



# Lay This Body Down: The 1921 Murders of Eleven Plantation Slaves

*Gregory A. Freeman*

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The John S. Williams plantation in Georgia was operated largely with the labor of slaves—and this was in 1921, 56 years after the Civil War. Williams was not alone in using “peons,” but his reaction to a federal investigation was almost unbelievable: he decided to destroy the evidence. Enlisting the aid of his trusted black farm boss, Clyde Manning, he began methodically killing his slaves. As this true story unfolds, each detail seems more shocking, and surprises continue in the aftermath, with a sensational trial galvanizing the nation and marking a turning point in the treatment of black Americans.



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