

The Alabama Jury Verdict Reporter

The Most Current and Complete Summary of Alabama Jury Verdicts

February, 2026

Statewide Jury Verdict Coverage - Published Monthly

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Alabama's Jury Verdict Reporter Since 2001

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Civil Jury Verdicts

Complete and timely coverage of civil jury verdicts in Alabama including circuit, presiding judge, parties, case number, attorneys and results.

RICO/Defamation - An

Alabama-based coal giant with worldwide operations alleged it was defamed by a crusading human rights lawyer's allegations the company abused and murdered workers at a mine in Columbia who had sought to organize, the plaintiff later filing a second suit that alleged the lawyer engaged in RICO violations by fabricating evidence against the company – the company prevailed on all counts and took damages of \$120,000,000 of which \$68,000,000 million (the RICO portion) are subject to being trebled for a total of \$256,000,000

Drummond Company, Inc. v.

Collingsworth et al,

2:11-3695 (Defamation)

2:15-506 (RICO)

Plaintiff: H. Thomas B. Wells, Benjamin T. Presley, William A. Davis, III, Kamryn G. Carpenter, Laura Alice Hillhouse and J. Joseph Stipp, *Starnes Davies Florie*, Birmingham and Sara E. Kropf, *Kropf Moseley Schmitt*, Washington, D.C.

Defense: J. Chase Bryan and Shauncey H. Ridgeway, Jackson, MS and Priscilla K. Williams, Richard E. Smith and Kenneth O. Simon, Birmingham, all of *Christian & Small*
Verdict: \$120,000,000

Federal: **Birmingham**, 1-15-26

Judge: R. David Proctor

This is the unusual civil litigation matter that stretched over almost a quarter-century and even after all that time, it's far from over.

Drummond Company is a Birmingham, AL based coal giant with worldwide operations. That includes operating a coal mine in Columbia. A Washington, D.C. lawyer, Terrence Collingsworth, who

specializes in human rights law and was formerly with the *Conrad & Scherer* law firm from Fort Lauderdale, FL, filed an Alien Tort Statute Act against Drummond in 2002. It alleged the company was behind the murders of three union organizers in Columbia.

That case (*Romero v. Drummond*, 2:03-575 in federal court in Birmingham) came to trial in 2007. Drummond prevailed on all three claims and a defense judgment was entered. The plaintiffs took an appeal. The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed in December of 2008. That ended that case. Those plaintiffs were represented at trial by Collingsworth as well as Robert F. Childs, Jr. of *Wiggins Childs*, Birmingham. Drummond's counsel included William A. Davis, II of the *Starnes Davies Florie* in Birmingham as well as William Jeffress, *Baker Botts*, Washington, D.C. Judge Karon O. Bowdre presided.

Thereafter Drummond alleged that Collingsworth sent a series of letters and had radio interviews that implicated Drummond in human rights abuses. That included letters to Dutch officials and Japanese partners of Drummond. Drummond filed suit against Collingsworth and other defendants in 2011 (2:11-3695) in Birmingham. Drummond denied it had engaged in human rights abuses and asserted it was defamed by the heinous allegations. This was ordinary state-law defamation.

During the course of discovery in the defamation case, Drummond learned that Collingsworth had paid witnesses in Columbia. The company believed this was done to secure false

Historical Alabama Verdict

Railroad Negligence - Flagman at a railroad suffered fatal injuries when while inspecting a "hot box" on a moving train, he struck a cattle guard

Barnett v. Northern Alabama Railroad

Verdict: \$25,000 for plaintiff

Circuit: **Franklin**

Judge: Ed B. Almon

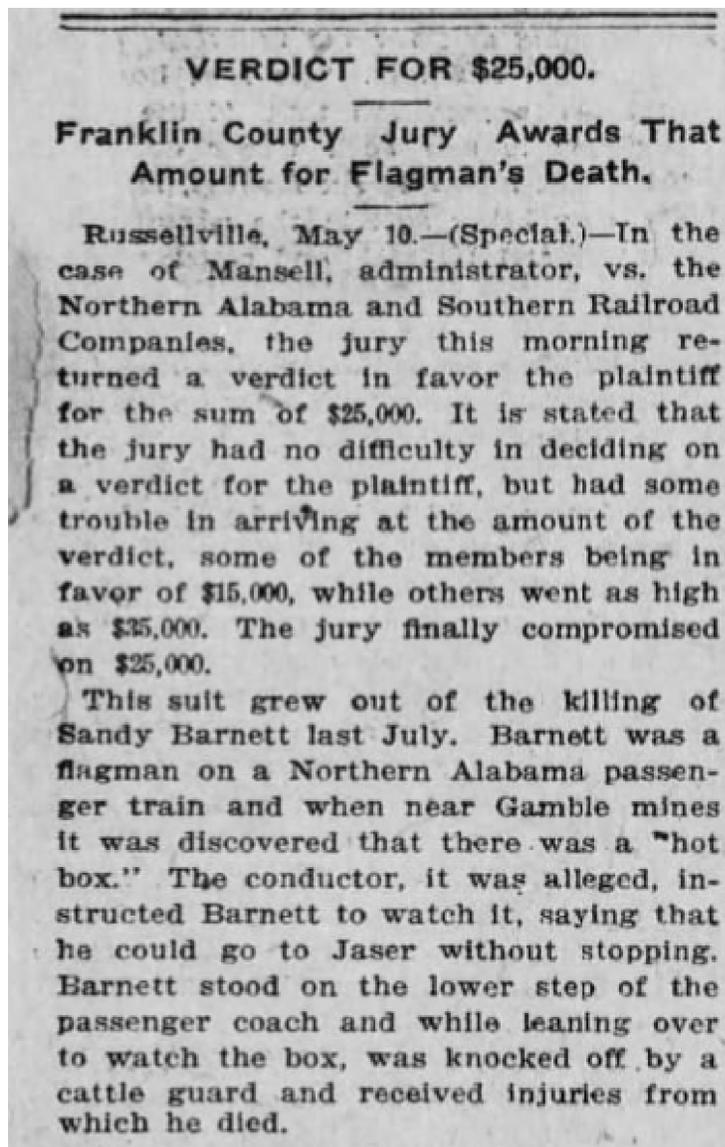
Date: May 9, 1901

William "Sandy" Barnett was working as a flagman for the Northern Alabama Railroad on 8-29-00. The train was headed to Jasper near the Gamble mines when the train's conductor asked him to check a hot box. What is a hot box? That's an overheated axle on a rail car. The conductor was eager to see if the problem could be resolved by having Barnett take a look rather than bringing the train to a complete stop. If it came to a stop, the train would have been late to Jasper.

The car in question was a passenger coach and the last one on this train. Barnett, who described as fine young man, descended to the coach's lower step to take a look. He leaned out of the train that was traveling at 25 mph. What Barnett didn't appreciate was an approaching cattle guard. He struck it as the train passed. Barnett suffered fatal injuries and died a few days later.

Barnett's estate sued the railroad and alleged common law negligence. The case was tried less than a year later in Russellville. The jury considered verdicts ranging from \$15,000 to \$35,000 before settling on \$25,000. That would be almost \$1,000,000 in today dollars. The presiding judge was Ed B. Almon who would later serve nine terms in Congress. It is not clear which lawyers tried the case.

The railroad moved for a new trial which was denied. It took a further



appeal. The Alabama Supreme Court reversed in 1903. In what would be considered quite antiquated today, the court decided that in a master-servant claim, the servant could not pursue a claim based on the negligence of a fellow servant as this an assumed risk of employment. See *Northern Alabama Railroad v. Mansell*, 36 So. 459 (1903).

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