agreement with words on the screen. I heard the subtle, "uh-huh" and long, deep sighs that all silently scream acknowledgement. Those people had--in one way or another--lived through at least some of what they'd seen on the screen.”

“I just wanted to say that I watched the film last night (12/26) with several family members and friends. I thought that the doc was very well done. Getting that many people to feel comfortable being interviewed is no small feat, but you guys pulled it off. And the re-creations were very well done.”

“I am glad someone had the courage to bring front and center a rapidly growing problem in small communities all across america. The poem at the end my daughter wrote before her murder in 2004, but could you not see that Charlie's oldest daughter might have been praying for the same thing all those years ago?”

-Sharon Norman, Mother of Melissa Tittle, 2004 Stokes County DV Homicide Victim

Break of Dawn Productions

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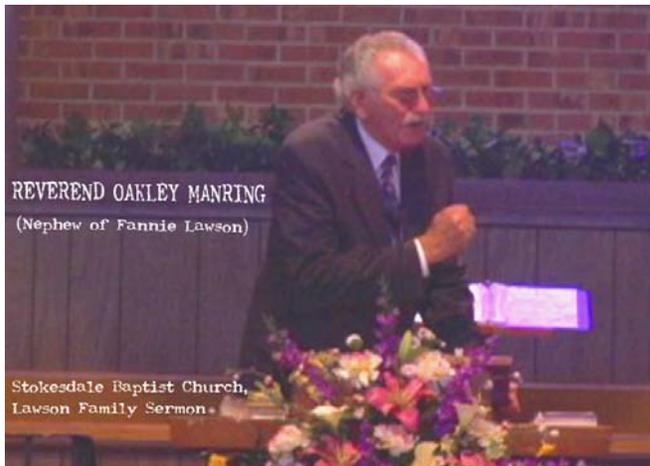
United States telephone: 919-623-5448

Website Address: www.bodproductions.com

Information about who we are and how to reach us.

- Past work includes producing The Tontine, a 28min adaptation of a Clive Barker property approved by Mr. Barker that's currently moving through the studios.
- ACFT is a Southern Documentary about the legends of the 1929 Lawson Family Massacre
- Affluent tobacco farmer brutally murders his wife, 6 of 7 children and himself
- Christmas Day 1929, 3 months after the stock market crash that kickstarted the great depression
- The documentary explores the legends and myths surrounding the murders in the heart of "Mayberry Country"; Stokes County North Carolina,
- There are conflicting stories as to Charlie's motives, ranging from a blow to the head from a pickaxe, and financial stress to a coverup for an incestuous molestation that resulted in his eldest daughter's rumored pregnancy
- This legend has inspired classic bluegrass ballads, house tours that lured over half a million people from all over the nation throughout the great depression through it's doors at a quarter a head, numerous ghost stories spreading as far as 6 miles upstream, family feuds over Charlie's presumed guilt and possible motive(s), and over capacity crowds for multimedia presentations retelling the story.
- Stories of the ballads include how it served once as a warning to families to behave or else from abusers and has now been subverted as a warning to abusers of the longstanding consequences of their inevitable actions, a la the Dixie Chicks' Earl's In the Trunk and the fact that alongside the legendary classic 'Ballad of the Murder of the Lawson Family', we also discovered the long lost 'Song of the Lawsons' and resurrected it with an amazing a capella rendition that's moved Many to tears since it's release.
- It also brings the current relevance and importance of the story to the fore with an interview of the mother of a 2004 DV Homicide victim, killed less than 5 miles from the Lawson's old home and the 2 DV caseworkers in the county fighting against an overwhelming epidemic w/ limited resources.
- A percentage of the profits will benefit local domestic violence organizations, beginning with Stokes County Family Violence Services, where we hope to help build the first womens shelter.
- Break of Dawn Productions is committed to using history as a tool to build a better future for families in rural areas.
- This film is available on DVD at our website www.bodproductions.com and is currently on tour for special screenings throughtout the south. For more information on screenings, the film, or the tragedy, visit our website or Contact
- Eric Calhoun @ eric.2birds1stone@gmail.com 919 623 5448 (Business Director)
- Matt Hodges @ matt.2birds1stone@gmail.com 336 201 2040 (Creative Director)
- Mary Conroy @ maryc@triad.rr.com 336-945-2465 (to set up screenings Western NC or Website Info)
- Amy Schmidt @ amy.breakofdawn@gmail.com 919 424 6106 (to set up screenings in Eastern NC, Virginia and work with Domestic Violence Contacts)

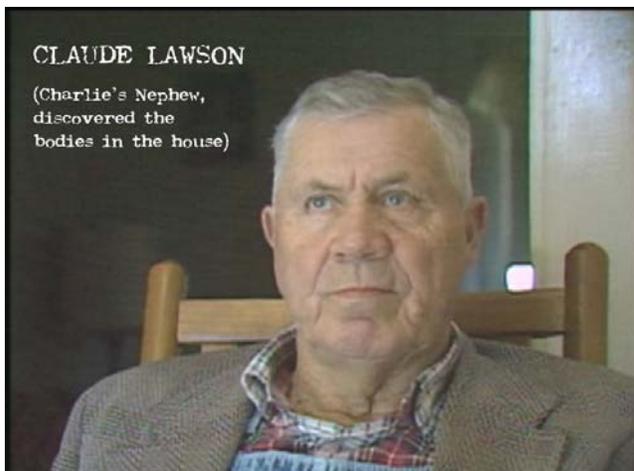
Press Photos From the Film



Rev. Oakley Manring delivers a stirring sermon on the tragedy 77 years later.



“A Christmas Family Tragedy” features interviews with many of the family and friends closest to the tragic murders of Christmas Day, 1929.



Press Photos From the Film



Arthur Lawson (Billy Milbeck) confronts his father, Charlie (Martin Henderson)



Charlie Lawson (Martin Henderson) leaves the bodies of his daughters in the barn



Charlie Lawson (Martin Henderson) prepares to gun down his wife, Fannie (Linda Lane)

Press Photos From the Film



To later generations, visiting the Lawson Grave at night became part of the initiation rites of area clubs and organizations



The Filmmakers on Location in Stokes County, NC



For electronic copies of photos, contact Eric Calhoun at (919) 623-5448 or at eric.2birds1stone@gmail.com