

After 45 hours, jury split on poor farm

Looking from page A1

Breeden, Indian Creek; and Lewis Harrell, Richland.

Robert Miller, Semple's attorney, opened the defense with a endorsement of the man's character and the observation that he had done the best he could with the money allowed him for the farm. In fact, said Miller, only 11 of the 26 residents were able to take care of themselves, the others being idiots and epileptics. Several witnesses speculated as to the number of staff required to take care of the helpless ones.

A member of the grand jury testified that he had seen a black snake whip hanging on the wall at the farm, the implication being that Semple had used it on the inmates. One of them told the jury the superintendent had threatened "Granny" Scott with the whip

while saying her prayers.

Neighbors of the farm who had dropped by from time to time said they had seen nothing amiss, and the cook gave testimony to the effect that residents received bread and butter, molasses and coffee for breakfast and meat and two vegetables for dinner.

A physician who had made many calls at the farm testified "the building was as clean as could possibly be expected and the food was good."

Finally, Semple, himself, took the stand. He said, "I was employed by the commissioners to superintend the poor asylum and was furnished a hired hand to help look after the farm, but not the inmates. We raised a crop this year of 350 bushels of wheat, 350 of oats, 160 of Irish potatoes, 22 of sweet potatoes, and garden truck of cabbage, beets, turnips and the like." He also said the place was scrubbed with hot

water every two weeks and swept every day.

Semple explained that the furnace had no "regulator" on it, and until the really cold weather, heat was provided with fireplaces. He added, "I always try to keep the building ventilated, but the inmates always put the windows down as soon as my back is turned."

The jury retired to come up with a verdict and deliberated some 45 hours. According to the *Telephone*, the first ballot was nine for conviction and three for acquittal. The men were up all night wrestling with the decision and had a second ballot, which was seven for conviction and five against. The final one was evenly split and the judge dismissed them.

In its final appraisal of the trial, the *Telephone* reported, "They (the jury) were equally divided politically, but in the balloting the political faith of the jurors cut no figure."