

THE BLOODY RED RIVER: LYNCHING AND RACIAL VIOLENCE IN
NORTHEAST TEXAS, 1890-1930

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THE BLOODY RED RIVER: LYNCHING AND RACIAL VIOLENCE IN
NORTHEAST TEXAS, 1890-1930

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CHAPTER I

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND INTRODUCTION

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the United States underwent vast transformations. This was especially in the South where, in the wake of Emancipation, new economic, social, and political relationships emerged between blacks and whites. Industrialization, urbanization, modernization, and reform were the dominant themes of post-Reconstruction America. Underneath the façade of achievement however, rested the dark underbelly of the American past. Between 1890 and 1930, race relations reached a particularly difficult and discouraging point. African-Americans were disenfranchised, racially segregated, and institutionally denied basic human rights. Black resistance to forced second-class citizenship often resulted in outbursts of lynching and racial violence. From the late 19th century to the present, African-American activists, sociologists, and historians struggled to explain Americans' historical penchant for vigilante violence.

Dating back to the revolutionary period, lynch mobs punished alleged criminals and social pariahs of all races and genders. The origins of lynching in the U.S. are inconclusive, but it is commonly believed that lynching in the United States began in Virginia during the American Revolution. William and Charles Lynch set up makeshift courts and dispensed vigilante justice against Tories in the region. These courts had an air of legality, closely mirrored institutionalized court systems, and punished criminals

quickly. The Sons of Liberty and other Revolutionary groups also resorted to tar-and-feathering as a means of exposing, humiliating, and punishing American colonists who supported the British crown.¹

Dependence on “vigilante justice” spread as the United States expanded westward in pursuit of Manifest Destiny. When Americans encroached on “unsettled” land outside the plausible jurisdiction of institutional law and order on the eastern seaboard, lynching became the preferred method of extralegal punishment. As historian Christopher Waldrep demonstrates, Americans in the North, South, and West espoused the tenets of vigilante violence as long as it fit a specific script. Legitimate mobs, according to the popularly supported ideal, represented the will of the community, protected women, and operated in places without effective courts. This justification remained pervasive throughout the history of lynching.²

From the 1890s through the 1930s, lynching became increasingly racialized and southern. Lynch mobs increasingly targeted black victims, while the number of white victims fell off dramatically because the growing effectiveness of courts convinced many whites that extralegal violence was no longer necessary to punish white criminals. However, the view that blacks were increasingly less and less likely to be controlled by the same courts became a dominant viewpoint held by many southern whites that resulted in the continued use of lynching against blacks.³ According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, mobs lynched 2,522 African-Americans and 702

¹ Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 13-25.

² *Ibid.*, 49-66.

³ William D. Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture: Violence and Vigilantism in Central Texas, 1836-1916* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 132-133.

whites between 1889 and 1918.⁴ As the number of black lynch mob victims skyrocketed, lynching became concentrated in the southern states because most of the nation's black population resided there. From 1889 to 1918, mobs in former Confederate states lynched 2,961 people, comprising 91% of total lynch victims.⁵ According to historian Stephen Kantrowitz, by 1900, vigilante violence against blacks "had become a regular feature of Southern life."⁶

Reported lynchings reached a zenith in the late 1880s and early 1890s. To justify the sharp increase in the number of extralegal executions in the South, defenders of lynching and vigilante violence elucidated the motivations behind mob violence. The blame, pro-lynchers argued, lay not with the mob itself, but instead fell on the retrogressive black population and the inability of the local legal system to protect their respective communities from criminals. In the late-nineteenth century, many whites believed the black race was headed towards extinction and until the ultimate extinction, blacks would degenerate morally, physically, and economically.⁷ It is in this context that criminal accusations exploded as white communities justified their violent treatment of African-Americans with trumped up rape charges and other accusations of black criminality.⁸

As Southerners utilized lynching with more extreme barbarity and characterized blacks as brutish monsters, a backlash erupted from black activists. These activists

⁴ NAACP, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States: 1889-1918* (New York: NAACP, 1919), 39.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶ Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman & the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 162.

⁷ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 258.

⁸ For an example of a typical southern defender of lynching see J. M. Early, *An Eye for an Eye or the Fiend and the Fagot: An Unvarnished Account of the Burning of Henry Smith at Paris, Texas, February 1, 1883, and the Reason he was Tortured* (Paris, TX: Marshall's Printing House, 1893).

emerged in an era of legalized segregation and disenfranchisement throughout the South. They exposed the myths and brutality embodied in lynching as part of a larger civil rights agenda. Early civil rights activists focused their initial efforts at eliminating lynching in the United States. Many white Americans believed the accusation of rape justified lynching; however, from the 1890s to the 1930s, activists such as Ida Wells and Walter White debunked early myths surrounding such beliefs. Wells began her attack on lynching in 1892 and disputed rape allegations as justification for mob violence. She stated, "Somebody must show that the Afro-American race is more sinned against than sinning." She also suggested that white women were having consensual sexual relationships with black men, and the rape accusations were nothing more than an attempt by white men to cover up these interracial relationships. Through thorough investigation of the causes behind many lynchings, Wells concluded that accusations of rape accounted for only one-third of all the reported lynchings.⁹ Her findings challenged the dominant argument in support of lynching that painted black lynch victims as rapacious and began the major challenge to lynching in the United States.

Picking up where Wells left off, Walter White delved deeper into the causes of southern lynchings. White was a very light-skinned black man who worked as Field Secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. His light complexion allowed him to penetrate southern white communities and gain a better understanding of southern white lynch mobs than his darker colleagues. In his examination of lynching, *Rope and Faggot*, White shifted the focus on lynching from the black community to the white community. He argued against the notion that whites utilized lynching to discourage black criminal acts and claimed that lynching represented

⁹ Wells, *On Lynchings*, 25, 33, 40.

a reaction by the white community against black economic progress. Activists, such as White, who arose from the onslaught of segregation and discrimination did, much to expand the understanding of lynching; however, their studies focused specifically on debunking myths and uplifting a race.¹⁰

In the 1920s and 1930s, the number of lynchings decreased and activists focused their attention on the fight to end segregation. Sociologists explored the complexities of lynching with a more scholarly approach than the previous pro-lynching and anti-lynching authors did. Conversely, these scholars were less interested in debunking myths and instead sought an understanding of the culture that produced and condoned mob violence. Arthur Raper's seminal work, *The Tragedy of Lynching*, first tackled this challenge in 1933 and remains the most prominent book of the sociological school. Raper placed the blame for the widespread acceptance of lynching on the insufficient education system in the South. He viewed mob violence as more than a response to outward circumstances, arguing instead that it reflected deep-rooted prejudices and racial hatred of African-Americans, which the poor educational system in the South reinforced. Raper claimed the southern tendency towards racial hatred and mob violence stemmed "from within rather than from without. A mob is a mob, not because of what it does, but because of what it is."¹¹

Lynchings declined to minimal numbers in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, and sociologists focused their efforts elsewhere. Seemingly content with Raper's 1933 conclusions, historians paid scant attention to the topic. C.Vann Woodward's *Origins of the New South*, published in 1951, illustrates their lack of interest. In the 515 page book,

¹⁰ White, *Rope and Faggot*, 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

Woodward devoted less than two pages to lynching. He broached the topic as an introduction to a larger discussion of the Atlanta Compromise and race relations in the 1890s and early 1900s. He simply articulated that by 1900 lynching became a “southern and racial phenomenon.”¹²

Scholarly interest in the history of American violence increased in the 1960s and 1970s in response to the student protests, urban riots, and the Civil Rights Movement.¹³ Initially, historians examined lynching as lesser parts of larger narratives or biographies. George Tindall’s *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945*, published in 1967, devoted ten pages to lynching as part of his larger discussion of the establishment of Jim Crow.¹⁴ He suggests that lynching became the focal point of early black activism because, “lynching afforded Negroes one major issue with which to pierce the veil of hostility and evasion that shrouded their condition.”¹⁵

Anti-lynching activism became the focus of the next major historical work to discuss lynching as part of a larger narrative. Historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall published *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign against Lynching* in 1979. Hall discussed lynching as part of the larger story of anti-lynching activism by southern women. She examined the role of lynching as “an instrument of social discipline” that reinforced proper class and caste roles for whites and blacks.¹⁶ Hall argued that lynching diminished black assertiveness and also entrapped white women in a

¹² C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 351-352.

¹³ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “Introduction,” in *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 10.

¹⁴ Tindall’s book was part of the same series that published Woodward’s *Origins of the New South* 16 years earlier. See George Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 170-180.

¹⁵ Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, 172.

¹⁶ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 137.

state of dependence on or subordination to white men by promoting fear of black men.¹⁷

Historians also tackled the issue of racial violence as part of their larger discussions on the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan used violence much like other white southern proponents of Jim Crow, as a means of enforcing social mores and punishing pariahs. The Reconstruction Klan of the 1860s and the Klan of the 1920s shared many similarities. One overarching theme was, as previously stated, the use of violence as a means of maintaining social, racial, and gender customs. In her examination of the Klan in the 1920s in *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, Nancy MacLean argued that “Klan culture generated a propensity to vigilantism... Vigilante violence was the concentrated expression of that culture, of the brutal determination to maintain inherited hierarchies of race, class, and gender.”¹⁸

Historians also discussed racial violence as part of the larger story of Jim Crow. Most significant to this scholarship is Leon Litwack’s *Trouble in Mind*. Litwack demonstrated how instrumental violence was, as either a threat or reality, in the making and maintenance of Jim Crow. In his chapter devoted specifically to lynching, he argued that southern whites used lynching to “emphasize the limits of black freedom.” He also illustrated how lynching, similar to fears of slave revolts in the antebellum period, was an expression of white fear and uncertainty that mass black resistance to white suppression always festered under the surface.¹⁹

When historians finally focused specifically on lynching, they took two different approaches. One approach was the monograph that focused on a single lynching as a case

¹⁷ Ibid., 149-153.

¹⁸ Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 173.

¹⁹ Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 285, 324.

study and examined the causes behind it in an effort to explain its significance for larger trends. The second approach looked at larger trends in lynching through an examination of multiple lynchings, either across the nation or in various states.

The two most important monographs were published in the 1980s. James McGovern's *Anatomy of a Lynching* examined the lynching of Claude Neal in 1934. McGovern concluded that a "power-dependence relationship" prevailed in societies that condoned lynching.²⁰ Whites, the author posited, were conscious of the inequities of this relationship and because of their "unlimited power over blacks," turned to lynching more frequently because it was understood that members of the mob suffered no repercussions.²¹ Howard Smead's *Blood Justice* focused on the lynching of Mack Charles Parker in 1959. In the wake of the *Brown v. Board* decision, the author argued, southern whites feared that their traditional way of life was under attack by the federal government. This, coupled with the perceived weakness of the local judicial system, culminated in the lynching of the young black man.

Monographs offer rich detail and valuable insights into the causes behind specific acts of mob violence; however, they are limited in scope and inadequately explain larger trends in southern society. George C. Wright's study of mob violence in Kentucky began a trend among historians who looked at lynching over longer periods of time and in larger geographical areas. *Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940* was one of the first major works on lynching. Wright demonstrated that mob violence against blacks did not peak or emerge suddenly in the 1890s, but had roots tracing back to the end of the Civil War. Wright also explained the decline of lynching as a result of "legal lynchings." In other

²⁰ James R. McGovern, *Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 156.

²¹ McGovern, *Anatomy of a Lynching*, 151.

words, lynchings declined as the number of blacks legally executed by the state increased. Although formal legal procedures were followed, the influence of the mob over the court and the inability of blacks to obtain any semblance of a fair trial resulted in nothing more than legal lynchings. In his conclusion, Wright argued that throughout the period under study, whites consistently turned to mob violence, lynchings, and legal lynchings “to ensure that Afro-Americans knew ‘their place’ and remained at the bottom of society.”²²

Instead of looking at lynching as an undifferentiated type of violence, in the 1990s historians began exploring the complex nature of lynching as a phenomenon rooted in economics. In *Lynching in the New South*, Fitzhugh Brundage argues, “No single model of lynching can describe adequately the great differences in size, organization, and motivation that distinguished mobs.”²³ In his comparative study of lynching in Virginia and Georgia, he demonstrated the variations in lynching over time and across geographical regions. Regional variations and distinctions in the South affected the incentive to lynch. Because mobs varied in size, organization, motivation, and several other factors, simple explanations are inadequate. Despite the variations, however, Brundage found that tense labor relations and economic changes characterized areas with large numbers of lynchings.

Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck took similar approaches and came to similar conclusions. Examining lynching in ten southern states from 1882 to 1930, Tolnay and Beck’s study quantitatively tested many purported causes of mob violence, concluding

²² George C. Wright, *Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940: Lynchings, Mob Rule, and “Legal Lynchings”* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 13.

²³ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 18.

that the driving force behind southern mob violence was economics. Several other factors, including political and social competition, contributed to the outburst of mob violence in the late 18th and early 19th century, but Tolnay and Beck concluded that “Economic forces were clearly the most important undercurrent that carried southern society to such outrageous extremes of brutality.” These forces contributed to the increase of mob violence in the period under study, but, conversely, also contributed to the decline of mob violence in this period. This, Tolnay and Beck argued, was because the loss of cheap labor during the Great Migration threatened the economic well-being of southern planters and other elites.²⁴

Recent scholarship has turned away from the emphasis on socioeconomic causes behind lynching and examines the culture of violence that produced lynching. Michael Pfeifer’s *Rough Justice* explores the “social and ideological underpinnings of mob violence.”²⁵ He determined that the deep cultural roots of vigilante violence in the West, Midwest, and South suggests that lynching represented a clash between an old American frontier culture that supported vigilante violence as a means of community protection and a Northeastern, middle-class law and order ideology that supported “an abstract, rational, detached and antiseptic legal process.”²⁶

William Carrigan comes to comparable conclusions in his study of central Texas. In *Making of a Lynching Culture*, he argues vigilante violence had deep roots in the historical memory of central Texans and a “culture of violence...nourished and endured”

²⁴ Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 257, 221.

²⁵ Michael J. Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

for decades.²⁷ This culture of violence began as soon as the first white settlers migrated to the region and utilized vigilante violence to subdue Indians, Mexicans, and freedmen. Over the decades, the historical memory of the region regarded these acts of vigilante violence as heroic. As this cultural memory coalesced with an increasingly negative view of blacks in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, lynching became championed as an efficacious method of punishment for black pariahs that eventually culminated in the 1916 lynching of Jesse Washington in Waco, Texas.

Much less prominent in lynching scholarship has been an examination of why lynching declined. That is not to say that historians have not explained the demise of lynching completely. In many major works on lynching, a brief discussion, usually in one of the last chapters or the epilogue, examines the myriad forces that combated lynching. However, many of these examinations echo each other and fail to offer a more in-depth explanation.

Anti-lynching activist Walter White suggested that lynching declined because of various national trends. White credits the growth of black newspapers and the Northern white press that combated the pro-lynching justifications and helped change national perceptions of lynching. He also attributed the decline of lynching to organizations such as the NAACP and the Commission on Interracial Cooperation and their efforts to decrease racial tensions and highlight the negative aspects inherent in lynching. The most important factor that contributed to the decline of lynching, White argues, was the Great Migration and “increasing resistance by Negroes to mob attacks.”²⁸

Those historians who argued that economic factors promoted lynching also

²⁷ Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture*, 3.

²⁸ White, *Rope and Faggot*, 175-189.

concluded that economic factors contributed to the demise of lynching. Fitzhugh Brundage, in his examination of Virginia and Georgia, suggests lynching declined because the efforts of anti-lynching activists such as Jessie Daniel Ames and changes in the southern economy, including mechanization, “delivered the decisive blows to the tradition of mob violence.”²⁹ Tolnay and Beck echoed Walter White’s claim that the Great Migration was the main factor that prompted the end of lynching. As more and more African-Americans fled rural counties in the South, white elites feared the loss of cheap labor and, according to Tolnay and Beck, “realize[d] that mob violence was a luxury that southern society could no longer afford.”³⁰

Historians who followed the cultural model demonstrated factors outside of the economy that precipitated the decline of lynching. Michael Pfeifer suggested that lynching declined as an increasing number of Americans moved into the middle class and disavowed the traditional method of community, vigilante punishment that predominated the frontier and the South. Instead, the growing middle-class supported a notion of “a legal order that eschewed the social chaos and unseemliness of lynching,” but only because the prevalence of Jim Crow, disenfranchisement, and a legal system that increasingly sentenced pariahs and alleged criminals to death ensured that traditional social and racial hierarchies would remain firmly in place.³¹

Most of these studies, however, focus on larger national trends and there has been scant attention given to how these larger national or state trends have affected lynching at the local level. It is in this vein that “The Bloody Red River” contributes to the existing historiography. This thesis utilizes both the case-study model and the regional study

²⁹ Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 245.

³⁰ Tolnay and Beck, *Festival of Violence*, 221.

³¹ Pfeifer, *Rough Justice*, 127, 147.

model and examines lynching over time in three different counties in Northeast Texas. It examines the sociocultural and economic factors that contributed to the rise of lynching in each county, but also demonstrates how the larger national trends that contributed to the decline of lynching played out on the local level.

In order to understand the trends that occur at the local level, however, it is essential to understand what was happening in Texas during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. As previously stated, by the 1900s lynching became racialized and southern. Although Texas is in the South, it was largely overlooked by historians examining the region. For example, Tolney and Beck's seminal study of lynching in the South did not even consider Texas. Despite historians' hesitancy to include Texas in larger examinations of the South, the state is in fact very Southern. For example, Texas seceded with the other Confederate states, supported slavery, produced large amounts of cotton, passed Jim Crow laws, disenfranchised blacks, and lynched more African-Americans than all other states except Mississippi and South Carolina. Within the state, East Texas was the region with the most recorded lynchings, the most members of the Ku Klux Klan, the largest population, and is culturally and economically similar to other Deep South states.

Following the end of the Civil War, Texans embraced the ideology of the New South more than any other southern state. They pursued a more diverse economic base and encouraged economic investment, especially in the form of oil extraction and production.³² On the surface, it seemed Texans treated blacks better than most of the southern states in the former Confederacy. For example, Texans offered blacks

³² Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 98.

educational opportunities more so than other southern states. Although these opportunities for blacks in Texas did not equal the opportunities available for whites, Texans provided for black education, especially in the bigger cities. Texans established three times the number of black public high schools than any other former Confederate state despite having the fifth lowest black population among the former rebels.³³ Texans in general pushed for economic progress, while white citizens sought to maintain the racial hierarchy that dominated southern society for decades.

Although most scholarship on lynching in the South shies away from Texas, Texans lynched more than most other states.³⁴ Texas ranked third, behind South Carolina and Mississippi, in total number of people lynched. Texans also participated in some of the most heinous acts of lynching ever recorded. Most notable was the 1916 lynching of Jesse Washington, in which several thousand men, women, and children witnessed the public burning of the young black man. This also helped anti-lynching activists in their crusade against lynching, because the images of the event horrified many Americans. Most lynching scholarship in Texas glosses over northeast Texas and focuses on central Texas because of the notoriety of the lynching of Jesse Washington. Even though the 1916 lynching was indeed an atrocious event, similar burnings occurred with unsettling frequency in Northeast Texas. Further details will be provided of the most infamous example, the 1893 lynching of Henry Smith, but there are numerous other examples that

³³ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 199; Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Total Black Population, 1890" University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 8, 2011).

³⁴ Some examples of scholarship on lynching in Texas include Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture*; Watson, Dwight. "In the Name of Progress and Decency: The Response of Houston's Civic Leaders to the Lynching of Robert Powell in 1928." *The Houston Review* 1, no. 2 (1995): 26-30; Cynthia Skove Nevels, *Lynching to Belong: Claiming Whiteness Through Racial Violence* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007).

illustrate the brutality and prevalence of mob violence in the region.

Despite the prevalence of violence throughout the postbellum period, the region experienced massive economic growth. The northeast Texas economy diversified and grew. The cities of Paris, Marshall, and Texarkana, emerged as the economic focal points of the region. Multiple railroads in the three cities connected northeast Texas to surrounding markets in Kansas City, St. Louis, Memphis, New Orleans, Dallas, and Houston. Access to larger markets brought more industry to the region. Lumber factories, flourmills, cottonseed and food production, banking, and wholesale distribution created a thriving local economy. Cotton farming, however, remained the driving force behind the regional economy. Increased access to markets also helped the cotton industry, but the success of local farmers fluctuated with the price of cotton from the 1870s to the 1930s.³⁵

The region also experienced population growth because of the new economic opportunities. From 1870 to 1930, the population for the region grew from 93,389 to 316,409.³⁶ The region's cities also grew and northeast Texans became increasingly urbanized and middle-class. The total urban population of the region, although still a minority, grew from 40,177 in 1900 to 60,127 by 1930, and comprised nearly twenty percent of the total population.³⁷ During this period of growth and transformation, locals increasingly supported middle-class movements taking place elsewhere in the country, such as the women's movement and increased reliance on the state and federal government to improve their lives.³⁸ By the 1920s, business leaders and a growing

³⁵ Walter L. Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South: Northeast Texas between Reconstruction and the Great Depression* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), xxi, 42, 58-66.

³⁶ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: TOTAL POPULATION, 1870-1930," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 8, 2011).

³⁷ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: Total Urban Population 1900-1930," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 8, 2011).

³⁸ Buenger, *Modern South*, xxiv.

middle class became dominant local political and social leaders in their respective counties.

“The Bloody Red River” examines three northeast Texas counties: Lamar, Harrison, and Bowie. In an earlier study on northeast Texas, historian Walter Buenger briefly discussed lynching in the region. He based his conclusions on two lynchings that occurred in Lamar County in 1893 and 1920 and argued that lynching in the region declined because of a larger process of cultural change that occurred between 1887 and 1930. He briefly mentioned the role economics played in the decline; however, Buenger argued the decline of lynching in the region was indicative of a larger cultural shift that occurred between 1900 and 1920 through which northeast Texans became less concerned with promoting the traditional southern ideals of the Lost Cause and states’ rights. This cultural transformation, he states, acted as the main catalyst to the region’s changing attitudes regarding lynching. Buenger states, “Intense local criticism of lynching in the early 1920s...drastically reduced the practice.”³⁹

This study examines Buenger’s claim that local criticism reduced lynching, and suggests the change resulted from the region’s city leaders’ understanding that lynching threatened their economic potential in the 1920s. The fact that lynchings occurred regularly in the region during the 1910s indicates that the general population accepted, or at least did not condemn, the practice. Significant opposition is not apparent until city leaders, responding to national trends that viewed lynching negatively, became outspoken opponents of the practice. Because of their increased influence in local politics, these men prompted authorities to increasingly protect blacks in custody and attempt to prosecute members of lynch mobs. This study also demonstrates how African-Americans

³⁹ Ibid., xxv.

in the region contributed to the decline of lynching through migration, organization, and armed self-defense. Utilizing a fusion of the socioeconomic paradigm and the cultural approach, this study examines the deep cultural roots of mob violence in the three counties and argues socioeconomic factors and black resistance to lynching and racial violence encouraged the change in county leaders' view of lynching, which brought about the decline in the prevalence of mob violence.⁴⁰

Each county had a rich history of violence. During the antebellum period northeast Texans relied on vigilante violence to protect their communities from bandits, as in the Regulator Moderator War. A group called the Regulators formed to prevent cattle rustling in Harrison County because the courts failed to bring thieves to justice. A group called the Moderators formed to counter the Regulators. Both of these vigilante groups worked outside of proper legal avenues to enforce order where the courts failed and many locals supported either the Regulators or the Moderators. Texans in the region also controlled a sizeable slave population through violence and vigilance committees. Following the Civil War and throughout Reconstruction, white Texans in the region rebelled against military occupation and the federal government's attempt to promote black equality. They not only stymied the federal government's efforts in the region, but also reclaimed control of local government through violent intimidation of freedmen and their supporters. After "Redemption" racial violence continued, but it increased to epic proportions throughout the 1890s to the 1920s. Lynch mobs sometimes targeted local whites, but they increasingly reserved lynching for unruly blacks. During the 1890s, local city leaders espoused the tenets of mob violence, presenting it as necessary to ensure the safety of the local populous from criminals because of the ineffective court system.

⁴⁰ Ibid., xxv.

In each of the counties studied, lynching took on varied characteristics. Mob sizes varied from small mobs that exacted revenge against social miscreants, to posses that consisted of several hundred people and operated on a quasi-legal level, and finally to mass mobs that numbered anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand participants and punished victims with extreme, ritualistic violence. Victims also varied. The overwhelming majority of lynch mob victims were black men; however, on occasion northeast Texans lynched black women and white men. Finally, local blacks participated in a lynch mob on at least one occasion to punish social deviants of their own race. Thus, a simple explanation for why lynching declined would be inaccurate. Brundage demonstrated that no single model could explain the rise of lynching; similarly, no single overarching model can accurately explain why lynching declined in individual locales. However, it is evident that prominent city leaders, reacting to changing national perceptions, and local blacks' resistance played a decisive role in the decline of lynching in the three counties under study.⁴¹

County leaders' view of lynching changed between 1890 and the 1920s. In the early 1890s, county leaders repeatedly came out in support of mob violence. Some published books or wrote editorials in support or participated in the lynching. With the support of most locals, mob violence remained a persistent threat to blacks throughout the late 19th and early 20th century. By the 1920s, however, county leaders' view of lynching changed from acceptance to condemnation. Mob violence began to threaten the economic potential, social standing, and political power of local elites. Thus, local elites condemned mob violence, brought suspected mob members to trial, and voted against local and state politicians who did not oppose mob violence. Studying city leaders'

⁴¹ Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 19.

response to lynching is important because, as W. E. B. DuBois stated in 1903, “So long as the best elements of a community do not feel in duty bound to protect and train and care for the weaker members of their group, they leave them to be preyed upon.”⁴² The change in local perception of lynching, therefore, can best be attributed to the actions of local elites who, acting in their own best interest, condemned mob violence.

⁴² W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003), 122.

CHAPTER II

PARIS IS BURNING: LYNCHING AND RACIAL VIOLENCE IN LAMAR COUNTY, 1890-1920

The headlines “SCORCHED WITH IRONS AND THEN BURNED ON THE SCAFFOLD” and “ANGRY MOB BURNS TWO AT STAKE IN PARIS” that appeared in the *Marshall Evening Messenger* and the *Chicago Defender*, respectively, flashed across the nation following the burning of one black citizen of Paris, Texas, on January 31, 1893, and two black men on July 6, 1920. Whites in Lamar County acted aggressively towards local blacks, clinging to antebellum notions of black subordination even as economic and demographic changes from the end of the Civil War through the first decades of the twentieth century transformed the county. The county seat of Paris became a major railroad hub and by the turn of the century it was one of the region’s most important cities. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the city was an archetype of the New South. In spite of the outward appearance of modernization, racial violence plagued the city between 1890 and 1920. Local whites reinforced white supremacy and black subordination in public displays of white authority. Lynching demonstrated this authority in the most violent way and was a persistent aspect of race relations in Lamar County. However, a change in national perceptions of lynching following World War I and the mass migration of local blacks following the notorious

lynching in 1920 caused city leaders to move from acceptance of mob violence to condemnation of it.¹

The history of escalating racial violence in Lamar County dates back to the antebellum era. During the Civil War, a lynch mob murdered a slave named Rube. Allegedly, according to the *Dallas Morning News*, “five hundred people assembled and Rube was tied to a tree, rails were piled around him, set on fire and he slowly burned to death.”² This suggests that prior to emancipation, whites in the county were willing to go to extreme lengths to eliminate perceived threats to the racial caste system.³

Following emancipation, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands came to Texas to make emancipation a reality. The Bureau faced many problems in Texas. The central problems were a shortage of personnel and funds, bureaucratic regulations, and the violent resistance of white Texans to emancipation and black equality. During Reconstruction, white mobs murdered at least four hundred black Texans. Most of these lynchings allegedly resulted from the murder or rape of a white person at the hands of a freedman.⁴ The myth of the retrogressive and rapacious black man had begun. In Lamar County, the Klan had organized by 1868 in response to federal efforts to help freedmen exercise their new rights. Bands of local whites resisted the Bureau’s efforts violently and attempted to kill local bureau agent DeWitt C. Brown

¹ “SCORCHED WITH IRONS,” *The Marshall Evening Messenger*, February 1, 1893; “Angry Mob Burns Two at Stake in Paris,” *The Chicago Defender*, July 10, 1920; The New South describes the postbellum South that embraced visions of racial justice and promoted industrialization, urbanization, and agricultural reform. For an examination of the idea of a New South see Paul M. Gason, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970).

² “The Triple Lynching,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 9, 1892.

³ On the eve of the secession, a slave insurrection panic broke out in Texas. Vigilance committees across the state formed and summarily lynched and violently interrogated slaves. See Donald E. Reynolds, *Texas Terror: The Slave Insurrection Panic of 1860 and the Secession of the Lower South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

⁴ Jesse Dorsett, “Blacks in Reconstruction Texas, 1865-1877” (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 1981), 168-169.

numerous times. These cabals also patrolled the county, murdering several white Republicans and “an untold number of freedmen.”⁵ In this era, local whites realized that violence remained an effective way to limit black advancement and successfully thwarted the Bureau.⁶ By the end of 1868, Brown had resigned his post with the Freedmen’s Bureau because he lacked federal support and left the county for good. One year later, it was clear to locals that the Bureau failed because blacks remained virtually enslaved to landholders and conservative whites had regained control of local political offices.⁷

With white Democrats firmly in control of the county politically, violence was less overt, but tensions remained. Paris housed a sizeable and well-established black middle class, with several African-Americans serving as council members, including Harry Cunington in 1871, and Creed Taylor and Chris Johnson from 1882 through 1885. Like the national economy, Lamar County’s economy grew tremendously during the last decades of the 19th century, accompanied by rapid population growth. The county’s population more than doubled from 15,790 to 37,302 between 1870 and 1890 and the black population grew by more than 2,000 people in the 1880s.⁸ The working-class character of recent black migration produced profound effects on local race relations, because white citizens of Paris, like those of most cities in the New South, pushed for economic improvement and growth while retaining traditions of white supremacy.⁹

⁵ James M. Smallwood, Barry A. Crouch, and Larry Peacock, *Murder and Mayhem: The War of Reconstruction in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 50, 70.

⁶ For a synthesis on Reconstruction, see Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988).

⁷ William L. Richter, “‘The Revolver Rules the Day!’: Colonel DeWitt C. Brown and the Freedmen’s Bureau in Paris, Texas, 1867-1868,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 93, no. 3 (January 1990): 332.

⁸ A. W. Neville, *The History of Lamar County (Texas)* (Paris, Texas: The North Texas Publishing Co, 1937), 201.

⁹ Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1983), xvi; Walter L. Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South: Northeast Texas between Reconstruction and the Great Depression* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 22.

Economic opportunities in the cotton trade in Lamar County prompted a mass influx of new, unknown blacks, causing black-white tensions to rise. For instance, local whites pushed for prohibition reform in the late 1880s and the early 1890s and this movement pitted them against local blacks, who tended to be anti-prohibition. To many local whites, black opposition to prohibition signaled the retrograde nature of the new black migrants. The combination of recent black in-migration and blacks' resistance to prohibition reform increased racial tension in the county. By the 1890s, Walter Buenger suggested, these conditions turned Paris into "a lynching site."¹⁰

In the summer of 1890, racial violence struck Paris again. Andy Young, a local black, became the first lynching victim when local whites accused him of having "difficulty with some white boys."¹¹ The *Chicago Inter Ocean* described Young as "a hard-working Negro," but listed no additional reason for his murder. Young was in his early twenties and worked as a sharecropper on Nathan Grant's farm.¹² The night of the lynching, a small group of six or seven whites found him at his residence, "called him up," and shot him as he came out of the door.¹³ Fitzhugh Brundage suggests that small mob murders "can best be understood as a form of private vengeance."¹⁴ Young's murder did not fit the traditional image of spectacle lynching, but the mob sent a message to the rest of the black community by desecrating Young's dead body with a barrage of bullets.¹⁵ Andy Young's killing did not seem to upset the citizens of the community. Evidence of black or white reactions is either nonexistent or lost to the historical record.

¹⁰ Buenger, *Modern South*, 23.

¹¹ "Savage Murder of a Negro," *Chicago Inter Ocean*, July 21, 1890.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 28.

¹⁵ "Savage Murder of a Negro," *Chicago Inter Ocean*, July 21, 1890.

The lack of reaction to the slaying is symptomatic of a lack of national attention to lynching and racial violence at the time. The absence of record might also suggest that blacks and whites generally accepted the lynching or felt they could not speak out against it because they too may become victims of violent reprisal.

A similar lack of reaction by county whites occurred again in 1892, when a local white man, John Ashley, murdered local black sharecropper Jarrett Burns. Allegedly, Burns purchased a horse from Ashley but, according to Ashley, did not keep up the payments. Ashley took the horse from Burns because of his inability to pay. Burns then showed pragmatism and foolishness in the same instance. He went alone and unarmed to request the return of the horse in order to till his soil. Allegedly, during an ensuing altercation, Ashley killed Burns. In southern society, the value of blacks did not exceed even the most miniscule debt. Local authorities pursued no legal action against Ashley, suggesting that unpaid debts justified the murder of a black man at the hands of a white man in their eyes.¹⁶

This murder, however, sparked an unprecedented reaction from the county's blacks. The lack of legal action against Burns infuriated the black community in Lamar County and they organized the "Colored Association" to voice their frustration.¹⁷ They expressed their dissatisfaction in a way that frightened many southern whites, through violence.¹⁸ Ashley claimed to have received numerous threats against his life from

¹⁶ The lack of legal redress for white on black violence was widespread in the New South. This had a lasting impact on blacks who learned to view law enforcement as inimical to their interests. See Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 15.

¹⁷ "Six Negroes Lynched: The Race Troubles in Texas Culminate in a Terrible Tragedy," *Langston City Herald*, September 24, 1892.

¹⁸ The fear of black violence against whites was a persistent fear of southern whites and dates back to slavery. See Reynolds, *Texas Terror*; Dan T. Carter, "The Anatomy of Fear: The Christmas Day Insurrection Scare of 1865," *Journal of Southern History* 42 (August 1976): 345-364.

members of the “Colored Association,” and they allegedly even poisoned his horses. The action considered most threatening to local whites was yet to come. According to the *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, local blacks attempted to enter Ashley’s house a few nights after the murder of Burns. In defiance of all Jim Crow social rules, several local blacks rode around the Lamar County streets armed with guns.¹⁹

To combat the growing tide of black assertiveness, local whites organized for their own protection. Following the attempted break-in of Ashley’s residence, members of the white community stood guard over Ashley’s house to ward off any further black efforts at revenge. Additionally, local whites turned to the time tested use of violence to send a message for blacks to leave the issue alone. Small groups of whites whipped numerous blacks in the ensuing days. Most disturbing to the black community was the attempted lynching of Jarrett Burns’ niece, Ella Ransom.²⁰

Following the botched lynching of Ella Ransom, local blacks again asserted their manhood. Ella Ransom returned to Paris to report the attack to authorities under protection of several armed black men. Local whites refused to accept this assertion of dignity and violently expressed their disapproval. Three of the men who guarded Ella Ransom received beatings by a group of masked men, but the worst was yet to come. The racial tensions between the black and white communities came to a tragic culmination. On September 6, 1892, John Ransom, John Walker, and William Armor, three black men who protected Ella Ransom, were lynched. These black men who defended womanhood,

¹⁹ “A Texas Lynching: Three Troublesome Negroes Swung to a Tree,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, September 8, 1892.

²⁰ When the mob of five men, including John Ashley, attempted to lynch Ella Ransom, she was able to slip the noose off and run away while the men were “standing a little way off and while one of them was fixing the rope over a tree limb.” While she fled she was allegedly shot in the hip by John Ashley. See “Backward Glances,” *Paris Morning News*, July 29, 1937.

the very thing that white southerners held so sacred, paid with their lives.²¹ Not one local white voiced any opposition or condemnation of the action.²²

The triple lynching was meant to send a clear message to the black community.²³ Twenty or thirty masked men rounded up the three men, placed nooses around their necks, and marched them into the woods. The next morning two young boys discovered the bodies near a road, and found that “Ransom was swinging clear of the ground, but the mob in its hurry had not hung [sic.] Armor and Walker clear, and had to tie their feet up to clear the ground.”²⁴ According to reports, at least one of these black men belonged to the “Colored Association.”²⁵ Ransom, Walker, and Armor’s bodies hung in public for all blacks to see with an oath signed by black members of the “Colored Association” attached to one of the dead bodies.²⁶ This note, an obvious white fabrication, visibly linked the lynching with the recent black assertion of self-respect.

At the time of the triple lynching, a new era of race relations was emerging throughout the South. Scientific racism became the guiding principle behind white southerners’ attack of black civil liberties. According to proponents of scientific racism, African-Americans were innately inferior to Anglo-Saxons and did not have the mental capability to operate effectively in civilized, white, society. In fact, these proponents

²¹ Southern defenders of lynching often cited defense of southern white women from the rapacious hands of southern blacks as a justification for lynching. For an examination of the southern obsession with defense of women see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 129-158.

²² “Swung to a Limb: Three Negroes Taken out by a Mob and Hanged,” September 6, 1892, Newspaper clipping attached to telegram, Vol. XXIX September 1 – 30, 1892, Letters Received, James Stephen Hogg Papers, Texas State Archives, Austin, TX. (hereafter cited as “Swung to a Limb.”)

²³ It has been suggested whites lynched blacks when “everyday violence... failed to yield the desired results.” See Kidada E. Williams, “Resolving the Paradox of Our Lynching Fixation: Reconsidering Racialized Violence in the American South after Slavery,” in *Lynching Reconsidered: New Perspective in the Study of Mob Violence*, ed. William D. Carrigan (New York: Routledge, 2008), 99.

²⁴ “Swung to a Limb.”

²⁵ “Recent Lynching,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 14, 1892.

²⁶ “A Texas Lynching: Three Troublesome Negroes Swung to a Tree,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, September 8, 1892.

posited, African-Americans had retrogressed from docile, humble, and hard working under the civilizing institution of slavery back to their savage, violent origins following emancipation.²⁷ The black male propensity to lust after and rape white women was the culmination of this process, according to racist ideology. Consequently, the popular notion of the black “beast” dominated southern thought and was often the justification for the violent treatment of blacks.²⁸

In Lamar County, the new racist ideology and the obvious lack of punishment of previous lynchers brought about a new era in lynching history: the spectacle lynching. In January 1893, Lamar County authorities found the dead body of a three year-old white girl, Myrtle Vance. Days after her death, local authorities claimed the child had been raped and then choked to death. Based on unsubstantiated evidence, authorities quickly charged a local black man, Henry Smith, with the crime.²⁹ Smith personified the stereotype of the retrograde character that local whites attributed to the newly arrived black population. Smith was a recent arrival to Lamar County, having lived there for only five years. He had limited family and community ties and a reputation as a drunk and a troublemaker. The circumstances surrounding the murder, alleged rape, and involvement of Smith were questionable, but one detail stood out in the case.³⁰ Months before the murder, local law enforcement official Henry Vance clubbed and arrested Smith, and

²⁷ For a discussion of the rise of anti-black ideology see I. A. Newby, ed., *the Development of Segregationist Thought* (Homewood, IL: The Dorsey Press, 1968).

²⁸ For an examination on the popular portrayal of blacks as sexual “beasts” see Thomas Dixon, Jr., *The Leopard’s Spots: A Romance of the White Man’s Burden—1865-1900* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1902; reprint, Ridgewood, NJ: The Gregg Press, Inc, 1967); James Kinney, “The Rhetoric of Racism: Thomas Dixon and the ‘Damned Black Beast,’” *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910* 15, no. 2 (Autumn 1982): 147; Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 180-189.

²⁹ Ida Wells-Barnett reported that no physical evidence of rape existed. See Ida Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2002.) 77.

³⁰ Ida B. Wells-Barnett attacked the notion that black rape of white women justified lynching in *Red Record*. For a full understanding of Wells-Barnett’s argument see Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings* (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 2002).

upon his incarceration Smith allegedly vowed revenge against Vance, who was Myrtle's father. Upon the discovery of the young girl's body, Smith emerged as the prime suspect based on his low reputation and his vow to seek revenge against Vance.³¹

Smith fled the city, but authorities caught up with him at Hope, Arkansas, on January 31, 1893. These officers bound Smith in handcuffs and took the train back to Paris. Along the way, mobs of angry and belligerent whites met the party transporting Smith back to Paris and voiced their desire to see him lynched. When the train arrived at Texarkana, Texas, two thousand men gathered and expressed the desire to see Smith lynched.³² The mob demanded Smith be given over to them so they could lynch the "brute." However, the mob decided that the people of Paris deserved their vengeance. It was a foregone conclusion that, guilty or not, Smith was going to die.

Whites in Paris were exhilarated at the chance to lynch Smith. In the 1890s, public burning became a popular form of lynching among East Texans.³³ The *Dallas Morning News* reported a day prior to Smith's capture that "it is the almost universal sentiment that he will be publicly burned at the stake."³⁴ On the day of the lynching, aroused citizens from all over northeast Texas and Arkansas came to view the spectacle. These onlookers filled almost every train destined for Paris. The railroad company even increased the number of passenger trains traveling to the city to accommodate the sheer

³¹ Henry Vance, *The Facts of the Case of the Horrible Murder of Little Myrtle Vance and its Fearful Expiation at Paris, Texas, February 1st, 1893, with Photographic Illustrations* (Paris, Texas: P.L. James, 1893), 3-5; Buenger, *Modern South*, 22.

³² "Texans Burn a Negro Murderer at the Stake," *New York Herald*, February 2, 1893.

³³ Many other instances of spectacle lynchings occurred throughout Texas history. Ed Coy was burned alive before a mob of several thousand in Texarkana, Texas, in 1892. Similarly, mobs in Tyler, Texas, burned Henry Hillard alive in 1895 and Dan Davis in 1912. Also see Amy L. Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

³⁴ "Myrtle Vance Murderer," *Dallas Morning News*, January 31, 1893.

number of curious whites.³⁵ No one tried to stop the inevitable. Instead, locals prepared for the imminent lynching and assembled a large float box with the word “JUSTICE” painted across the front and a chair on top in order to secure Smith to the structure and parade him through the town. This spectacle would not be a quick murder. The impending lynching turned these religious, supposedly civilized people into a frenzied, insatiable mob that the entire community condoned.

When authorities returned to Paris with Smith in hand, they quickly handed him over to the frenzied mob, and then the show began. The ringleaders paraded Smith up and down the main thoroughfares of the city. The lynching became a community event that thousands participated in, encouraged, and condoned. The mob of 10,000 men, women, and children followed the parade to a field just outside of the city center and watched as Henry Vance, his son, and two of Myrtle’s uncles took their vengeance. According to the *New York Herald*, “hot irons were placed upon the soles of his [Smith’s] feet, rolled over his quivering body, poked into his eyes and down his throat. A scaffold upon which he lay was then set on fire. His clothes and fetters burned off and he threw himself to the ground, he was tossed back into the flames again and again until death came to his relief.”³⁶ The mob watched and encouraged the torture until Smith’s body burned to ashes. The *New York Herald* further stated, “Thousands looked at the death struggles with evident satisfaction and many of them with demonstrations of delight.”³⁷ For the time, civilization ceased.

The level of brutality meted out against Smith captivated the nation and exposed

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Texans Burn a Negro Murderer at the Stake,” *New York Herald*, February 2, 1893.

³⁷ Ibid.

millions of Americans to this unprecedented form of vigilante violence.³⁸ Americans in all sections of the country had long accepted lynching as a necessary form of punishment in regions outside the control of the institutions of law and order, like the West. Lynchings served as extralegal methods of punishment and mimicked legal executions.³⁹ Victims usually admitted their crime and were hung in a matter-of-fact manner. The lynching of Henry Smith, however, looked more like a medieval torture than a legal execution. It also occurred at a time when sensational newspaper reporting became the norm.⁴⁰ Newspapers across the country reported the lynching in sensationalized form that captivated millions and exposed them to spectacle lynching for the first time. The *Philadelphia Inquirer's* headline read, "Tortured With Red-Hot Irons and Then Burned Alive-Thousands of Citizens of Paris Aid the Unparalleled Retribution."⁴¹ The *New Haven Register* also focused on the heinousness of Smith's prolonged death and printed the simple and straightforward headline, "Tortured Him [Smith] to Death."⁴² Perhaps the most telling description of the Henry Smith lynching came from the *Chicago Daily Inter Ocean*: "The Texas Horror" ran across the headlines on February 3, 1893, and painted a violently negative picture of Lamar County.⁴³

The extraordinary and unprecedented lynching piqued national interest and forced locals to defend their actions. Many citizens, according to the mob's ringleader Henry Vance, expected the event to come and go and "all seemed satisfied and went their

³⁸ Wood described the lynching of Henry Smith as the first modern lynching. See Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 74.

³⁹ For an examination of American acceptance of lynching see Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch*, 85-101.

⁴⁰ For a full discussion on the sensationalism in reports of lynching see Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*.

⁴¹ "Burned at the Stake: Awful Doom of a Negro Murderer in Texas," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 2, 1893.

⁴² "Tortured Him to Death," *New Haven Register*, February 2, 1893.

⁴³ "The Texas Horror," *Chicago Daily Inter Ocean*, February 3, 1893.

way in peace.”⁴⁴ National attention, however, did not let the lynching fade quietly into history. Responding to a request for an explanation by the editor of the *New York Herald*, *Paris News* editor A. P. Boyd replied, “I am not unmindful of the fact that such violence is a menace to the liberties of the people...and as a public journalist I do not generally indorse [sic] it.” However, Boyd still believed the “sickening outrage” of the rape and murder of Myrtle Vance vindicated the actions of the citizens of Paris, and other locals expanded upon his argument.⁴⁵

The most comprehensive defense of the lynching came in the form of a book published by prominent local businessman John M. Early, shortly after Smith’s death. Entitled *Eye for an Eye* (1893), the book defended the action of the mob and attempted to justify the mob’s incomprehensible brutality. Early emphasized that it was the sadistic rape and murder of the young girl that “incite[d]” the mob.⁴⁶ The author blamed the brutal torture on the victim himself; Smith’s actions alone led to the lynching, not some underlying racial motivation. Early described Smith as “the chiefest among sinners” who committed the most barbaric of crimes and argued that the “tardiness and uncertainty of punishment ha[d] stripped the law of its terror” and it therefore had not acted as a deterrent for heinous criminals such as Smith.⁴⁷ According to Early, the lynching of Smith resulted from the inadequacy of the legal system to discourage violent crimes properly, which, in turn, forced the community to defend itself through extralegal means. In the eyes of the white community, the mob did not represent lawlessness. Instead, it

⁴⁴ Vance, *The Facts in the Case*, 67.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴⁶ Early, *An Eye for an Eye*, 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9, 41.

was viewed as having acted responsibly and in a “very refined manner.”⁴⁸ In his attempt to save the reputation of the city, Early did not denounce the lynching but instead rationalized it as a necessary and justifiable punishment for atrocities committed by blacks against civilized society.⁴⁹

Early’s book expressed the pro-lynching defense, but it also had more personal motivations. Early was a successful local businessman with a wife and three children. More importantly, he was heavily invested in the city, so much so that in 1893 he built an elegant, two-story house complete with floor-length windows, ornate brass hardware, handmade doors, and a cherry wood stairway just one mile outside of the city center.⁵⁰ Early did not want the lynching to discourage economic and population growth in Lamar County, and thus concluded his book with a statement describing the good-hearted nature of the community and the economic advantages of the city. Early described Paris as a place where economic prosperity was easily attainable and he encouraged Americans to move to his town.⁵¹ He touted the community’s economic potential and emphasized the availability of “thousands of acres of land at \$2 per acre, rich as the Nile valley.”⁵² Early explained the religious commitment of the city, its educational benefits, and the dedication of the citizens to protecting “at all hazards, the women and children, even though it takes a little fire.”⁵³

After the 1893 lynching of Smith, the citizens in Lamar County never again

⁴⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁹ Pro-lynching advocates throughout the South argued lynching was a response to “the Negro’s outrages.” See I. A. Newby, *Jim Crow’s Defense: Anti-Negro Thought in America, 1900-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 137-140.

⁵⁰ See Texas State Historical Marker no. 5277008191, J. M. Early House, Paris, Texas, dedicated 1967.

⁵¹ Early, *An Eye for an Eye*, [71].

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

resorted to such a large-scale, public lynching, but small-scale lynchings continued.⁵⁴ Mobs killed two black men in Lamar County in 1895 and 1901, but little information about the lynchings exists. The lack of local accounts makes it necessary to rely on national newspapers that paid little attention to the murders, but the persistent acts of mob violence suggest continued community acceptance of lynchings. In 1895, whites in Paris lynched a black man named Jefferson Cole in the midst of increased White Cap violence.⁵⁵ According to the *Kansas City Times*, “many outrages [were] committed by white caps in Texas” throughout the month of August 1895, but the report gave little indication why whites in the county resorted to violence against blacks. It stated that on August 23, 1895, Jefferson Cole, “an aged and inoffensive negro, was called out of his house and riddled with bullets” by a mob of whites.⁵⁶ No reason was given for the murder of Cole, but the article noted that Cole owned land.⁵⁷ Whites throughout the South reacted violently against black property owners because blacks who owned property “could be deemed disrespectful to certain elements of the white population.”⁵⁸ Local whites also attacked prominent members of the black community, including Reverend J. H. McClinton, who was murdered on December 25, 1901. The lynching did gain some national attention, but accounts only stated that the reverend was “shot to death by a

⁵⁴ Historians have identified four main types of lynch mobs. For an examination in the different types of lynch mobs, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 17-48.

⁵⁵ White Caps were groups of armed whites that used violence to enforce racial boundaries between whites and blacks. For a discussion on white cap violence see Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman & the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 162-163.

⁵⁶ “Riddled With Bullets,” *Kansas City Times*, August 24, 1895.

⁵⁷ The tax records for Lamar County in the 1900s burned in the fire of 1916. It is unclear how much land Cole owned.

⁵⁸ Loren Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South: 1790-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 228.

crowd of men.”⁵⁹ From 1893 to 1920 lynching in Paris declined as the subordination of blacks hardened through legal and other less overt means.

While lynching declined in Paris, Lamar County whites utilized another virulent form of subordination. White southerners implemented new laws that legally subordinated blacks in the 1890s and early 1900s. The Texas Legislature passed stringent laws legally segregating blacks and whites in the 1890s. In 1891, for example, the Texas Legislature passed a bill that required separate railroad coaches for blacks and whites.⁶⁰ The Supreme Court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) officially gave Southerners legal sanction to enforce segregation in nearly all public places as long as they followed the principle of “separate but equal.”⁶¹

Legal segregation was accompanied by the removal of black political representation through disfranchisement measures. In 1903, the Texas legislature passed the Terrell Election Law that required the payment of a poll tax in order to vote in Texas. The legislature amended the law numerous times between 1903 and 1923, and by 1908 had succeeded in eliminating almost all black voters. In that year, only one black voter attempted to vote.⁶² The Democratic Party’s establishment of the white primary also played a role in eliminating the black vote. By 1910, Texans had a firmly established a system of segregation that legally placed blacks below whites.⁶³ Black

⁵⁹ “Texas Preacher Called Out And Shot To Death By The Mob,” *Duluth News-Tribune*, December 26, 1901.

⁶⁰ Alwyn Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform: Texas Politics, 1876-1906* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 108.

⁶¹ *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U. S. 537 (1896); For a full examination of the history of Jim Crow see C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

⁶² Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1979), 69-83.

⁶³ Jerry C. Drake, “‘Something between Slavery and Freedom’: The Evolution of Jim Crow in Texas, A Cultural History” (MA thesis, Texas State University, 2003), 94-118; Leonard Brewster Murphy, “A History of Negro Segregation Practices in Texas, 1865-1958” (PhD diss., Southern Methodist University, 1950), 91-97.

disenfranchisement had an obvious impact on the prohibition campaign. Earlier, in August 1902, Lamar County locals rejected a prohibition measure by a count of 4,046 for and 4,562 against. Undoubtedly, the votes of local blacks, who did not support prohibition, played an important role in this defeat. However, a year after the enactment of the poll tax prohibition passed in the county, signifying the effectiveness of the poll tax in disfranchising blacks. The total number of votes cast had fallen by 3,000 since the previous election.⁶⁴

Throughout the 1890s and the early 1900s, Lamar County experienced economic growth. Property values in northeast Texas steadily grew from 1900 to 1920 and Paris emerged as one of the largest cotton markets in the region. Throughout northeast Texas, farmers devoted more and more of their land to the production of cotton, especially after the outbreak of World War I in Europe. Demand for cotton seed oil, peanut seed oil, and other agricultural products grew as a result of the war and local farmers answered the call. Agricultural production more than tripled between 1910 and 1920 as the overall value of all crops produced exploded from \$5,518,581 to \$18,270,287.⁶⁵ Investment in the manufacturing sector grew slowly between 1870 and 1880 from \$43,750 to \$74,970. However, the manufacturing economy expanded during the next two decades; by 1890 local capital investment blossomed by 600% to \$439,350, and by 1900, it had more than doubled to \$1,003,152.⁶⁶

Wartime demand for agricultural and manufactured goods promoted economic growth in Lamar County during the 1910s, and the manufacturing sector doubled from

⁶⁴ Buenger, *Modern South*, 89.

⁶⁵ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: Total Value of all Crops, 1910-1930," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 8, 2011).

⁶⁶ Buenger, *Modern South*, 149, 61, 138.

1914 to 1919. A devastating fire in 1916, which caused \$11,000,000 worth of property damage, did not stop economic growth in Paris and locals came together and rebuilt the city. Economic growth encouraged population growth and both blacks and whites migrated to the area for jobs. The total population grew from 46,544 in 1910 to 55,742 in 1920.⁶⁷ The prosperity of Lamar County and the chance to rebuild after the 1916 fire allowed city leaders to promote Paris as a city of beauty and wealth.⁶⁸

Despite the outward appearance of progress and growth, Paris was two different places. It was an idyllic place for whites, but underneath the veneer of progress there remained the ever-present threat of violence for local blacks. Although few lynchings occurred during this time, other, less widely reported instances of racial violence underlay race relations in the city. As historian Kidada Williams argues, rapes, whippings, assaults, and shootings became so commonplace in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century South that reports of these events rarely surfaced. Local blacks surely remembered the excessive punishment meted out against Henry Smith, thus more individualized acts of violence against local blacks probably were sufficient to ensure their cooperation within the confines of Jim Crow.⁶⁹

World War I spawned economic prosperity, but it also profoundly affected race relations in Paris and throughout the country. Many returning black veterans vehemently opposed Jim Crow in an unprecedented assertive manner. Blacks across the country heeded the advice of W. E. B. DuBois to take up arms and join the army despite the “deep-seated feeling of revolt among negroes at the persistent insult and discrimination to

⁶⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, “Area and Population of Counties: 1890 to 1930,” (<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/03815512v1ch10.pdf>, accessed March 8, 2011), 1060.

⁶⁸ Buenger, *Modern South*, 149, 61, 138.

⁶⁹ Williams, “Resolving the Paradox,” 97-116.

which they are subject.”⁷⁰ DuBois hoped that blacks’ loyal service in their nation’s fight for democracy abroad would persuade white Americans to return the favor and grant equal rights at home. Nearly 400,000 African-Americans followed DuBois’ advice and enlisted in the armed forces.⁷¹ Upon the return of the black service men, the so-called “New Negro mentality” swept the nation. The New Negro asserted himself like never before as “on the national canvas and a force in the foreground of affairs” who emphasized the importance of black culture as separate from but equally important as white American culture.⁷² This new mentality encouraged many blacks to push for equal rights and challenge the American racial hierarchy.⁷³

White Texans responded violently to the idea of a New Negro who rejected racial subordination. The Red Summer of 1919 represented the most evident impact of World War I on race relations in the United States. After fighting to make the world safe for democracy, returning black soldiers created tensions through their push for better treatment at home. Race riots erupted in twenty-two cities throughout the country from April 14 to October 1, 1919.⁷⁴ Racial tensions boiled over in northeast Texas as well. In Longview, Texas, a race riot erupted when whites responded ferociously to the push by local blacks to “migrate, to start businesses, to vote, and to strive for equal rights.”⁷⁵

⁷⁰ W. E. B. DuBois, “Editorial,” *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races* 14, no. 2 (June 1917): 61.

⁷¹ W. Allison Sweeney, *History of the American Negro in the Great World War* (New York: G. G. Sapp, 1919; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969): 77.

⁷² Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925): ix.

⁷³ For a representation of the “New Negro” mentality and culture see Locke, *The New Negro*.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the Red Summer and race riots in American cities during the late 1910s and early 1920s, see Stanley B. Norvell and William M. Tuttle, Jr., “Views of a Negro during ‘The Red Summer’ of 1919,” *The Journal of Negro History* 51, no. 3 (July 1966): 209-218; James S. Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race Riot and its Legacy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002); Elliot M. Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis: July 2, 1917* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964); William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago and the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Atheneum, 1970).

⁷⁵ Lawrence Olsen, “Black Texans in the ‘Red Summer’ of 1919: The Longview Race Riot,” (MA thesis, Southwest Texas State University, 1974), 2. For additional information on the Longview Race Riot see

Although no riots erupted in Paris, the end of WWI brought an economic recession and the New Negro mentality to Lamar County. European production of agricultural and manufactured goods rebounded after the end of the war and Lamar County suffered. The price of cotton dropped by more than fifty percent in 1920 and the demand for other goods subsided as well.⁷⁶ Accompanying the economic downturn, local black veterans from World War I returned with new ideas that threatened Jim Crow. To southern blacks, these valiant, uniformed men were a source of racial pride. However, these veterans struck fear into many southern whites. Southern whites viewed the New Negro as a threat, and as arrogant and impudent. Many feared violent clashes between southern whites and blacks because of the New Negro's assertion of manhood and willingness to fight for civil rights.⁷⁷ In 1919, local whites alerted federal investigators that black veterans were conducting meetings with other black residents. Local whites feared these meetings would cause "trouble" because local black veterans urged their fellow blacks to fight for equal rights.⁷⁸ Like blacks around the country, local blacks did not violently express their dissatisfaction with their subordination and instead many left the countryside and moved to cities to escape rural poverty and racial violence.⁷⁹

In Paris, two young black tenant farmers decided to escape farm tenancy and move out of Lamar County's countryside. Herman Arthur, a twenty-six year old World War I veteran who served in France, and his nineteen-year-old brother Irving, decided to leave. Along with many other blacks, they sought an escape from Jim Crow racial

William M. Tuttle, Jr., Violence in a 'Heathen' Land: The Longview Race Riot of 1919," *Phylon* 33, no. 4 (4th Qtr. 1972): 324-333.

⁷⁶ Buenger, *Modern South*, 147.

⁷⁷ Steven A. Reich, "Soldiers of Democracy: Black Texans and the Fight for Citizenship, 1917-1921," *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 4 (March 1996): 1499.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1499; Buenger, *Modern South*, 169.

⁷⁹ E. M. Beck and Stewart E. Tolnay, "Black Flight: Lethal Violence and the Great Migration, 1900-1930," *Social Science History* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 347-370.

violence behind, and find and new economic opportunities in the emerging urban centers.⁸⁰ Since cheap black labor was the backbone of the southern agricultural economy, many southern whites utilized a number of tactics to stem the flow of black migrants, and Lamar County was no exception.⁸¹ In the early afternoon of July 2, 1920, a wealthy farmer, J. H. Hodges, and his son Will confronted the Arthur brothers when they packed their limited belongings into a rented truck. The Arthurs allegedly owed J. H. Hodges money, but refused to acquiesce to Hodges's demands that they stay to work on his farm and an intense argument turned violent. Sometime during the subsequent altercation both J. H. and Will Hodges died of gunshot wounds. The Arthurs then took flight and headed north.⁸²

In the wake of the Red Summer of 1919 and the race riot in Longview, Lamar County whites intended to send a message to the black community: the New Negro would not be tolerated. For several days search parties fanned out over northeast Texas to capture the black fugitives. Four days after the murder of Hodges and his son, authorities in Valiant, Oklahoma, captured the Arthurs. Paris officials placed the brothers in jail to await trial, but quickly a crowd gathered, "stormed" the jail, and overpowered the authorities holding Herman and Irving.⁸³ The mob quickly took the Arthurs to the fairgrounds, "where a stake and fuel had been prepared."⁸⁴ At the fairgrounds, a crowd of around three thousand tied the defiant Herman and Irving to a stake and watched with

⁸⁰ Between 1910 and 1970 six and a half million African-Americans migrated from the South to the North. For a discussion on the push and pull factors, and the impact this migration had on race relations see Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

⁸¹ Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 257-281.

⁸² "Negroes Kill Two Whites in Lamar County," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 3, 1920.

⁸³ "Two Negroes Taken from Jail at Paris, Texas; and Lynched," *Tulsa World*, July 7, 1920.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

ominous delight as the two men slowly burned. Herman and Irving, in the true spirit of the “New Negro” met their death bravely. When the mob’s ringleaders asked Herman if he was sorry for killing Hodges, he replied, “[he] would kill any man, white or black, who assaulted [my] mothers and sisters.” The defiant black men did not utter a single word while being burned alive.⁸⁵ In a final act of desecration, the mob chained the charred bodies of the Arthurs to a truck and a “caravan proceeded to drive them through the streets and yards of the black sections of town.”⁸⁶ Although no blacks witnessed the lynching, the foul smell of burnt flesh, the rambunctious and boisterous crowd, and the dragging of the charred bodies through town reminded all of the city’s blacks of the lengths to which whites would go to punish perceived transgressions.

In light of the previous years’ race riots, authorities feared a violent backlash from the black community. Following the mass burning of the two black men, city officials took “extraordinary precautions” to ensure no Longview-type race riots occurred.⁸⁷ The mayor organized groups of armed volunteers and deputized squads that he then sent into the black section of town to quash any would-be rioters. In spite of the widespread fear of black reprisal, blacks did not organize a large-scale, violent response. Local blacks had no intention of retaliating violently. As Essex Reese, a ten-year-old black boy at the time of the Arthur lynching, remembered, “Most blacks had families and children; they weren’t going looking for trouble.”⁸⁸ Thus, the organized bands of whites disbanded the following night with “quiet restored.”⁸⁹

Blacks did not respond to white violence with violence, but instead expressed

⁸⁵ “Family Driven from South by Mob,” *The Chicago Defender*, September 4, 1920.

⁸⁶ “Arthur Lynchings in Paris were 87 Years Ago,” *Paris News*, July 6, 2007.

⁸⁷ “Try to Prevent Texas Race Clash,” *Greensboro (NC) Daily Record*, July 7, 1920.

⁸⁸ “Running North: A Family History,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1998.

⁸⁹ “Quiet Restored after Lynching of Negroes,” *Duluth News-Tribune*, July 9, 1920.

their dissatisfaction through flight. Black flight was the safest and most common form of black discontent.⁹⁰ Blacks in Lamar County fled on an unprecedented scale following the lynching. From 1920 to 1930, the total number of blacks in Lamar County shrank from 12,970 to 9,382.⁹¹ Authorities released the remaining members of the Arthur family and with the help of the Black Masonic Lodge and some sympathetic whites, they left for Chicago. Along with the Arthurs, “an exodus of black residents followed.”⁹² The *Chicago Defender* sent a representative to report on the events unfolding in Paris. One of the newspaper’s headlines read, “THOUSANDS OF RACE PEOPLE LEAVING BLOOD SOAKED DISTRICT.”⁹³ Census records support the newspaper reports and show that the migration led to a permanent and significant loss of black population.

The exodus of blacks concerned white citizens of Paris, some of whom used a number of intimidation tactics to dissuade blacks from fleeing. The *Chicago Defender* claimed, “The only thing causing concern at the present time is the migration of hundreds of our people” from Paris.⁹⁴ Whites understood black flight as a form of protest, but more troubling for southern whites was the threat to the southern agricultural economy that the mass migration of blacks posed.⁹⁵ The lack of available farm labor threatened to cripple the manual labor workforce and damage an economy that, because of the devastating fire

⁹⁰ McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 272.

⁹¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, “Composition and Characteristics of the Population, for Counties: 1920,” (<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/41084484v3ch08.pdf>, accessed October 20, 2010), 1003; U.S. Bureau of the Census, “Population by Age, Color, Nativity, and Sex, for Counties: 1930,” (<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/10612982v3p2ch09.pdf>, accessed October 20, 2010), 961.

⁹² “Arthur Lynchings in Paris were 87 Years Ago,” *Paris News*, July 7, 1920.

⁹³ “Preacher Protests: White Member of Clergy Denounces Lynchers in Paris: Thousands of Race People Leaving Blood Soaked District,” *Chicago Defender*, July 24, 1920.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 46.

in 1916 that destroyed much of the city, was still in the process of rebuilding.⁹⁶ Whites resorted to numerous, extralegal tactics to discourage blacks from moving out of the city.⁹⁷ The *Chicago Defender* reported that banks “refused to allow the withdrawal of savings of the people who have already left or who are preparing to go” and hoped that blacks would not flee without their money.⁹⁸ Whites also employed violent intimidation tactics to discourage blacks from leaving and patrolled the streets of Paris armed with revolvers and other guns to influence blacks to stay.⁹⁹

J. M. Crook, mayor of Paris, demanded leaders of both the black and white community meet to discuss the recent troubles and dissuade the city’s blacks from fleeing. Thirty leading white citizens, such as Judge A. P. Park, Captain J. J. Dickerson, and Professor J. G. Wooten, led the white delegation. Reverend C. N. Hampton and Reverend Brackeen, two pastors from the leading black churches in Paris, led the black delegation. The purpose of the meeting, according to the white delegates, “was to impress on the colored people that it was very necessary for them to be discreet and temperate in speech and conduct.”¹⁰⁰ Local whites, once again, placed the blame for the lynching squarely on the black community. In this meeting, local businessman J. J. Dickerson announced to the black delegates the senselessness of leaving because blacks would receive similar treatment anywhere in the United States. Dickerson stated, “If they should go to Indiana, Chicago or other places in the North, they would receive summary

⁹⁶ For more information on the Paris fire of 1916 see Herbert Lynn Hollis, *Paris Fire of 1916* (Wolfe City, TX: Henington Publishing Co., 1982).

⁹⁷ McMillen, *Dark Journey*, 272-273.

⁹⁸ Preacher Protests,” *Chicago Defender*, July 24, 1920.

⁹⁹ Skipper Steely, “Paris, Texas: Living with a Bloody Past – The Lynchings,” (unpublished manuscript, Paris Genealogical Society), 179.

¹⁰⁰ “Made Talk to the Paris Negroes,” *Paris Morning News*, July 13, 1920.

treatment if they did not behave themselves.”¹⁰¹ Dickerson’s attempt to dissuade blacks from fleeing the city reflected the idea that blacks in general needed to respect the authority of whites, and if blacks continued to step out of place they would receive harsh treatment regardless of where they resided. Although prominent whites did not approve of the lynching, their demeanor towards the city’s black population remained as ardently racist as in the 1890s.

National media attention compounded the local problems the Arthur lynching caused. The national black press and black organizations attacked the city, the state of Texas, and all American citizens for once again allowing a public burning of black men. The *Chicago Defender* blasted the city of Paris with a headline that read “Texans Rejoice as Men Burn: Paris, Birthplace of Stake Burning, Stands by Old Record.”¹⁰² The NAACP denounced the lynching and James Weldon Johnson criticized Governor William P. Hobby for his unwillingness to bring the members of the mob to justice. Johnson, in a public statement issued to the *Wichita Negro Star*, asked, “Christian America is there any justice within your power? How long will you burn human beings at the stake—what will be your end?”¹⁰³

Most southern cities engaged in boosting during this time, and city leaders of Paris promoted their city as vociferously as city leaders did in other major cities in the South. Groups of city leaders banded together and “sold” their respective cities to outside investors who could improve the economic capacity of their city. Boosters embellished

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 175.

¹⁰² “Angry Mob Burns Two at Stake in Paris,” *Chicago Defender*, July 10, 1920.

¹⁰³ James W. Johnson, “Christian America is There any Justice Within your Power?,” *Wichita (KS) Negro Star*, July 16, 1920.

the benefits of their city and downplayed the negative aspects, such as racial violence.¹⁰⁴ Following the 1916 fire, Paris boosters sought to promote their city as modern and attractive to outside investment. The negative national attention that emerged following the Arthur brothers' lynching forced these boosters to respond to national criticisms. Whereas in 1893 city boosters defended lynching, this time, they moderated their response.

Following the Arthur lynching, prominent whites condemned the mob's actions. A well-known minister, Robert Shuler, led the attack on lynching in a statement printed in the local newspaper. He claimed the lynching tarnished the city and the citizens and represented "a shameful defiance of civilized ideals and standards."¹⁰⁵ Schuler further condemned mob violence, stating "a mob never rights a wrong."¹⁰⁶ He also expressed concern regarding the negative impact the lynching would have on the reputation of Paris. His public statement declared, "That our community will suffer beyond repair is proven by the fact that Wednesday afternoon there was published all over the North and East dispatches announcing that we had burned Negroes."¹⁰⁷ Many other prominent members of Paris also worried the lynching damaged the respectability of their city during a crucial time. Focused on rebuilding their city, they worried that the unruly nature of the mob and turbulent race relations hurt chances for outside investment. As the *Paris Morning News* exclaimed, "the people of Paris will pay a heavy price for the orgy of anarchy."¹⁰⁸ In light of changed national perceptions of lynching, the city leaders of Paris finally understood that lynching was bad for business.

¹⁰⁴ Frances Dressman, "Visions for Houston: Booster Literature, 1886-1926," *The Houston Review* 9, no. 3 (1987): 137, 139.

¹⁰⁵ "Rev. R. P. Shuler Made Statement about Lynching," *Paris Morning News*, July 10, 1920.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Following the pattern of previous lynchings, many locals deflected the responsibility for the lynching to blacks themselves. Even Schuler, the outspoken critic of mob violence, clung to the idea of racial subordination and exclaimed, “if the Negro race will show its appreciation by living as these good men [prominent white men of Paris] desire them to live, much of the errors of the past will be removed from the path of their race.”¹⁰⁹ He reminded blacks that in order to ameliorate the threat of violence against them, they needed to remain in their place and act according to the racial customs of the day. Schuler went further and claimed that the New Negro mentality brought on mob violence. He stated, “The attitude of many negroes toward farm labor and other work, their seething disposition not to assist the farms in earnest fashion and at fair remuneration, had much to do with the spirit of this mob.”¹¹⁰ Shuler spoke out against lynching on legal grounds, but did not denounce the discriminatory and oppressive treatment of blacks, and instead placed the blame for extralegal violence squarely on the shoulders of local blacks.

In response to local and outside pressure, authorities called a grand jury to investigate the Arthur brother lynching and bring the ringleaders to justice. According to news reports, a mass meeting of white citizens adopted a resolution insisting on a “thorough investigation” to look into who led the mob.¹¹¹ The grand jury responsible for investigating the lynching consisted of some of the most influential members of the city, “the cream of the business and Chamber [of Commerce] crop of Lamar County, with a huge vested purpose to save the image of Paris, Texas.”¹¹² The grand jury attempted to

¹⁰⁹“Rev. R. P. Shuler Made Statement about Lynching,” *Paris Morning News*, July 10, 1920.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ “Declare Another Lynching Here is to be Impossible,” *Paris Morning News*, July 10, 1920.

¹¹² Steely, “Paris, Texas: Living with a Bloody Past,” 176.

identify the ringleaders, but had a difficult time finding locals who would testify against the alleged lynchers.¹¹³

Despite many impediments, the grand jury persevered and continued to investigate the matter diligently. After several days of interviews, the grand jury indicted local white farmers Wilber C. Clough, Ernest Coggins, Tom Dobbs, Charley Luckey, and T. D. Holderness for murder. Following a grand jury indictment, Judge Ben H. Denton decided to move the case because “the prejudice and excitement in this case in Paris would by its existence here be detrimental to a fair and just trial.”¹¹⁴ The trial took place in the 59th District Court of Grayson County in Sherman, Texas. A fire destroyed most of the records in 1930, but it seems no convictions occurred because many of the people indicted continued to live in Lamar County.¹¹⁵

Although it appears no convictions came out of the trial, prominent citizens of the County considered the lynching an “outrage” and publicly supported the convening of the grand jury.¹¹⁶ The *Paris Morning News* printed a resolution signed by 198 locals that pledged “to render every assistance in our power” to the investigation into the Arthur brothers lynching.¹¹⁷ Although not every citizen spoke out against the lynching, prominent county whites assured the public that “There will never be another lynching in Paris.”¹¹⁸ One can deduce, however, that violence remained a persistent threat to local

¹¹³ Ibid., 180.

¹¹⁴ Typed interview given to Skipper Steely by Randy Rader, miscellaneous notes section, Steely Collection, Lamar County Genealogical Society, Paris, Texas.

¹¹⁵ Steely, “Paris, Texas: Living with a Bloody Past,” 181-182; On May 9, 1930, a mob of several thousand whites in Sherman, Texas, burned the court house to the ground. The mob trapped local black man George Hughes inside and burned him alive along with the courthouse. Hughes was charged with assaulting a white woman. See Arthur Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 319-355.

¹¹⁶ “Special Grand Jury to Investigate Lynching,” *Paris Morning News*, July 10, 1920.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ “Declare Another Lynching here is to be Impossible,” *Paris Morning News*, July 10, 1920.

blacks despite the fact that no lynchings were reported following the 1920 burning.

From 1890 to 1920, whites in Paris consistently reaffirmed their dominance over local blacks through lynching. In response to an influx of working-class blacks and increasing black assertiveness, such as community defense in 1892 or the “New Negro” mentality in 1920, local whites utilized lynching as a method of ensuring conformity among the local black population. African-Americans in Lamar County faced the threat of violence and several local blacks who stepped out of traditional racial boundaries met their deaths at the hands of lynch mobs.¹¹⁹ Local whites used lynching to punish specific transgressions, but they also used lynching to send a message to the entire black community. Lynch mobs left their victims hanging in public, publicly tortured and burned them to death, and dragged them through black sections of town, all in an effort to intimidate the black community, remind them who ruled, and to firmly reinforce white supremacy.¹²⁰

Paris had an inveterate history of racial violence, but as white supremacist ideology grew in the 1890s, local whites became increasingly vociferous in their acceptance of lynching.¹²¹ Community participation in lynching increased steadily from the early 1890s and culminated in the 1893 lynching of Henry Smith before a crowd reaching upward of 10,000 people. As the number of mob participants increased, lynching became increasingly public and organized. When citizens in Paris lynched Henry Smith, the brutality and sheer size of the mob forced locals to defend their actions. Locals claimed such extreme forms of extralegal violence were necessary to deter

¹¹⁹ “Savage Murder of a Negro,” *Chicago Inter Ocean*, July 21, 1890.

¹²⁰ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 2.

¹²¹ Recent scholarship has addressed the culture of violence that produced lynching. See Pfeifer, *Rough Justice*; Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture*.

rapacious blacks from raping white women and to counterbalance a slow, cumbersome legal system.

The national press, however, forced locals to respond in both the 1893 and 1920 lynchings. The responses from prominent locals changed from justifying lynching in 1893 to condemning it in 1920. Local attitudes reflected a broader national pattern. Lynching in the United States reached a crescendo in the early 1890s and reports of lynchings proliferated more than in any other time in American history. Thus, when national attention focused on Paris following the lynching of Henry Smith, prominent citizens defended the actions of the mob as necessary due to the inability of the local legal system to protect the citizenry properly. By 1920, however, American perceptions of lynching had changed due to increased pressure from organizations like the Commission for Interracial Cooperation NAACP, the masses of blacks who migrated from southern states to the North, and the work of newspapers in painting lynching in a negative light.¹²² Therefore, in an effort to salvage their city's reputation and not appear backward and crude, prominent whites repudiated the actions of the mob in 1920, but by no means did they accept responsibility for mob violence. Following the lynching in 1893, locals blamed the lynching on the actions of Smith himself and not on the members of the mob. In 1920, locals blamed the entire black community for the lynching. Local whites hoped to maintain a sizeable black community for a cheap labor source and attempted to curb the flow of blacks fleeing the county, but simultaneously argued that the local black community's inability to "behave themselves," was the root cause of mob violence.

Following the 1920 lynching, blacks in Paris felt their vulnerability more

¹²² White, *Rope and Faggot*, 172-195.

intensely and took to flight. Their willingness to leave the county resulted in an increased recognition of the importance of the black community by local whites. In spite of Lamar County's history of lynching, the strength of the local economy outweighed the fear of violence and the black population increased from 9,378 in 1890 to 12,970 in 1920.¹²³ During the 1920s, however, the agricultural economy of Lamar County receded at an alarming rate and the total value of all crops produced during that decade dropped dramatically from an all-time high of \$18,270,287 in 1920 to \$7,155,653 in 1930.¹²⁴ The economic downturn and the fear of violence caused black flight. The loss of a cheap source of labor threatened to damage the local economy. This forced the local white power structure to begrudgingly recognize the local black community as a viable force in county affairs. Where previously negotiating with blacks was untenable, in the midst of massive black migration, prominent local whites called a meeting with local black leaders. Although they still did not see blacks as equals, local whites acknowledged the legitimacy of the local black community by inviting black community leaders to a meeting with the still all-white Chamber of Commerce.

In summary, from 1890 to 1920, whites in Lamar County generally accepted lynching as a form of racial control. Locals repeatedly resorted to mob violence in an effort to firmly establish racial subordination among a growing black population in Lamar County. From 1890 to 1920, mob violence continued unimpeded, but the changed national perception of lynching and the unprecedented exodus of thousands of local

¹²³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Composition and Characteristics of the Population, for Counties: 1910," (<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/36894832v3ch6.pdf>, accessed October 20, 2010), 830.

¹²⁴ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Census Data over Time, total Value of all Crops," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 8, 2011).

blacks forced prominent locals to rebuke mob violence to protect the reputation of their city and ensure that lynching in Paris was a thing of the past.

CHAPTER III

WE ARE MARSHALL: LYNCHING AND RACIAL VIOLENCE IN HARRISON COUNTY, 1890-1930

In counties where blacks made up the majority of the population, southern whites used the threat of violence as part of a larger effort to subjugate large black populations. Harrison County, Texas, had the largest black majority in the state. Local vigilantes murdered several blacks between 1890 and the early 1900s. Evidence suggests that community whites resorted to the lynch rope more frequently in response to a downturn in the local economy in the 1910s. In these hard economic times, claims of black on white rape and murder rose and “chivalrous” white mobs formed to combat the problem. County authorities were complicit in mob action and did little to dissuade lynch mobs. Vigilante violence had deep roots in the local community and lynching stemmed from earlier tendencies of local whites to resort to violence to achieve political, social, and economic dominance in a county with a huge black majority. However, the rise of the area Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s prompted local white authorities to condemn vigilante violence in an unprecedented manner as the Klan not only attacked local blacks, but also threatened local whites with both violent intimidation and political subordination.

The roots of extralegal violence run deep in Harrison County. From 1839 to 1844, the Regulator-Moderator War engulfed the county’s frontier settlements. Regulators originally organized to protect the local populous against cattle thieves that occupied the

Neutral Ground, a previously disputed a strip of land that ran east of the Sabine River from the Gulf of Mexico to the Red River that until 1821 was claimed by both the United States and Spain¹. The Regulators, a group organized to defend the county from cattle thieves, soon ran unbridled throughout the Neutral Ground counties. In response, a group called the Moderators arose in an effort to control the Regulators, who began not only attacking cattle thieves, but operating more like a gang. In Harrison County, these two organizations battled each other in the early 1840s over personal disputes and for vigilante control of the region. After years of rampant violence, the vigilante groups disbanded when Texas president Sam Houston sent the militia to pacify the region. The dispute between the Regulators and the Moderators ended when both agreed to cease hostilities and join together to serve in the Mexican War.²

The economic development of Harrison County coincided with the end of the Regulator-Moderator War. Citizens developed the thriving agricultural potential of the county. "Rich, loose, and easily cultivated" soil abounded and the county was heavily timbered. Easily accessible transportation promoted growth. Water transportation allowed for easy export of agricultural goods to larger markets. Caddo Lake in east Harrison County connected to the Red River, which flowed directly into the Mississippi River about seventy miles northwest of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. From there, agricultural products made it to New Orleans.³ The county quickly became one of the major cotton

¹ John V. Haggard, "NEUTRAL GROUND," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/nbn02>), accessed March 26, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Commission.

² Sallie M. Lentz, "Highlights of Early Harrison County," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (October 1957): 246; Gilbert M. Cuthbertson, "REGULATOR-MODERATOR WAR," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jcr01>), accessed February 10, 2011, Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

³ Randolph B. Campbell, "Population Persistence and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Texas: Harrison County, 1850-1880," *The Journal of Southern History* 48, no. 2 (May 1982): 187.

producing areas in Texas. By 1860, the output of cotton increased by 366 percent from the previous decade and ranked third in all Texas counties. This production prompted the introduction of railroads. The Southern Pacific Railroad was completed in 1858 and connected Marshall, Texas, the Harrison County seat, to Shreveport, Louisiana. It made the transportation of goods to New Orleans faster and more efficient. This railroad was one of only ten other railroads in the entire state prior to the Civil War. Agricultural production boomed in Harrison County because of the large supply of labor, fertile soil, and easy access to markets.⁴

Improvements in transportation and favorable environmental conditions encouraged the growth of slavery in Harrison County. So much so that on the eve of the Civil War, Harrison County claimed the largest slave population in Texas. By 1860, 8,726 slaves were held in the county and slave based agriculture dominated the economic landscape. Slave labor produced 94 percent of the total cotton output for the entire county in 1859. Not only did slaves produce the vast majority of agricultural goods, they also accounted for the most significant economic investment for whites in Harrison County. Slavery was an invaluable part of the local economic system and social structure and was completely disrupted by Emancipation and Reconstruction.⁵

When Union forces arrived in Texas in 1865, Harrison County became a focal point for Union occupation forces and the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands because of its black belt status. During Reconstruction, the main thrust of Freedmen's Bureau efforts in the county centered on getting the freedmen into labor

⁴ Lentz, "Highlights," 250; Campbell, "Human Property: The Negro Slave in Harrison County, 1850-1860," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (April 1973): 389; Railroads were the key to economic growth in the late 19th century see Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 9.

⁵ Cambell, "Human Property," 389-390.

contracts with local landowners. Although this goal benefitted local landowners, resistance to federal encroachment and attempts at equality were met with heavy resistance. White employers took advantage of the freedmen, withheld wages, enforced mobility restrictions on black laborers, and used the threat of violence to ensure black compliance. Most whites in the region approved of this violence. The Bureau leaders attempted to enforce fair treatment of the freedmen, but proved “less than effective” at containing violence, especially outside of the city limits of the county seat, Marshall. One of the Bureau representatives in Marshall, 1st Lt. Isaac M. Beebe, complained that local whites, “upon the slightest provocation beat, knock down, and shoot” freedmen. Ku Klux Klan violence against blacks proliferated. The Klan also targeted freedmen’s schools and burned them to the ground. Lawlessness defined the three and a half years of the Freedmen’s Bureaus efforts in Harrison County, as “outlaws and vigilantes, not federal law, ruled.”⁶

Despite violence and intimidation, freedmen and Republicans remained politically active. Republicans, supported by the large black population that voted for them, dominated local politics from the 1860s up through 1880 and helped local blacks realize their political power. From 1868 to 1879, for example, eleven blacks represented the county in the state legislature.⁷ In response to the political force of “carpet-baggers” and the local black population, the Ku Klux Klan organized in an attempt to gain a political advantage in the county. However, as the editor of the *Tri-Weekly Herald* reported, “The political status of this county is settled for years to come; nothing that we can do will

⁶ Christopher Bean, “‘A Most Singular and Interesting Attempt’: The Freedmen’s Bureau at Marshall, Texas,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 110, no. 4 (April 2007): 469, 473, 485; Smallwood, Crouch, and Peacock, *Murder and Mayhem*, 16.

⁷ Merline Pitre, *Through Many Dangers, Toils and Snares: The Black Leadership of Texas, 1868-1900* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1985), 205-207.

change it.”⁸ Because of the overwhelming black majority in Harrison County, Republicans won local, state, and national elections easily. For example, in the presidential election of 1876, the Republican nominee, Rutherford B. Hayes, carried Harrison County by a margin more than 1,600 votes.⁹

White conservatives did not “redeem” Harrison County until 1880. Local blacks and Republicans continued to win local and state political offices. To regain control of local politics, a coterie of conservative whites formed the Citizens’ Party and began a campaign against blacks and their Republican supporters. During the 1880 county election, allegations of fraud and intimidation were rampant, but a misplaced polling box allowed the Citizens Party to gain complete control of the local government. County Election Officials allegedly placed the polling place for the third precinct outside of the precinct’s jurisdiction. Therefore, the votes cast in the precinct three box were cast by people voting in the wrong precinct. If officials did count these votes, Republicans would remain in control of the county. Harrison County’s Citizens Party contested the election results to the state. Conservative white Democrats dominated state courts and, not surprisingly, declared that the votes would not be counted. Due to a misplaced box, the Citizens Party defeated the Republicans and controlled the county politically. Historian Randolph Campbell described the Citizens Party victory as “a virtual *coup d’état* thwarting majority rule through a trifling technicality.”¹⁰ Local whites realized that violent intimidation was an effective way to limit the political ambition of the black majority. Furthermore, when white Democrats controlled the levers of state and local

⁸ Randolph B. Campbell, *A Southern Community in Crisis: Harrison County, Texas, 1850-1880* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983), 311.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 245-335.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 364.

power, there was no need to fear retribution. Local whites so thoroughly dominated local politics that no blacks represented the county in any state office after 1880 until the 1950s, when the Citizens' Party finally lost political control of the county.

However, the loss of political power did not eliminate all opportunities for local blacks. Education, the chief means of social advancement, flourished in the county. In the two decades following emancipation, churches established two black colleges in the county. In 1873, the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church established Wiley College, and in 1881 the Baptist Home Missionary Society founded Bishop College. Both schools followed the Booker T. Washington approach and focused on vocational and religious training. Wiley College offered courses in printing, farming, shoemaking, gardening, shorthand, typing, cooking, sewing, and housekeeping. According to the 1887 Wiley catalogue, these skills had a "healthy influence" on the black students.¹¹ By 1915, enrollment in Wiley and Bishop reached 755.¹² The vast majority of Harrison County blacks, however, did not attend either school, although local blacks looked up to the students as role models. White residents also supported the industrial education programs promoted by the two black colleges. When introducing Booker T. Washington on October 21, 1911, to a crowd at Wiley College, the former county superintendent of public schools, Chesley Adams, praised Washington and his educational ideology. He also commented on the local black population, stating, "They are intelligent, peaceful and law-abiding, largely because of the influence of these two

¹¹ Michael R. Heintze, *Private Black Colleges in Texas, 1865-1954* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985), 68.

¹² *Ibid.*, 69.

schools.”¹³ In a black belt county, whites viewed vocational education as an important tool that promoted black subordination by channeling blacks into low-level positions.

In spite of the social and political turmoil that followed the Civil War and emancipation, the local economy and population thrived. From 1870 to 1880, Harrison County’s manufacturing sector flourished. Capital investment in manufacturing expanded during the decade from \$43,750 to \$93,275. Although initial growth was slow, the manufacturing sector grew exponentially over the next several decades. From a total investment of \$93,000 in 1880, capital investment in manufacturing grew by more than 700% to \$720,286 by 1890. Growth continued throughout the 1890s, but slowed compared to previous decades. By 1900, the total capital investment in countywide manufacturing came to just over \$1,000,000.¹⁴ By 1904, Harrison County whites boasted of the foundries, mills, nurseries, two wagon factories, soda water apparatus factory, impressive quantities of iron ore, and three banks. More importantly, however, was the fifty-ton cotton oil and seed mill with the capacity to press 45,000 bales of cotton annually.¹⁵

Agricultural production also expanded. Cotton drove agricultural expansion. The total value of agricultural production increased from \$878,745 in 1870 to \$948,421 in 1880. Total agricultural output declined somewhat in the 1880s and fell to \$874,040 by 1890, but rebounded in the next decade and totaled over \$1,520,427 by 1900. Growth seemed almost inevitable in the two decades following 1890 and by 1910 agricultural

¹³ Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock, eds., *The Booker T. Washington Papers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 11: 342.

¹⁴ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, “Texas: TOTAL CAPITAL INVESTED IN MANUFACTURING, 1860-1900,” University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011).

¹⁵ *The Texas Almanac for 1873* (Galveston, TX: Strickland & Clark Stationers, Steam Printers, & Blank Book Manufacturers, 1873), 101; *Texas Almanac & State Industrial Guide 1904* (Galveston, TX: Clark & Courts, 1904), 283-284.

growth climaxed and the total value of all crops totaled \$2,378,144.¹⁶

Accompanying the economic expansion and diversification, more and more people migrated to the county. The most dramatic population growth came during the 1870s when the population nearly doubled from 13,241 to 25,177. Population growth remained steady and by 1910 had grown to 37,243.¹⁷ Although faced with some slumps in overall growth, the trend in Harrison County at the end of the 19th century and the first decade of the 1900s was one of modernization and growth.

As the turn of the century approached, whites looked back at their history of vigilante violence as successful. Through threats of and actual violence, whites ousted the Freedmen's Bureau and the occupation forces of Reconstruction. More importantly, they politically dominated county government in spite of the huge black majority. County blacks, however, still pushed the limits of emancipation by seeking social equality. Whites utilized mob violence, including lynching, to maintain control over the large black community. Two lynchings occurred between 1890 and 1910, both of which involved blacks who had killed white police officers. In a black belt county, such overt contempt of white authority had to be combated by the white minority decisively. The result was a lynching, and those who partook in the mob were never punished. The unwillingness of local authorities to counteract lynch mobs and the lack of local condemnation suggests that most whites in the region supported the practice.

Whites in the county took slights from blacks very seriously in an effort to

¹⁶ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: ESTIMATED VALUE OF ALL FARM PRODUCTS, 1870-1900," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011); Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: TOTAL VALUE OF ALL CROPS, 1910-1930," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011).

¹⁷ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: TOTAL POPULATION, 1870-1930," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011).

maintain their domination of the black majority. Even simple expressions of black manhood, like talking back to whites, resulted in violent retribution. On April 27, 1897, Hal Wright and his son, Paul, proceeded to the local courthouse after being summoned to appear before the magistrate. Authorities charged Wright with the crime of having “words with white men the day previous.”¹⁸ Public displays of disrespect by blacks against whites often resulted in violence as whites struggled to maintain their superiority in the face of increasingly resilient blacks.¹⁹ Such minor violations of social customs demanded strong reaction by local whites, especially in a black belt county, in which they were a numerical minority. On the way to the courthouse a small mob of four white men “met and accosted” the Wrights, killed Paul, and wounded Hal.²⁰ Hal fled, only to return a few hours later with a friend, Bob Brown, to recover the body of the deceased child. Upon their return, another mob of masked men finished the job, killing the wounded Hal Wright and fatally wounding Brown. A crowd of nearly seventy-five curious onlookers watched as the white mob murdered the men in broad daylight. Investigators arrived on the scene the next day, but “the officers could not find one who knew who did the shooting” and the ephemeral investigation came to naught.²¹ The lynching near Harleton, in the northwest corner of the county, did not attract major attention in the local paper and did not appear to cause major disruptions in county. Whites had little sympathy for any black who stepped out of place and often used violence as a means to enforce social mores and racial hierarchies.

The lack of police protection caused blacks to distrust local police, oftentimes

¹⁸ “Additional News of the Killing Near Harleton,” *The (Marshall) Evening Messenger*, April 28, 1897.

¹⁹ Jane Dailey, “Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres in Danville, Virginia,” *The Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 3 (August 1997): 557.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ “Additional News of the Killing Near Harleton,” *The (Marshall) Evening Messenger*, April 28, 1897.

resulting in the murder of police officers. For example, on October 1, 1903, Walter Davis, a local black man, was arrested by Constables Charles Hayes and Sid Keasler. Although Hayes and Keasler arrested Davis, he did not go quietly and “when some distance from the place of arrest they [Hayes and Keasler] were fired on by negroes from ambush.”²² During the ambush, Davis’ brother and some of their friends shot Constable Hayes. Following the constable’s murder, authorities arrested Walter Davis, Mich Davis, and their stepfather, Nathan Hilton, and placed them in the county jail at Marshall.

The murder of a white law officer by a group of blacks epitomized the major fear among southern whites: armed and organized blacks willing to kill whites. While the three black men sat in jail, news of the constable’s murder spread. Men from adjoining towns crowded into Marshall, “and by 7 o’clock it was plain to everyone that an effort would be made to hang one or more of the Negroes.” In response to the growing mass of agitated men, Sheriff Calloway, according to reports, called “out the Marshall Company to protect the jail and prisoners;” however, the militia did not assemble quickly enough. Only six militiamen had gathered by 7:30, but in a move that suggests local law enforcement’s complicity in the lynching, all six men left their post together and went to the local telegraph office to send a message. At the exact moment that the guards left their post, a man “on the square raised his hand above his head whistled a low whistle, and quickly half a dozen men closed in around him.” These six men, along with an unspecified number of other spectators, grabbed a telephone pole, broke down the jail wall, entered the jail, and brought Walter Davis out with a noose around his neck. Davis was marched to a nearby bridge, hung, and “a number of shots were fired into his body as it hung.” Following the lynching, “the mob dispersed as quietly as it assembled...” and

²² “Shot Dead From Ambush,” *The (Marshall) Evening Messenger*, October 1, 1903.

life in Marshall continued as though nothing had happened.²³

Local authorities appeared to make only token efforts to maintain a semblance of law and order in their city. The actions of the militia and the authorities to enforce law and order were nothing short of negligent. In addition to the suspicious activity of the six-man militia, law enforcement was also noticeably absent from the affair, thus leaving the two black prisoners at the mercy of the mob. As the *Marshall Messenger* reported, “The Musketeers got out on very short notice, but the mob...got to the jail and had the prisoner on shorter notice.” In addition to the tardiness of the local militia, the sheriff and other law officers did nothing to stop the mob. Even though “the mob had been organizing for hours,” the sheriff and many of his officers had apparently gone fishing.²⁴ Far from coincidental, these circumstances demonstrate local authorities’ approval and complicity in the lynching.

Blacks from outside the county who were unfamiliar were almost as troubling to southern whites as were armed and organized local blacks. Itinerant blacks had no local family ties, no “restraining, taming, legitimizing white-man link to the white man’s world,” and in the eyes of many southern whites, had poor character, and often corrupted local blacks.²⁵ Therefore, when three peripatetic blacks killed a local sheriff, whites alleviated their fears through violence. On April 26, 1909, Deputy Sheriff Mark Huffman raided a craps game with Deputy Constable Alex Cargill. During the raid, both deputies were shot, Huffman died and Cargill was seriously injured. “Creole Mose” Hill, Mat Chase, and Jesse Jefferson, all from Louisiana and with no local ties, emerged as the three prime suspects. Authorities captured the black men in Wascom, Texas, twenty

²³ “Work of Mob,” *The (Marshall) Evening Messenger*, October 2, 1903.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Williamson, *Crucible of Race*, 57-58; Buenger, *Modern South*, 22-23.

miles east of Marshall, charged the black men with the murder, and took them to the infamous county jail in Marshall. The militia from Longview was called in to “take charge and prevent a lynching but it [was] thought there [was] no danger of a mob dealing out summary justice.”²⁶ Nonetheless, as an extra precaution, local authorities closed all saloons and ensured a “speedy trial for slayers of Huffman.”²⁷

Despite the superficial attempts of authorities to thwart any semblance of mob violence, local papers stoked the flames of discontent. The *Marshall Messenger* painted a negative picture of the black prisoners. One report emphasized that “a worthless gambling cap-follower” had murdered Sheriff Huffman and further warned, “That if the crime went unpunished, similar crimes might be committed at any time.”²⁸ Many southern whites believed that all black criminals threatened the safety of the community, and especially white womanhood.²⁹ For several days it appeared the law would take its due course. Men from all over the region flooded into Marshall, but “the assurance of a speedy trial satisfied most of them, and many returned home.”³⁰

Authorities essentially promised a quick conviction and death for the three black men, but the sluggish nature of the legal system failed to appease the white community. The grand jury was called and issued bills of indictment against the three men for murder, assault to murder, and for robbery with use of firearms to murder. With charges being brought against them, authorities felt the threat of mob violence passed and the militia was relieved from duty at 11:30 a.m. on August 29. “Now that the critical moment has passed and the machinery of the law well in motion,” one reporter stated, “it is hoped that

²⁶ “3 Negroes In Jail For Marshall Killing,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 27, 1909.

²⁷ “Speedy Trial For Slayers Of Huffman,” *The Marshall Messenger*, April 27, 1909.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch*, 117.

³⁰ “Speedy Trial For Slayers Of Huffman,” *The Marshall Messenger*, April 27, 1909.

no further talk of mob law will be indulged in and the law will be allowed to takes its course.”³¹ The man responsible for relieving the militia was the brother of the injured officer Alex Cargill. Three hours after the militia left, a mob stormed the jail and lynched Hill, Chase, and Jefferson. Again, local law enforcement allowed the mob to lynch black men after the wheels of justice began spinning. Whites did not lynch in lieu of ineffective courts, but instead demonstrated to the black majority that legal protection and rights was inaccessible to blacks. No condemnation of local law enforcement surfaced, but the local newspaper praised the mob as “quiet and orderly.”³²

The potential for further violence amplified as the economic growth from previous decades disappeared during the 1910s. Agricultural production, the base of Harrison County’s economy, plummeted. The total value of all crops produced throughout the decade fell by just over seventy-five percent from \$2,378,144 to a meager \$578,545.³³ The decline in the overall value of crops pushed more people into farm tenancy. From 1910 to 1920, the number of tenants rose from 2,381 to 3,353, with the overwhelming majority, eighty-two percent, being black; however, the number of white tenants also increased during the same period from 381 to 581.³⁴ Tenancy meant black dependency on white property owners, increasing debt, and single-crop agriculture.

Although the economic downturn hit black farmers the hardest, whites projected their fear about harsh economic times onto local blacks and blamed the weak agricultural

³¹ “Cases Are Set For Monday Afternoon,” *The Marshall Messenger*, April 29, 1909.

³² “Taken From Jail And Hung,” *The Marshall Messenger*, April 30, 1909.

³³ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, “Texas: TOTAL VALUE OF ALL CROPS, 1910-1930,” University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011).

³⁴ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, “Texas: TOTAL FARMS OPERATED BY NEGRO AND OTHER NON-WHITE TENANTS, 1910-1920,” University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011); Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, “Texas: TOTAL FARMS OPERATED BY TENANTS, 1910-1920,” <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011).

returns on poor farming techniques and the abundance of tenant farmers. “The tenant farmers,” one local posited, “ruin the soil by growing the same crop on it year after year and seldom if ever replenishing it with fertilizer of any sort.”³⁵ In actuality, local tenants had no control over the crops they produced. White property owners demanded tenants grow cotton on all available land.³⁶ The author further expressed local discontent with the economy, stating, “The total value of farm property in this county is on \$6,683,461 and it should be ten times that and would be ten times that if we had better farming methods.”³⁷

Despite the faltering agricultural economy, the Harrison County population grew by 6,322 inhabitants during this period.³⁸ Although struggling economically, the county still offered many opportunities that most rural places did not. Education, easy access to world markets, and a burgeoning manufacturing sector brought in migrants from around the region. This population growth further strained the struggling economy. The increase of people coupled with the decline in the agricultural economy corresponded with an eruption of violence aimed against local African-Americans.

Rough economic times impeded rural white males from providing for their families, driving these frustrated men to find another way to protect their women and children: eliminating the purported threat of rapacious blacks.³⁹ In October 1911, whites in Harrison County came to the “defense” of “Mrs. Green,” a local white woman. The *Marshall Messenger* reported that Will Ollie, a twenty-four year old black man, attacked

³⁵ “Tenant Farmers Too Numerous,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 26, 1913.

³⁶ For a brief discussion of problems faced by tenant farmers in Texas see Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 328, 349-350, 384-385.

³⁷ “Tenant Farmers Too Numerous,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 26, 1913.

³⁸ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, “Texas: TOTAL POPULATION, 1870-1930,” University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011).

³⁹ Tolnay and Beck, *A Festival of Violence*, 70; Williamson, *Crucible of Race*, 183-184.

Mrs. Green and threw a rope around her neck in an attempt to choke her.⁴⁰ Mrs. Green lay prostrate on the ground while Ollie went to her house to get matches. As he came to the house, he was startled by Mrs. Green's daughter, who alerted neighbors and the local sheriff. Ollie fled, but for several days following the incident, hundreds of local men scoured the region "for miles in every direction in search of him [Ollie]."⁴¹ During the search, the local press described Ollie negatively. The paper even attacked Ollie's family background, postulating, "Will Ollie's father...has spent a good portion of his life in the penitentiary."⁴²

These character attacks did not stop with Ollie and his father and, as one local editorial illustrated, were aimed at the entire black population of the county. During the manhunt for Will Ollie, the local paper printed a commentary entitled "The Negro in the Country." This commentary illustrated the perception held by some whites regarding the region's black population. The writer explained "the conditions that surround us in this section of Texas," and offered advice for rural citizens who lived outside of the protection of urban law enforcement. The writer stated, "No white woman is safe at any time in the country with the low, vicious negro for a neighbor." He argued that law-abiding African Americans were rare among the community and concluded that "when a negro of the brute class attacks a white woman or a white man for brute reasons it is time to eliminate the brute."⁴³ The Ollie story is emblematic of southern claims of white women's victimhood, regardless of the implausibility of the claims, in times of economic recession.

⁴⁰ "Negro Attacked White Woman," *The Marshall Messenger*, October 27, 1911.

⁴¹ "Will Ollie Was Hung," *The Marshall Messenger*, October 30, 1911.

⁴² "Negro Attacked White Woman," *The Marshall Messenger*, October 27, 1911.

⁴³ "The Negro In The Country," *The Marshall Messenger*, October 28, 1909.

An editorial in the *Marshall Messenger* expressed the fears of whites living in a black belt county. Blacks comprised around sixty percent of the total population of the county throughout much of the late 19th and early 20th century. This made whites uncomfortable. The best way to deal with the “brutes in the Negro race,” argued the commentator, was “by sheer Caucasian domination.” The solution offered up by the commentator was to encourage mass white settlement in the county in an effort to “crowd him [blacks] out, show him that he is not wanted and then give good white men his place.” However, whites, in the author’s opinion, would not settle in the county “unless we...rid ourselves of the Negro brutes.”⁴⁴

In this atmosphere of fear and resentment, a lynching was imminent. Local posses captured Ollie twenty-two miles west of Marshall in Longview, Texas. Upon capture, the angry mob, not local authorities, hustled Ollie into a car and brought him back to Mrs. Green’s residence. By this time, “it was pretty generally known in Marshall and the surrounding country and a mob began to form in the neighborhood of the Green residence.” Mrs. Green identified Ollie as the perpetrator, essentially signing his death warrant. The mob hurried the young black man to the Texas and Pacific railroad and continued their interrogation. Ollie denied all accusations and even implicated another local black man, Jim Nesbitt, but to no avail. According to *the Marshall Messenger*, “Ollie was swung up to a limb and hanged” by a mob of several hundred men at about 2:15 in the morning. Reports described the mob as “quiet and orderly and not a shot or loud, boisterous word was said to have been heard.” Although several hundred people witnessed the lynching of Will Ollie, the coroner reported Ollie died at the hands of

⁴⁴ Ibid.; This type of rhetoric was common in the South at this time. The most notable proponent of this racist rhetoric was Mississippi governor James K. Vardaman. See William F. Holmes, *The White Chief: James Kimble Vardaman* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970); Oshinsky, 85-106.

“parties unknown.”⁴⁵ Authorities did not question anyone, including Mrs. Green, the alleged victim. County officials also did nothing to apprehend the lynchers, suggesting many of them participated in or knew members of the mob.

Defending the white community also encompassed protection from black murderers. Thus, in October 1912, when authorities found white Harrison County resident Paul Strange murdered in Elysian Fields, located eighteen miles southeast of Marshall, Texas, authorities understood a lynching was imminent. Following the murder, authorities quickly arrested a local black man named Tennie Sneed on unsubstantiated evidence and placed him in the Gregg County jail in Longview, Texas, twenty-three miles west of Marshall. Harrison County officials moved him to avoid tensions, with the hope that locals would cool down with Sneed out of the county. Allegedly, authorities did this to protect Sneed from threats of mob violence.⁴⁶ The fears of authorities were well founded, as ten men visited the Harrison County jail around midnight on February 9, 1912. According to the jailer on duty, these men were there to make an “inquiry about the negro.”⁴⁷ The men were from the same neighborhood where both Paul Strange and Tennie Sneed resided. In addition to the ten men from Elysian Fields, “many more in the city...came here [to the Harrison County jail] for the same purpose.”⁴⁸ Some local authorities, however, told local whites where Sneed was incarcerated and a small group of men quickly traveled by train to Longview to verify the rumors regarding Sneed’s location. Less than six months after the lynching of Will Ollie, authorities understood that

⁴⁵ “Will Ollie Was Hung,” *The Marshall Messenger*, October 30, 1911.

⁴⁶ A number of lynchings occurred in Longview prior to Sneed’s incarceration. White mobs lynched Dudley Morgan on May 22, 1902, Julius Stevens on March 14, 1905, and Albert Fields April 9, 1908. How safe Sneed would be in the Gregg County jail is open to conjecture, but clearly, he was not completely removed from the threat of lynching.

⁴⁷ “Men Were After Sneed,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 13, 1912.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

lynching remained a real threat. Therefore, authorities acted proactively to eliminate the threat of mob violence and preemptively removed Sneed to the state penitentiary at Rusk for “safe keeping.”⁴⁹

Not to be deterred, local whites’ thirst for black blood was satisfied nonetheless. On the night of February 15, 1912, authorities found Mary Jackson and George Sanders hanging from a limb.⁵⁰ Jackson and Sanders lived in the same house as Sneed and whites accused them of furnishing Sneed with the gun used to murder Paul Strange. The mob lynched the two blacks near the place where Strange was murdered. According to the county commissioner, Sanders was sixty years old and “always considered a good negro,” and the forty-year-old Jackson “protested all along” that they had no involvement in the murder of Paul Strange.⁵¹ While locals “protected” white women during the difficult economic times, they held no regard for black women. It did not matter to whites if their victims were innocent or guilty; a white man died at the hands of a black man and someone had to pay. The mob would have their vengeance and until they did, no blacks were safe.

Authorities called a grand jury to investigate the killing of Paul Strange, George Sanders, and Mary Jackson.⁵² According to reports, even though the grand jury examined several witnesses, it failed to find sufficient evidence to indict any member of the lynch mob. Black life was cheap in the black belt county and the grand jury demonstrated that blacks fell outside of the protection of the local legal system. However, the grand jury

⁴⁹ “Tennie Sneed Safe In Prison,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 9, 1912.

⁵⁰ “Two Negroes Were Hung,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 15, 1912.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² “Grand Jury To Finish Work Today,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 21, 1912.

did find sufficient evidence to indict Tennie Sneed for the murder of Paul Strange.⁵³ The indictment against Sneed meant a trial would be held in Marshall.

In the wake of the Sanders and Jackson lynching, authorities limited the threat of mob violence in an unprecedented manner. Two militia companies, the Marshall Musketeers and the Timpson Company, were brought in to protect the jail. Not only did authorities protect the county jail, but District Judge H. T. Lyttleton also “ordered that the local express company offices not to deliver any whisky, beer or intoxicating beverages.”⁵⁴ In addition, authorities searched everyone in the vicinity of the courthouse for firearms and other weapons. Authorities hoped these steps would decrease the threat of mob violence and guarantee a fair trial would occur in Marshall. It appears that the precautions worked—“Quiet Prevails About The Jail” ran across the front page of the local newspaper as local militiamen turned Marshall into a makeshift military camp.⁵⁵

Authorities had to defend this exceptional defense of a black criminal to local whites. They quickly proclaimed that their actions did not stem from sympathy for the alleged murderer. One editorial vehemently assured the public that “Tennie Sneed...is not being protected as much as are law and order.” The editorial comforted citizens of Harrison County by explaining that authorities’ actions represented not the protection of African-Americans, but more so the integrity of the state and local laws. It identified two things that local authorities and citizens must understand if the sanctity of law and order was to prevail in Harrison County. Law enforcement, according to the editorial, must enforce laws “without regard to the standing of anybody in any way, and see that no illegitimate law, like that of the mob, interfere with the action of the state law.” The

⁵³ “Three Men Indicted,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 22, 1912.

⁵⁴ “Sneed Here For Trial,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 26, 1912.

⁵⁵ “Quiet Prevails About The Jail,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 27, 1912.

writer pleaded with the citizenry to understand that “if we expect to maintain decency we must obey the law.”⁵⁶

Local whites apparently bought the argument and the trial of Tennie Sneed commenced. Sneed’s lawyers first requested a change of venue stating as justifications “the fact that the defendant is a negro and had killed a white man, the prominence of the Strange family, the hanging of the two negroes...the attempt to get Sneed by the mob, newspaper articles...and various other reasons, it was impossible to get a fair and impartial trial in Harrison county.”⁵⁷ In spite of these claims, the local judge denied the request and the trial continued as originally planned, in Marshall. Tennie Sneed claimed he killed Paul Strange in self-defense and both the prosecution and the defense brought in witnesses who either vouched for or argued against Sneed’s claim. The burden to substantiate Sneed’s claim was based mostly on Sneed’s own testimony, because many witnesses were hesitant to testify on the defendant’s behalf. According to the *Marshall Messenger*, the defense team submitted a document that suggested why no witnesses would come forward. This document showed “that the two negro witnesses of the defense had been hung and could not be brought into court...witnesses had [also] been whipped and threatened.”⁵⁸ Sneed’s defense team realized that vigilante violence could threaten the legal system in many ways.

Upon hearing testimony from local witnesses, the judge handed the case over to the jury. The jury deliberated for two days and returned to the courtroom deadlocked. They told Judge Lyttleton that they could not reach an agreement. Ten of the jurors

⁵⁶ “Protecting The Law Of Texas,” *The Marshall Messenger*, March 5, 1912.

⁵⁷ “Prejudice Alleged,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 29, 1913.

⁵⁸ “Sneed Jury Has Not Agreed,” *The Marshall Messenger*, March 5, 1912.

believed Sneed was guilty and two wanted an acquittal.⁵⁹ Despite the lack of evidence and intimidation of witnesses, the jury refused to find Sneed not guilty. The judge accepted this and demanded a retrial. Authorities did not release Sneed. Instead, Sheriff Sanders then took Sneed back to Rusk penitentiary for safekeeping as he awaited a new trial.⁶⁰ “The War Is Over” exclaimed one local newspaper.⁶¹ Sneed was now the responsibility of the state of Texas, authorities relieved the militia, and the judge dissolved the ban on alcohol in Marshall. “Marshall,” the report continued, “is again at its normal condition that existed before the Negro was brought to the jail ten days ago.”⁶² Authorities seemed more willing to protect Sneed only because whites already wreaked vengeance on two blacks for the murder of Paul Strange, and further vigilantism could descend into real chaos.

As the economic recession deepened, even blacks accused of petty crimes were targets for white frustrations. In February 1913, two young black men, Robert Perry and George Redden, faced trial for theft of a hog. Larceny carried serious penalties for blacks in the South that sometimes resulted in harsh prison sentences and even death.⁶³ Following their appearance before local Justice of the Peace W. S. Baldwin in Karnack, Texas, Constable Ed Odom escorted the men seventeen miles to the Harrison County jail in Marshall to await Grand Jury action. The jury would have undoubtedly found the two men guilty, but in the year after the Tennie Sneed debacle, locals took the law into their own hands. En route to Marshall, a mob of whites “overpowered” Constable Odom and

⁵⁹ “Sneed Jury Disagreed,” *The Marshall Messenger*, March 4, 1912.

⁶⁰ It is unclear what happened to Tennie Sneed after he was placed in Rusk Penitentiary.

⁶¹ “The War Is Over,” *The Marshall Messenger*, March 6, 1913.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ The state of Mississippi executed eight black men for theft, but executed no whites accused of stealing. See Oshinsky, *Worse Than Slavery*, 208.

killed Perry and Redden.⁶⁴ Authorities' commitment to protecting black prisoners proved ephemeral. Just one year after authorities had demonstrated their ability to protect blacks in custody from lynch mobs, Harrison County authorities confirmed that their loyalties laid with lynch mobs and not with law and order.

Even trivial offenses such as attempted burglary soon became reason enough to lynch blacks, as stories and allegations of rape became more far-fetched. By 1917, whites became increasingly desperate and in their attempts to demonstrate their manhood in tough economic times they began to conjure up the black rapist more frequently. In late August 1917, Harrison County authorities arrested nineteen-year-old Charles Jones for burglary. Allegedly, Jones cut the screen out of the window of Reverend Heggins' home and entered. The Reverend was not home, but his daughter and wife were. It is unclear why Jones entered the house, or why he left. Authorities arrested him eleven miles southeast of Marshall in Elysian Fields and took him to the county jail in Marshall, where Jones confessed to the attempted burglary.

While Jones sat in jail, tensions escalated. In addition to attempted burglary, Heggins' wife and daughter claimed Jones "approached the bed and touched the hand of one of the young ladies."⁶⁵ Local county sheriff, John C. Sanders, understood the threat that accompanied the alleged crime and "had jail [sic] doubly guarded."⁶⁶ This did not deter local white from "protecting" the white women. On the next day, at about noon, five men with handkerchiefs covering their faces entered the jail. This small force of locals apparently overpowered the large force of guards on duty and forced Raymond

⁶⁴ "Killed By Mob," *The Marshall Messenger*, February 25, 1913.

⁶⁵ "Jail Forced By Five Men Today," *The Marshall Messenger*, August 22, 1917.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Cain, the jailer, to open the cell that held Charles Jones.⁶⁷ The mob then hurried Jones into a waiting automobile parked outside of the jail and headed south. Raymond Cain, the jailor, accompanied by the local sheriff proceeded to chase down the small mob, but unfortunately for Charles Jones, the two men were too late and “Jones had been hung” by the time they arrived.⁶⁸

Local authorities seemed utterly incapable, or more likely unwilling, of defending Jones. In spite of Sheriff Sanders’ inability to protect Jones, he knew “who composed the mob,” and vowed, “that they will be prosecuted.”⁶⁹ Initially, Sheriff Sanders appeared to be a man of his word and filed charges against five men for their alleged involvement in the lynching of Charles Jones. Following their arrest, however, the five men were released on bond of \$5,000 each and “since the grand jury has not yet met, there is so far no formal charge against them.”⁷⁰ The grand jury proved as committed to law and order as the men who guarded the jail.

As the number of lynch victims climbed higher, some local whites feared this trend. Following the lynching, an editorial was published that illustrated the changing mood in Harrison County. An editorial in the *Marshall Messenger* expressed concerns regarding the prevalence of unchecked vigilante violence in Harrison County. The author began with the question, “Will the day ever come in Harrison County when mob violence will have ceased and give place to the proper execution of the law?” The outcry following the lynching of a man accused of assault or murder of a white citizen was limited and did not seem to alarm whites, but the murder of a black man for theft of a hog

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “Arrested Men Released on Bond,” *The Marshall Messenger*, August 28, 1917.

worried some. As the author stated, “to deliberately take the life of a man, a negro...for no other purpose...than stealing a hog makes the value of the man that of a hog.”

Although appearing in favor of the black man’s life, the author’s concern actually focused on the fate of white men if mob violence continued in the county. The author worried, “human life will become cheaper and cheaper and white men will be killed because they do not vote for certain people and we will have a reign of terror.” Mob violence was an acceptable form of social control, but some whites feared the mobs would eventually turn against them.⁷¹

As the motivations for lynching became increasingly trivial, local blacks struggled to make sense of their plight. It is difficult to gauge black responses to lynching and mob violence in Harrison County. No black press existed and, if the African-American community did protest, no records remain. According to census records, the black population continued to grow from the 1870s to the 1930s, which suggests no large-scale black out-migration occurred as a response to racial violence.

However, in 2001, local black man George Dawson published an autobiography that offered insight into the lives of blacks in Harrison County. Newspapers provide important insight into life in Harrison County, but as Dawson noticed when looking at Marshall newspapers, “this paper was not about the Marshall that I knew...[articles] only had white people in them.” Dawson discussed the lynching of his friend Pete Spillman in the opening chapter of his book. He also noticed that nothing in the local paper discussed this lynching. “I don’t even find that in the newspaper. They didn’t talk about those

⁷¹ “The Affair At Karnack,” *The Marshall Messenger*, February 26, 1913.

things. I guess I am the only man alive that knows the truth about Pete Spillman.”⁷²

Dawson’s retelling of the lynching of Spillman illustrated the effects racial violence, especially lynching, had on local blacks. Dawson described Pete as an average black man who picked cotton and did other odd jobs for local whites. According to Dawson, a local white woman accused Spillman of raping her and the mob was determined to “make that boy pay and show all the niggers that they can’t get away with this.” The author specifically remembered the lack of effort on behalf of the local sheriff to stop the mob as they cheered and laughed at the sight of a lynched black man “like it was a picnic.” As a young boy who did not fully understand the implications of Jim Crow, Dawson remembered his feelings immediately following the lynching. “This hurt...I cried and my daddy wrapped his arms around me and held me to his chest...I cried for me. I cried for Pete. I cried for the little ones and for Mama and Papa. I cried for all the pain that there was in this world. Papa had his own tears and he just held me.” The impact of lynching on blacks was clear in Dawson’s account. Both the image and message of the lynching were obvious, even to a young black child, and etched into his memory: “I didn’t forget...I’m one hundred and one years old now. But I still remember.”⁷³

Lynching and racial violence did not just haunt the memories of local blacks, but also affected the way they lived their everyday lives. Segregation had legal backing was codified, and predictable. However, lynching was arbitrary and unpredictable. Any one, at any time could face the threat of mob violence which ensured that blacks lived in fear of upsetting local whites and local customs. As Dawson remembered, racial violence was

⁷² George Dawson and Richard Glaubman, *Life is so Good: One Man’s Extraordinary Journey Through the 20th Century and How He Learned to Read at Age 98* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 44-45.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8, 10-11, 13.

not an everyday occurrence, but “we could always feel” the threat of violence lingering.⁷⁴ The fear of mob violence and Dawson’s memories of the lynching of Pete for associating with a white woman discouraged Dawson from interacting with white women as much as he could. When approached by a young white girl on a farm that he worked on, Dawson, even as a young boy, knew he should not engage in conversation with the girl. In fact, Dawson refused to even talk with the white girl. He “kept [his] mouth shut...[he] knew that saying too much could just cause trouble.”⁷⁵ Dawson knew that interacting with a white girl could upset any number of whites and, he remembered, “It’s a white man that will decide when a colored man is in trouble.”⁷⁶ Dawson’s story tells us that lynchings had the desired effect on blacks, especially in terms of propagating a desire to stay away from white women and a respectful fear for the unbridled authority of white men.

Following a decade of recession, the Harrison County economy resurged throughout the 1920s. Between 1920 and 1930, capital investment in manufacturing rose from \$2,260,828 to \$2,688,548.⁷⁷ More importantly, however, the agricultural sector recovered. The total value of all crops skyrocketed by more than 700%. Starting at the depressed value of only \$578,545 in 1920, by the end of the decade the value of all crops totaled a staggering \$4,341,741.⁷⁸ Harrison County’s population also continued to increase during the 1920s, growing by 12.3 percent and totaling 48,937.⁷⁹

As the status of the economy changed, so did the character of mob violence in

⁷⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, “Texas: County-Level Results for 1930,” University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011).

⁷⁸ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, “Texas: TOTAL VALUE OF ALL CROPS, 1910-1930,” University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011).

⁷⁹ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, “Texas: TOTAL POPULATION, 1870-1930,” University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed March 26, 2011).

Harrison County. In previous decades, local mobs only targeted local blacks, but in the 1920s, mob violence threatened local whites as well. This was a direct result of the second Ku Klux Klan, which emerged between 1915 and 1924. The Klan of the 1920s differed from the Klan of Reconstruction and attracted a more broad-based coalition of support among white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. The revitalized Klan of the 1920s championed anti-Catholicism, white supremacy, anti-Semitism, anti-radicalism, anti-immigration, and a “drive to maintain crumbling Victorian standards of personal conduct.”⁸⁰

The Klan steadily grew in influence in Texas during the early 1920s. The maintenance of Victorian values became the “most powerful stimulus for the prodigious growth of the Klan in Texas.”⁸¹ The Klan quickly became a dominant force in Texas. It challenged the state and local political structure and dictated community mores. In 1922, for example, Texans elected Earle B. Mayfield, an open supporter of the KKK, to the United States Senate. At the local level, the Klan became so dominant that in Dallas, former governor Jim Ferguson reported, the Klan “elected nearly all the county officials.”⁸²

The Klan also grew in response to increased organizational efforts by Texas blacks. Beginning in 1918, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People organized a strong membership drive in Texas in an effort to eradicate lynching and end political, social, and economic discrimination. Across the state branches opened in cities such as Houston and Dallas, and in more rural locations like Marshall. Locally,

⁸⁰ Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 19.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 25.

the NAACP officially organized in January 1919. Fifty blacks comprised the initial charter members, but by the end of the year, membership had risen to ninety-seven. White vigilance committees formed to control the increasingly organized and boisterous black community. Their efforts appear to have succeeded, because the local NAACP chapter did not survive to the end of 1920.⁸³

The organization of vigilance committees culminated in the formation of a Harrison County chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. The local Klan chapter 168 announced its presence on January 27, 1922. Upwards of 10,000 residents gathered on the streets of Marshall as the Klan paraded through the town. Onlookers watched in subdued fascination as three horsemen carrying a cross led by 371 “cloaked, hooded men marched through the streets of downtown.”⁸⁴

Klan 168 also pursued an all out campaign to gain support and members among the citizens of Harrison County. In a published statement in the local Marshall newspaper, the Klan announced its mission and encouraged locals to join. The statement challenged the manhood of locals and described the quality of their members as:

men whose constant thought is MY COUNTRY; may she ever be right, and never wrong, but right or wrong, MY COUNTY; men who teach their children to see in the nation’s flag the sacrifice of martyrs on the altar of liberty, justice and freedom; the eternal vow of a proud race that America shall be white, the fond hope of our souls, that America is the hope of humanity from the oppression of tyrants and shackles of hierarchy. Men who believe in true freedom of conscience and teach their children that the Holy Bible is the book of life and the true guide to their faith and practice.⁸⁵

The Klan put on concerts and banquets to help gain local support, and as a result it enjoyed the approbation of many citizens in Harrison County. For example, on

⁸³ Reich, “Soldiers of Democracy,” 1500, 1503.

⁸⁴ “Marshall’s Battle Begins,” *The Marshall News Messenger*, April 18, 2009.

⁸⁵ “Klan in Seven Counties Assembled Issue Letter,” *The Marshall Morning News*, February 28, 1922.

September 22, 1922, the Klan held a rally in Harrison County just four miles outside of Marshall where “1000 of the hooded figures were present, and that 102 were being initiated into the order.”⁸⁶ Through such elaborate spectacles, the Klan made their presence known to citizens of Harrison County.

Reminiscent of punishments in the antebellum South, the local Ku Klux Klan turned to the whipping post as a form of social control. The *Marshall Morning News* reported on March 7, 1922, that a small mob “caught a negro...who had some booze on him, strapped him to a log and gave him 100 licks of the lash.”⁸⁷ Mack Abney reported that the mob assaulted the black man in an effort to end bootlegging in the county.

Klan mobs often turned deadly. A local black man, Isaiah Sanders, had his feet tied to one tree and his hands bound to another tree with his face on the ground. The mob whipped his legs, back, and shoulders for two hours. The beating was so severe that Sanders died a few hours later. The Klan attacked Sanders because he allegedly insulted Robert Green, a local white property owner, and “called him a liar” after Green accused Sanders of mismanagement of his crops.⁸⁸ White landowners throughout the south consistently cheated black tenants out of their fair share of the harvested crop. When blacks questioned the fraudulent practices of white property owners, the result was often deadly.⁸⁹

Ku Klux Klan no. 168, however, also targeted local whites who did not comply with traditional Victorian customs. According to historian Charles Alexander, the Klan of

⁸⁶ “Report Ku Klux Hold Big Meet Near Marshall,” *The Marshall Morning News*, September 22, 1922.

⁸⁷ “Unmasked Men Give Negro 100 Licks of Lash,” *The Marshall Morning News*, March, 7, 1922.

⁸⁸ “Negro Beaten To Death With A Leather Strap,” *The Marshall Morning News*, July 17, 1924.

⁸⁹ Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 131-132.

the 1920s focused more on “moral authoritarianism” than racial superiority.⁹⁰ The KKK demonstrated this authority through threats and outright violence. In Harrison County, at least fifteen white citizens received warning letters from the Klan due to their breach of proper social ideals promoted by the KKK. Local white business owner Ray Daniels became the first victim of outright vigilante Klan justice in Harrison County. On February 20, 1922, the Klan abducted Daniels as he left the Marshall post office. Daniels “was knocked on the head, loaded in an auto that had no lights burning or number showing, carried a half mile or more out of town, partially stripped, tarred and feathered, brought back to town, dumped out on the sidewalk, bloody and wounded.”⁹¹ The abductors then dropped Daniels on the steps of the Marshall National Bank at the feet of Chief Sheriff’s Deputy Ellis Johnson. Although the men were not hooded, Daniels had previously received orders from the KKK to leave town. Many citizens, including the members of the Marshall Chamber of Commerce and the Marshall Rotary Club, concluded that the Klan was behind the attacks.

The Klan attack on a local white troubled many citizens of Harrison County. In an editorial in the local newspaper, one citizen argued that the Klan directly threatened the laws of the United States. The Klan, the writer argued, threatened the sanctity of the United States government and “the fundamental doctrines of our republic and if persisted will bring on an era of anarchy.”⁹² Another plea to let law and order prevail in Harrison County came a few days after the abduction of Daniels. The author pleaded, “Let us be law abiding citizens and co-operate with our officers and courts, in punishing criminals as

⁹⁰ Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, vii.

⁹¹ “The Klan in Operation,” *The Marshall Morning News*, February 22, 1922.

⁹² *Ibid.*

prescribed by our sufficient LAW.”⁹³ The abduction of Ray Daniels caused an outcry among many whites in ways that mob violence against local blacks did not. The earlier fear that mob violence would not be reserved for local blacks had come true: whites now faced the looming threat of mob violence.

The fear of local Klan domination encompassed more than just vigilante justice, and reflected concerns for KKK political domination. Klan membership throughout the state exploded in the 1920s and by 1922 the total state membership was between 75,000 and 90,000.⁹⁴ The Ku Klux Klan became a political powerhouse that controlled many local, state, and national political races. According to one estimate, the Ku Klux Klan held the majority of the state House of Representatives in 1923 and, in the opinion of some locals, “overwhelmingly rule[d] the house.”⁹⁵ The Klan was also a local political force. As one reported exclaimed, “The Klan is no longer something to be looked on as being in Atlanta. Its [sic] here in Texas, here in Marshall.”⁹⁶ The Klan penetrated all aspects of local politics and even “invaded the courthouse,” to the extent that, “Men are chosing [sic] their lawyers right here in this county, not on account of their legal ability, but because of their supposed friendliness to the Klan.”⁹⁷

The combination of Klan violence and Klan attempts to impose influence on local politics and economy sparked trepidation in many white residents. They feared the Klan, and soon that fear turned to anger. One editorial blasted the hypocrisy of the Klan for neglecting the community’s protection of the laws and due process, but when authorities

⁹³ “Let Us Have Peace,” *The Marshall Morning News*, March 11, 1922.

⁹⁴ Norman D. Brown, “TEXAS IN THE 1920s,” *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/npt01>), accessed March 6, 2001. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

⁹⁵ “Fugler’s Fight on Klan,” *The Marshall Morning News*, January 16, 1923.

⁹⁶ “Showing Its Teeth Here in Marshall,” *The Marshall Morning News*, August 20, 1924.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

captured members of the KKK whipping parties, the organization called “for all the protection of the law and howls for the benefits of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, the Magna Charta.”⁹⁸ Citizens of Harrison County also attacked the Klan on religious grounds. Another editorial in the *Marshall Morning News* asked, “Did the religion of Jesus Christ say that in order to enter the Inner Shrine a man must be a native of America, a member of the white race, a Gentile?”⁹⁹

Backlash against KKK attempts to dominate state and local politics elicited the most ardent anti-Klan rhetoric. Residents questioned the manhood of Klansmen and demanded “they take off their nighties and masks, [as] they have lost the respect of their more intelligent sympathizers, who will not now join a secretly manipulate star chamber group to function in politics in a democracy where the people directly or indirectly control.”¹⁰⁰ They fought vigorously against KKK domination of politics, especially in the 1924 election for governor.¹⁰¹ “If this city and county votes for Robertson,” one author posited, “it will be proclaimed to the world as a Klan city and Klan county and before 60 days you will see ‘100 Per Cent’ business houses in Marshall, ‘100 Per Cent’ doctors and ‘100 Per Cent’ lawyers.”¹⁰² Prominent whites feared the growing influence of the Klan would hurt their traditional role as social, political, and economic leaders of the county. They decried the Klan and their use of violence as hypocritical and un-American.¹⁰³

During the Democratic primary, the anti-Klan candidate Miriam “Ma” Ferguson

⁹⁸ “Whose Ox?,” *The Marshall Morning News*, June 21, 1922.

⁹⁹ “The Klan Speaker,” *The Marshall Morning News*, August 18, 1923.

¹⁰⁰ “Have a Heart,” *The Marshall Morning News*, April 5, 1923.

¹⁰¹ Felix D. Robertson was the Klan backed candidate for governor of Texas in the 1924 Democratic Primary election. See Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 194-199.

¹⁰² “Showing Its Teeth Here In Marshall,” *The Marshall Morning News*, August 20, 1924.

¹⁰³ Throughout the state, the Klan’s use of violence frightened whites. This hurt their popularity and ability to attract new members. For an examination of the rise and fall of the KKK in Texas see David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1951), 39-48.

defeated Robertson. Robertson's loss and similar defeats at the local level was symbolic of defeats the Klan would later face. Overt support for the Klan waned and the Klan was on the decline in Texas. Governor Ferguson proposed several anti-Klan laws, including an anti-mask law and publication of Klan membership.¹⁰⁴ After an arduous local battle against the Klan, *The Marshall Messenger* signaled the triumph of anti-Klan advocates. Headlines read, "Convention Denounces The Klan," "Klan Considered Buried As Texas Political Faction," and "Funeral of Klan."¹⁰⁵ According to one editorial, "The Ferguson caucus during the night was in the nature of a ceremony depicting the funeral pyree [sic] on which the Klan, as a political factor, was cremated."¹⁰⁶ Once denunciations against the Klan appeared, many people felt more comfortable criticizing the terrorist organization. One editorial illustrated the disdain many Harrison County locals felt towards the Klan. It proudly criticized the Klan's fears of Catholics and African-Americans, mocked Klan efforts to "put on a mask to protect womanhood," and ridiculed the hypocritical notion of enforcing the law by "putting a hood over his face instead of openly and fearlessly fighting wrong."¹⁰⁷ Following the defeat of Robertson in the Democratic primary, Klan number 168 suffered a major setback and never rebounded.¹⁰⁸

Vigilante violence plagued Harrison County throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. From the outset of white settlement in the county, residents found violence to be one of the most effective ways of controlling citizens, white and black. Dating back to the 1840s and the Regulator-Moderator War, the innate violence that

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰⁵ "Convention Denounces the Klan," *The Marshall Evening News*, September 3, 1924; "Klan Considered Buried As Texas Political Faction," *The Marshall Messenger*, September 2, 1924; "Funeral of Klan," *The Marshall Messenger*, September 2, 1924.

¹⁰⁶ "Funeral of Klan," *The Marshall Messenger*, September 2, 1924.

¹⁰⁷ "Didn't Stutter," *The Marshall Morning News*, September 4, 1924.

¹⁰⁸ For a full discussion on the decline of the Klan in Texas see Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 39-48.

undergirded American slavery, resistance to Emancipation and federal occupation, political subversion, and finally through lynching and mob violence, for nearly a century, citizens of Harrison County understood that violence was part of life. In the local economic recession of the 1910s mob violence against blacks increased. However, by the 1920s, local authorities realized the importance of allowing law and order to prevail.

Harrison County transformed from a bucolic frontier settlement into a county defined by economic growth and modernization. Accompanying this transformation, the nature of vigilante violence became increasingly racialized after Emancipation. Blacks in Harrison County faced the threat of mob violence throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Despite the looming threat of hostility, the black population continued to increase each decade following Emancipation. Economic and educational opportunities for blacks outweighed the threat of violence as many chose to live like George Dawson and avoid trouble with whites. From 1870 to 1930 the local black population grew even more, by more than three hundred percent. Although not perfect, Harrison County continued to attract blacks to the county and keep them there.

Prior to 1910, whites lynched blacks in response to the murder of police officers, the traditional defenders of white supremacy. However, as the economy declined in the 1910s, white blamed much of the economic woes on blacks, and lynchings became more common as whites vented their frustration through violence. As the idea of economic independence dwindled and threat of increasing white tenancy loomed, local whites reclaimed their manhood through lynching. From 1910 to 1917, at least twelve local blacks died at the hands of a mob for offenses ranging from murder, assault, hog theft, and any other affront to local whites. The ability of whites to provide for their families

decreased, new ways to defend their families emerged, mostly in the form of community defense from alleged black criminals. In this climate, lynching grew in popularity and acceptance and local authorities proved unwilling or unable to protect blacks.

As the economy resurged in the 1920s, the economic condition of the county's whites improved and the need to vent frustrations through violence against blacks diminished. Thus, it appears that in Harrison County, whites were more prone to lynch blacks during times of economic hardship. This reflects the idea posited by Arthur Raper that, "periods of relative prosperity bring reduction in lynching and periods of depression cause an increase."¹⁰⁹ The decline in the value of farm products means fewer jobs and the growing population further stressed this already tenuous situation. The competition for jobs pitted whites against blacks and as stated previously, whites blamed the poor farm conditions on blacks. As the economy rebounded, more jobs meant less competition and the competition between blacks and whites became less tenuous.

However, an improving economy was not the only reason why lynching declined during the 1920s. The acceptance of mob violence among the local city leaders faded away as the Ku Klux Klan expanded into Harrison County in the 1920s, and whites faced the threat of mob violence for the first time in many decades. The Klan regulated both black and white behaviors, and more importantly, threatened the influence of city leaders. Local whites faced political, social, and economic subordination at the hands of the Klan. The Klan pledged to use mob violence to promote their goals; however these goals, at times, ran counter to traditional city leaders'. This pitted city leaders against the Klan. As part of a larger effort to discredit the clandestine organization, city leaders condemned vigilante violence as a Klan tactic to impose their will on the county's whites. Attacks

¹⁰⁹ Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching*, 30.

against the Klan and mob violence grew more vociferous and as the KKK became increasingly discredited, so too did vigilante violence. By the late 1920s, city leaders succeeded in discrediting the Klan, and in the process, ultimately eliminated mob violence from Harrison County.

CHAPTER IV

'ROUGH JUSTICE' IN TEXARKANA: LYNCHING AND RACIAL VIOLENCE IN BOWIE COUNTY, 1890-1925

Bowie County's history of lynching is more convoluted than most lynching narratives. The traditional trajectory of lynching juxtaposes powerful white mobs and helpless black victims, and in fact several instances of white mobs lynching black men in public spectacles proliferate in Bowie County's history. However, there are also several anomalies to the traditional narrative as it relates to vigilante violence and numerous examples of intraracial lynching complicate the traditional understanding of lynching and mob violence as simply a tool of racial subordination. Without a doubt, whites in Bowie County utilized lynching as a tool of black subordination, but when closely examined, intraracial lynching demonstrates the strength of the historical and cultural vigilante precedents that permeated notions of criminal justice in East Texas.

Prior to 1917, the historical record indicates that most locals either supported lynching or felt they could not speak out against it. The introduction of the railroad in Bowie County prompted an economic and social transformation in the postbellum era that changed the character of the county from a primarily rural area to an emerging urban area. As this transformation occurred, the burgeoning urban, middle- and upper-class businessmen in Texarkana, the largest urban area in the county, became an important factor in local politics. Following the lynching of William J. Mayfield in 1916, these

elites organized in an unprecedented manner to promote the county as a viable place for outside investment. These booster organizations became the main opponents of lynching in the county because lynching tarnished the county's image and hurt chances for outside investment. Coupled with the efforts of white business elites, local blacks also became more assertive in their opposition to racial violence. Bowie County blacks became increasingly organized and more vociferous in their demands for equality, resulting in increasing demands to end lynching and bring those responsible for lynching to justice. Thus, by the 1920s, the efforts of the growing business class and the assertive black community worked to eradicate lynching in Bowie County.

Throughout the antebellum period, farming served as the backbone to economic and population growth. Most county residents worked in agriculture and cotton became the most important cash crop. Slavery buttressed Bowie County's agricultural economy and by 1860 the total number of slaves in the county was 2,651. Cotton production in the county grew from 1,113 bales in 1850 to 6,874 bales in 1860. Although cotton was the most profitable cash crop, Bowie County farmers also produced corn and livestock. By 1860, county farmers produced 218,289 bushels of corn, 12,819 swine, 3,281 dairy cows, 1,160 working oxen, 7,601 other cattle, and 1,331 sheep. By 1860, local farmers produced enough agricultural and animal products to make the county self-sufficient.¹

The end of the Civil War brought emancipation and federal troops to Bowie County. The Ku Klux Klan quickly established a foothold there following the Civil War. By 1868, the Bowie County Klan operated with near impunity. They patrolled the county targeting politically active blacks, often expelling or killing them. The local KKK also

¹ Cecil Harper, Jr., "BOWIE COUNTY," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb11>), accessed June 13, 2011. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

prevented less assertive blacks from leaving the county to maintain the local labor force to work the cotton fields.² To combat this problem, Union troops arrived in the county in July 1867 to ensure the legal and political equality of local freedmen. The federal government named former Union Army captain, William G. Kirkman, head of the Freedmen's Bureau for the district. Kirkman worked diligently to eliminate violence and fraud against the freedpeople, mainly by eliminating the local white power structure that continuously thwarted the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau.³

Kirkman however, lacked the support and numbers to enforce laws and protect local blacks and Unionists effectively.⁴ One prominent example of the inability of the Bureau to provide protection was Kirkman's attempt to arrest local bandit Cullen Baker. The Cullen Baker gang consisted of several well-known bandits in the region, including the gang's leader and namesake who joined the local KKK. He and his gang worked in tandem with the KKK, focusing their efforts on killing federal soldiers and former slaves. The Klan quickly gained the support and respect of many citizens. According to one writer, "This man Cullen Baker was hailed as a hero, and by many, even as a Moses who had appeared, to lead them out of the wilderness of Northern Political Tyranny and oppression." After another failed arrest, the federal government recalled Kirkman. On the day he was set to leave the county, local authorities found Kirkman dead. The coroner declared the killing "murder by person or persons unknown," but it was well-known throughout the county that Baker and his gang committed the crime. The federal government removed all troops from Bowie County following the murder and never

² Rebecca A. Kosary, "Regression to Barbarism in Reconstruction Texas: An Analysis of White Violence against African-Americans from the Texas Freedmen's Bureau Records, 1865-1868" (master's thesis, Southwest Texas State University, 1999), 44-46.

³ William L. Richter, *Overreached on All Sides: The Freedmen's Bureau Administrators in Texas, 1865-1868* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 282.

⁴ Smallwood, Crouch, and Peacock, *Murder and Mayhem*, 50.

stationed another Bureau representative there. The inability of the Freedmen's Bureau to protect the rights of local blacks and Union supporters, coupled with the ability of the KKK to suppress black political activity, made Reconstruction a failure in Bowie County. Moreover, the efficacious use of violence to defeat Reconstruction efforts demonstrated to local whites that violence was a viable tool for the suppression of blacks.⁵

The Civil War and Reconstruction halted economic and population growth in the county. The county's overall population fell from 5,052 in 1860 to 4,684 by 1870. A large number of blacks left the county because of the rampant violence and a desire to exercise their new freedom of movement following emancipation.⁶ The black population fell from 2,651 in 1860 to 2,250 in 1870. For the first time since Texas' introduction into the Union, whites outnumbered blacks in Bowie County. Emancipation completely disrupted the backbone of the local economy. The loss of slaves represented a loss of \$1,167,139 in total taxable property in the county. The total number of farms fell from 269 in 1860 to 195 in 1870 and property values plummeted. The total value of property fell from \$1,250,661 in 1860 to \$223,347 in 1870.⁷

After the tumultuous 1860s, the population in Bowie County resurged from 1870 to 1890. It grew over 400% from 4,684 to 20,267. The white population grew at a greater rate than the African-American population and whites became an increasingly higher

⁵ Cecil Harper, Jr., "BOWIE COUNTY," *Handbook of Texas Online*; Smallwood, Crouch, and Peacock, *Murder and Mayhem*, 50, 77; Patrick G. Williams, *Beyond Redemption: Texas Democrats after Reconstruction* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 18; Mob violence proliferated across the South during Reconstruction "as whites, often through paramilitary organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan...reclaimed political power from enfranchised African American men." See Pfeifer, *Rough Justice*, 13.

⁶ Following Emancipation, blacks across the South walked off the plantations of their former masters to look for family members, better wages, or escape the tyranny of their previous owners. See Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm so Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 297.

⁷ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: County Level Results, 1860-1870," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed June 13, 2011); Cecil Harper, Jr., "BOWIE COUNTY," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

percentage of the total population. In 1870, the black and white populations were nearly equal; 2,434 whites and 2,249 blacks lived in Bowie County. By 1890, however, the total white population comprised nearly 63% of the total population with 12,676 residents. The black population made up 37% of the total population and amounted to 7,591.⁸

Economic opportunities for whites actuated the boom in population.

Manufacturing in Bowie County exploded between 1870 and 1900. The completion of the Texas and Pacific Railroad in 1873 proved to be the main catalyst behind economic growth because it provided manufacturers and farmers with a broader market.⁹ The number of manufacturing establishments and the amount of capital invested in those establishments grew tremendously. Beginning in 1870 with only 8,300 dollars invested in seven manufacturing sites, investment grew to a staggering 1,328,457 dollars invested in sixty-eight establishments by 1890. The total value of all manufactured products also grew from 8,425 dollars to 1,757,425 dollars. Farming remained a viable source of income countywide and the total number of farms grew tenfold from 195 in 1870 to 1,972 by 1890. The value of all farm products also increased in the twenty-year period from \$331,261 to \$674,180.¹⁰

Despite the outward appearance of modernization, race relations in Bowie County remained firmly rooted in white supremacy and racial subordination. White supremacist thought had an inveterate history in Texas. Black racial inferiority undergirded slavery for hundreds of years and in the aftermath of Emancipation these beliefs intensified.

White politicians increasingly turned to race-baiting, through which whites characterized

⁸ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: County Level Results, 1870-1890," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed October 27, 2011);

⁹ Cecil Harper, Jr., "BOWIE COUNTY," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

¹⁰ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: County Level Results, 1870-1890," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed June 13, 2011).

blacks as mentally retrogressive, indolent, and violent, in an effort to eliminate the threat of black political participation.¹¹ Because disenfranchisement in Texas did not completely occur until 1905 with the passage of the Terrell Election Law, whites utilized violence, intimidation, and race-baiting to effectively eliminate the threat of interracial, working-class political movements prior to disenfranchisement. The most notable example is the Democratic campaign to destroy the Texas Populist Movement in the 1890s.¹² Moreover, the portrayal of rapacious black men in popular culture only intensified the negative, violent stereotype of black men in the white mind.¹³ At the turn-of-the-century, this perception became ingrained in the white mind.

It is in this context that lynching in Bowie County reached a crescendo as white on black violence increased and continued unimpugned through the 1890s. Throughout Texas, regions with a strong history of vigilante violence often became hotbeds of lynching. The reasons for this include the frontier experience of Texans, the legacy of slavery, the toleration of vigilante violence by Texas courts, and historical memory that promoted vigilantes as local heroes.¹⁴ Bowie County's history of vigilante violence and the negative characterization of blacks sweeping the nation created the conditions

¹¹For a study on white perceptions of blacks in the antebellum South see Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 43-96; For an examination of the development of racist thought in the postbellum period see C. Vann Woodward, "The Strange Career of Jim Crow," in *The Segregation Era 1863-1954: A Modern Reader*, ed. Allen Weinstein and Frank Otto Gatell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 74, 77-79; Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 256-282.

¹²For a general examination of the Populist Movement see Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); For an examination of the failure of the Populists in Texas because of the race issue see Gregg Cantrell and D. Scott Barton, "Texas Populists and the Failure of Biracial Politics," *The Journal Of Southern History* 55, no. 4 (November 1989); For a study on the disenfranchisement of blacks in Texas see Hine, *Black Victory*, 69-94.

¹³The best example of popular cultural perceptions of blacks see Thomas Dixon, *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden—1865-1900* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1902; reprint, Ridgewood, NJ: The Gregg Press, Inc, 1967); Thomas Dixon *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1905; reprint, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970); Claude A. Clegg III, *Troubled Ground: A Tale of Murder, Lynching, and Reckoning in the New South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 41, 67-68.

¹⁴Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture*, 12-14.

through which lynching proliferated. In the 1890s, citizens of Texarkana lynched five black men. Thomas Brown, Ed Coy, Perry Bratcher, Bud Hayden, and Joe King all died at the hands of lynch mobs; however, little is known about the victims or the circumstances surrounding their lynching. The alleged crimes of the black lynch victims ranged from raping a white woman, attempting to rape a white woman, or murder. Accusations of rape prompted the most ritualized and sadistic lynchings in the county, which suggested whites bought into the idea of black regression and rapaciousness and had a fear of interracial relationships. Furthermore, most of these lynchings were highly ritualized, very public, and consisted of sizeable mobs.

The February 1892 lynching of Ed Coy exhibited the ability of whites to use lynching as a form of social control. According to local sources, a white woman identified only as Mrs. Harry Jewell, alleged that Ed Coy assaulted her several times while her husband was away from home. However, according to an examination by Ida B. Wells, Coy and Jewell had carried on a consensual relationship for several years. Wells' examination suggested that local whites created the rape allegation in an attempt to galvanize the white community to punish Coy. After searching for several days, a posse finally captured Coy, who had fled north into Arkansas. A posse of fifty armed men brought Coy back to Texarkana, Mrs. Jewell identified him as her assaulter, and he was condemned to death. However, Ida Wells later claimed that Mrs. Jewell's identification of Coy as her "assaulter" was less than genuine and came after whites intimidated and threatened her to solidify the rape allegation they made against Coy.¹⁵

The lynching of Ed Coy was wildly popular and thousands of citizens witnessed and participated in the spectacle of white supremacy and black degradation. The mob of

¹⁵ Wells, *On Lynchings*, 112.

nearly 6,000 men, women, and children paraded Coy through several city streets. They brought Coy near the local post office on the state line between Texas and Arkansas and threw a noose around his neck. The hanging, however, was stopped as several thousand spectators demanded Coy be burned alive. The mob shouted, ““Burn Him! Burn Him!”” Charles M. Reeves, one of the town’s leading citizens, begged the mob to take Coy to the outskirts of town “for the sake of the wives and children.” The mob acquiesced, dragged Coy to a field near the Iron Mountain Railway Track, and secured him to a stump. The mob saturated Coy with kerosene, brought Coy’s alleged victim/lover to the stump, and she applied the match. She “applied the match in two places...in a few moments the doomed man was a sheet of flame, writhing and groaning in his horrible agony” for fifteen minutes.¹⁶ This despicable display sent a clear message to black men and white women that whites did not and would not condone interracial relationships and black male interactions with white women have no place in public space.

Most citizens supported the lynching of Coy. The 6,000 people who actively viewed, cheered, and encouraged the spectacle comprised almost half of the reported white population of the county. In addition to large number of active participants, news reports suggested that most people in the county supported the lynching. On February 21, 1892, the *St. Louis Republic* stated, “The event...is justified by a large majority of the people of this section on the ground that a desperate disease requires a horrific remedy, and that hanging has not as great horror for the average Negro as death by fire.”¹⁷ This report suggested locals burned Coy as a symbolic act against the entire black community. The same paper later disparaged citizens in Texarkana for the Coy lynching, which

¹⁶ “At the Stake,” *St. Louis Republic*, February 21, 1892.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

placed the community on the defensive. According to the *Dallas Morning News*, “the city was stirred up over an editorial that condemned the lynching and the city.”¹⁸

Six years after the lynching of Ed Coy, locals in Texarkana lynched Bud Hayden, a black man, for “raping” a white woman. In a calculated effort to discourage interracial mingling and white supremacy, the mob lynched Hayden at the site of the Coy burning. Locals accused Hayden of raping Jessie Scott, the young daughter of local clerk of the district court. Authorities arrested Hayden and placed him jail. At noon on June 3, 1898, seven of the town’s “most prominent citizens” took Hayden from the prison, drove him to the Scott residence, and the young girl identified him as the attacker. During this time, a mob gathered at the Scott residence and upon Hayden’s positive identification, the mob dragged him to a tree near the Iron Mountain railroad, tied a noose around his neck, and as he hung in the air, the mob riddled his body with bullets. The mob was so large that they blocked a train from passing on the Iron Mountain Railroad for over an hour.¹⁹

The surviving evidence regarding the two lynchings demonstrated how whites used lynching to dissuade black men and white women from comingling, but also to promote white supremacy and white unity. For example, the two lynchings both resulted from allegations of black on white rape. Ida Wells suggested in *Southern Horrors* that southern whites utilized the rape charge to quell any condemnation of lynching. Instead of focusing on the criminal acts committed by the mob, the rape allegation placed the black victim beyond the pale of human compassion and allowed the mob to act with impunity.²⁰ Additionally, the white mobs lynched the two black men in the same spot

¹⁸ “Texarkana Stirred Up.” *Dallas Morning News*, February 26, 1892.

¹⁹ “Vengeance is Swift in Old Arkansas,” *Idaho Statesman*, June 4, 1898; “An Every Day Occurrence Down There,” *Trenton Evening Times*, June 6, 1898.

²⁰ Wells, *On Lynchings*, 40-41.

adjacent to the railroads, which demonstrated the symbolism behind the mob's action. Although the railroad brought economic prosperity and modernization to Bowie County, for the local black community it became a place of horror. Lastly, the large size of the mobs suggests lynching was widely supported, but also that it involved various elements of white society in a community event that downplayed class divisions among whites and promoted white unity at the expense of the black population.²¹

In addition to interracial violence, several instances of intraracial violence occurred between 1889 and 1916. Intraracial violence, or white on white and black on black vigilante crimes, occurred because of the belief that the local legal system failed to adequately protect the respective communities. The presence of intraracial violence also suggests the absence of effective law enforcement to curtail the vigilante spirit. These instances, however, do not discount the use of interracial lynching as a form of racial control. Instead, the difference between intraracial and interracial vigilante violence demonstrates more clearly how whites lynched blacks as a form of subordination and control of the entire black community. As opposed to the symbolism, barbarity, and publicity associated with interracial lynching, when whites lynched whites and blacks lynched blacks there was little ritual behind the lynchings. Most were done secretly and the lynch mobs were usually small.

The main cause of intraracial lynchings in Bowie County was the perceived inability of the local courts to punish alleged criminals efficaciously. For example, on December 16, 1886, whites in Bowie County lynched a white resident named James Howard. A few days prior to the lynching, Howard faced trial on the charge of branding his wife with hot irons. According to reports, Howard subjected his eighteen-year-old

²¹ Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 8.

wife, Mary Minchew, to brutal tortures, including “hanging her up by the toes, and a few days ago he branded the letter ‘H’ upon her person.” The charges against Howard proved true in the trial, the judge placed him under arrest, and committed Howard to jail.²²

Local authorities feared mob retaliation against Howard. Many local residents “felt justly indignant at such barbarous treatment of a woman.” Therefore, five officers guarded their inmate until midnight, when they felt the threat of mob violence had subsided. While four of the five officers went to get some food, the prisoner was protected by only one guard. At that point, “Unknown parties rushed upon the jail, broke in the door, overpowered the remaining guard, and took Howard out.” The mob quickly hung him to a nearby railroad trestle. Although the local paper called the lynching “an unfortunate affair,” the editor of the paper also proclaimed that “if mob law is ever justifiable, [sic.] this case was certainly that way.” An anonymous member of the mob also claimed the mob “did our work according to my opinion, in a very quiet and decent way, and I hope to the satisfaction of all it may concern.” No evidence exists suggesting locals condemned the lynching. Instead, locals approved of it because it followed the specific script of justifiable lynchings that most Americans accepted. According to historian Christopher Waldrep, Americans in the late-nineteenth century generally accepted the tenets of vigilante violence as long as the lynchings occurred in places without effective courts, the lynch victim committed horrible crimes, the mob was protecting white women, and the majority of locals supported the lynching. In the case of the Howard lynching, the citizens seemed satisfied with the mob’s action.²³

Intraracial lynching also penetrated the black community because the protection

²² “An Unfortunate Affair,” *Daily Texarkana Independent*, December 16, 1886.

²³ *Ibid.*; “It Explains Itself,” *Daily Texarkana Independent*, December 17, 1886; Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch*, 88-89.

afforded whites by local authorities was absent in the black community. Whites dominated the local court system and blacks rarely received a fair trial in them. These courts also did little to combat crimes against the local black community. Consequently, the black community relied on vigilante justice as a means of communal self-defense and self-preservation and often meted out punishment on their own terms. For example, in early October 1908, local black man Anthony Davis attempted to rape a fifteen-year-old black girl as she made her way to school. Authorities demonstrated their indifference towards the sanctity of black womanhood, and following Davis' arrest only fined him a minimal amount. Authorities allowed Davis to quickly bail himself out of jail and he quickly appealed his fine. The indifference of the white authorities inflamed members of the black community and they took matters into their own hands. According to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, "the negroes of the city expressed great indignation" over Davis' release and on the evening of October 9, 1906, a crowd numbering between fifty to one hundred local black men gathered outside Davis' residence. The mob enticed Davis out, beat him, then strangled him to death. The next morning local authorities found Davis' body in a secluded spot about half a mile outside of Texarkana's business center.²⁴

The differences between white on black and black on black vigilante violence deserve elucidation. One glaring difference is in the reaction by the local authorities to the rape of black women. Whereas the rape of a white woman prompted the deputization of hundreds of locals, huge manhunts, and quick death sentences in southern courts, the rape of a black woman elicited little response from local whites. For decades, southern whites viewed black women as licentious, promiscuous, and prone to engage in sexual

²⁴ "Negroes Lynch Negro," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 10, 1906.

relations with white men brazenly.²⁵ As such, the rape of a black woman went largely unpunished by courts and whites usually blamed the rape on the victim herself. Moreover, whites dominated formal methods of social control, specifically the southern legal system, and they had little concern for crimes committed against blacks.²⁶ Southern authorities had a history of weak or no punishment for people accused of crimes against the black community and as a result blacks across the country became increasingly militant in their efforts to protect their communities from offenses.²⁷ Thus, the lynching of Anthony Davis by a black mob suggests local blacks relied on extralegal methods to punish people who committed offenses against their community because they lacked any other form of protection.

The proliferation of mob violence, however, did not hamper Bowie County's growth from the 1890s to the 1910s. Agriculture continued to undergird the economy. The number of farms in the county expanded from 1,972 to 4,480 and the total value of all farm production increased from \$674,180 in 1890 to \$1,949,400 in 1910. As a result, the population jumped from 20,267 to 34,827 by 1910. The total black population reached 12,734 and remained at around 1/3 of the total population of the county. Although agriculture remained the basis of the economy, Bowie County became an increasingly urban and business oriented society by 1910.²⁸

From 1900 to 1910, the number of residents living in urban areas increased.

²⁵ Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 344-345.

²⁶ E. M. Beck and Stewart Tolnay, "When Race Didn't Matter: Black and White Mob Violence against Their Own Color," in *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 150; Clegg, *Troubled Ground*, 65.

²⁷ See Sundiata Cha-Jua, "'A Warlike Demonstration': Legalism, Armed Resistance, and Black Political Mobilization in Decatur, Illinois, 1894-1898," *The Journal of Negro History* 83, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 52-72; Karlos Hill, "Resisting Lynching: Black Grassroots Responses to Lynching in the Mississippi and Arkansas Deltas, 1882-1938" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2009).

²⁸ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: County Level Results, 1890-1910," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed June 13, 2011).

Texarkana sat on the border of Texas and Arkansas and as a regional railroad hub and market center, grew at a tremendous rate. The city quickly became the most important urban area in the county. The city's population grew from 5,256 in 1900 to 9,790 in 1910. By 1910, twenty-eight percent of the total county population resided in Texarkana. During the 1910s, a number of businesses grew in prominence. The Texarkana Telephone Company emerged as the county's most important telecommunications company. The Texarkana Casket Company became one of the leading businesses in the county. They built caskets, bedroom suites, novelty furniture, and cedar chests. The Wood Preserving Corporation incorporated just prior to 1910, with total capital reaching \$300,000. The W. S. Dickey Clay Manufacturing Company manufactured clay products and sewer pipes came to the county in 1908. Banking also grew as a viable industry. The State National Bank, which organized in 1896 with total of \$100,000 in capital, increased the total capital in 1911 to \$200,000 and again in 1920 to \$400,000. Finally, Texarkana headquartered most of the regions lumber mills and lumber mill headquarters. In 1904, an estimated twenty-five lumber mills operated within thirty miles of the city and produced nearly 1,000 carloads of lumber every month. Furthermore, businessmen located in Texarkana owned all of these mills. Thus, by 1910, Texarkana the most important city in the region and offered more job opportunities than any other nearby town.²⁹

As urbanization and industrialization transformed many rural southern counties, an urban middle class grew, and a cultural clash between rural and urban citizens developed. One area of contention revolved around the criminal justice system. Many

²⁹ Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "Texas: Total Value of All Crops, 1920," University of Virginia Library, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/newlong3.php> (accessed June 13, 2011); Barbara Overton Chandler and J. Ed Howe, *History of Texarkana and Bowie and Miller Counties Texas and Arkansas* (Shreveport, LA: J. Ed Howe, Publisher, 1939), 128, 130-131, 137; Buenger, *Modern South*, 44.

rural southerners supported the frontier notion of community retribution in the form of vigilante or “rough” justice, because they felt the organized legal system was inefficient and did not afford the community proper protection. Historian Michael Pfeifer defined rough justice as a form of justice at the community level that was “administered face-to-face with a measure of retribution that matched the offense, and it sought...to uphold the hierarchical prerogatives of the dominant residents of the locality.”³⁰ Conversely, urban middle-class citizens grew increasingly disdainful of public disorder, especially mob violence. To the growing middle-class, mob violence represented a descent into anarchy that ran counter to their views of the justice system. These citizens wanted a strong judicial and legal system that stressed order, regularity, and formality and was far removed from the personal vengeance style of punishment inherent in lynching.³¹

A clash between the old folkways of the rural South and the modern ideas of an emerging urban society proliferated in many southern communities. In 1916, these conflicting ideologies became apparent in Bowie County. As Texarkana grew, the previously rural nature of the county became more urbanized and middle-class. However, the strong rural component of the county still clung to the extralegal methods of punishment that Bowie County residents had relied on for decades. The January 25, 1916, lynching of William J. Mayfield, a white man accused of murder, represents the county’s commitment to rough justice. The trial of William J. Mayfield captivated Bowie County residents after authorities charged Mayfield with the murder of his father, mother, and brother with a hatchet on January 4, 1916. One report described the courtroom as “overflowing with an intensely interested crowd of Bowie county citizens.” Despite

³⁰ For a full definition of Pfeifer’s notion of rough justice, see Pfeifer, *Rough Justice*, 3-4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9, 49.

initial threats of mob violence, locals capitulated, let the legal system run its course, and confidently assumed the jury would convict Mayfield. The prosecution brought in several people to testify, but the only actual witness was Mayfield's seven-year-old son. The boy did not actually see the murders, but heard a scuffle in the room next to his and heard his grandfather scream. Officers also found a bloody axe in the room, a bloodstained hatchet in the dining room, and soiled clothes in a barrel outside the house. Mayfield's lawyers argued the man was insane. After ten days the jury reached no verdict and found it "impossible to agree." The judge set a retrial to be held in Franklin County.³²

The ultimate fate of Mayfield illustrates the connections between mob violence and beliefs that the existing criminal justice system was inadequate, inefficient, and ineffectual. A public that sees the justice system in this way is likely to see lynching as necessary to counterbalance its shortcomings.³³ In Bowie County, the failure of the court prompted whites to take matters into their own hands. Following the court's declaration of a retrial, twenty-five unsatisfied "masked and armed men" gathered outside of the Bowie County jail. Just before midnight, the men stormed the jail, overpowered the jailer, and took Mayfield about five miles south of town. The mob summarily tied a noose around his neck and hung him to a tree. The next day the coroner returned a verdict of "death at the hands of unknown persons." Mayfield's attorney, J. S. Crumpton, issued a statement and condemned the lynching. Judge O'Neal called for an investigation, but nothing came of it and the identity of the lynchers remained a mystery. One newspaper

³² "Alleged Murderer Lynched," Idaho Statesmen, January 25, 1916; "Quiet at New Boston," Dallas Morning News, January 26, 1916.

³³ Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture*, 81.

reported, “Everything has quieted down” in the county following the lynching.³⁴

Although there is no evidence of strong opposition to the Mayfield lynching, it represents a turning point in the history of vigilante violence in Bowie County. In the wake of this lynching, influential whites organized to promote their interests in county affairs in an unprecedented manner.³⁵ Local professionals organized several civic clubs to promote their business interests, which included the promotion of Texarkana and Bowie County as a viable place for outside investment. In 1917, the Texarkana Board of Trade and the Young Men’s Business League, two organizations of prominent local businessmen, merged together to form the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber worked to make the city ripe for outside investment and business expansion. It promoted improvements in local infrastructure, the creation of industrial and public buildings, and attracted outside businesses to come to the city.³⁶ The Texarkana Rotary Club also organized in 1917 and promoted any local “movements making for substantial growth and development of the city [Texarkana].” Another important organization that formed in 1917 was the Lions Club. The Lions Club consisted of important Texarkana professional and businessmen and acted as “an active and efficient vehicle for united civic effort and enterprise.” Lynching and vigilante violence did not complement the perception of Bowie County that these organizations cultivated. Reports of lynching painted the city as lawless and unpredictable, whereas these groups promoted the city as a stable and attractive place for outside investment. These groups fostered a change in local perceptions of lynching and mob violence in their efforts to promote the well-being of

³⁴ “Alleged Murderer Lynched,” *Idaho Statesmen*, January 25, 1916; “Quiet at New Boston,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 26, 1916.

³⁵ Similar occurrences happened across the South in emerging cities as prominent business men promoted their cities for outside investors. Historians define these groups as “boosters.” See Dressman, “Visions for Houston,” 137-144.

³⁶ Chandler and Howe, *History of Texarkana*, 138.

Texarkana and Bowie County.³⁷

As the middle-class, business oriented population expanded, views on vigilante justice changed. One example of the changing attitudes was seen in the efforts of the local authorities to oppose lynch mobs. Following the murder of a local black woman, Hester Hopkins, an enraged mob of local blacks attempted to lynch the accused, but local authorities fought off the mob and maintained law and order. Bowie County authorities alleged that Jasper and Eddie Hopkins, father and adopted son respectively, murdered Hester Hopkins, Eddie's wife, on October 10, 1921, and left the body in a field 150 yards off the road on a DeKalb County farm. The murderers cut the woman's throat three times and hit her over the head with a heavy club. Authorities arrested the two Hopkins men in Bowie County and subsequently took them back to DeKalb for trial. Jasper Hopkins bonded himself out for one thousand dollars, but Eddie could not afford the \$5,000 bond and was taken back to the Bowie County jail. On the way, "a mob estimated at over a hundred, composed of negro and white men, followed officers and the prisoner to Boston in an effort to lynch Edley [Eddie] Hopkins." The mob, contained in more than fifty automobiles, overtook the car with Deputy Sheriff Tom Bankston, Constable "Doc" Bryant, and Hopkins inside, but "guns were quickly drawn by the authorities who prevented the attempt." The officers then successfully dissuaded the mob and placed Hopkins in jail at Texarkana. Although the mob paraded around the jail for about half an hour, authorities quickly phoned for additional reinforcements and the mob dispersed shortly after. On the following day, the local paper congratulated Sheriff G. A. Richardson and his deputies and stated, "A dangerous situation was handled with courageous intelligence and Bowie county [sic.] saved from a disgraceful blot on its fair

³⁷ Ibid., 139, 196, 198.

name.”³⁸

Authorities were less successful at opposing mobs that targeted blacks who were accused of killing whites. On February 9, 1922, for example, authorities failed to prevent the lynching of P. Norman, the alleged murderer of white resident G. W. Landers. In the wake of Landers’ murder, officers brought in several local black men for interrogation, but the questioning rendered no new leads. A day prior to the Landers murder, local black resident P. Norman “threatened [an] officer with a Winchester rifle,” “roundly cursed white officers,” and fled the city. Officers caught him some days later, twenty miles north of Texarkana in Ashdown, Arkansas. Deputy Jordan handcuffed Norman, placed him in a car, and drove him back to Bowie County for arraignment. As he drove through the streets of Texarkana, Jordan “was halted by four masked men, all armed, who demanded the negro, and, who without ceremony, jerked the prisoner out of the car, then commanded the officer to drive on.” The small size of the mob and the fact that they wore masks demonstrates the lynchers were aware of the changing sentiments of lynching in the county. The Deputy did as the masked men instructed and left. He immediately told the local Sheriff about the abduction and Sheriff Richardson, Deputy Jordan, Deputy W. M. Dunn, and District Attorney Wheeler returned to the scene of the abduction, but did not find “a trace of the men with the negro, or the body of the negro.” The following day at about two o’clock in the morning, two Bowie County residents found the body of P. Norman in the middle of a road, handcuffed, and with three bullet wounds to the head and one on the right side of his body. Allegedly, the masked men believed Norman to be implicated in the murder of Landers and “would not have listened

³⁸ “Attempt Made To Lynch Negro At Boston Jail,” *Four States Press* (Texarkana), October 18, 1921; UNTITLED, *Four States Press* (Texarkana), October 19, 1921.

to reason had an explanation of the Negro's status been given" by the deputy, because regardless of Norman's involvement in the Landers murder, he broke custom by publicly threatening a white officer.³⁹

Whites in Bowie County denounced the local authorities' collusion in the lynching. One news report declared, "Much criticism and censure is being directed by many citizens of Texarkana against the sheriff's department of Bowie county [sic]." Residents questioned both the deputy's decision to bring Norman back to the county when "public sentiment was so wrought up" over the killing of Landers and the inability of authorities to find the murderer. The local paper called the decision "unusually dangerous."⁴⁰

The business community demanded authorities take action against the lynchers. The Lions Club, an organization consisting of many prominent Bowie County residents, adopted resolutions "severely denouncing the lynching" and published their resolutions in the local paper. The Lions condemned "in the strongest possible terms" the lynching and "all other similar acts." They also called on the authorities and local courts to "identify, apprehend, and bring to justice the authors of this brutal crime." The Chamber of Commerce offered a two-hundred and fifty dollar reward. Another prominent citizen donated one-hundred dollars to the Rotary Club "to be offered as a reward for the arrest and conviction of the slayers of the negro Norman." The Rotary Club matched the donation with an additional \$200 contribution and passed resolutions demanding action against the members of the mob. The Rotary Club declared the lynching "detrimental to the interests of the city" and demanded that authorities enforce the laws and bring

³⁹ "Sheriff Criticized For Action Allowing Saturday's Lynching," *The Daily Texarkanian*, February 13, 1922.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

criminals to justice.⁴¹

Despite the proclamations of authorities and the outcry of many residents, the members of the mob proudly announced their involvement. On Tuesday, February 21, 1922, a mob of four armed men, three masked and one unmasked, “suddenly appeared at the front door of door of The Texarkanian office” at 9:30 at night. The men presented a note they wanted the paper to print in the next morning’s issue. The note stated, “We are the four men who took the negro away from Mr. Jordan. We are citizens of Texarkana and intend to stay here. Find us. We are not the K. K. K.” During their presentation of the note, the mob “kept everybody in the office under cover of their guns.” Although the lynchers proudly announced their involvement, the majority of local reactions denounced the lynching.⁴² The different reactions by the mob participants and the leading business organizations of the county was further evidence of the divide between rural proponents of rough justice and the middle- and upper-class citizens who opposed the disorder associated with vigilante violence.

The business organizations’ condemnation of the lynching prompted local authorities to investigate. A grand jury convened and Judge P. A. Turner, of the county district court criminal division, gave “specific, definite instructions” to the grand jury to look into the lynching of Norman. Judge Turner claimed, “Such acts of lawlessness...are a subversion of the majesty of the law to the spirit of mob rule, mob violence.” Authorities undertook preliminary investigations and procured evidence to present to the grand jury. Citizens applauded the efforts of the local justice system. One editorial

⁴¹ “Lions Denounce Mob,” *The Daily Texarkanian*, February 13, 1922; “Will the Investigation Investigate?,” *The Daily Texarkanian*, February 22, 1922.

⁴² “Masked Men Declare They Abducted Negro on Night of Feb. 11,” *The Daily Texarkanian*, February 22, 1922.

vehemently supported the grand jury investigation. The author implicated local authorities in the prevalence of mob violence and claimed, “The version of the matter given by the officer having the prisoner in custody is far from satisfying to the public.” Residents of Bowie County supported the investigations and Judge Turner’s decision was “met with hearty approval” and many citizens hoped “that this investigation will be thorough and vigorous” and bring all parties and persons implicated in the murder to justice or “our community will be damned in the eyes of the outside world.”⁴³ Several witnesses appeared before the grand jury and the court indicted both Deputy W. T Jordan and Deputy Joe Johnson, but both men bailed themselves out at the cost of \$3,000 each.⁴⁴ No record explaining the fate of the two officers exists.

Bowie County whites also feared the rampant mob violence in neighboring Miller County, Arkansas, would affect them. Since Texarkana spills over into Miller County, locals feared the negative press tarnished the name of Texarkana. For example, following the lynching of Huley Owens on May 19, 1922, in Miller County, citizens condemned the lynching. Miller County authorities charged Owens with the murder of local police officer Dick Choate. While Owens was in the Miller County jail, a mob of several thousand men abducted him, dragged him to death through the streets of the city, and burned his remains. Bowie County residents decried the lynching. One concerned citizen worried about the ability of the governmental institutions to enforce laws effectively and stated, “Never in history has the law of the land come so near to utter collapse.” Another editorial condemned Owens for the murder of police officer Dick Choate, but asked, “Do

⁴³ “Let the Probe Go Deep,” *The Daily Texarkanian*, February 15, 1922.

⁴⁴ “Will the Investigation Investigate?,” *The Daily Texarkanian*, February 22, 1922; “Masked Men Declare They Abducted Negro on Night of Feb. 11,” *The Daily Texarkanian*, February 22, 1922; “Arrest of Companion of Deputy is Latest Action on Indictments Returned by Bowie Grand Jury,” *The Daily Texarkanian*, February 27, 1922.

these facts [in the murder of Choate] justify the method by which he [Owens] was made to atone for his brutal crime?" The author further criticized the mob's ringleaders as "misguided" and declared that the lynching will "hang as a blot over the good name of our community for day and months and years to come." Finally, another editorial worried over the impact lynching and mob violence had on the children of the community. Since several children and young men witnessed and actively participated in the lynching, the author worried that these boys viewed mob violence as acceptable. The author asked, "Who are to take their place among the men of tomorrow? What are we to expect of them when thus taught contempt of law and civil authority?" Mob violence did nothing to benefit the community, argued the editorial, and instead threatened the sanctity of law and order. It "minimized their [the children's] respect for the majesty of law, the authority of the home, and the restraints of social requirements."⁴⁵

A new source of opposition to vigilante violence emerged as economic diversification in Bowie County provided new opportunities for blacks. As new businesses came to the county, many local blacks sought higher paying jobs. They left the fields when wages dropped and moved into more profitable jobs in the railroad, lumber, and other industries.⁴⁶ This burgeoning black middle class, much like their white counterparts, became increasingly organized. For example, the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People organized in December of 1918 with a total of 104 members. By 1921, the Texarkana chapter increased membership to 196.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ "Disregard of Law," *The Daily Texarkanian*, May 23, 1922; "The Mob Spirit," *The Daily Texarkanian*, May 20, 1922; "Teaching Boys Contempt of Law," *The Daily Texarkanian*, May 25, 1922.

⁴⁶ Buenger, *Modern South*, 44.

⁴⁷ Reich, "Soldiers of Democracy," 1503.

As black organizations grew, their demands for civil rights became more vociferous. Blacks in Bowie County became more vehement in their condemnation of lynching. For example, in a meeting at the Sunset Baptist church, blacks called a mass meeting “to protest against the lynching of P. Norman.” Throngs of blacks crammed into the church and, according to one report, “taxed the capacity” of the church. The meeting, which was “conducted in an orderly manner and with all due observance of the day,” adopted a resolution that both denounced the lynching and demanded action. The resolution declared lynching shamed “fair-play, decency and all our citizens, both white and black, who possess self-respect and civic pride.” Lynching not only damaged the image of the city, but it also “calculated to rupture the fine relationship between the races.” Like the white men of the Lions Club, blacks attending the mass meeting also urged authorities to “bring to justice the party or parties guilty of this heinous crime, thereby making redress, as far as possible for this great wrong.”⁴⁸

As the white business leaders condemned lynching to promote Texarkana as an ideal place for outside investment and blacks organized to protest their treatment as second-class citizens, lynching declined in Bowie County. Bowie County had an inveterate history of vigilante justice, but as the business and middle-class element grew, the interests of citizens shifted from black subordination to a wider focus on economic opportunities. As prominent residents organized to promote their city, they increasingly denounced lynching and those who participated in it. Furthermore, blacks increased their organizational efforts and expressed their disdain for lynching and second-class citizenship. Both of these groups also pressured authorities to take a more proactive role

⁴⁸ “Sheriff Criticized For Action Allowing Saturday’s Lynching,” *The Daily Texarkanian*, February 13, 1922.

to prevent lynchings by protecting prisoners in their custody and, even if just for show, indicted people responsible for lynching. By the 1920s, pressure from black and white organizations prompted a change in acceptance of lynching and precipitated the elimination of lynching from Bowie County.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Northeast Texas experienced vast changes in the late 19th and early 20th century. Much of this transformation is rooted in the changing regional economy following the Civil War. Throughout the antebellum period, the economy in Northeast Texas was overwhelmingly agricultural. Between 1870 and 1920, the regional economy diversified. In each of the counties studied, railroads precipitated the economic diversification. The cities of Paris, Marshall, and Texarkana became railroad hubs and transportation centers that provided the regions' farmers and emerging manufacturers' access to wider markets. By 1920, the region transformed to a dual agricultural economy dominated by cotton production and a modernized economy supported by railroads, manufacturing, lumber mills, and banking.

As the economy diversified, the regional population grew at an astounding rate. From the devastation of the 1860s and 1870s, the region's population boomed for the succeeding forty years. In addition to the general increase in overall population, the character of the population changed as well. As the regional railroad hubs grew, businesses migrated to the cities and the previously rural population became increasingly urban. As more business enterprises emerged in Texarkana, Marshall, and Paris, more job opportunities followed. The rural character of the region became increasingly urban as the population of these cities comprised a sizeable proportion of the overall county

population.

The tensions usually associated with economic change were compounded greatly by the abrupt change in the social, political, and economic status of the region's African-American population. The institution of slavery supported much of the antebellum agricultural economy and also conveyed social status to the region's white population. Slave-based agriculture relegated blacks to the bottom of the social structure through legal means, while whites, regardless of economic status, remained at the top of the two-tiered social structure. Moreover, slaves had no political voice and their fate rested in the hands of their white masters. This system was dismantled on June 19, 1865, when General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas and issued General Order Number Three, the proclamation that formally abolished slavery in the state.

Two bifurcated processes developed simultaneously in Northeast Texas. One was economic diversification, modernization, and growth. The other was a pattern of violence, oftentimes a reaction to the economic and social changes, as means of continued suppression of the region's African-American population. These two patterns could not coexist. As the increasingly powerful businessmen of the region placed greater priority on increasing their economic potential, the presence of mob violence counteracted this goal. Mob violence hurt chances for economic growth because northern investors grew increasingly wary of investing in unstable regions. In addition, racial violence encouraged black migration out of the region and diminished whites' access to cheap labor. Finally, when terrorist organizations like the KKK organized and used violence as a means of imposing their will on local communities, mob violence

threatened white city leaders' traditional claims to positions of authority.¹

Instead of viewing the dramatic increase in the number of lynchings reported in the early 1890s as an aberration, it was more accurate to see it as a continuation of the vigilante violence aimed at blacks during the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Redemption. During this time, whites in the county turned to vigilante violence, something that had been around since the frontier days, as a means of thwarting federal interference and “redeeming” their counties, diminishing the freedom guaranteed to the freedpeople, and as a tool for solidifying whites in Northeast Texas behind the credo of white supremacy.

Although the rise in reported lynchings in the 1890s was part of a longer pattern of mob violence against blacks, lynchings in Northeast Texas from the 1890s to the 1920s had identifiable characteristics. As historian Fitzhugh Brundage suggests, “The history of lynching reveals a complex pattern of simultaneously fixed and evolving behavior and attitudes.”² Lynchings in Northeast Texas had various causes, including responses to changes in the character of the black population, black economic and social advancement, and economic downturns in the agricultural sector. Despite the various causes, lynching ultimately served as a form of social control during a time when racist rhetoric and a lack of repercussions fueled violence against blacks. All of these lynchings, however, were defended as a necessary tool to diminish the supposed rising tide of black criminality in the region. Under this guise, lynching was also used to

¹ For more on the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s see Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965); Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1951). For more on how civic leaders in Texas opposed the Klan see Patricia E. Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 91-107.

² Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 15.

prevent white women from intermingling with black men because of the stereotypes of the black rapist perpetuated by whites in the region. From 1890 to the 1910s, local officials were complicit in lynchings and city leaders promoted and defended the tenets of mob violence. With little opposition, white mobs ran rampant in the region. During the period under study, white mobs lynched a reported thirty-two black victims. On three occasions, mobs numbering in the thousands publicly burned their black victims at the stake in huge public spectacles, but more common was the small mob that either quickly hung or shot their black victim. Regardless of the manner of death, the symbolism behind lynching was undeniable. Black life was expendable and whites had unimpeded power over the black community.

For the most part, lynchings promoted black compliance with Jim Crow. As the story of George Dawson illustrates, after witnessing a lynching, Dawson eluded white women and feared to power of white men. He also heeded his father's suggestion to avoid "trouble" with whites and act according to the racial mores of the day. Despite the tragic nature of the lynching narrative in Northeast Texas, there is also evidence of a pattern of black grassroots resistance to unimpeded racial violence. Black agency in lynching narratives is an emerging field of analysis in lynching scholarship. Blacks in Northeast Texas resisted racial violence in various forms. Either in individual acts of violent self-defense, coordinated community efforts to protect themselves, peaceful protest, and flight, it is clear that blacks in the region were more than passive victims to white violence. This suggests a history of black radicalism in one of the most racist and hostile regions in the South.³

³ For more on black resistance to lynching see Sundiata Cha-Jua, "A Warlike Demonstration": Legalism, Armed Resistance, and Black Political Mobilization in Decatur, Illinois, 1894-1898," *The Journal of Negro*

Black resistance to lynching was not the main catalyst behind the decline of reported lynchings after 1920. Beginning in the late 1910s through the 1920s, city leaders condemned mob violence because it was in their own best interests to do so. Their condemnation prompted local authorities to do more to prevent mob violence than previously. Local authorities began protecting black prisoners in their custody and local grand juries indicted lynch mob participants more frequently. Although no mob participants ever spent time in jail for their actions, it was clear that the local legal system and local power structure would no longer encourage, participate in, or allow mob violence. Thus, it was the change in the way city leaders viewed lynching that precipitated its decline. As prominent residents condemned mob violence, they also encouraged local authorities to do more to prevent mob action. As authorities did more to protect prisoners in their custody, the condemnation of lynching by city leaders also prompted a change in less prominent whites' willingness to resort to lynching as a form of punishment.

Instead of viewing the decline of lynching as evidence of a larger shift away from southern culture, this thesis suggests the decline of lynching resulted from a concerted effort among prominent locals protect their county's economic viability. The change in national sentiment towards lynching undeniably affected how whites in Northeast Texas viewed lynching; however, not all whites in the region condemned the practice. In fact, lynching plagued the region consistently through 1920. It was not until business and political leaders understood lynching threatened their positions of power that a concerted

History 83, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 52-72; Karlos Hill, "Resisting Lynching: Black Grassroots Responses to Lynching in the Mississippi and Arkansas Deltas, 1882-1938" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2009); Christopher Waldrep, *African Americans Confront Lynching: Strategies of Resistance from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Era* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009).

effort to resist lynching emerged. It was pressure from city leaders who were responding to both national and local pressures that precipitated the increased willingness of local authorities to protect blacks in their custody and local grand juries to indict lynch mob participants.

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