Jean Toomer's "Portrait in Georgia": the lynching of African-American females in Georgia from 1871-1946

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This study examines the lynching of African-American females in the state of Georgia. Historians have long studied the lynching of African-American men, but works that examine the lynching of women are relatively few in comparison. This study was based on the premise that the lynching of black females in Georgia is correlated to the objectification of black women, the pecuniary suppression of Blacks, the ineffective administration of laws, and the cultural approval of the use of violence to resolve conflict.

A case study analysis approach was used to analyze information gathered about the black women who were victims of lynch mobs. Additionally, quantitative analysis of data for population distribution, property ownership, tenancy, cotton prices and production was conducted to examine the correlation between these variables and lynching. The researcher found that allegations of insolence by the woman or her relative(s) and economic exploitation often precipitated these acts of violence. The
conclusions drawn from the findings suggest that the lynching of African-American women in Georgia is attributed to the cultural acceptance of violence as a means to dominate Blacks.
JEAN TOOMER'S "PORTRAIT IN GEORGIA": THE LYNCHING OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALES IN GEORGIA FROM 1871-1946

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF ARTS IN HUMANITIES

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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¹Prov. 3:5-6.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The United States has an extensive history of lynching men, women, and children. While victims of these mobs represent various ethnicities, economic and social classes, lynching was peculiar and rampant in the southern region of the United States. In this area, victims were more likely to be African American\(^1\) and male. Subsequently, the vast majority of available literature relates to the persecution of these men.

The purpose of this study is to examine the lynching of sixteen African-American females\(^2\) in Georgia and to quantify the factors that induced the practice, including the ratio of African Americans in communities, farm ownership, share or crop tenancy, cotton production and the inconsistency in the execution of state laws by Georgia governors. This study seeks to fill a void in the scholarship of Southern lynching. A review of the literature indicates that most research analyzing lynching has focused on male victims or the circumstances that contributed to the proliferation of violence. To this end, this study is unique in that it is an analysis of violence perpetrated against females, specifically, African-American, in Georgia.

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\(^1\) The terms African American and Black have been substituted for the racial categories, Negro and Colored.

\(^2\) The designation females and women have been selected as descriptors for the subjects regardless of age.
Lynching and other forms of violence were actively utilized as a means of social control in the United States from the American Revolution through the 1960s. However, arguments have been put forth that these attacks continued through the latter 1990s, when James Byrd, Jr., was assaulted and his death hastened by three white males in Jasper, Texas.³ In order to provide a better understanding of these violent attacks, primarily fueled by racism, fear and the desire to control, it is imperative to construct a definition for lynching. Polemicists, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) and Tuskegee Institute, determined that an attack could be classified as a lynching when there “was a dead body, (a) person or persons met death illegally, (a) person or persons met death at the hands of a group, and the group acted under pretext of service to justice, race or tradition.”⁴ Based upon this codification, lynching is defined as the use of violence that was not formally authorized by the established legal system, i.e. judges, law enforcement officials, district attorneys, etc. (even though many of them proffered their “informal” support) by a mob that resulted in the death of a person. These assaults were meant to inflict punishment upon people considered guilty of committing transgressions that were ostensibly in conflict with accepted tenets of the culture. Most significantly, locals sanctioned these attacks through active or tacit endorsement.


Lynching is the action rather than the process of execution; therefore, the death of an individual could be hastened by a number of violent attacks, including burning, mutilating, shooting, drowning and hanging. Nevertheless, the result was the same: the death of the purported assailant and accomplices. Fundamentally, lynching served a dual function in that it punished the alleged miscreant and was the impetus for suppression for Blacks as well as Whites, who refused to adhere to societal rules.\(^5\) Lynching is confused with murder as both are types of homicide; though, the two concepts can be distinguished by motive, participation and communal support. A murder could have one or more active members who conspire to commit a crime; conversely, murder differs in that it is often a solitary act performed without societal support.

Furthermore, lynching holds pronounced similarity to the use of frontier justice or vigilantism as these activities took an alleged delinquent, after which the members of the mob predetermined guilt and administered what they identified as relevant punishment. For both lynching and vigilantism, “the essence is the same . . . group action in lieu of regular justice . . . is the identifying character.”\(^6\) Moreover, the concepts differ in regards to adequate and immediate access to law enforcement, an incitement for Western communities. “Vigilantes [were] sufficiently organized to handle multiple cases over a period of time . . . some groups [were] formally organized, with centralized decision making, officers, and limited access to membership while others [had] organized only for

\(^5\) A number of terms are used synonymously for lynching, including mobocracy, summary justice, lynch mob, lynching bee, lynching law and Judge Lynch.

\(^6\) John W. Caughey, Their Majesties the Mob (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 5.
a matter of weeks or even days before they disbanded." Hence, vigilantism or frontier justice was necessary to contend with the criminal element in the western territory of the country and to maintain social order.

Conversely in the South, especially during the twentieth century, communities had adequate access to both law enforcement and the judicial system for punishing nefarious conduct. Both of which could have successfully dealt with the actions of purported degenerates. Instead, members of the mob preferred to enact punishment as they submitted that the legal system was inefficient, and that “due process, trial by jury, even imprisonment, were meaningless to them (Blacks), for they saw no connection between crime and punishment unless the one was immediately followed by the other.”

A dire contradiction to the reality, as Southern courts were proficient in convicting Blacks accused of crimes.

The proliferation of lynching in the South was dynamic. Historically, during the antebellum epoch, lynching was rarely used as a method of punishing wayward slaves, as the owner would incur an economic loss, not only of monies invested in these persons, but also the potential labor that would be performed. The pervasive usage of lynching occurred after the demise of the institution of slavery. The loss of the Civil War was devastating socially, politically and economically for the South. The period of Reconstruction offered Blacks some opportunities for equity, previously unavailable to

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them, but violent acts perpetuated against them increased as the Ku Klux Klan and other night riders began to harass them. Eventually, the United States federal government returned control of the South to the aristocratic class and as the period of Reconstruction ended in the late 1870s, the economy fluctuated, competition for jobs and the need for cheap labor helped augment the practice of lynching. The patrician class continued to support lynching as they established Jim Crow laws from 1877 with the goal of completely exploiting Blacks.

The general pretext for lynching was the sexual molestation of white women by black men. However, Ida B. Wells, the NAACP, and other researchers have determined that lynching rarely occurred for that reason. In fact, Leon Litwack concluded in Trouble in Mind that:

the offenses that precipitated mob violence related less to sex crimes (as sensationalized in the press) than to physical assault and murder (the most common charge), theft, arson, violations of the racial code, economic competition, and disputes over crop settlements. Many of the transgressions by Blacks would have been regarded as relatively trivial if committed by Whites and were not grounds anywhere else for capital punishment: using disrespectful, insulting, slanderous, boastful, threatening, or “incendiary” language; insubordination, impertinence, impudence, or improper demeanor (a sarcastic grin, laughing at the wrong time, prolonged silence); refusing to take off one’s hat to a white person or to give the right-of-way (to step aside) when encountering a white on the sidewalk; resisting assault by Whites; “being troublesome generally”; disorderly conduct, petty theft, or drunkenness; writing an improper (“insulting”) letter to a white person; paying undue or improper attention to a white female; accusing a black man of writing love letters to a white woman, or living or keeping company with a white woman; turning or refusing to turn state’s evidence, testifying or bringing suit against a white person, or being related to a person accused of a crime and already lynched; political activities, union

9 Donald L. Grant, The Way It Was In the South: The Black Experience in Georgia (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), 141, 142, 159.
organizing, conjuring, or discussing a lynching; gambling or operating a “house of ill fame”; a personal debt; refusing to accept an employment offer; “jumping” a labor contract; vagrancy; refusing to give up one’s farm conspicuously displaying one’s wealth or property; and (in the eyes of Whites) trying to act like a white man.¹⁰

Any action that may be construed as a form of disrespect toward Whites could be the catalyst for a lynching.

While lynching occurred throughout the United States, mob violence was particularly prevalent in the southern states. The state of Georgia has the abhorrent distinction of having 530 lynchings occur between 1882 and 1968, second only to the state of Mississippi.¹¹ Of these victims, 39 were white and 491 black; included in the latter is a subcategory of fourteen African-American females, who were lynched. Additionally, there is satisfactory evidence, which indicates that two other black women succumbed from attacks by lynch mobs between 1870 and 1880.¹²

**History of Lynching**

The escalation of lynching reflected a “[psychological manifestation as] Whites could ill afford black economic progress,” and the onset of laws, beliefs, and behaviors based on intolerant tendencies began to manifest in the region.”¹³ Aristocratic men

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recreated a paternalistic society that ensured their dominance of people and control of resources. As a result, they incorporated tenant farming, the convict lease system, and sharecropping ventures to ensure that most Blacks were unable to sustain themselves as financially independent, thereby preventing them equitable access to opportunities for advancement. This facilitated a burgeoning culture of white supremacy that exacerbated the repression of Blacks politically, economically and socially.

These domineering men implemented Jim Crow laws to circumvent and dismantle the political rights of African Americans. Under the auspices of these laws, Blacks not only had their political rights impeded, but the constricting policies encompassed the economic and social spheres, impeding their advancement. Moreover, these men determined that “both law and terrorism . . . applied simultaneously” secured their status. Accordingly, aggression and violence were deemed appropriate responses to social infractions.

These aggressive tendencies induced lynching to abound in the Deep South. The acceptance of aggression and violence has origins in feudal system traditions that mandated personal and familial honor. Hence, if someone disgraced an individual or family member, it behooved the affronted person to challenge them to a duel or some other combative act by which familial honor could be restored. These ideals appealed to Southerners; yet, the loss of the Civil War seemed to exacerbate and distort the

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application of these customs as white Southerners struggled to redeem themselves. As a result, the concept of honor became not only a personal ethos, but a guiding societal principle as the masses readily embraced the view that “a ‘real’ man [was] someone who [felt] the need to rise to the challenge of the opportunities available to him to increase his honor by pursuing glory and distinction in the public sphere.” Therefore, in the South, this belief system evolved into a frenzied culture where familial and group reputation was of such extreme importance that the relational status was to be protected regardless of circumstances. This is potentially problematic, because “when honor is strongly valued by many in the culture, the likelihood increases dramatically that two individuals will interact and then become embroiled in a conflict in which neither can back down. A person knows what is expected of him or her, and importantly, because individuals know the rules of their culture; they also know what is expected of their opponent.” The Southern veneration of honor reinforced the racial etiquette that governed the demeanor of Blacks and Whites. There was a great preoccupation with controlling sexuality and prohibiting relations between white females and black males. This obsession remained the source of great concern as white men continued their efforts to ensure that these men and women would be barred from engaging in sexual relations with one another.

The culture of white supremacy promoted the onerous ideals of acceptable feminine behavior through the Cult of True Womanhood, which facilitated lynchings and

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negated white support for anti-lynching laws. White women were compelled to adhere to an extremely high standard for their comportment and simultaneously, deprived of equal rights with white men. Devotees endorsed the belief that white women were to present themselves as moral, pure, and innocent; characteristics that were to sustain and advance the progression of the white civilization. The Cult of True Womanhood held that white women were the epitome of virtue, to be esteemed and protected, particularly, from adversarial, vile, lascivious black males, who according to the endorsed Southern stereotype had been unable to control their sexual appetites since losing exposure to the civilizing force of slavery. As a result, many white women embraced this ideology and the status extended to them. Ascribing these values to white women served a number of objectives, because “their reputation and especially their chastity--- constituted... a fetishized [sic] measure of masculine reputation... of the brothers or fathers, which [induced] a vigilance [that was] attentive, and even paranoid, as that of the husbands.”

The pursuit of social acceptance by poor Whites and the irrational fear of black males created a volatile environment in which allegations of rape would facilitate the lynching of the accused or any available black person. Ironically, these white women, who were purportedly delicate and naïve, often served as witnesses, damning victims to an eminent death, and occasionally, actively participating in the lynching of an alleged perpetrator. That white women maintained a “dual role of victim and victimizer... requires exploration of the paradox that subordinates could at once be the target of violence and

disadvantage while at the same time be the perpetrators of pervasive racial and sexual violence."\textsuperscript{19} Regrettably, many white women embraced the code and their position in society to the detriment of Blacks.

Strangely, the restrictive nature of this code for white women created new opportunities for those who were particularly shrewd and wanted a greater role in the public sphere. Therefore, "some white women [who] wanted new roles [would] use rape as a bargaining tool."\textsuperscript{20} Women like Rebecca Latimer Felton, an outspoken critic of those white men who in her estimation refused to protect white women from black men, professed support for the lynching of alleged black rapists. She challenged white men to act "properly" and make every concerted effort to civilize the black brute, who posed a threat to white women, including the use of violence. As they garnered the support of the females that they sought to protect, the lynching of Blacks proliferated because according to Crystal N. Feimster in \textit{Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching}, the "allegations of rape . . . [that proliferated] gave white women solidarity with white men."\textsuperscript{21} The subjugation of the minorities through violence facilitated the retention of stature for white men and women.


The social rewards of lynch mob participation included recognition, esteem, and a sense of belonging. In fact,

much of [the] aggression [came] in response to threatened life-supporting attachments whose proper functioning [was deemed] critical for [the] mental and physiological well-being [of] the community, in addition to individual and group . . . self-esteem, recognition, and status, related in evolution to the adaptive value of having a place in the group . . . [and] the sense of belonging to some larger group or groups beyond the family.22

Social and cultural constructs manifested into a model of attainment where ‘white’ was not only race, but specifically, a status that meant security and belonging and not an “other” or an outcast. The Southern elite’s lackeys, poor native Whites and immigrants, particularly those from southern Europe, desired social status and acceptance from native whites. Realizing their position within the communities, many of these poor Whites readily adopted the racist rhetoric of the culture and participated in lynchings, because “for [these] low class Whites, social segregation was a means of asserting their superiority” and proved that they were worthy of “whiteness”.23 Moreover, “there was always general agreement among whites, regardless of social class, on matters of race . . . at least in part by condoning violence against blacks who became the scapegoat for the regions many problems.”24 This appealed to poor Whites, which often competed with African Americans for resources.


The racist culture of the South permeated every aspect of life and inhibited opportunities for Blacks in general and especially women of color. Contrary to the old Southern proverb "the freest people on earth are black women and white men", the reality of daily life for black females was a dire contradiction.\textsuperscript{25} African-American women typically comprised the lowest segment of the economic and social structure as they often worked jobs that positioned them for economic and sexual exploitation. In order to justify this premise, stereotypes impugning the integrity of black women were conceived.

A representation of these negative stereotypes is presented by Jennifer DeVere Broady in her book, \textit{Impossible Purities}, where she examines Edouard Manet's famous painting \textit{Olympia}. This work depicts a white prostitute and her black maid, both of whom were besmirched by society. The sullied harlot was dishonored because of her occupation. However, the black chambermaid was perceived as defiled based solely on her ethnicity, rather than wanton behavior.\textsuperscript{26} This characterization reflects the pervasive acceptance of stereotypes attributed to African-American women—Mammy, Sapphire and Jezebel.\textsuperscript{27} They objectified black women and ultimately, fostered an environment where it was deemed socially acceptable to lynch them.

\textsuperscript{25} Deborah E. McDowell, \textit{"The Changing Same": Black Women's Literature, Criticism, and Theory} (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 124.


During this era, one of the most prevalent stereotypes was that of the asexual, devoted Mammy, dependable and loving to the white family that she provided service for as a nanny or housekeeper. This myth disseminated from the latter decades of the 19th century to the early decades of the 20th century. Perpetually loyal and willing to endure any hardship or reproach from her “white folk” whom she loved more than her own family, this stereotypical figure was esteemed throughout the Deep South as the ideal for black women, who were perceived as not having any virtue. The worth of this popular image was extracted by her acceptable deferential attitude, a display of her adherence to white dominion and her own insignificance. The endorsement of this stereotype flourished for generations and became a cultural icon. “Mammy signaled the wish for organic harmony and projected a woman who suckled and reared white masters. The image displaced sexuality into nurture and transformed potential hostility into sustenance and love.” Moreover, this stereotype supported the precept of the civilizing effect of slavery and perpetuated the superiority of the aristocratic class, as it was alleged that the “better citizens” of the South were reared by a loving Mammy.

The controlling Sapphire gained prominence during this period, as black women were depicted as uncouth women, who constantly berated, disrespected and emasculated their mates. Hereto, this negative image was widely accepted as an accurate representation of black women. Furthermore, in an effort to legitimize their pursuit of

black women for continued access for sexual favors, the stereotype of the hypersexual, deviant Jezebel was popularized. This perception evoked images of black women with an innate lack of sexual mores and insatiable sexual appetite. Supposedly, this deficiency of respectability fueled the lack of sexual self-control in black men. Hence, the black male’s wanton lust made him crave white women as he never did while enslaved, thus it remained the responsibility of white men to ensure that their white women were protected. These distortions were another manifestation of the restrictive, Machiavellian policies of Jim Crow in the South.

The negative characterization of black women fostered an unrelenting fear for African Americans. Accordingly, parents of daughters of great beauty were cautious as their offspring’s physicality might attract unwanted attention from white males. This was problematic in a locality where the culture revered violence, and there was little recourse regarding physical or emotional safety. Only rarely were criminal charges pursued against the alleged perpetrators of sexual assaults endured by black females. Despite these odious actions, black families were fortunate to solicit an arrest, and then the culprit would only be charged with a misdemeanor. The dangers that these women faced were related by that Mary Church Terrell in “From a Negro’s Point of View” when she reflected that

... from the day they were liberated to the present time, prepossessing young colored girls have been considered the rightful prey of white gentlemen in the South, and they have been protected neither by public sentiment nor by law. In the South, the Negro’s home is not considered sacred by public sentiment nor by law. In the South, the Negro’s home is not considered sacred by the superior race. White men are neither punished for invading it, nor lynched for violating colored women and girls. In discussing this race problem last year, one of the most godly and eloquent ministers in the Methodist Episcopal Church (white) expressed
himself as follows: ‘The Negro’s teachings have been white. It is from [the] white man the Negro has learned to lie and steal. If you wish to know who taught the Negro licentiousness, you have only to look into the faces of thousands of mulatto people and get your answer.’

It was incumbent upon “black parents [to make every effort] . . . to protect their daughters from white men. That meant, if possible, keeping them out of white homes.”

Yet, because of their economic circumstances, many parents for forced to allow their daughters to work as domestics.

The objectification of black women through the use of these stereotypes served a number of motives. It promulgated the belief that white men could have sexual access to black females, who were to acquiesce whenever approached, as “white men considered free and uninhibited access to black women [to be] their prerogative.” The marital status, age, personal beliefs, or religious indoctrination of these females had absolutely no bearing on the perceived appropriate response. White men were to be submitted to, and black women were to serve as their concubines.

“One of racism’s salient historical features has always been the assumption that white men- -especially those who wield economic power- - possess an incontestable right of access to black women’s bodies... [and this] pattern of institutionalized sexual abuse of black women became so powerful that it managed to survive the abolition of slavery.”

29 Mary Church Terrell, “From a Negro’s Point of View” in Witnessing Lynching, ed. Anne P. Rice (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 102.


This “system of male domination over women . . . [relied] on the eroticization of inequality between men and women, and [enforced] control of women by the use, as well as threat, of male sexual violence . . .” These attacks on black women occurred with impunity as the local police force was rarely able to gather necessary evidence to pursue criminal charges, albeit many officials were not interested in seeking justice for the victims. “But white men also exploited black women sexually as a process of subjugating the entire Black community,” thusly, serving as a tool to oppress Blacks and create fear of reprisal in regards to the individual, her family, and the community.

Methodology

The culture of white supremacy in the South that fostered negative stereotypes in an environment of degradation and submission also promoted the lynching of black women. Maria DeLongoria proposed in her dissertation “Stranger Fruit” “that . . . the lynching of black women was facilitated by the stereotypes espoused by white society as it dehumanized them, creating images of objects to be used and just as easily discarded.” This study seeks to analyze the documented lynching of 16 black women in the state of Georgia during the seventy-five year span from 1871 to 1946. These assaults


illustrate the depravity of southern norms and the protocol that maintained social, economic, and political control. Ultimately, as noted by Cynthia Skove Nevels,

... lynching was about economics. It had strong political overtones. There were psychosexual aspects, social repercussions, and cultural meanings. It had religious significance, and it was about gender. And always, the immediate reason behind any single lynching was simple contingency: a lethal combination of specific social, political, economic, or religious factors that on a particular day in a particular place exploded into horrific violence."

Nevels theory is reflected in the lynchings of the sixteen Black women that were victims of lynch mobs in Georgia.

One of the limitations of the study relates to locating subjects with firsthand knowledge of the events. The last black women lynched in Georgia were attacked 67 years ago, so most witnesses are now deceased or are unwilling to discuss the matter. Also, lynching occurred with such frequency that some newspapers reported only negligible or biased details of the events that preceded the assaults. Additionally, facilities, including courthouses, police departments and newspaper offices sustained damage from fires and floods prior to these records being duplicated.

The historiography of lynching evolved from the era when this study begins, when most newspaper articles, editorials, speeches, and books espoused the fabrication that lynching was a consequence of the rape of a white woman by a black lout. Even authors who maligned the practice, including W.J. Cash and Ray Stannard Baker, both of whom produced works considered being among the most salient resources about the New

South, opined the acceptance of this myth. As African-Americans researchers began to submit and publicize alternative hypotheses, the interpretation of lynching began to change. Ida B. Wells, James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, and others proffered dissenting opinions that were reflective of data garnered from the Chicago Tribune and NAACP records. These sources delineated that the attacks on black men, women and children rarely occurred because of allegations of rape, but rather economics and power were predominant motives. Since this time, Ralph Ginzburg, Stewart Tolnay, E.M. Beck, W. Fitzhugh Brundage, and Micheal J. Pfeifer have contributed valuable resources to the body of historical literature by investigating assaults upon victims and analyzing elements that contributed to these deeds. The work of researcher William D. Carrigan has been instrumental in expanding research on the impact of culture on lynching and Paul Connerton’s work engages memory and history as it expounds the field of psychohistory. Yet, the lynching of women has been engaged by few academics. Primarily, Crystal Feimster, Kerry Seagraves, Maria DeLongoria and Julie Buckner Armstrong have added to the canon of work about mob violence and the women lynched.

The resources selected for this study have been analyzed and thematically categorized. This methodology was selected for the review of literature in an effort to determine the correlation of the elements and acts of lynching. Literature was selected based upon the researcher’s data indicating an economic component as a factor to the lynching of blacks. Other resources were chosen to analyze the social problems that manifested in Southern society and how these issues influenced lynching. References indicating that lynch lawlessness prevailed because of ineffective laws were examined. Additionally, research was reviewed about the role of women as change agents and
victims. To provide insight into the psyche of members of the mob, literature was explored that revealed the psychological benefits for Whites of affiliating with the lynch mob. Finally, discourses examining the adaptation and perversion of the ideals of honor and violence were procured in an effort to establish cultural acceptance of lynching.

Chapter Outlines

The current chapter of this work examines the situations that facilitated lynching in the United States, which included the mental, social, political, and economic subjugation of African Americans. Lynch mobs traditionally used a number of methods to torture their victims, but an evolution occurred in the mob’s tactics. During this time, “lynching ceased to be a quick hanging and became a more violent and barbaric affair often entailing protracted torture of the victim before crowds gathered in a carnival atmosphere; intended to transmit a message to African Americans.” Mobs were more likely to carry out summary justice in districts where their actions would be communally supported. Poor Whites, who often were engaged in contentious relationships with Blacks for jobs, actively participated in the lynching bees to express not only their superior status in relation to Blacks, but also, their affiliation with the whites of the upper stratum. Yet, these people were fundamentally minions as the wealthier class often blamed them for these deeds and absolved themselves. While poor Whites and immigrants may have been Caucasian, they were not considered to be the heirs of white supremacy. Whites of upper classes often used slurs such as “rednecks”, “crackers” and “white trash” when

referencing these people. This was indicative of a chasm that wealthier Whites created as “effects of symbolic distancing and social exclusion through moral disapproval, resulting in a dichotomy that both enable and enact different aspects of inequality, prejudice, and discrimination. Consequently, such terms [were] crucial markers of status and prestige and [served] to establish thresholds of inclusion and respectability.”

Lynching, then, was a medium for social and class acceleration. Additionally, inherent to the study of the lynching of black women is the investigation of stereotypes attributed to these females. Historically, these classifications of black women objectified them. Hence, their worth, both individual and collective, was based upon serving the physical and emotional needs of Whites. Only if able to accomplish this responsibility, particularly in the vein of the Mammy, would a black woman be accorded a minuscule semblance of respect. These beliefs served to dehumanize African-American women as nonentities. Subsequently, these characterizations were indicative of and promoted an environment that substantiated violence against women, including lynching.

Chapter two is an overview of works regarding lynching in the United States. Included in the review of literature are works that examine the black experience in the United States during this epoch, as a valuable element in the proliferation of the practice of lynching. These resources indicate that there were several causes during the era of Jim Crow have contributed to the lynching, including African-American women in Georgia.

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The presumption in accordance with the “threadbare lie” was that lynching ensured that the guilty party would not escape due punishment for alleged crime.

Proponents surmised that the criminal justice system could not be relied upon because the alleged assailant would escape punishment through some legal technicality. Supporters of mobocracy asserted that the victim be spared the shame and psychological damage of recounting the details of the crime, a fabrication perpetuated by those, who desired to deny a fair trial for the accused and sought social acceleration and acceptance. There was also widespread support of the use of lynching as a tool to ensure the prevention of black on white violence. Particularly interesting, this philosophy developed as Blacks promoted the idea of the New Negro and pursued education, political and economic autonomy. Nevertheless, these racist views were typically endorsed by the citizens and law enforcement officials, who offered their support either passively or actively to lynch mobs. Additionally, encouraged by societal complacency and newspaper coverage, lynching flourished during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the aristocracy regained social, political and economic control.

The sexual and physical attacks of black women were reinforced by the objectifying stereotypes promoted during this era. These denigrating characterizations prompted black women, particularly those of the middle class, to adopt and support a belief system based upon ideals similar to those of the Cult of True Womanhood, promoting black middle class morality. The Black Women’s Club Movement served as the vehicle for disseminating these values, and attempted to indoctrinate lower class Blacks in an effort to prove the purity of black women, many of whom worked in environments where they were prey.
The third chapter of the work specifically examines the lynching of black females in Georgia. In the poem, "Portrait in Georgia", Jean Toomer describes a morphing figure representing the often purported players in the lynching saga, the white female and black male. “Hair--braided chestnut, coiled like a lyncher’s rope, Eyes--fagots, Lips--old scars, or the first red blisters, Breath--the last sweet scent of cane, And her slim body, white as the ash of black flesh after flame”.\(^39\) As these two figures are presented as one ultimate victim; I propose an alternative analysis, which is influenced by the lynching of black females. The victim of the assault in Toomer’s poem could represent any of the approximately 159 women lynched in the United States, sixteen of whom were attacked in Georgia during a span of seventy-five years. Nevertheless, the victimization of white women was the presumed impetus of lynching black women who were not perpetrators of the rape of white women. In an effort to justify these assaults, these persons may have been accused of complicity or commission of a violent crime. The sixteen documented cases of lynching in Georgia were chosen based upon available newspaper accounts and testimonies. The brutality of lynch mobs often involved the desecration of the victim’s body followed by a crude cremation on a funeral pyre. This further exacerbated the difficulty in determining the identity and gender of victims, as well as convincing family members to come forward and collect the remains. Occasionally, mobs would leave the remains of the decedent(s) in black communities after the attack as a warning to black females.

residents. Subsequently, lynching often triggered a mass exodus of Blacks from these areas.

Georgia governors charged with executing laws seemed unable to obstruct lynching. Excuses throve as these officials claimed that the excessive number of counties made administering lynch laws unfeasible and that blacks contributed to lynching by their lawless behaviors. Locally, police officers were often complicit in lynching, which made the mobs more brazen. Yet, when officers performed their duties as required, the alleged criminals were often safely secured until trial. The suffusion of lynching was supplanted by an apathetic justice system.

The fourth chapter provides a quantitative analysis of numerical data related to lynching. The offensive environment in Georgia was further cultivated by the objectification of black women. Many denigrated and dehumanized females endured sexual and physical violence that culminated in mob violence for sixteen of them. Of the black women lynched in Georgia, five or 31%, of the victims were accused of the violent crime of murder or complicity in murder. The other assaults were the result of infractions of race based decorum. Eventually, as Blacks gained some economic success, they were mindful of the appearance of prosperity as it garnered unsolicited attention from envious poor Whites, as well as members of the planter class concerned about the domination of Blacks and adherence to the mandate for “Blacks to remember their place.” Not only was prosperity a major factor that precipitated attacks on African American women, but the competition for available tenant farms contributed to the proliferation of lynching.

Finally, an analysis of data indicates that lynching was more common in counties where the percentage of ethnicities was relatively comparable, rather than a great
disparity among the races. This gives credence to the assertion that the competition for resources created an antagonistic environment where the threat of violence and lynching became the norm for Blacks, who were believed disreputable. Violence was the means of social control that Whites used to exert their power and subjugate Blacks.

The fifth chapter of the work focuses on analyzing the findings within the context of Southern culture and its norms of domination and lynching black women. When one hears of a lynching, it has typically been assumed that the victim was a black male. Southern media outlets used to characterize the victims of lynching as brutes with insatiable sexual appetites, who lusted after white women. The reality is that victims of lynch mobs transcended race, social class, age, and gender. Nationally, the vast majority of victims who were lynched happened to be male; yet, it is the lynching of African-American women in Georgia that is the crux of this work. Therefore, in order to comprehend why these violent acts were perpetrated against women and occurred with impunity, it is imperative to examine the attacks on the sixteen women in Georgia. The debasement of black women that was facilitated by negative stereotypes was also indicative of the culture that objectified these women, thereby relegating them to a status of extreme unimportance. This status, reinforced by the abiding stereotypes of the era and the need for racial supremacy facilitated by complete economic, political and social control by white males, promoted violent outbursts against black females that served as a reminder to black residents of their subjugation.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of extralegal violence by groups seeking to enforce community values or to punish miscreants has a long history in the United States. However, the lynching of African Americans in the South was typically more egregious, as these attacks reflected the dominant society's desire to maintain social, political, and economic control. Essentially, lynching relegated Blacks to a subordinate position that would sustain the ideals of the white supremacist, agrarian, and fabled region. Lynching is not merely the sanctioning of violence against a degenerate, but the action is a reflection of societal norms. This chapter reviews the literature of lynching and analyzes these works in reference to the economic implications of the practice, social ills, ineffective laws, the roles of women as victims and change agents, the psychology of lynching and the violence that was inherent to Southern culture.

Economic Implications

Despite the reported myth that lynching was necessary for the protection of white females from the lascivious black rapist, statistical evidence indicates that other extenuating circumstances contributed with far more frequency to the assaults upon Blacks. Lynching served as an efficient method to hamper the economic development of
individuals on the lowest rungs of the social and economic hierarchy. This was accomplished by the use of restrictive policies that kept poor Whites and Blacks in constant competition for opportunities or by encumbering African Americans in rigid labor contracts for sharecropping and the crop-lien system.

Walter White’s classic study *Rope and Faggot* (1929) refuted claims that lynching was the result of sexual assaults by black men on white women but substantiated that violence was a means of economic subordination. An executive secretary and investigator of lynching for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), White was inspired to entitle this work for the mob’s tool, the rope, and method of binding or trussing their victims. Gleaning data from the NAACP statistical study, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918*, James E. Cutler’s *Lynch Law* and the lynching statistics from the *World Almanac*, White surmised that lynching was the pretext for the domination of Blacks and hindering their economic growth was a primary goal as “lynching has always been the means for protection, not of white women, but of profits.”¹ He noted that the planter class placed economic pressures upon Blacks in an effort to reinforce their prosperity. This produced unintended consequences, because the entire region suffered economically as a result of this scheme. White’s work remains a significant contribution to lynching scholarship, but does not provide exclusive coverage of mob violence as it relates specifically to black women.

The economic oppression of Blacks was the focus of the planter class in the South and is the subject of *The Way It was in the South: the Black Experience in the South*

¹ Walter White, *Rope and Faggot* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1929), 82.
According to Donald Grant, the Ku Klux Klan was originally established during the period of Reconstruction with the intention to terrorize, abuse, and control Blacks. The continued economic manipulation of Blacks was facilitated by abysmal wages that forced Blacks to retain a subservient position within the community. Grant further related that some Blacks were concerned about appearing economically successful, as prosperity could garner unsolicited attention, resulting in the discontent of the white community, which could then facilitate a lynching. According to Grant, planter class hypocrisy was apparent in their religion and mores, as they espoused Christian, honorable virtues, yet worked to ensure the unconditional exploitation of Blacks. Whites almost unequivocally supported the lynching of Blacks, as the practice was rarely condemned by religious entities and their leaders who embraced the members of the mob. Ultimately, this dichotomy almost destroyed their economical way of life. Although Grant’s text does not provide a complete exposition on lynching, it does provide a thorough examination of the racist South and the culture that facilitated lynching.

Robert H. Wiebe contends in *The Search for Order* (1993) that people of color held a contentious position in the South; their cheap labor was necessary, but the freedmen and “New Negroes” were marginalized during the last decade of the nineteenth century, a stark contrast to the great strides accomplished during the 1880s, in terms of the attainment of education and property ownership. Wiebe asserts that the development of an extensive middle class in this country impacted the mores of society, but these new values held nothing more than a continuation of racist ideology and strict codes for
Blacks that hampered their development and further oppressed them.2 Wiebe's work represents the conception of social history in the 1960s with a focus on ordinary individuals. Black history, a subdivision of this type of historiography, became an acceptable endeavor for engagement with historians of other ethnicities. Previously, black history was rarely considered a viable option for study of non-blacks and the few that elected to engage this study expressed racist propaganda.

The study the proliferation of lynching and the demise of the attacks in the South are the objective of *A Festival of Violence* (1995). In order to investigate the nuances of the lynching phenomenon, Tolnay and Beck implemented a comparative method for research and "compiled information about as many lynchings as possible, then searched for underlying patterns, derived clues about what drives mob violence."3 As a result, they were able to determine the elements that formed the basis of lynching. *A Festival of Violence* is a seminal work in the scholarship of lynching studies, because of the methodology employed to extrapolate the data and the subsequent analysis. Although, the work addresses some key elements of mob violence, there is limited discussion of lynching as it relates specifically to female victims of mob violence.

*A Festival of Violence* analyzed lynching from a perspective that the phenomenon was more likely to occur in specific geographic regions and that established events served as catalysts for these assaults. Researchers Stewart Tolnay and E.M. Beck use demography to analyze patterns of racial violence. They concluded that lynching was the

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preferred method executed by Southern Whites to exert control over Blacks in the region. Mob violence was exacerbated by economic crises, for example, fluctuating cotton prices. When the prices of the commodity increased, there was a decrease in the number of lynching and conversely, when cotton prices decreased lynching increased in the area. Furthermore, Tolnay and Beck noted that other economic issues, including competition for scarce resources, caused Blacks to be scapegoated and terrorized because of the precarious economic situation, which also contributed to surges in lynching. However, both the onset of the mechanization of cotton crops and the Great Migration greatly impacted the number of lynching in these communities. The mechanization of farms meant the crop-lien system was indispensable and that some farmers would only hire wage earners when necessary. As masses of Blacks moved to the North in search of a better life, lynchings decreased as farmers were motivated to denounce the practice in order to keep an adequate workforce for the planting and harvesting of their crops. Tolnay and Beck discovered that mob violence was more prevalent during the summer months and that lynching was also an expression of competition for resources. According to their findings, the Southern social structure was three tiers composed of the planter class/employer, White tenant farmers and laborers, and finally, Blacks.

That predilection of lynching in Georgia was attributed to a number of factors, which is a primary focus of Lynching in the New South. Race relations were often problematic, as white supremacy manifested itself as the primary ethos guiding society. As a result of the precarious nature of the mobs, a black person could be lynched for the slightest infraction. Additionally, economic issues, including the widespread usage of a
plantation-based system for agricultural production, economic troughs, and the competition for jobs were often provocation for racial violence. Accordingly, W. Fitzhugh Brundage related that incidents of lynching were less frequent in those geographic areas that were more urban, maintained a more diversified economy, and possessed a large populace of African Americans. Brundage further related that the response of Whites during the first decades of the twentieth century was one of resignation, in that they perceived that the practice was necessary for maintaining order within society. He noted, similarly to other researchers, that lynching in Georgia began to decline as reformers began to campaign against the practice.

In contrast to some works, Brundage provided a comparative inquiry of mob violence that focused on two states---Georgia and Virginia. He examined various components to determine how lynching varied between the two states, and the factors that provided for those differences. Brundage determined that, in comparison to Virginia, lynching had become ingrained in Georgian society, and because of this, it took longer to eradicate mobocracy in the state. *Lynching in the New South* provides a significant contribution to the discourse on lynching, particularly because Brundage identifies most of the lynching victims in the state, conducts a geographic analysis of lynching, in which he corroborates an assertion of Tolnay and Beck, that lynching was more accepted in the Cotton Belt/Central and Southwestern counties, in Georgia, and provided statistical evidence to substantiate this theory.⁴

Lynching and the Law

Theorists have suggested lynching proliferated in the South because of an incompetent justice system. Law enforcement agencies that were either ineffective or duplicitous, state policies and procedures that were not resolved or without the spirit of the law resulted in very few convictions of lynch mobs and complicit law enforcement officials. As a result, the violence attacks against Blacks continued unabated.

An outspoken critic of lynching, Frederick Douglass reflected in his 1894 essay, “Lynching Black People because they are Black,” an analysis of lynching in the South. Douglass contended that lynching was a contagion that was prevalent in the South, and because it was not restrained, began contaminating Northern states in dire opposition to the preferred Southern depiction, which promoted a community based upon civility and Christianity. His premise was that the “mobocratic murderers are... permitted to go free, untried, and unpunished.” These lynch mobs defied law enforcement and while they executed extralegal justice, refused to allow their victim to prove his/her innocence in court. Douglass asserted that the mob avoided a trial, primarily because they were aware that most of the individuals that were tortured were actually innocent, which would then reflect their true violent character. He surmised that the lynch mob utilized the excuse of rape as a ploy to subvert attention from their own lawless activities and to justify their violent acts. So these bodies excused their behavior by determining that the “crime” required an immediate reaction, as a trial would exact a strain on the woman that was

5 Frederick Douglass, "Lynching Black People Because They Are Black," The Christian Educator, April 1894, 97.
abused. Douglass placed the discourse regarding the correlation of rape and lynching into a historical reflection of the subjugation of Blacks, when he elucidated that chronologically there were “three distinct periods of persecution of Negroes in the South, with accompanying excuses for persecution . . . insurrection . . . Negro supremacy. . . [and] assault upon defenseless women . . .”6 Douglass’s compelling argument against the practice did not provide a comprehensive examination of the lynching of women.

The inability of the justice system to prevent lynchings was noted by Ida B. Wells-Barnett. Her work, “Lynch Law in Georgia (1899),” was an examination into the lynching of Sam Hose (Samuel Wilkes) and the subsequent violence that terrorized the black community in Palmetto, Georgia. After procuring the services of a private detective, who investigated the lynching, Wells-Barnett concluded that law enforcement officials in Palmetto, Georgia, did not make any other efforts to stop the lynching despite the fact that the governor had notified authorities to move Hose to Atlanta for safekeeping. Rather, locals garnered a special train to take Hose to Newnan. The event was advertised and subsequently, a few thousand men, women, and children showed up for the spectacle, and the lynching was duly executed in a carnival like atmosphere, where attendants clamored for fragments of Hose’s remains. “Lynch Law in Georgia” exposed the lawlessness of sheriffs and police officers, whose fidelity was to their local community rather than their sworn duties and in deference to the mandates of the executive branch of the state. Wells-Barnett provided a detailed essay delineating the act

6 Frederick Douglass, "Lynching Black People Because They Are Black," The Christian Educator, April 1894, 104.
of mob violence, but, as with *Lynching Black People Because They Are Black*; she does not provide an exposition on the lynching of women.\(^7\)

Additionally, violence and abuse of the laws were used to continue the subjugation of these individuals. In contrast, some legislators at the state level predetermined that these maligned individuals did have the right to basic liberties, and attacks like lynching denied them constitutional rights. Hence, states enacted legislation to ensure that basic human rights were available to all citizens. *The Civil Rights Record* (1970), edited by Richard Bardolph, related the passage of legislation in Kentucky that made lynching a crime punishable by death. Further, the state’s laws would punish those individuals that harbored members of the lynch mob, including family members, for a term of two to twenty years. Despite questions regarding the viability of the efforts of the state of Kentucky’s government, particularly when enforcing these measures and monitoring law enforcement successfully, some would posture that these laws effectively inhibited the practice of lynching.\(^8\)

William Link’s 1992 study, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, “argues that southern Progressivism should be understood as a clash between radically divergent views of the social contract.”\(^9\) For people of color in the South that meant that equity would not exist. The accoutrements that society typically utilizes to esteem individuals

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eluded Blacks of all social and economic circumstances. Therefore, the wealthiest or erudite Blacks were still deemed to be less valuable than the poorest or illiterate Whites. Link further relates historian Albert Bushnell Hart’s observation during his sojourn through the South, indicating that “southern Anglo-Saxons . . . were ‘lazy . . . densely ignorant’ . . . [yet] the well-to-do, the cultured, the educated, the well-connected absolutely controlled society.”10 Although this characterization seems contradictory, it is an accurate depiction, as the upper echelon of society essentially defined many of the recreational, educational, and economic opportunities within these communities, for Blacks and Whites. Link’s assertion further relates that Progressivism in the South was illustrated differently in comparison with the rest of the country. Whereas, other communities progressed, the South remained stagnant because of the remoteness of communities, the vehement distaste of governmental influence and the inherent prejudice against Blacks. This resulted in a paternalistic control of the South that evolved into Jim Crow laws.

Philip Dray asserted that “with a lynching, shared values and community bonds were reinforced.”11 Lynch law permeated society to its core, influencing government officials and society that summary justice was acceptable, so much so that jurists advocated incorporating aspects of the torturous practices as punishments for criminals. Even those individuals who decried the action acquiesced to this spirit when attempting to identify the source of dissatisfaction and promoting remedies. In At the Hands of

Persons Unknown (2003), Dray stressed that state officials who enforced laws punishing violators and co-conspirators, successfully abated lynching, but the decline in mob violence was a reflection of

"changing ideas about women and their role in society, the sobering example of European barbarity during two world wars, the influence of white commerce and industry in the South, the due-process revolution in courts that reflected a new concern for the sanctity of the person, the binding together of the nation by technology and ever-faster modes of transportation."12

Hence, the justice system was not the catalyst to end lynching. These studies proffer that the implementation of legislation criminalizing lynching was as effective as the government officials who were bound to enforce them, though they do not provide insight into the lynching of women.

P. Thomas Stanford contributed to the premise that the prevalent use of lynching was the result of government officials, who seemed unable or unwilling to act in an attempt to thwart mob violence. In The Tragedy of the Negro in America (1897), Stanford ascertained that the lynching of African Americans tarnished the country’s character and that these assaults were committed in an effort to force Blacks into submission, a stance supported by many of the aforementioned authors. Additionally, Stanford submitted that these bureaucrats, who supported lynching as a preventative measure for the security white women, would not consider acting on behalf of Blacks that were lynched in

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increasing numbers during the 1890s. Stanford concluded that the mobocracy became an agent of change circumventing established laws and changing the tenor of the country.  

Ineffective governmental policies were the premise purported by Robert Minor in *Lynching and Frame-Up in Tennessee* (1946), who related that the act of lynching was often used as a “political instrument” and that the Democratic and Republican parties acted in concert to disenfranchise Blacks during the latter nineteenth century. The molestation of Blacks served as a means to provide the former slave owners with the opportunity to regain power and Minor concluded that the mob violence was utilized “to relieve the Negro and the mass of white citizens of the laboring classes, of the responsibilities of citizenship”. As he investigated a foiled lynching and the subsequent imprisonment of two men who stopped the attack, Minor proposed, as was previously mentioned, that the lynching of people of color occurred with the local, state, and federal official’s knowledge and consent, as these individuals made little effort to impede the practice. He surmised that the North did not substantively intervene to prevent lynching, and thereby contributed to the proliferation of mob violence that escalated “after the Republican Party entered into an agreement with the Democratic party to no longer apply the Civil War amendments of the Constitution insofar as the rights of the Negro were concerned.” Finally, Minor asserted that once the disenfranchisement of Blacks was

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complete, the former planter class was restored to a position of power. Hence, lynching was a method to ensure that these individuals would retain their positions without interference from Blacks.

Michael Pfeifer asserted in *Rough Justice* (2004) that the act of lynching was not erratic, but rather the methodical plan of the white community intent upon rule. Further, lynching fostered a sense of inclusiveness for members of the mob, as those persons elevated their status by disenfranchising others. Pfeifer related that as the government placed a new impetus on due-process of laws, proponents of mobocracy, in defiance, increased the intensity of violence that became

"an aspect of a larger cultural war over the nature of criminal justice waged between rural and working-class supporters of 'rough justice' and middle-class due-process advocates... [because] postbellum mobs did not respond to an absence of law but rather to a style of criminal justice that was careful and deliberative, ostensibly impersonal and neutral, in which the rights of the defendant, the reform of the criminal, and humanitarian considerations were factored in beyond punitive demands of communal opinion. To rough-justice advocates, real justice was lodged in the community. It was administered face-to-face with a measure of retribution that matched the offense, and it sought to 'preserve order,' that is, to uphold the hierarchical prerogatives of the dominant residents of the locality... rough justice enthusiasts revolted against due process through lynching."¹⁶

Pfeifer further deduced that the practice of lynching only began to wane after due process advocates proposed the application of the death penalty as a viable solution for punishing criminal behavior. Stanford, Minor and Pfeifer's hypotheses were substantiated by citing specific incidents, and these works endorse the hypothesis racist regimes enabled lynching.

Jim Crow policies were more than regulations implemented through local and state governments created to enforce a strict, separatist society. *The Jim Crow Guide* (1959) documented the implementation of prejudicial policies and the manner in which the racism of the nineteenth and early twentieth century permeated every aspect of life in the United States. Inclusive in the text was an examination of Southern laws, where social changes occurred resulting in what Stetson Kennedy refers to as "racist etiquette". The ultimate goal of this protocol was to subordinate Blacks socially, politically and economically. This code of behavior was vague, but it behooved Blacks to be particularly careful in their interactions with Whites, as any slight infraction could result in injury or death as decorum was enforced by mobs. These Black Codes were edicts legalizing aspects of the etiquette, created a more stringent and hostile environment for Blacks. Additionally, laws and etiquette prohibited "social equality" as it was believed that these relationships would lead to sexual intercourse, presumably between black men and white women. However, the rules of etiquette allowed white men access to black women, as long as discretion was observed, thus reinforcing the need of legal, social, and economic recourse for the women. Ultimately, the planter class was the true beneficiary of segregationist policies, as Blacks and poor Whites that competed for jobs were exploited. Kennedy's work provides additional reference depicting Southern societies and its environment that fostered lynching.  

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Social Ills

Southerners often noted that lynching ensured a safe and proper society in which members understood their roles. But, this flagitious ideology generated because members of lynch mobs were average citizens who perceived collective violence to be an acceptable tactic to resolve societal issues, particularly, those matters that related to African-Americans.

Wells-Barnett also authored a trilogy of pamphlets now published in text form. *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: the Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, which was edited by Jacqueline Jones Royster, encompasses Wells-Barnett’s works, “Southern Horrors”, “A Red Record”, and “Mob Rule in New Orleans”. Utilizing newspaper accounts of assaults on Blacks derived specifically from “white” newspapers, Wells documented the attacks on black males and females, and provided statistics gleaned from the articles to support her thesis. Intentionally selecting these broadsheets, Wells understood that utilizing data procured from black-owned papers did not give necessary credence to convince mainstream America that the argument supporting lynching was based on a lie; analyzing white papers would serve to condemn the guilty parties “by their own words”. She decided that lynching was not the immediate response of the local white community demanding justice for the rape of a white woman by a black male, but rather an “old threadbare lie” that served as a means to continue to subjugate people of color. Supporting this hypothesis, Wells-Barnett provided evidence that Blacks have been lynched for numerous offenses, including simple violations of social graces when the offended was white. Her indictment addressed the alleged rape victims, who
were supposedly overwhelmed by black brutes. Wells-Barnett declared that neither she nor members of the black community condoned sexual assaults of women and broached the subject by exposing the realities of the alleged sexual liaisons that led to mob rule. She expounded upon idea that white women were actually willing participants and that many of the alleged assailants were actual paramours in illicit love affairs. Of these couplings, some white females readily placed all culpability on the black males in an attempt to refrain from becoming a social pariah within their community. Yet, others refused to identify their lovers, even when it became evident that locals counseled these white women to assume the stance of victimization.

Her investigation also addressed the sanctity of white women, as Wells-Barnett posited that lynching occurred even when it was public knowledge that some of the supposed victims were of ill repute. Refusing to digress from volatile social issues, she exposed white males, who were the perpetrators of crimes against black women. Noting that these individuals were adamant about protecting the virtue of white women, Wells-Barnett inquired about their double standard, as they were the promulgators of miscegenation through their abuse of black females. Her definitive discourses’ strengths are reflective of the fact that these works address many issues that some studies disregard. Wells-Barnett delved into the authentic motives of the mobs, and also detailed the impact that these attacks had on the victims and society. She then constructed an argument challenging the gang and bystanders and, subsequently, created a new
paradigm based on the fact, rather than rumor and innuendo, which were catalysts for lynching.18

The Psychology of Lynching

Individual participation in lynching bees involved more than seeking retribution for perceived affronts to racial etiquette. Although, this depiction was espoused throughout the South as the necessity for lynching bees, in reality, lynching also fulfilled the psychological need to belong to a group. The violent attacks were injurious to more than the victim and the community. The fear that drove the mob to violence had a deteriorating effect on the consciousness of the people.

Walter White concluded in *Rope and Faggot* (1929) that the lynching contagion that was so prevalent in the South resulted in diminished intellectual development. White reflected that the South was stagnant, intellectually and he noted:

Southern Whites have been handicapped and stunted in their mental and moral growth... they have had it constantly dinned into their ears from pulpit and press, in the home and school and on the street, that Negroes are given to sex crimes, that only lynching can protect white women, that unmentionably horrible deeds can be prevented only through the use of extreme brutality... One can only estimate the long and difficult climb the Southern white child, living in an atmosphere where dissenting opinion is ruthlessly suppressed, must make to attain even a reasonably intelligent attitude towards lynching and the Negro... [and that] the factors which have been largely contributory to the low mental estate... where lynching has flourished... include the influence of evangelical religions, the use by unscrupulous politicians of mythical fear of "Negro domination," the important role of sex and the strenuous efforts to keep the Negro ignorant and intimidated that he may the more easily be exploited.

White's treatise includes other factors that, in his estimation, made Southerners intellectually inept. He notes the repression within these communities initiated by evangelical religions, which dictated prescribed behaviors, the lack of entertainment, a preoccupation with sex, and the tendency to suppress ideas contrary to those conservative views espoused by the mainstream audience resulted in a lowered degree of intelligence.19

When Ray Stannard Baker wrote Following the Color Line (1937), it was his intention to provide an accurate depiction of the experiences of people of color in the country. Employed by McClure magazine, Baker was on assignment that took him across the country, and he provided the periodical with a series of articles that were comprised into one volume regarding his experiences and the summation of his findings. Baker's approach to the subject matter has resulted in a plethora of information about race relations during the early twentieth century. Baker noted that, by the early twentieth century, a new type of a black person had emerged in society, a "New Negro", one that had not experienced the demoralizing institution of slavery. He or she was educated and embarked on professional and economic endeavors. The Southern society considered that these new opportunities and ideology made the "New Negro" problematic, difficult to control and untrustworthy. As a result, White's fear of Blacks escalated. According to Baker, Whites experienced a "growing fear . . . especially the women and children living alone on great farms where white neighbors are distant.[ But], statistics shows that less

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crime is committed in the black belt than in other parts of the South. Yet, this irrational anxiety strained the relationship between Blacks and Whites, and was yet another excuse for the lynching of Blacks. Conversely, the fear of assault remained a constant threat to Blacks in the South and for the black community who had little hope for local, state or federal intervention against white foes.

After the Civil War, as white men in the South grappled with fear and aggression, coupled with what was characterized as the impudence and secrecy of Blacks, they were compelled to dominate. Lawrence Jacob Friedman surmised in *The White Savage* (1970) that this stress permeated the society, resulting in the proposing of southern autonomy, in which the South proffered that they had the experience and thus could handle the “negro problem” without any assistance or intervention from the North. The New Cavalier literature characterized Blacks as uppity and dangerous but idealized the preferable docile, complacent Negro. Furthermore, this period coincides with the administration of Woodrow Wilson, son of the South, and with Jim Crow policies that became more inflexible and garnered the president’s support. Friedman charged that the official policy of Wilson’s administration was to engage Blacks in segregated and subservient positions. But, people of color worked to combat these policies and become independent. This became a cause of concern for many Whites, but Blacks persevered. They strove to

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subvert the damaging effects of racism and alter the presumption of the black molester as the impetus for lynching.21

George Wright hypothesized in *Racial Violence in Kentucky* (1990) that popular stereotypes presented Blacks as having an innate proclivity to lawlessness and lynching resolved that problem. As a result, some lynching detractors, including Willis D. Weatherford, a Southerner reformer, espoused this rhetoric. In an address delivered to the Southern Sociological Congress, Weatherford stated that not only were Blacks inherently less intelligent than Whites but that they were known to be disreputable and routinely victimized Whites. Further, Weatherford asserted “Negroes have been known to assault white women on the way home from the most horrible and revolting lynching scene.”22

Wright theorized that newspapers and local historians supported the lynching of Blacks because of the desire to punish a criminal, who might otherwise escape punishment from the judicial system, and to serve as a deterrent of potential crimes by members of the black community. As a result, Whites determined that the benefits of the practice justified their community’s refusal to adhere to local and state laws. Wright further asserted that white supporters of the phenomenon presumed Blacks to be inconsequential, so in their estimation there was no great loss to the community.

Finally, Wright determined that Whites were complicit in concealing the identity of the mob. Most notably, he indicated that white reporters sympathized with the

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members of the mob and portrayed them as honorable citizens desiring to maintain
civility and morality within the community. As laws were passed in Kentucky
criminalizing mob rule, Wright asserted that the newspaper reporters proffered support by
reporting allegations of brutal attacks by Blacks on Whites, thereby giving the mob the
justification of self-defense.

White, Baker, Friedman and Wright examined the impact of lynching on
individuals in the South. Friedman and Baker’s research contributed to theories regarding
the irrational fear that Whites had of Blacks and how that angst permeated every aspect
of the society and resulted in stereotypical literature and racist government policies.
Wright reflected the widespread acceptance of the belief that Blacks were criminals by
the white community, who used this to justify the use of mob violence. White’s
contribution to the research conceptualized the idea that the refusal of new philosophies
and experiences arrested the intellectual development of Southerners, which in turn
negatively impacted the region not only intellectually, but also politically, socially, and
economically.

Women: Victims and Agents of Change

Most lynching scholarship does not address how the lynching phenomenon relates
to women. However, three compositions have contributed to scholarship about violence
and women. Those expositions are Fire in a Canebrake, “Stranger Fruit” and Southern
Horrors.Fire in a Canebrake (2003) by Laura Wexler examined the last mass lynching in
Georgia, the attack on Roger and Mae Murray Dorsey and George and Dorothy Malcolm
at Moore’s Ford Bridge in Walton County. Wexler created a significant work by
conducting interviews with locals, searching FBI records, as well as utilizing archival sources in an effort to ensure that the case study was a comprehensive. Wexler, a journalist, analyzed the social, political and economic dynamics of black and white relationships within the community and examined the lynching of the couples in reference to this framework. She noted that individuals in the community blamed the victims and their behavior for the lynching. The women were described as uncouth by members of the African-American community; Roger Dorsey was portrayed as “uppity” with a romantic interest in a local white girl, and George Malcolm was referred to as crazy. Wexler surmised that a lack of adequate education and economic opportunities relegated most people of color in the community into labor contracts and under the control of the powerful planter class. In conjunction with the presence of racist politicians, like Herman Talmadge, the fear of reprisal and complicity of law enforcement officials and townspeople were effective tools that provided the lynch mob with immunity. She confirmed that these perceptions were so pervasive that they became ingrained in the psyche of the community, as more than 50 years after the deaths of the Dorseys and Malcolms many townspeople, both black and white, refused to divulge information or provide the names of the members of the mob.23

Maria DeLongoria’s dissertation “Stranger Fruit” (2006) seeks to provide another dimension to the commentary of the lynching of women through the analysis of the sexual and racial dynamics of the lynching of Rosa Richardson in South Carolina and

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Marie Scott in Oklahoma. DeLongoria studied lynching in relation to stereotypes objectifying women and the Southern white male’s sense of honor.

DeLongoria theorized that the “idea of memory is central to understanding ... the lynching of black women in general.” These females were often objectified in the media’s “public memory” and characterized in stereotypically negative terms, i.e. ‘brutish’, ‘wanton’, Mammy, or Jezebel. But, the men that Richardson and Scott were involved with were afforded a positive public image, “as efforts were made to omit these (sexual trysts with black women) from collective memory.” DeLongoria posited that lynching was used as a means to protect the white male sense of honor and was “not a consequence of dishonorable white conduct.”

Crystal Feimster’s Southern Horrors (2009) examined sexual violence and the politics of these acts. Feimster presented two formidable, yet somewhat controversial women in their period, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, an outspoken opponent of lynching, and her counterpart, Rebecca Latimer Felton, a proponent of lynching, and examined how these women’s experiences influenced their work within the dialogue of sexual violence and lynching.

The Civil War changed the lives of each of these women. Rebecca Latimer Felton was a wife and mother on a large Southern plantation whose life had been irreparably


changed when confronted with the horrors associated with war. This caused Felton to perceive that white men were incapable of defending white women, so it was incumbent upon these individuals to protect themselves. Felton began to actively campaign for the reform of rape laws to protect both black and white women from sexual assaults by white men. But, as the myth of the black rapist was popularized, this shifted the focus of the molestation of black women by white men to Blacks as perpetrators. A scheme devised by white men, the idea of the black brute was conveniently implemented at a time when white women were campaigning for suffrage, temperance and economic freedom. Fiemster noted that this ploy allowed white men to retain control of most white women. However, Rebecca Felton exploited the rhetoric of rape and lynching from the “sexualized discourse of white supremacy” and successfully advanced her political agenda and career becoming a noted advocate for the advancement and protection of white women, which included the support of lynching as a means to accomplish this.

Conversely, Wells-Barnett and her parents were formerly enslaved. Feimster noted that her parent’s relative economic privilege, political activity, and determination, as well as Wells-Barnett’s sheltered life during her formative years instilled self-worth and resilience. As a teen, Wells-Barnett endured the harsh realities of life including the death of her parents, character assassination, becoming a caretaker for her siblings, and expulsion from college, yet these events fortified her determination to persevere. This characteristic became a personality trait, and Wells-Barnett relentlessly published articles, gave speeches and challenged individuals and organizations to expose the

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fabrications purported to support lynching, the eradication of mobocracy and suffrage and security for black women.

Feimster determined that the Civil War caused a shift in paradigm in reference to the roles and behavioral expectation of women. The activities of Felton and Wells-Barnett are indicative of two extraordinary women that successfully navigated social barriers as they worked to change social constructs. But, most women were impacted differently. Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, poor white women were typically disregarded. Aristocratic whites perceived them to be of low moral character. This created a chasm between the two economic and social groups, and the gentry initially refused to interact with them, but that would eventually change. After the war ended, white supremacist policies were enacted to manipulate social, economic and political sectors, as well as the poor, women and black men. Individuals that refused to abide by the mandates were in danger of being lynched. These violent acts were perpetuated upon black men and women, without impunity, but poor white women were also in a precarious situation. "The violent politics of white supremacy functioned in a small way to bring ordinary white women under the umbrella of extralegal protection" as long as they abided by the appropriate mandates.

There is a commonality between the black and white female victims of lynch mobs. Generally, these groups of women were impoverished, some were participants in illegal activities and were characterized negatively in newspaper articles. Black women were susceptible to mob violence, because they were typically employed in occupations

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28 Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*, 175.
that could lend to economic and physical exploitation, both of which increased the likelihood of an alleged affront that would be summarily resolved by a mob, or as a relation to a black male that had a violent encounter with a white person. Conversely, white women were marked for violence because of their “absence of male protectors . . . and in some cases the very presence of men.”29 The act of lynching ensured that white supremacist policies could be fully enacted and that elite white males would maintain political, social, and economic control.

A Culture of Violence

The South embodies a unique culture where honor is preeminent, violence is tolerable, and laws are flouted. The dominant group establishes the protocol, stringently enforces it and circumvents the legal system in their efforts.

The principle of sovereignty has permeated Southern society, not just politics. Roberta Senechal de la Roche hypothesizes in “Collective Violence as Social Control” (1996) that collective violence is a group effort at self-help as the group does not want intervention from a government entity. “Collective violence, then, is commonly a moralistic response to deviant behavior.”30 Senechal de la Roche relates that the dominant group determines aberrant behaviors, whether real or illusory. Likewise, the dominant group may exhibit deviant behavior and project those attributes onto persons or groups that are subordinate, who are scapegoated.

29 Feimster, Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching, 183.

The South endorses violence for self-protection and honor for the dominant
group. In Dov Cohen and Richard E. Nisbett’s “Self-Protection and the Culture of Honor:
Explaining Southern Violence” (1994) cultural violence is attributed to the Scotch-Irish
herders who lacked sufficient law enforcement during the era when the South was settled
and used “retributive violence” for the preservation of their livelihood. In this society,
honor and violence were esteemed and “when honor is strongly valued by many in a
culture, the likelihood increases dramatically that two individuals will interact and then
become embroiled in a conflict in which neither can back down.”31 Because socializing
institutions advocated violence, the culture thrived.

In “Culture, Social Organization, and Patterns of Violence” (1998) Cohen asserts
that “understanding the way culture interacts with social structure and organization is
essential to understanding violence”32 in the South. Accordingly, norms inherent to the
highly regarded culture of honor support the use of violence and that “culture persists
past material changes, and as long as the old southern . . . culture is kept in place by its
stabilizing forces, it can continue: If socializing institutions like family, community, and
religion that have crystallized around culture-of-honor patterns stay cohesive, stable, and
solid, traditional notions about honor and violence can remain.”33 These proselytized
institutions influenced the laws and social policies that governed society.

31 Richard Nisbett and Dov Cohen, “Self-Protection and Honor: Explaining Southern Violence,”

32 Dov Cohen, “Culture, Social Organization, and Patterns of Violence,” Journal of Personality

33 Dov Cohen, “Culture, Social Organization, and Patterns of Violence,” Journal of Personality
Lynching was a manifestation of the subculture of violence in the South. James W. Clarke theorizes in “Without Fear or Shame: Lynching, Capital Punishment and the Subculture of Violence in the American South” (1998) that Southern violence was not capricious but an entrenched aspect of society that evolved out of centuries of racial antipathy between blacks and whites. In such a facilitating culture, racial violence was volatile and situationally determined. A case-by-case assessment of the motives behind these events suggests that lynchings could be, and were, triggered by countless and diverse provocations — real and imagined — in a region where the absolute level of racial tension was always high and white-on-black violence was always condoned as the primary means of maintaining the racial caste system.  

According to Clarke, mob violence is not extinct, but the punishment of black culprits has now been relegated to the state and federal government as capital punishment.

The literature reviewed for this dissertation addressed the economic implications of lynching, the effectiveness of laws, social ills, the psychology of lynching, women as agents of change as well as victims and the Southern culture of violence. However, my dissertation seeks to fulfill a void in the scholarship as it specifically examines the lynching of women in Georgia. Furthermore, numerical data has been gathered in an attempt to quantify whether ethnicity, property ownership, tenancy and the production of lint or seed cotton factored in the lynching of these women.

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CHAPTER 3
FINDINGS

The loss of the Civil War, the enacting of federal policies abhorrent to Southern sensibilities and the desire to regain economic, political and social control facilitated a racist culture, which fostered a capricious environment. The achievements of Reconstruction seemed to dissipate as people of color were continually victimized as the social and political order was reestablished—one which was based upon the mores of repression and bigotry. African Americans soon realized that the dreams of a new life after the Civil War would not come to fruition as the culture and politics of the region manifested to hamper their progress. Hence, African Americans were expected to adhere to norms that required submissiveness in any interaction with Whites per the racial decorum of the era.

The failure to adhere to the rules inherent to this culture, whether real or perceived, often resulted in the lynching of the accused, which served as punishment for the violator and a warning to the black community. These assaults were usually performed by members of white racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), along with, “the better people of the community.” As the culture that supported the creation white supremacist organizations flourished, binary derivatives impacted African-American females. The characterizations of African-American women were extremely malevolent and “between 1890 and 1920 the vast majority of black women were
perceived to be dangerous and conniving wenches . . . [hence] the image of the Jezebel captured the imagination of southern Whites and served to justify the ill treatment of black women in general and the race as a whole.”¹ Negative stereotypes demeaned and objectified these individuals, and the social construct proffered images of black females as overly sexual, uncouth, animalistic beings. These typecasts fostered an environment where it was socially acceptable to objectify and dehumanize black women, even to the point of sanctioning violent attacks. Mobs attacked black women in Georgia, because the community supported their actions and the consequences of these assaults were negligible. As a result, sixteen females in Georgia became victims of lynch mobs.

Women Victimized by Lynch Mobs

The first documented lynching of a black woman in Georgia after the Civil War occurred in Wilkinson County, Georgia. Matthew Deason and his black mistress were allegedly involved in a public, adulterous relationship and openly cohabitated in his home much to the chagrin of the community.² On Wednesday night, August 30, 1871, in Toomsboro, Georgia, Deason, who was sheriff of Wilkinson County, and the unidentified black woman were forcibly taken from their home by a mob and lynched.³ Matthew Deason was shot in the forehead and the back of his head was clubbed. The Ku Klux Klan, credited with the assault, tortured the woman by inflicting knife wounds.⁴ Their


² “Dreadful Tragedy in Wilkinson,” Federal Union, September 13, 1871.

³ Untitled, Telegraph and Messenger, September 7, 1871.

⁴ Untitled, Atlanta Daily Sun, September 6, 1871.
bodies were then tied to pieces of iron and thrown into a nearby mill pond and were discovered the next day. Sources indicate that prior to the lynching Deason assaulted his wife, Caroline Deason, on a public street in Irwinton, Georgia.\(^5\) This show of hostility, and the disavowal of societal values, seems to have served as the catalyst for the attack by the local members of the Ku Klux Klan, who through community representatives had confronted Deason about ending his adulterous relationship with his mistress and demanded that he return to his family. Still, the sheriff ignored their appeals and continued his relationship with the woman. Although the KKK indicated that “they did not intend to kill him; [Deason] sent them word he would kill them if they bothered him,”\(^6\) an impertinent answer that annoyed members of the intolerant group, who decided to rebuke the law enforcement official. The perpetrators were never identified and no one was ever arrested for the crime. As usual for many Southern lynchings, they died at the hands of persons unknown.\(^7\)

Deason, who became the sheriff of Wilkinson County in 1871, was a former Confederate soldier, who had worked as a farmer, grocer and retail sign dealer, and had been elected to office by the local Republicans. Married to Serena Dulcima Catherine Caroline Johnson Deason (Caroline), they were the parents of five children--- Wiley, Mary, William, Rufus and Matthew. Despite being married with a family, Deason publicly conducted an illicit relationship with the black woman.

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\(^6\) Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs, *Interview of Henry Lowther, Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire Into the Late Insurrectionary States, Georgia*, Volume 6, 1872, 356-363.

Matt Deason’s justification for the relationship may have hinged on Caroline Deason’s allegedly precarious mental state. She was often institutionalized and even when not confined in an asylum; she did not live with the family, but maintained a separate home approximately two miles away. Resources do not divulge whether the affair contributed to Caroline Deason’s fragile mental state or if the relationship blossomed after her confinement for mental health issues. This may have been a reason for Matt Deason’s maltreatment of his wife, when it was reported that he publicly humiliated her. Newspaper accounts also indicated that Deason left his family for his mistress, who was purportedly employed by the family. Allegedly, the woman had been involved with the sheriff for at least a dozen years, and in 1871, she was living with Deason, though he was still legally married to his wife.

Sexual relations with black women were customary and acceptable in the South, as most white males considered sexual access to black women their right. Further, it was not uncommon for elite white males to discreetly engage in sexual relationships with women of color. But, the Deason affair was a vastly different arrangement. Firstly, Deason was not a reputable, wealthy planter. Albeit, his status as a white male afforded him a modicum of honor, he lacked genteel status; hence, Deason was not entitled to discount protocol. Indisputably, the couple was committed to each other because Deason flagrantly disregarded civility and his marital vows in favor of the long-term relationship. These overt acts of miscegenation, adultery, and cohabitation were intolerable to Southern mores and a severe violation of propriety. Accordingly, Deason was reprimanded by persons in the community, including the Klan, but refused reproach in
favor of the relationship. As a native Southerner, Deason had more than a cursory knowledge of the actions of white cappers and other vigilante groups that were intent upon maintaining traditional values. Deason certainly could have been turned out of office for this breach of protocol, which at that time would have been thought an ethical violation. It seems his imprudent response precipitated the deaths of Deason and the black woman.

The identity of Deason’s mistress remains a mystery, but government documents provide some information about her. Harry Lowther testified before the Joint Select Committee of the United States Congress, which included Luke P. Poland, chairman representing the House of Representatives, John Scott, chairman representing the Senate, Senator Thomas F. Bayard and Representative William E. Lansing, about the vigilante activities of night riders in Wilkinson County, Georgia. During his deposition, Lowther revealed details about the lynching of Sheriff Deason and the unidentified woman.

According to Lowther, the woman in question had been in a relationship with Deason for at least a dozen years, which would include the period prior to the Civil War.\(^8\) Lowther indicated that the woman had five children for Deason, though two were deceased. The 1860 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedule indicates that Deason owned three slaves, a 20 year old black woman and her two sons, ages two and two months. The time coincides perfectly, but the document does not identify the father of the children, who were classified as black rather than mulatto, which may mean that she was impregnated by a black male that was not owned by the sheriff. Liaisons between slave owners and

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enslaved women were common—a fact that increases the probability that the enslaved woman identified in the 1860 slave tax register was the mistress that was lynched with Matthew Deason.

The manner in which Deason and the unidentified woman were lynched may provide clues regarding the composition of the mob. Matt Deason was shot in the back of the head, and his body tied to a piece of metal and subsequently, thrown into a pond. The woman was tortured, and her body was mutilated, essentially, cut to shreds and then tied to a piece of iron and thrown into the same pond. Both corpses were found the next day. This act of brutality is indicative of intense passion, an attribute of lynch mobs. However, one wonders if members of Caroline Deason’s family participated in the attack. As has often been noted by historians, Southern culture has its roots in the feudal systems of France and Spain that required strict adherence to personal and familial honor. As a result, any infraction against one’s family honor was to be confronted in order to restore familial reputation. Caroline Deason’s family may have sought retribution against her husband for the gross disrespect and embarrassment endured by his extramarital affair because of this Southern tenet.9

Retaliation for a lawsuit was the incentive for the lynching of the next African-American woman in Georgia. Fifty year old Joe Thompson was a tenant farmer working for James McElroy in Fayette County, Georgia. On a hot July day in 1879, Thompson and his 15 year old son, Bob, were working in the fields. During the course of the day,

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John Gray, James McElroy’s brother-in-law, approached Bob Thompson and accused him of stealing farm equipment. Despite Bob Thompson’s vehement denials of theft, Gray was not persuaded, and began assaulting the young man. As Joe Thompson attempted to intervene on behalf of his son, Gray accosted the older man and beat him with a stick. Joe Thompson, then, filed charges against John Gray and the Fayette County Superior Court fined him $100 for the attack. Allegedly, Gray was infuriated, not only at Thompson’s perceived insolence, but at being found guilty of assaulting a black man and having to pay him remuneration. Because of this Joe Thompson wisely chose to move his family from that farm to another in Jonesboro (Clayton County), Georgia owned by Reuben Munday.10

It was in Jonesboro that the assault occurred at approximately midnight, Wednesday, July 29, 1880. Joe Thompson and his family were awakened from their slumber by the noise of the mob. After forcing their way into the home, four members of the lynch mob, grabbed Joe Thompson, took him out into the yard where a fifth man viciously attacked him with a whip.11 During the fray, Thompson’s married daughter, Milly Thompson Johnson, a young mother nestled in bed between her two young children, was shot in the head as she rose from her slumber awakened by the disturbance. Mrs. Mary Thompson, wife of Joe Thompson and mother of his children, was sadistically attacked by the mob that also shot their 16 year old son, Bob Thompson, in the side.12

As news of the attack spread throughout the local area, a crowd gathered to commiserate with the Thompsons, who were devastated at the loss of their daughter and uncertain about the survival and health of their son. Some of the women sewed the shroud that Milly was to be buried in and other visitors offered their condolences for the senseless act. Blacks and Whites were incensed after hearing of the attack and demanded that police officers take action.13

When he was questioned by the police and news reporters, Joe Thompson indicated that there were ten to fifteen members of the mob that attacked his family and though they attempted to disguise their identity by wearing black masks or smearing their faces black, the elder Thompson recognized one of the leaders of the mob to be John Gray. As he reflected, Thompson noted that a few days prior to the attack, John Gray surprisingly appeared at his home and asked Thompson make a tray for him, which made Joe Thompson extremely suspicious.

A coroner’s inquest was convened and Sheriff Scott Archer conducted an investigation that resulted in the arrest of Fayette County residents, James H. McElroy, James B. McConnell, Bankston McConnell, Henry Spradlin, James Murphy, John M. Murphy, Lewis (Louis) Gray, John W. Gray, Wilson Hadaway, Andrew Murphy (Murphey) and Sam Cook of Clayton County. On September 8, 1880, McElroy, J. B. McConnell, B. McConnell, Spradlin, J. Murphy, J. M. Murphy, L. Gray, J. W. Gray, Cook, Murphey and Hadaway were charged with murder in Clayton County Superior Court. In addition to the homicide indictment, Joe A. McConnell was charged with

assault and battery for his participation in the fray that caused significant injuries to Joe Thompson, Mrs. Thompson, and their son, Bob Thompson. Judge Hillyer remanded James Murphy and James Mcлерoy to the Fulton County jail and the other alleged assailants to a facility in Clayton County. Newspaper accounts referred to a "most unhealthy excitement" attributed to two sources: Blacks that congregated to discuss the particulars of the assaults on the Thompson family, who allegedly planned to lynch the assailants in retaliation, as well as some white "roughs" who sought to free the accused. Fearing a riot, Archer submitted a telegram requesting Governor Alfred H. Colquitt's reinforcements. Colquitt responded via telegram requesting further details. The governor sent the Gate City Guard to Jonesboro to guard the inmates and maintain order. In the midst of these proceedings, a meeting of approximately 300 people was held at the local courthouse where a resolution was adopted "that we condemn in most solemn terms such outrages on law and decency and urge all good citizens to use their best endeavors to bring the perpetrators to justice and see that the laws are vindicated."

The defendants, who were represented by Col. G. D. Stewart of the prestigious Stewart and Hall law firm from Griffin, Georgia, maintained their innocence. When the trial commenced, it was apparent to those attending the proceedings that Joe Thompson and his wife were still suffering from the effects of the attacks. The victim's statement and the confession of one of the defendants guaranteed the fate of the mob. Joe

Thompson testified that he was positive of John Gray’s presence the night of the assaults and recounted the reason that caused Gray to have a grudge against him.

During the criminal proceedings, the attorneys for the defendants attempted to have their clients released and the charges dropped. Their lawyers surmised that the sheriff of Clayton County was more concerned with obtaining the reward money offered by the citizens of Clayton County and Georgia Governor A.H. Colquitt for the apprehension of the members of the lynch mob and that his greed resulted in dereliction of duty, as their clients were erroneously targeted and arrested for the crime. Additionally, the lawyers for the defense demanded the release of the defendants “because there was no legally qualified grand jury sitting . . . [and, because] no properly authenticated list of jurors [was] kept or filed as required by law”. Ultimately, after hearing the evidence, Judge George Hillyer overruled the arguments for the defendant’s dismissal, and they were forced to stand trial for their actions.

The defense pursued having the confession of Sam B. Cook withdrawn due to it being given to law enforcement under duress, but the judge decided that the testimony would remain as evidence. Cook told law enforcement that on July 28th he and some of the accused men attended a dance and upon leaving agreed to go by Thompson’s cabin and attack him. Further, he insisted that Millie Johnson’s death was the result of returned gun fire, and insinuated that Bob Thompson shot at them first. This statement helped convict John Gray and Louis McElroy of the crime. On September 11, 1880, the grand jury found Sam Cook not guilty of murder, but sentenced him for a lesser crime

17 Clayton County Superior Court Records.
associated with the intrusion. However, he escaped from incarceration, and later died in Alabama from an illness thought to have been contracted while he was eluding the police.\textsuperscript{18} Thompson's lynching has the distinction of being the only example of the lynching of a black woman in Georgia in which members of the mob were convicted for their crime.

Often attributed to Georgia, the lynching of Jane Wade illustrates the dilemmas associated with assessing historical reporting of these extralegal activities. Jane Wade was a white woman born in Georgia between 1842 and 1845, and lived in the state until after the death of her husband, when she moved to Cherokee County, Alabama. It was here where Wade was lynched with her married lover, James Russell (J.R./John) Dorsey for the murder of his niece, Mary Davis, on October 20, 1884.

It could be deduced that Jane Wade and J.R. Dorsey knew each other before becoming acquainted in Alabama. Both Wade and Dorsey lived in Alpine, Georgia, a small town in the northwest part of the state and Dorsey served as the postmaster there. J.R. Dorsey had been married to his invalid wife, Elvira, since 1833. Two children were born to the union, Jasper C. Dorsey and Mary L. Dorsey, both of whom preceded their parents in death, passing away by 1869. At some point after 1870, Jane Wade, who was widowed, moved from Alpine, Georgia, with her two children, John and Arminda, to

Centre, Cherokee County, Alabama. Whether she moved at the request of Dorsey is unknown, but the Wade family established their household in a separate home on the property of J.R. Dorsey. It was fodder for gossip that Dorsey “kept” Wade for approximately nine years. This was not particularly shocking, as Dorsey had earned a reputation as a base character who allegedly “moved from White County, Georgia, to escape gambling debts and a gung-ho sheriff.”

J. R. Dorsey’s relationship with family members suffered because of his affair. On October 5th, E.C. and Mary Davis and their son were leaving for church when Mrs. Davis’s aunt, Elvira Dorsey, arrived at their home accompanied by J.R. Dorsey and Jane Wade. Elvira Dorsey could not be left alone because of her disability, and since J.R. Dorsey and Jane Wade planned to go to Summerville, Georgia, approximately 36 miles away to enjoy a day of drinking, they were in need of a caretaker for his wife. Mr. Davis replied that he would stay home and care for Elvira Dorsey, and his wife and son left to attend church. When Dorsey and Wade returned the next day, he went to the Davis home to retrieve his wife. Inebriated, irate and belligerent, Dorsey was out of control when he found that his wife had returned home despite his order to stay with the Davis family. Hearing the commotion in the field where he was working a mile and a half from home, E.C. Davis rushed to his wife’s aid and found that she had locked herself in the home by bolting the doors and windows shut in fear of her uncle and his paramour who were at the front door, threatening to break it down with an ax. Mary Davis was struggling to placate

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the couple, telling them that they were just drunk and needed to sleep off the effects of the alcohol, but the pair refused to be dissuaded.\textsuperscript{21} Wade warned the couple to lay low, noting that she and Dorsey would return to exact revenge upon them by attacking E.C. Davis on his way to the cotton patch and then returning to kill Mary Davis.

C.C. Jones, an acquaintance of E.C. Davis, had been traveling and was spending the night with the Davis family. Before dinner, Wade and Dorsey returned to the Davis farm. Reports indicated that Mary Davis was making preparations for dinner when she saw her uncle and Wade approaching the house and she hurried to lock all the windows and doors, to no avail. Conclusively, Mary Davis was shot in the head and heart, dying almost instantly, as she fell across the threshold of the door. C.C. Jones, who went to help her, was severely wounded from the 18 shots he sustained from his hip to his shoulder, which precipitated his death about 11 pm that night.\textsuperscript{22} Apparently, Jones had been mistaken for E.C. Davis and that was the reason he was assaulted.\textsuperscript{23}

Compounding the peculiar nature of Mary Davis’s homicide was that three months prior to the ambush that resulted in her death, her cousin, Sam Hardwick, was also ambushed and killed. Dr. Freeman, a local physician, was sought after, captured and arrested for the murder but was later released as authorities presumed his innocence. But the question remains, was there a link between the Davis and Hardwick murders?

\textsuperscript{21} \textbf{"The Alpine Tragedy,"} \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, November 15, 1884.

\textsuperscript{22} \textbf{"The Alpine Murder,"} \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, October 11, 1884.

\textsuperscript{23} \textbf{"A Man and Woman Lynched,"} \textit{The Daily Gazette and Bulletin}, October 23, 1884.
J.R. Davis and Jane Wade were eventually arrested for the murder of Davis and Jones in Chattooga County, Georgia, near Alpine, where they were remanded to jail without bail. As officers attempted to return them to Centre, Alabama, for incarceration on October 10, 1884, where they would face charges of murder, a lynch mob of approximately 300 "of the best people in the county" was forming. Officers took the couple to the mountains for their personal safety, thereby undermining the efforts of the mob. Several days later, the pair was returned to the Centre, Alabama, jail, where another lynch mob comprised of forty men from Chattooga County, Georgia, approached the facility with the intentions of seizing the pair from the sheriff’s wife and brother, who had been given charge of them since the sheriff was out of town. The mob arrived after midnight, and three masked men demanded that the jailer, Charles Vandiver, give them the keys to the jail. "Recognizing the fact that it would [be] foolhardy for him to refuse the demand, Vandiver quietly handed his keys over to the masked man who appeared to be the leader of the mob." The presence of the mob was a source of extreme consternation among the inmates, but the mob forced them to quiet down and explained that they were only there to retrieve Wade and Dorsey. They did not resist the gang and Dorsey reportedly remained stoic as the mob placed them in the wagon and drove them approximately one half to three-fourths of a mile out of town on the road to Howell’s Crossroad to a tree where the mob executed sentence. Accounts of Wade’s actions that night apparently vacillated from quiet resignation to vehement protests of her innocence,

24 "Double Lynching," Evening Observer, October 23, 1884.
25 "Double Lynching at Centre, Alabama," The Jacksonville Republican, October 25, 1884.
26 "Woman Once Hanged by Angry Mob in Centre," The Post, July 9, 2007.
while she accused Dorsey of the crime. Despite her confession, the mob remained undeterred from the task at hand. When they arrived at the scene, the two were hanged from the same limb of the tree with the same rope. Dorsey's death was hastened when his neck was broken during the assault, but Wade had strangled to death before the bodies were riddled with bullets. "Coroner R.T. Ewing summoned a jury composed of J.D. Davis, Geo. Tally, J.R. McGhee, Oscar Lowe, W.H. Walker and J.T. Smith and held an inquest over the dead bodies. But no clue as to the identity of the Lynchers was found." Jane Wade and J.R. Dorsey were determined to have died by the hands of persons unknown.

The lynching of Mary Hollenbeck on July 25, 1886 in Tattnall County was markedly different from the lynching of other women in Georgia as she was the only woman that allegedly died at the hands of African Americans. Records reveal that Samuel Frick, a single father with a four year old daughter, was in need of childcare and approached Hollenbeck regarding attending his daughter while he worked at a turpentine distillery in another county. Mary Hollenbeck agreed to board and care for the child, but when Frick returned a few days later to see her, the little girl was missing. When Hollenbeck evaded Frick's demands for his daughter, the frantic father began to search the premises where the smell of decomposition attracted him to her partial remains in the salt pork barrel. The distraught father threatened Hollenbeck with violence, and she confessed to killing her. According to the woman two days after the youngster was left in her care, a picnic was planned, and she was to prepare food. Because she was inebriated

27 "Two Cold Bodies," The Atlanta Constitution, October 22, 1884.
28 "Double Lynching at Centre, Alabama," The Jacksonville Republican, October 25, 1884.
and penniless, the woman decided to butcher the child and fulfill her obligation. Reports indicated that picnic attendees partook of the meal and remarked that the food had a peculiar taste, but were unaware of the source. As word spread throughout the community, a mob of Blacks took Hollenbeck to a field where they chained her to a post, doused her with kerosene and set her afire. The police of Tattnall County and the coroner conducted an investigation into the lynching and ascertained that Mary Hollenbeck died at the hands of persons unknown.29

Newspaper characterizations of Mary Hollenbeck reflected how African-American women were “demonized and stripped of all signs of femininity” and “just as dangerous if not more so than her male counterparts.”30 Newspaper accounts fostered a characterization that implied that black women were animalistic, not empathetic, lacking essential intelligence and integrity, in addition to being a danger to children. Additionally, the elements of the news articles that indicated that Hollenbeck confessed to cooking the child and feeding her to members of the community at a picnic, added to the negative stereotypes ascribed to the entire black community. “When it was served the Negroes remarked upon the peculiarity of its flavor, but nevertheless ate heartily. Several now allege that they were nauseated by the mess, but none of them were made seriously ill.”31 This statement was another character assassination of Blacks as it intimates that


30 Feimster, Southern, 162.

African Americans were not astute and would be inclined to partake in any type of repulsive activity.

The next lynching of a woman in Georgia occurred in 1906 in Mitchell County, when Meta Hicks died at the hands of unknown persons. Meta Hicks worked as a farm laborer near Pelham, Georgia, for John Akridge, a 32-year old husband and father of three little girls.\textsuperscript{32} Her husband, Jett (Jet) Hicks, seemed to have great difficulty staying out of trouble and had recently completed his second term on the state's chain gang when he returned home to his wife, Meta. Unfortunately, three weeks later, Jett Hicks would be embroiled in an incident that would lead to his wife's lynching.\textsuperscript{33} Although John Akridge allowed Meta Hicks to work on his farm, he disliked her husband and banned him from the farm Sunday, October 28, 1906. The next Saturday night, November 4\textsuperscript{th}, Akridge found that Jett Hicks was in one of the outhouses and demanded that he come out. The confrontation escalated when Hicks came out of the privy and he fatally shot John Akridge in the head.\textsuperscript{34} As word spread, a lynch mob formed to punish Jett Hicks. By Wednesday, the mob confronted his wife, Meta, at the Akridge farm and shot her twice killing her. The mob refused to give up and questioned one of Hicks's acquaintances.


\textsuperscript{33} \textit{"Now Believed Negro Located," The Atlanta Constitution}, November 6, 1906.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{"Crime a Heinous One," The Atlanta Constitution}, November 9, 1906.
Assuming that he helped Jett Hicks to escape, the mob shot him several times killing him.35

Jet Hicks was apprehended in Vienna, Georgia, approximately 80 miles away, by Sheriff Forehand of Dooly County, who took Hicks to Moultrie, Georgia, and had him held in a livery stable, while Forehand made arrangements for his extradition. Unfortunately, Akridge had relatives who were in Moultrie at the time. Moultrie citizens seemed to know that he had been returned to the city in police custody. The disgruntled group instigated a mob, which outnumbered law enforcement officials. Subsequently, Governor Terrell, who had previously contributed $150 for a reward for the capture of Hicks, was contacted with a request for reinforcement for the Moultrie Rifles, who were to protect the detainee.36 Sheriff Forehand retrieved Hicks with the support of Dr. W. W. Stevens and took him to Sale City in Mitchell County approximately 20 miles away to surrender him to Sheriff Campbell of Mitchell County. Forehand left a message for Campbell and notified him of his plans prior to leaving Moultrie. Later, Campbell responded to Sheriff Forehand’s request asking that Hicks be taken to Albany, Georgia, through the Tifton route as a mob was forming in Sale City. Unfortunately, Forehand never received Campbell’s reply and walked into a trap.37 When the sheriff arrived in Sale City about 5:00 pm with Hicks, a lynch mob forced their way into the detention

35 “Race to Save Negro by State Troops too Slow for Mob,” The Newark Advocate, November 9, 1906.
36 “Negro Murderer Taken from Guard and Lynched,” The Daily Nevada State Journal, November 11, 1906.
37 Lynchers Beat State Troopers to the Negro Hicks, Who Foully Murdered Mr. Akridge, “Summarily Dealt With,” The Atlanta Constitution, November 9, 1906.
center, seized Hicks and lynched him. The Moultrie Rifles were dispatched to Sale City at 6:15 pm, but the lynching was over.

Meta Hicks’ reasoning in regards to remaining on the farm after her husband killed the landlord is questionable. Why would she continue to live in her dwelling? Did she think that she would not be targeted by a lynch mob because they were seeking her husband? Certainly, Hicks knew the reputations of lynch mobs and was informed that Blacks should be troubled by mob actions, as the lynching bees were known to hang African Americans with impunity. Had she been lulled into a false sense of security by an individual(s), who was hoping to lure her husband out of hiding by keeping her in close proximity? Did Meta Hicks believe that she had nowhere to go, knowing that friends and family would be in danger if they attempted to intervene on her behalf? Was she too poor to afford the means to leave? Landlords were notorious for cheating their tenants and keeping them in debt and confined to the farm. Finally, was she afraid to leave, as her disappearance from the farm might incriminate her? Maybe she thought it prudent to continue and “prove” her innocence by continuing to live as normally as possible. Although a naïve response, a person not thinking rationally may have concluded that this was the best option.

The assault on Jett Hicks was also fraught with issues commonplace to lynching. As Sheriff Forehand spirited him from one place to the next in an effort to save him from being lynched, the sanctity of the office of law enforcement was called into question. As


had been reported in the *Atlanta Constitution*, John Akridge was esteemed in the Moultrie and Sale City area, as was evident by the large attendance at his funeral that consisted of family, friends, and members of his Masonic lodge. Considering the popularity of a victim of murder, why would Sheriff Forehand return the alleged killer to the community that was incensed by the murder? It was his responsibility to take Hicks into custody and ensure that his charge would be entrusted to the proper officials, and his actions seemed somewhat suspect. There were a number of alternatives that Forehand could have pursued rather than immediately returning the offender to the area where the alleged crime had been committed. As Forehand arrived in Moultrie, Sheriff Campbell was not available, because he was out of the city. Sheriff Forehand decided to conceal him in a livery stable, but as a crowd gathered, he opted to take the accused gunman to Sale City. The sheriff had not received the notification from Sale City officials, which indicated the necessity of an alternative plan through the towns of Albany and Tifton, in order to ensure the safety of the prisoner. Forehand’s late arrival was problematic for Hicks, who was forcibly taken by the crowd. The mob’s quick action may be attributed to both rumors and gossip from individuals that saw the sheriff with Hicks. It is also possible that leaks from within the sheriff’s offices in a number of jurisdictions, where officials had knowledge of the apprehension of Jett Hicks, including Vienna in Dooly County, Moultrie in Colquitt County and Sale City in Mitchell County led to the attack. Law enforcement made many mistakes in the transfer of the prisoner knowing that he was hunted by mobs that killed his wife and friend. Still, the question remains, was there an informant giving details to members of the Moultrie and Sale City communities?40

Similar to the Hicks lynching, allegations of violence perpetrated by a black male on a white person was the motive for the assault on the family of Sim and Sula Padgett on May 21, 1907. Mobs lynched with impunity, as was the case for Sula Padgett, 40, and her daughter, Mary, aged 10, who were attacked because of a rape allegation against her son. The Padgett family lived in Hogwallow, Tattnall County, Georgia, and as was commonplace during this era, the children completed chores for various individuals in the community to earn extra money. Padgett’s son, Sim, Jr. worked for Laura Moore, the widow of a Georgia legislator, when he allegedly committed an act or exhibited behavior that was interpreted as a sexual assault. News of this event spread quickly and seventy-five men approached the Padgett home. Sula Padgett’s husband, Sim, Sr., attempted to pacify the mob by telling them that Sim Padgett, Jr. was not there and that they were free to search the home. As the members of the mob were within 30 feet of the house shotgun blasts rang out from the house allegedly by Sim Jr., who was crouched in a corner. A few members of the mob were gravely wounded; John Hare was killed; Barlow Preston was severely wounded; County Commissioner Dr. J.L. Kennedy was injured; and James Daniel’s was shot in the eye, shoulder and arm.

The mob retreated to a safe distance, proceeded to guard the home to ensure that no one left, and sent for reinforcements. Approximately 300 to 500 men arrived at about 10:00 pm and the group proceeded to shoot volleys into the cabin for 30 minutes, ripping

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it to shreds and killing or seriously wounding the family members inside.44 Sim Padgett, Sr., was killed, as was his daughter, Mary.45 Other children were critically injured as well, including sons, Sim, Jr., who was shot through the lung, Wilbert was shot in the hip and daughters, Dosia and Dell, were found “locked in each other’s arms”46 critically wounded. Law enforcement officials were summoned, who found and detained Sula Padgett, her son, Ben, and a family friend, Hamp Strickland, after they fled the initial melee. While en route to the jail, the officers took the suspects to Laura Moore for identification, but she did not recognize Ben Padgett. The officers decided that he was not the guilty party, but were forced to relinquish their captives to the lynch mob. Sula Padgett allegedly confessed to the mob that she was responsible for killing Hare. In retaliation, the gang told her to run and as she did, they shot her repeatedly. They then turned their attention to Padgett’s son who was shot until he died. Strickland was then taken to jail.47

The mob was still determined to locate the supposedly guilty party and proceeded to surround the nearby swampy woods assuming that the miscreant may have escaped and was possibly hiding there.48 There was validity to their assumption as Arthur Padgett, who happened to escape the home after the attack, hid in the woods for the night. The next day he turned himself in to the police, who returned him to a secluded area in the

44 “All Done by Mob,” Logansport Pharos, May 22, 1907.
47 “Two Negroes Lynched and Two Negroes and a White Man Killed,” Statesville Record and Landmark, May 24, 1907.
48 “Surrounding the Swamp to Capture Alen Padgett,” Titusville Herald, May 23, 1907.
woods for protection until arrangements could be made to safely transport him to the Savannah, Georgia, detention center.49 Once arrangements were confirmed, Deputy Sheriff Bendrick transported Padgett and Strickland to Savannah for security.50 Arthur Padgett was placed on trial regarding the allegations of the rape of Mrs. Laura Moore and found not guilty based on the evidence provided.51

The allegations of "the threadbare lie" that Sim Padgett, Jr., had molested Laura Moore was purportedly the reason for the attack on the family. However, there are other factors that should be considered. The Padgetts were native South Carolinians who owned their family farm, a visible sign of prosperity, which, unfortunately, could prompt an attack by Whites who felt this success was a threat to the present state of affairs. And, in a community where only 178 of the 2086 farms in Tattnall County were owned by Blacks, this could have been a contributing factor in the attack on the Padgett family by the lynch mob.52

Five years later, another young black woman became a victim of a lynch mob in Harris County, located in the West Central region of Georgia. A tenant farmer living on Norman Hadley’s farm in Hamilton, Georgia, Belle Hathaway’s life would be irreparably changed by the events of Sunday, January, 14, 1912. Tensions ran high on the farm as


50 “She Finished Killing Hare,” The Atlanta Constitution, May 23, 1907.

51 Minutes from the October term 1907 Tattnall Superior Court, Calhoun County, Georgia 143 (46) Homestead Records Volume A, 1868-1927, Presiding Judge BT Rawlings, Judge of Superior court, Solicitor General.

Hadley and the tenants were involved in a disagreement about the tenancy agreement and debts. These problems were exacerbated by Hadley’s repeated sexual harassment toward Belle Hathaway. Reports show that Hadley had tried to seduce her for a long time, and despite Hathaway’s rebuffs, Norman Hadley refused to stop abusing her. Early Sunday afternoon, Hadley went to Hathaway’s residence and demanded that she come to see him. Later that day an unknown assailant shot and killed Norman Hadley while he was sitting in his home.

After a brief investigation, authorities arrested four of Hadley’s tenants, Belle Hathaway, John Moore, Eugene Hemming and John “Dusty” Crutchfield, on charges of murder. Immediately, citizens and some local officials from Harris County sought an intervention from the local court system, fearing summary justice. On January 18, Judge S.P. Gilbert after agreeing with their assertions ordered a trial for the accused that was to be held on February 19, 1912.53 Unfortunately, sentiment within the community would not allow the courts to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused assailants. That Monday, January 22, Hamilton County official, Sheriff Hadley, uncle of Norman Hadley, who “[feared] no lynching, and . . . [subsequently, decided to go to] Columbus, Georgia,” which was about 22 miles away.54 Left in the custody of jailer E. M. Robinson, the four accused were in their cells when a disgruntled group assembled on the lawn of the courthouse, where they had been positioned from that morning. By nightfall, a crowd of 100 stormed the facility, ignored the protests of Jailer Robinson and forcibly removed the

53 “Special Trial to Save Blacks from Lynching,” The Atlanta Constitution, January 19, 1912.
54 “Four Negroes Lynched By Hamilton Avengers; Woman One of the Victims,” The Atlanta Constitution, January 23, 1912.
four defendants at gunpoint. After marching the accused out of town, and arriving at the destination, members of the mob stripped Belle Hathaway of her clothing and tortured her by sexually assaulting her with a limb from a tree. Following the assault on Hathaway, summary justice was applied as Hathaway, Moore, Hemming and Crutchfield were hanged from trees, their bodies riddled by volleys of 300 to 500 bullets. The mob was not interested in the processes of the legal system in determining one’s guilt or innocence. As was common practice, particularly in the South, they decided collective guilt for all members of the party, pronounced and carried out the sentence without recognition or repudiation.

Belle Hathaway’s lynching emphasizes the precarious nature of southern life for people of color. Hathaway and three other tenants were accused of murdering Norman Hadley, the plantation owner for whom the group worked as sharecroppers. Although reports of his murder varied, most of the information disseminated did not note Hadley’s unrelenting pursuit of Hathaway. This omission can be attributed to the pervasive efforts of the media to esteem one of Hadley’s standing. As discreet sexual relationships with black females were acceptable conditions to Southern mores, Hadley’s conduct would not have been considered inappropriate. However, when accounts of the incident that precipitated his murder were reported, details were altered to contravene the character of

55 “Three Colored Men and Woman Lynched,” The Gettysburg Times, January 24, 1912.
56 “Georgia Negroes,” The Chicago Defender, January 27, 1912.
all Blacks. Hadley probably died at the hands of Hathaway’s fiancé John Moore, who was indignant by his landlord’s actions. Lynch mobs were notoriously indiscriminate when investigating accusations and alleged perpetrators, the most pertinent criteria being that of race.

In June of that same year, Annie Boston (Barksdale/Bostwick), a domestic worker was accused of murdering her employer, Mrs. R. E. Jordan, in Pinehurst, Georgia. Jordan was the daughter of a prominent physician and married to one of the wealthiest men in Pinehurst. The Jordan family employed Ann Boston as a maid. The 60 year old woman was reportedly mentally unstable, but was capable of working, and did so for the Jordan family for many years. On Monday, June 24, 1912, a conflict between Jordan and Boston arose regarding the quality of the latter’s performance. At approximately 4:00 pm, Jordan exited the rear of the house and as she approached the backyard, Boston attacked her from behind, cutting her throat with a razor. The Jordan’s neighbor, Mrs. George Haslam, heard screams and ran to investigate the matter. She found Mrs. Jordan sitting on the ground with her hands to her throat and bleeding profusely. Haslam asked Jordan questions, but she was unable to respond, yet pointed in Boston’s direction, as the old woman was leaving the scene. Mrs. Haslam turned to go into the house and retrieve water for Mrs. Jordan, but before she could reach the door, she turned to see that Jordan was now lying prostrate on the ground where she died from her injuries.59

Boston, who left the house after the attack, went to the field where Mr. Jordan was working. The husband initially did not understand anything that Boston said, as she

had a history of making unintelligible comments, but her emphatic manner, as well as her emotional breakdown into sobs, caused concern. When he arrived at the home, Jordan found his wife’s lifeless body lying in the grass surrounded by a pool of blood.\(^\text{60}\) Immediately, the neighbors seized Boston and Dooly County authorities were called. Sheriff Bennett responded immediately and prohibited the actions of the lynch mob that was forming to execute the housekeeper. Bennett indicated that he intended to move Boston to Hawkinsville for safekeeping, but while en route, he noticed that they were pursued by members of a lynch mob. Fearing that he would be overtaken, Bennett changed routes and took the accused assailant to the city of Cordele in Crisp County where it was thought that Boston could be kept safely. However, at 10:30 pm that night, a band of one hundred mobsters forced Sheriff Ward of Crisp County and a local policeman to release Boston as she was being transferred from the jail to an undisclosed location in the town for safety. Witnesses saw the mob’s cars speed through the town of Vienna at 50 miles per hour at 11:00 pm taking Boston back to Pinehurst for the lynching.\(^\text{61}\) After arriving at a destination near the Jordan home, a rope was placed around Boston’s neck and she was hoisted as the men clamored for the chance to pull the rope. The mob completed their job soon after midnight, when Ann Boston was hanged from a tree in Pinehurst, Georgia.\(^\text{62}\)

Boston allegedly had a history of mental illness, but her issues did not impact the lynch mob, which was intent on implementing summary justice. Although one does not


\(^{62}\) "Mob Hangs a Negress," *New Brunswick Times*, June 25, 1912.
desire to blame the victim, it is possible that the abuse Mrs. Jordan inflicted upon Boston aggravated her precarious mental state and served as the impetus of her descent into momentary madness. Especially, since it was reported that this was not an isolated incident and that the abuse suffered by Boston was both mental and physical, as Jordan was known to slap Boston “and on many occasions had injured her severely.” Furthermore, the question remains as to why the Jordans employed an individual who was mentally unstable? Boston’s mental instability would certainly make her more vulnerable to exploitation, and the previously addressed issues of abuse, suggest it would also make it easier to manipulate her economically. Mae Clide, reporter for the Chicago Defender, proffered that domestics in the area earned “50 cents a week and never over four dollars a month,” substantiating that there was a culture in which the economic exploitation of black women was commonplace. With the plethora of available black workers in the community, the Jordans could have secured another servant, but apparently could overlook the issues with her psychosis. Confirming that Ann Boston’s neurosis was pronounced, Kerry Seagrave noted that Boston’s sanity was an issue and that “while living [in the Macon area] the lynched Negress was tried by a jury and found a fit subject for the lunatic asylum but owing to the crowded condition of that institution she could not be received. In her rational moments she was a good reliable servant, but became violent at times.”

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63 Mae Clide, “Georgia Brutes Again Lynch U.S. Citizen,” The Chicago Defender, June 29, 1912.

64 Mae Clide, “Georgia Brutes Again Lynch U.S. Citizen,” The Chicago Defender, June 29, 1912.

Finally, the characterizations in periodicals that Boston nearly decapitated Jordan and slashed her from ear to ear serve to reinforce negative stereotypes as they relate to black women. In these depictions, the black woman was a fiend, absent of humanity and decorum. She was considered wild like an animal, not human, and thusly, did not deserve humane treatment, which would have included allowing the established legal system to decide her innocence or guilt.66

There are a number of issues related to the reporting of the lynching of people. In some instances, an individual could disappear and the family would be unsure as to whether their loved one willingly left the family or if their disappearance was due to some menacing circumstance. Additionally, the methods utilized by lynch mobs during their attacks would sometimes cause such severe mutilation and the burning of bodies beyond recognition that identification of victims became problematic, in addition to the sometimes faulty reporting of information by news sources.

The lynching of Virgie Swanson, on August 25, 1913, illustrates problems with the reporting of events by newspapers. Swanson has erroneously been identified as a woman because news sources misspelled his first name, reporting the feminine derivation rather than Virgil Swanson. The catalyst that led to Swanson’s death was the homicide of wealthy planter, L.C. Marchman, 42, a prominent farmer in Meriwether County. Apparently, on August 20, 1913, an ongoing argument between Marchman and Matthew Brewster, a tenant farmer, about rent erupted into violence. Brewster later testified to police officers, that he became so incensed during the quarrel that he pulled a gun out on

66 “Lynching a Woman,” The Lima Daily News, July 1, 1912.
Marchman, who knocked him down. Subsequently, Marchman took Brewster to his truck to turn him over to Sheriff Terrell of Meriwether County. As they passed Brewster’s home, he jumped out of the vehicle and ran into the house to procure his shot gun.

Unwittingly, Marchman ran after him and as he entered the door of the shack, Brewster shot and killed him. The assailant fled the scene, and later received some type of aid from Virgil Swanson, an acquaintance. Swanson, 46, an illiterate farmer, had been married to his wife, Henrietta, for 23 years. The two were parents of four surviving children, the other six died before reaching the age of majority, and the couple also cared for Virgil Swanson’s elderly mother, Julian. Available documentation does not specify that Swanson was aware of the circumstances regarding Brewster’s crime and his escape plan, but Virgil Swanson apparently provided Brewster with food, and for this he would pay the ultimate price. Almost a week after Marchman’s death, on the night of August 25th, members of a lynch mob comprised of local residents, including Meriwether County farmers, were still in pursuit of Brewster and concluded that Swanson, who “was not within five miles of Marchman when [he] was killed”, was complicit in the crime and deserved a death sentence. The crowd took Swanson to a secluded area midway between Odessadale and Greenville, Georgia, and hanged him from a tree. The coroner held an inquest at the scene of the crime and surmised that Swanson died “at the hands of unknown parties.”

69 “Swanson Is Lynched,” The Atlanta Constitution, August 27, 1913.
Governor Slaton offered a $150 reward for the capture of Brewster,\textsuperscript{70} who was captured by J.M Wingo, a local farmer, in northern Heard County, after walking approximately fifty miles from the scene of the crime and turned over to police. According to the Atlanta Constitution, "Judge Freeman of the Coweta circuit . . . telegraphed to Sheriff Terrell Tuesday evening and requested that Brewster be kept in Fulton County jail for safety."\textsuperscript{71} It was a perceptive appeal since Swanson was lynched before officers could arrest him. Brewster later confessed to the crime and denied any involvement by Swanson. The lynching of Virgil Swanson indicates the precarious nature of lynch mobs. By only befriending Brewster, probably unwittingly, Swanson netted the indignation of the mob, who decided to execute summary justice. Whether the original confusion occurred because of a typographical error or a misunderstanding in the pronunciation of his name, Virgil Swanson has been widely reported as Virgie. This problem was exacerbated by the propensity of smaller newspapers to reprint articles submitted by correspondents who worked for newspapers with large readerships.

Lynch mobs in Georgia garnered national attention when they hanged the Barber family, who resided in Monticello, Georgia, approximately 51 miles south of Atlanta in 1915. Sam Barber, age 45, was the patriarch of the family, and was known to manufacture and sell liquor at the Blind Tiger, an unlicensed establishment that he owned. Because of his actions, the chief of police, J. P. Williams, attempted to serve an arrest warrant and raid the "shot house" that Barber was conducting on January 13, 1915. The police chief indicated that he initially assumed that he would not run into any

\textsuperscript{70} "Reward Offered for Meriwether Negro," \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, August 24, 1913.

\textsuperscript{71} "Marchman's Slayer Confesses His Guilt," \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, August 27, 1913.
difficulties, but once he reached the home, Barber refused to let him into the house and it became necessary for him to gain entry by force. Immediately after entering the home, Williams was attacked by Matilda Barber, Sam Barber’s wife, age 42, who brandished a club, and three of her children, married daughters Ella Barber Charles, whose age has been difficult to determine because of a lack of proper birth, death or marriage documents and census records, and Eula Barber Charles, 21, and son, Jesse, 13.72 During the attack, Chief Williams shot Matilda, who was gravely injured, and Sam Barber responded to the assault on his wife by retrieving his gun and shooting twice near Williams’ head. People in the vicinity heard the disturbance and notified Sheriff James R. Ezell, who went to the Barber home to offer support to Chief Williams. When he arrived, Ezell held everyone at gunpoint until the deputies were able to come and arrest the Barber family members, along with the five customers of the Blind Tiger, except the critically wounded Matilda.73

As details of the events circulated through the town, citizens were outraged because of the attack. There were threats of lynching during the day, but Jasper County Sheriff Ezell, who had custody of the individuals, failed to take any precautions. On the night of January 15, between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m., masked men entered the jail and took the Barber family from their cells.74 The mob took the family to the outskirts of town where the lynching occurred. It is unknown whether the mob was unprepared, but there was only one rope available for this sinister deed; thus, the decision

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73 “4 Negroes Lynched by Monticello Mob,” Union Recorder, January 19, 1915.

was made to hang the family members individually. Discrepancies exist in terms of the order of the members being lynched as some sources indicated that Dan Barber was the first person to be assaulted, yet other information indicates that he was actually the last. The latter sources indicate that the first person to be hanged was Eula Barber Charles. Her body swayed as it dangled from the rope and was sprayed with bullets. The lynch mob next assaulted her sister, Ella Barber Charles, and then their brother Jesse was hanged amidst a volley of bullets. After each lynching, the body was placed on the ground in preparation for the next. Finally, Dan Barber was lynched and his body was left hanging as the gang returned to town. The customers arrested at the Blind Tiger were not attacked by the mob, only the Barber family for their transgression for attacking the police chief, J.P. Williams. Assaulting an officer of the law or any white man was justification for mobocracy.

Many citizens of the small town of Monticello and Jasper County were indignant at the actions of the mob. Whether spurned by the negative attention received in the press or because these individuals truly felt that mob law was wrong or that the legal system would sufficiently handle such behaviors, the mayor, E. T. Malone, organized a meeting with several prominent men for January 19, 1915, where a resolution was adopted condemning the act of lynching the Barber family and reproving lynch law:

Whereas; A number of parties unknown to us gathered themselves together ...and did illegally put to death four negroes who had on the previous night assaulted the chief of police of Monticello, J.P. Williams, and sheriff of Jasper County, James R. Ezell (this assertion has not been proven as other sources seem to indicate that

although Ezell was present during the attack, he was not actually assaulted), while attempting to arrest them with authorized papers, Resolved. First, that we hereby express our hearty disapprobation of such conduct of these unknown parties and condemn this act of lawlessness, feeling assured that it would have been properly disposed of in the courts of our county and state had the matter been allowed to take legal course. Resolved, Second, that we in mass meeting assure the executive of our state [Governor Stanton] and county that we will render all the assistance in our power in bringing the guilty parties to justice by having the matter thoroughly investigated by the next grand jury. Resolved. Third, that a copy of these resolutions be given to the press of our state in order that the people may know the attitude of the good citizens of Jasper County and Monticello.\textsuperscript{76}

The resolution was adopted unanimously by the men in attendance. Later, the sheriff of Jasper County, James Ezell, submitted a report to Georgia’s governor, John M. Slaton, regarding the lynching and his failure to control the mob and maintain his detainees. Ezell asked that the governor give a reward for the arrest of the members of the lynch mob and attempted to absolve himself by stating that he “was powerless and the fury of the mob came upon me so quickly and quietly that I had no time to secure a posse or defend the jail. I deplore the lawlessness and cruelty of the mob.”\textsuperscript{77}

After receiving Ezell’s report regarding the abduction and lynching of the Barber family, Governor Slaton offered a reward of $500 each for the arrest and conviction of the first five members of the lynch mob. Slaton also conferred with Solicitor General Joseph Pottle and Judge J.B. Park, as Monticello was on the circuit under their legal and judicial supervision. Pottle agreed to prosecute the members in the lynch mob, but Pottle


and Park both believed the reward to be inconsequential, as the community would ultimately refuse to reveal the names of these adherents to lynch law.  

The actions of one family member could seal the fate of their relatives when summary justice was performed by a mob. Sixteen year old Sam Conley and his sixty year old mother, Mary Conley, worked for E. M. Melvin, a prosperous farmer, in Leary, Georgia, which is in Calhoun County located in the southwestern region of the state. Wednesday, October 4, 1916, Melvin instigated an argument with the Conleys when he chastised Sam for neglecting to complete the work assigned to him. When the young man’s mother, Mary Conley, attempted to intervene on behalf of her son, Melvin physically assaulted the woman, knocking her down to the ground and beating her. Sam Conley, objecting to the attack on his mother, procured an iron weight, threw it at Conley, striking him in the head and killing him almost instantly. The young man escaped, but his mother was immediately arrested for complicity to commit murder and jailed. That night when the lynch mob arrived at the jailhouse, they had little difficulty gaining access to Mary Conley as the facility was not guarded since local authorities were not concerned about reprisal for the murder. The lynch mob escorted Mary Conley to a waiting car and she was driven out of town to a remote site and hanged.

Sam Conley was captured that night in Pretoria, Georgia, when he entered Joseph Tolbert’s store to buy food. Tolbert held Conley until Sheriff Tarver of Dougherty


79 “Mob Lynches Negro Woman,” The Moberly Monitor Index, October 6, 1916.

County arrived. The sheriff's department had been notified of the lynching of Mary Conley and the decision was made to move him to Macon, Georgia, in Bibb County for safekeeping until he could have a trial. This sound decision saved Sam Conley’s life, because as he was taken by automobile from Albany to Americus and then transferred to a deputy sheriff on a waiting train that took him to Macon, Georgia, a lynch mob was searching for him in Calhoun and Dougherty counties.⁸¹

A change of venue was granted to the defense attorney, John R. Cooper, by Judge E.E. Cox who said “that the very fact that a mob had lynched the old woman was enough for him to know that Calhoun County was no place in which to try the defendant. Judge Cox told the [grand] jury that whoever participated in the murder of [Mary] Conley had stained his hands with blood and damned his soul.”⁸² This public denouncement of the exercise was unique as local officials were more inclined to avoid publicizing different or critical views.

Sam Conley’s actions were demonized in the South, yet celebrated by newspapers like the Chicago Defender that professed, “Sam Conley is one of the few young men of the Race who will not stand by and see white men beat and abuse women of the Race.”⁸³ The tenor of the piece eagerly supported retaliation for the abuses suffered by Blacks in the South. However, most Southerners understood the implications for such actions, best illustrated by the mob lynching of Mary Conley. Both Conley and Sam upset the racial


⁸³ “Slays Man Who Beat Mother; Mob Lynches Woman,” The Chicago Defender, October 14, 1916.
hierarchy that day. Mary Conley was guilty because she sought to interfere with Melvin’s punishment of her son and Sam Conley, by killing his mother’s assailant. For both acts, Mary Conley lost her life, as the mob punished her for her indiscretion and the homicide committed by her son. This point was glossed over in the *Chicago Defender* article; perhaps, because Sam Conley’s actions were a bit of an anomaly in the South, where black children were indoctrinated at early ages in the etiquette of deferential interaction with Whites.

When Mary Conley was arrested and jailed, officials left the facility unguarded. The authorities left the facility unattended and the mob was provided unencumbered access to Conley and they expeditiously executed their victim. The complicity of law enforcement was an element in the inability to deter lynching. Sam Conley’s arrest reflects the actions of an officer dedicated to the preservation of the law. Officers evidently understood the gravity of the situation, removed Sam Conley away from Calhoun and Early Counties and sent him to Macon, Georgia, for incarceration and his subsequent trial. Their actions proved that the laws established by the state of Georgia functioned properly to prohibit the lynching of alleged criminals. However, problems in the administration of these policies occurred when officials at the county level failed to follow protocol.

Another woman would not be lynched in Georgia until a year and a half later, and garnered national attention, as it was the only lynching of a pregnant woman in the state. Hampton Smith, a 31-year old South Georgia farmer, had earned a reputation for being abusive and unfair. Smith bailed 19-year old Sidney Johnson out of jail for gambling,
and Johnson was required to repay the debt by working on Smith’s farm. However, when the time came to release Johnson from his duties, Hampton Smith forced him to work longer than was mandated. Johnson was able to obtain his release from the convict-lease agreement, but was indignant with Smith. Hampton Smith had a reputation of being extremely difficult and predictably, Sidney Johnson was not the only person that had problems with him, as one of his acquaintances, Hayes Turner, also bickered with Smith.

Hayes Turner had been embroiled in a legal matter with Smith in which he prevailed. Turner wanted to terminate his employment contract with Smith, who, in retaliation, refused to allow him to retrieve his tools, as well as refused to pay for work that had been completed. Later, when his wife, Mary Turner, refused to work for the landlord, Smith became irate and beat her. When Hayes Turner confronted Smith about the assault, the enraged farmer formally filed charges against Turner, who was subsequently sentenced to serve a period of time on the state’s chain gang.

Later, Sidney Johnson, who still held a grudge against Smith, stole a gun from his employer’s home, mortally wounded Smith and injured his pregnant wife by shooting her in the arm. As word spread about the attack on the Smiths, a lynch mob formed comprised of prominent community members, including Samuel E. McGowan, an undertaker; William A. Whipple, a cotton broker and merchandise dealer; Audley Yates, clerk in the post office; Frank Purvis employed by Griffin Furniture Company; Brown Sherill who worked for W. A. Whipple; George B. Vann, barber; Lee Sherrill, Richard

84 “Lynching Established Institution in the US," Richmond Planet, May 24, 1918.
DeVane, Ross DeVane, Jim Dickson, local farmers and family members of Hampton Smith, including his father, Dixon Smith, and brothers intent on punishing the perpetrator(s) and those complicit in the crime. When the lynching bee abated, “there would be] eleven authenticated lynchings by the mobs in both Brooks and Lowndes counties.”

The mob feverishly searched for the attacker(s) of the farmer. Will Head, who allegedly stole the rifle from the Smith home that was used in the commission of the crime, was found and the mob extracted a confession from him. Head implicated Johnson, Thompson, and the Turners, indicating that the plot to kill Smith was planned at the Turner home. Will Thompson was later located and also lynched on May 17, 1918. Hayes Turner was arrested by Sheriff Wade of Brooks County, who decided to take Turner to Moultrie for security. While en route, the mob forced the sheriff’s car to stop and Turner was taken and lynched at the Okapilco River on May 18, 1918. In her eighth month of pregnancy, Mary Turner, age 21, was inconsolable after hearing of her husband’s death, and reportedly repeated to anyone listening, that if she knew the names of the members of the mob, she would have warrants taken out for their arrest. Her friends moved her to an undisclosed location, hoping to hide her from the mob, which was still on its lynching rampage. Once they were able to identify her whereabouts, the

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87 “Governor Let Us Reason Together,” *The Atlanta Independent*, June 1, 1918.

mob indignant that a black woman would impugn their integrity by threatening to have them arrested for murder, went to the house Saturday, May 18. While there, they searched the house and found a watch that allegedly belonged to Hampton Smith. The mob used this “evidence” along with the assertion that her personal home had been the meeting place for the conspirators as an excuse to lynch her. Mary Turner was taken to a remote site and hanged upside down. Members of the mob doused her in gasoline and oil taken from their vehicles and proceeded to set her on fire. After the flames died down, the lynch mob discovered that Turner was still clinging to life, at which point a member of the mob took out a knife, cut through her womb and her baby fell to the ground. An investigation by NAACP Secretary Walter White indicated that the infant was still attached by the umbilical cord and that the fall to the earth caused the infant to give a small cry. In response, members of the mob began to kick the baby around like it was a ball. Finally, a member of the lynching bee crushed the baby’s head with the heel of his boot. Turner and her baby were buried by members of the mob, who used an empty liquor bottle to serve as the headstone.

Sidney Johnson, however, still managed to elude the lynch mob and sought refuge with John Henry Bryant, as he needed his help in escaping the city. While at Bryant’s home, he confessed that he was responsible for killing Hampton Smith and wounding

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89 “Georgia’s Latest Contribution to Civilization and World Democracy,” Daily Herald, May 21, 1918.


Smith’s wife. Johnson related that he acted alone, without conspirators, confirming the innocence of Mary and Hayes Turner, Will Head and Will Thompson. Apparently, it was Johnson’s intention to wait until the mob subsided and the roadways cleared, thus allowing him an opportunity to escape. But, Thursday, May 23, Bryant went to town to inform Valdosta Chief of Police Calvin Dampier, who summoned a posse and went to retrieve Johnson, who was still located at Bryant’s home.92 A gunfight ensued between Johnson, who only had a shot gun and revolver, and the posse. Johnson was killed and Sheriff Dampier and his brother were shot in the fracas. The posse castrated Johnson’s body, threw the amputated appendage into the street in front of Bryant’s home, tied the body to the back of a vehicle and dragged it down the middle of one of the busiest streets in Valdosta. The body was taken back to the Bryant’s home, tied to a tree and burned beyond recognition.93 That same day, Governor Dorsey “declared a state of insurrection and order militia troops from Savannah to the region. On the evening of May 23 between 140 to 150 members of the Chatham Home Guard boarded a train for Valdosta. By the time the troops arrived about 1:30 a.m., Sidney Johnson had been lynched and the situation had calmed significantly. The governor’s decision to dispatch troops was simply too little too late.”94 “There were eleven authenticated lynchings by the mobs which ranged over Brooks and Lowndes counties in the week of May 17.”95


93 “The 11 Lynchings in Georgia,” NYC Tribune, August 8, 1918.


95 “The 11 Lynchings in Georgia”, NYC Tribune, August 8, 1918.
excitement of the lynching subsided, a rumor was circulated in the community regarding a plot by Germans to incite Blacks into insurrection. According to the reports, the lynchings were actually a part of a plot implemented by subversives to initiate a race riot. However, conclusive evidence to support this conjecture has never been found.96

The next lynching of a woman occurred 65 miles north of Brooks County in Irwin County, Georgia. Here, in the small town of Ocilla, Pearl (Pearly) Harper was a member of a well-known family, a husband and father of young children. Harper and Tom (Jud) Hutto, both white, entered a store owned, operated and frequented by Blacks for an unknown reason. What is definite is that Harper met his death on November 18, 1920. Hutto alleged that he and Harper were surrounded by a group of Blacks brandishing weapons when they entered the store. He alleged that Willie "Boney" Ivory was the person who fatally shot Harper and that his wife, Minnie, struck Hutto on the back of the head, disabling him. Later, Hutto identified the Ivories and Will Perry as the primary conspirators in the crime, but he failed to relate the actions of Perry. Based on his declaration, the group was apprehended by the sheriff's department and locked up.97 A crowd composed of citizens from Irwin and Coffee counties gathered in front of the jail demanding vigilante justice.98 Sheriff Tanner addressed the crowd when the city street lights turned off automatically at 1:00 am, and the sheriff's deputies sprang into action, as


97 "Ocilla Man Reported Killed by Douglas Negro Wednesday," The Atlanta Constitution, November 18, 1920.

did some members of the mob. The three accused were escorted out of the jailhouse by sheriff’s deputy, W.F. Wiggins, into an awaiting vehicle and driven to Ocilla, rather than Fitzgerald, the announced location.\(^9\) Seven miles from their destination, Wiggins’s automobile was forced to stop, as some members of a lynch mob had blocked the road. The deputy’s vehicle was surrounded and he was forced to surrender the alleged perpetrators. The three accused assailants were forced from the car, lined up and shot, their bodies left by the roadside.\(^1\) A coroner’s jury was impaneled shortly after news of the shooting [and] returned a verdict that the Negroes met their deaths at the hands of unidentified persons.”\(^1\)

Hutto’s assertion that he and Harper were abused by black customers appears to be suspicious. Retribution against the black community would have been a reality if that had happened. Pearly Harper’s family was well connected in Coffee County. A cousin to Sheriff Tanner, Harper had a brother who was a teller at a bank and another who was the clerk of the Coffee County Superior Court. Furthermore, it appeared that the lynch mob may have had cooperation from the sheriff’s office. Members of the mob had every road covered leading out of Douglas. When the prisoners were moved for safekeeping, a single deputy, Sheriff W.F. Wiggins was assigned the duty. As a matter of course, Wiggins was overwhelmed by the lynch mob, who took control of the Ivorys and Perry. What is particularly interesting in this case is the response of W.F. Wiggins, who did not

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\(^{9}\) “Three Negro Men Are Shot by the Mob,” *The Kingsport Times*, November 19, 1920.

\(^{1}\) “Three Negroes Shot Following the Killing of Young White Man,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 19, 1920.

notify the sheriff about the lynching. People traveling on the road to Douglas from Ocilla saw the bodies lying on the road and reported it to the Sheriff’s department, as Wiggins did not return to Douglas after the lynching bee. It is unknown whether Wiggins was an accessory to the lynching, fearful of punishment for dereliction of duties (for which he could be charged according to the Georgia statutes) or emotionally overwrought because of the lynching or concerned about possible reprisal by members of the mob.  

Unlike most of Georgia’s lynching victims, 38-year old Pennie Westmoreland, and her 43-year old husband, John, owned their own farm in Spalding County, Georgia, about three miles from Sunnyside, an area outside of Griffin. Around dusk, June 23, 1924, three or four automobiles full of white men traveled to the Westmoreland’s farm. After arriving at the destination, a group of eight to ten white males surrounded the home. Marcus Westmoreland, the 21-year old married son of John and Pennie Westmoreland saw the group and yelled a warning to the group, “don’t you come no further.” Hearing a commotion in the front yard and the alarmed tone of Marcus’s voice, Pennie Westmoreland asked, “Lord, Marcus what’s the matter.” Moments later, fifteen shots rang out in the house, with bullets wounding Marcus Westmoreland in the back, thigh and a lung. His father, John Westmoreland, who had been sitting in the back door, ran to

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104 “Three on Trial in Slaying of Negro Woman and Her Son,” The Griffin Daily News, August 7, 1924.

105 “Three on Trial in Slaying of Negro Woman and Her Son,” The Griffin Daily News, August 7, 1924.
see the mayhem and help his critically wounded son out of the house and into a field for safety. Westmoreland would later testify that it sounded like a “canebrake” (the noise that sugarcane makes when it is bursting in a fire that occurs when the joints of the sugarcane heat up and the sealed areas explode from extreme heat). Unbeknownst to John Westmoreland, his wife and mother of their twelve children, Pennie, had been killed after being shot numerous times in the chest, head and other parts of her body. Fortunately, the rest of the family was able to get out of the home unscathed, but John Westmoreland sustained a superficial wound on his arm after being grazed by a bullet. 106 Apparently, the group was seeking retribution for an argument that occurred a week earlier regarding an incident that involved the Westmoreland’s cow, as well as a previous incident involving Raymond Shockley, who was found in the family’s watermelon patch. After the assault, the Griffin police were summoned to the scene of the crime, where they detained Glenn Gulledge, Bill Rogers and Shockley, who had been identified by the Westmoreland family as participants of the mob.

Marcus Westmoreland, who was gravely ill, was subsequently taken to a Griffin hospital for treatment for his injuries. Four days later, on June 26th at 10:30 pm, he died from the wounds he sustained during the assault. The coroner attributed the deaths of Pennie and Marcus Westmoreland to the assault by the mob. 107 Despite the identification by family members and the fact that they were still present at the scene of the crime when police arrived, these three young men ardently expressed their innocence and claimed not

106 “Negress Brutally Murdered by Mob,” The Griffin Daily News and Sun, June 24, 1924.

107 “Second Victim Mob Raid Dies at the Hospital,” The Griffin Daily News and Sun, June 27, 1924.
to know anything about the attack. A grand jury was convened in June to ascertain their guilt, but it adjourned until the August session of the court. During the first week of August, when the grand jury was reconvened, John Westmoreland testified about what he witnessed and identified the young men that he clearly saw from his vantage point behind the barn after taking his son to safety. Ten additional witnesses were called upon, both black and white, as witnesses for both the prosecution and the defense, which included family members of Gulledge, Shockley and Rogers. The grand jury retired to deliberate and when they reassembled, their pronouncement was a verdict of not guilty for the accused young men. The attack on the Westmorelands and jury verdict were reminders to Blacks in the community about the dangers of circumventing racial etiquette—never confront a white person and do not expect parity from the justice system.

The last recorded lynching of a woman in the state occurred in Monroe, Georgia, at the Moore Ford’s Bridge, located between two counties, Oconee and Walton, in north Georgia. The area has been characterized as an economic and cultural paradox. Walton County was regarded as one of the most progressive counties in the state, where Blacks and Whites enjoyed a relatively high standard of living and most were literate. In stark contrast, Oconee County, an area with eight thousand residents, was one of the poorest and most racist counties in the state. On a wooden bridge, built to accommodate only a single vehicle, George Dorsey, his common-law wife, Willie Mae (Mae) Murray Dorsey,

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108 “Woman Dead in Georgia Lynch Fest,” The Chicago Defender, July 5, 1924.
23-years old, along with his sister, Dorothy Dorsey Malcolm, and her common-law husband, Roger Malcolm met their untimely demise.

Like many young men, who had been drafted during World War II, George Dorsey, 27-years old, had recently returned from active military service, which he completed in the South Pacific. Unable to continue serving in the military because of his lack of education, Dorsey returned to Walton County, to his family and to work as a tenant farmer.

The Malcolms and the Dorseys worked as sharecroppers on white-owned plantations, but dreamed of a better life. In fact, 24-year old Roger Malcolm had made plans to move to Chicago to live with his sister, Dora. However, a series of unfortunate incidents would cause this dream to never materialize. On the afternoon of July 15, 1946, Dorothy and Roger Malcolm were involved in a heated quarrel. The distraught Dorothy Malcolm, who was 20-years old, left her home and walked to the home of Barnett (Barney) Hester, their employer. Once there she implored Hester, age 22, to intervene on her behalf. Hester went to the Malcolm home to speak with Roger, who accused Hester of having an affair with his wife; the heated argument escalated into a struggle that ended with Roger Malcolm stabbing Hester. A number of sources have suggested that Dorothy Malcolm was seven months pregnant. According to Laura Wexler, who conducted copious interviews, Dorothy Malcolm was not pregnant, and this detail may have been added to either explain Roger Malcolm’s anger or garner more

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110 ""He Did Not Deserve It!' Says Lynch Victim Kin," The Chicago Defender, August 17, 1946.

111 "What the People Say," The Chicago Defender, September 28, 1946.
sympathy for the victims. As news spread about the assault on Barney Hester, a mob formed and attacked Malcolm, who was saved when a white woman neighbor saw the attack and contacted the sheriff and expressed that Malcolm would never bother anyone unless provoked. Sheriff E.S. Gordon’s timely arrival prevented the mob from lynching Roger Malcolm, who was arrested and incarcerated for his offense. In the interim, Malcolm’s relatives beseeched a number of local planters with requests to post bond for him with promises that Malcolm would work in return for the funds when he was released.

Barney Hester was well connected in the community and most of the local planters rebuffed the proposal. In the interim, it has been alleged that Eugene V. Talmadge, who was campaigning for the Georgia gubernatorial office met with Barnett Hester, the father of the victim, prior to the assault on the couple. The nature of their conversation has never been disclosed, but it seems plausible that the assault may have been a topic of discussion, particularly because of the impact that it had on the community. A noted racist, Talmadge’s incendiary antics could have sparked a flame.

Ten days after Hester was stabbed, Saturday, at 2:00 p. m., July 25, 1946, J. Loy Harrison, another prominent local planter, relented and posted the $600 bail for Malcolm’s release. Harrison did not immediately pick up Roger Malcolm who was to be released, because he was allegedly having car trouble. When he retrieved Malcolm at 5:30 pm, Dorothy Malcolm, her brother, George Dorsey, and his wife, Mae Murray accompanied him. Louis Howard, a deputy sheriff and relative of Barney Hester, assisted

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in the process to formally release Malcolm to Harrison. After the necessary documents were processed, J. Loy Harrison, the Malcolms and the Dorseys left the facility in Harrison’s car and headed back to the farm.

Rather than taking the usual route back to his farm where Roger Malcolm was to work, Harrison decided to travel on U.S. 78 and take “a short cut” that required a detour near Moore Ford’s Bridge. This bridge connects Walton and Oconee Counties near the Appalachee River and is approximately ten miles north of Monroe, Georgia. On their lonely trip home, a car appeared and followed behind them at a distance. Momentarily, that vehicle bumped Harrison’s car from behind, just as another car appeared in front of them, which blocked their exit from the bridge. According to J. Loy Harrison, a mob of approximately twenty to thirty men forced him out of the car first. The leader of the mob, described as a tall, distinguished looking man, barked orders and George Dorsey was snatched from the vehicle. Harrison indicated that he attempted to intervene and told the mob that they had the wrong man, but his life was threatened. Roger Malcolm was then seized and the mob began to execute their plan. Dorothy Malcolm and Mae Murray Dorsey were hysterical and pleaded with the ringleader to prevent the others from attacking the men. Incensed, the leader barked, “Get those two black heifers!” and the two women were removed from the automobile. Refusing to willingly comply with the mob’s orders, Mae Murray Dorsey and Dorothy Malcolm held on to the car. The mob used their gun and rifle butts to hit the women’s hands and arms in order to break their grip on the door handles. The coroner’s report revealed that every bone in their shoulders, arms and hands had been broken. The four victims were forced to walk about 50 yards
from Harrison's car to a remote area,\textsuperscript{113} where three rounds of ammunition, approximately 60 bullets, were pumped into their bodies. After the murderous deed was over, the mob interrogated J. Loy Harrison and inculcated him into a state of forgetfulness. The lynching bee left and Harrison drove to a nearby store to call the sheriff's office and report the lynching. The coroner, W.T. Brown, convened an inquest and submitted the "verdict to Sheriff Gordon: 'Death at the hands of unknown parties.'"\textsuperscript{114}

After the lynching, the local black mortician gathered the remains and prepared them for burial. The damage from the bullets that riddled their heads at close range made preparation a challenging task. The faces of three of the victims had been severely damaged by the firing of the bullets; only "Mae Murray Dorsey, whose eyes, nose and ears were unblemished, and whose long, straight hair- the envy of local black men and women alike- framed her pale face in death as it had in life. Mae Murray looked as if she were sleeping."\textsuperscript{115} Furthermore, Roger Malcolm's remains showed signs that he endured tremendous torture from the lynch mob, who not only castrated him, but slashed him repeatedly in the face.

Funeral services for Dorothy Dorsey Malcolm and George Dorsey were arranged and held at Mount Perry Church, fourteen miles from Monroe. D. W. Young, the local black undertaker, held up the services for two hours in anticipation of the arrival of

\textsuperscript{113} "Defender Vows to Fight until Lynch Evil Dies," \textit{The Chicago Defender}, August 3, 1946.

\textsuperscript{114} Philip Dray, \textit{At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America} (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 380.

\textsuperscript{115} Laura Wexler, \textit{Fire in a Canebrake} (New York: Scribner, 2003), 87.
family members. Although George and Dorothy Dorsey’s mother and stepfather lived in close proximity, they and most of the other family members were afraid of retaliation and decided to forgo the memorial service and internment. Finally an uncle, Robert Elder, and a cousin arrived. They were late, but at least two family members were in attendance at the services. The vast majority of the attendees at the service were reporters from Northern newspapers, sent to cover the funeral, in addition to a gathering of friends, many of whom were fellow sharecroppers, their wives and children. Later, Dorothy and George Dorsey’s mother would relate that she received his discharge papers for his four years of military service five days after the lynching. Mae Murray Dorsey’s parents, and her sister, as well as a host of family and friends were present at her funeral.116

Roger Malcolm’s funeral was delayed due to the coroner’s request that his remains be stored for an additional inspection by law enforcement and the arrival of his sister from Chicago. Attendees at his memorial service, many of whom were sharecroppers, did so in defiance to the orders and veiled threats that they received from their landlords. The tenant farmers had been told that if they went to the services, there would be trouble; however, state and federal law enforcement agents arrived in Monroe before this could happen.

Governor Ellis Arnall “termed the crime one of the worst incidents to take place in the state, and ordered state and county police to work on a 24-hour basis to apprehend the killers. He also called on the FBI and announced a reward of $10,000 for information

leading to the arrest and conviction of the estimated twenty killers.” Adamantly opposed to lynching, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) submitted a request to President Harry Truman for support in conducting the probe to identify and arrest members of the lynch mob. Truman contacted United States Attorney General Tom Clark, who ordered six Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents to examine the situation. After a thorough survey of the crime scene and the interviewing of 2500 people in the community, one hundred people were identified as witnesses and were subpoenaed to testify regarding their knowledge of the events.

Community response to the lynching vacillated along the social, economic and racial continuum. Most of the whites in rural Walton County expressed no sympathy for the victims. In Monroe, the county seat, the middle class expressed horror at the lynching, but was unwilling to do more than that. African Americans suffered silently. Fear contributed to the reactions of this group, as most understood that cooperation with authorities would result in mob violence against the collaborator and his family.

Agents operating under John Trost had great difficulty in obtaining evidence to charge those they deduced were guilty of the crime. Major William E. Spence of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) declared there was widespread collusion

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throughout the community, indicating that "we think that we know who some of the members of the mob are, but we can’t prove it. The good people of Walton County wouldn’t talk about the massacre even though some of them know who members of the gang are." This communal silence transcended race, as both blacks and whites refused to speak to authorities about the lynching. Further hampering the inquiry was that many of the witnesses who did come forward fabricated their statements. Allegedly, 10-year old Clinton Adams was in a field attending to his family’s cow and claimed to have witnessed the attack from his vantage point. After telling a local police officer his account, Adams was supposedly threatened and told to keep quiet or his family would be killed. His account was discredited by Laura Wexler in her book, *Fire in a Canebrake*.

Evidence also indicated that there was a dress rehearsal held before the lynching and a backup group of white men were ready to finish the job if the first group failed. Further, it was also acknowledged that the "better citizens" in Monroe knew who the murderers were but they would not reveal their identities. In utter disgust and frustration, the FBI agent in charge of the inquiry resigned and returned to Wisconsin amid allegations that Governor Eugene Talmadge, who by this time had been inaugurated, created such a hostile atmosphere that he was compelled to leave his post.

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Despite these difficulties, FBI agents were able to identify 55 suspects, but the paucity of information regarding the lynching made the prosecutor's job difficult. After three months of investigations, a federal grand jury was convened on December 2 and charges were brought against 15 of the suspects. The federal grand jury listened to the evidence and testimony of hundreds of witnesses presented by a federal attorney against the defendants for three weeks. Predictably, the jury that consisted of 19 white men and two black men was unable to reach a consensus and the suspects were released. The inability to punish participants in mob violence was typical as a strongly worded letter from the Civil Rights Commission to U.S. Attorney General Tom Clark, declaring that "it is this kind of immunity from punishment which gives greater and greater license to the white supremacists to carry out a systematic rule of violence and terror. It is incredible to think that the Federal Government of our nation cannot act to stop mob rule and mob murder."

The lynching of Roger and Dorothy Malcolm and George and Mae Murray Dorsey reflect complicity of the entire community in planning and executing a lynching, as well as the harboring of a member of the mob. Major William E. Spence "said the whole incident looked like a 'rehearsed affair,'" and his claim appears to be completely

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From the initial effort to attack Roger Malcolm, a lynch mob appeared to be in concert as it planned to exact its revenge. A number of indicators suggest the widespread collusion by the community in the plans. Typically a black person accused of the commission of a violent crime would have been assessed a larger fine. J. Loy Harrison had been approached for two weeks to bail Roger Malcolm out of jail and refused each time. He finally relented and agreed to bail him out of jail and allow Malcolm to work on his farm in lieu of repayment. According to Laura Wexler, who wrote about the mass lynching in *Fire in a Canebrake*, this action was a serious breach of etiquette, as one planter never bailed out another's tenants without their expressed consent. Harrison being a long-time member of the community and a wealthy planter would intimately understand this unwritten rule. Malcolm attacked an individual who was of the aristocratic class and generally, bail was not set when a black person committed an act of violence against a white person, particularly one of the land owning gentry. So, the assessed sum of $600 that Harrison paid to procure Malcolm's release was not the norm.

Another suspicious occurrence related to the actual physical release of Malcolm. People typically released from jail gained their liberty on Saturday afternoons. While Harrison paid to have Malcolm released at 2:00 p.m., he was not officially freed until 5:30 p.m., near sun down. Further, Harrison decided to take another route home, referring to it as a short cut, possibly as a means to assuage any misgivings the couples may have had. The wariness of his action was particularly questionable in reference to the actual attacks on the couples. A 25-year resident of Walton County, J. Loy Harrison, a twice

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convicted felon, was unable to identify any members of the mob, despite the fact that he recalled the threats made against the victims, as well as those expressed directly to him. Police arrested Lester Little as the alleged leader of the mob, but Harrison did not positively identify him. Harrison’s descriptions seem dubious, when he described the mob’s leader as a “tall and dignified-looking man of 65 wearing a brown suit and broad-brimmed hat, and later referred to him as “the huge lank leader,” but continued to claim that he did not know what the man looked like. If one does not remember what the “real” perpetrator looks like, how can one determine that the person in question is not said person? Especially, since he insisted that the leader weighed 20 pounds more than the suspect, Lester Little. Harrison was confident that Little was not a part of the mob, but again, he did not remember what the man looked like.

If the lynch mob wanted Roger Malcolm for the assault on Barney Hester, why did they kill George Dorsey and the men’s wives. Lynch mobs were notorious for being blood thirsty and callous, factors that would brand these individuals for death. But, there was a more insidious reason. George Dorsey became very friendly with a local poor white family, whose father was incapacitated and unable to complete manual tasks. Dorsey often provided support to the family by completing chores around the house and became a frequent visitor to their home. This led to a congenial relationship with the family’s teenage daughters. Many persons in the community took offense at the amiable relationship between the black man and the white girls, which resulted in threats to

129 “Negroes Slain by Georgia Mob: 2 Men, Wives Taken from White Farmer,” Iowa City Press-Citizen, July 26, 1946.

terminate their friendship with Dorsey. Allegedly, Dorsey propositioned one of the daughters, asking her to leave town with him. The family acquiesced to the community threats and severed ties with Dorsey, but the members of the mob did not lose sight of his transgression and used this as an opportunity to punish him.\textsuperscript{131}

The attacks on the Malcolms and Dorseys also revealed other issues regarding lynch mobs. The faces and bodies of George Dorsey, his sister, Dorothy Dorsey Malcolm, and Roger Malcolm had been severely damaged by the various point-blank shot gun and pistol detonations and “in one or two cases their faces blown up and unrecognizable.”\textsuperscript{132} However, Mae Murray Dorsey’s face was untouched though her body was mangled by the barrage of bullets.\textsuperscript{133} Perhaps Mae Dorsey was not shot in the face because of the pervasive belief that beauty was based upon European standards. Mae Dorsey was the only one of the victims that appeared to be of mixed ancestry, with skin of a lighter hue, and long, straight hair. It seemed an impossibility that an individual’s face would remain intact in the midst of this explosive crime, with guns and shot guns blaring. The exemption of her face may have been an indication that the mob was intrigued by her physicality. Particularly, as the mob indiscriminately shot the others, including George Dorsey, who had an eye shot out and an ear partially shot off during the massacre.

\textsuperscript{131} Laura Wexler, \textit{Fire in a Canebrake} (New York: Scribner, 2003), 156-159.

Approximately 50 years later, Rep. Tyrone Brooks from Georgia convinced Governor Roy Barnes to reopen the unsolved case. Governor Barnes directed the GBI in 2000 to seek the members of the mob that performed the lynching, even offering a reward for information leading to an arrest of the guilty persons or leading to information that would solve the case. A young, local man in his twenties gave the GBI the names of many members of his family who were allegedly involved in the lynching, but District Attorney Ken Wynne has decided that “at this point we don’t have sufficient evidence to charge anyone in connection with the case at all.” It remains extremely unlikely that the guilty parties will be brought to justice or their identities confirmed because of death, senility, poor health or old age.

Ultimately, black females, just as white females and black males, were pawns in a game of strict control exercised by aristocratic white men. These groups were continuously disenfranchised and socially and economically challenged, as Southern white males of the elite class continued to shape Southern culture and economy, employing any method of control they deemed appropriate and readily utilized acts of violence to manifest dominance. The gleam of progress was often snuffed out by the harsh realities of daily experiences; nonetheless, Blacks remained hopeful in their pursuit of equality of opportunity, justice, and protection from the violence of mobocracy. However, violent acts continually plagued Blacks in Georgia because of ineffective policies, futile attempts and apathetic attitudes regarding the plight of African Americans. As critics of lynching sought to remedy the situation, the Office of Governor of Georgia,

the state’s chief executive charged with fulfilling the law, was usually approached. Georgia’s governors occasionally responded affirmatively to end lynching, yet they continued to believe in the carefully crafted stereotypes about Blacks that were proliferated in Southern culture.

**Georgia Governor’s Response to the Lynching of Women**

Governor William Y. Atkinson was an outspoken critic of lynch law, who once supported the premise of law enforcement providing a prisoner with the necessary firearm as a means of self-defense when confronted by a lynch mob. After a lynching in Monticello in 1894, Atkinson offered remuneration for the arrest of the members of the mob. The governor indicated that he was “determined to have every participant in this disgraceful affair arrested and convicted if the means can be found to accomplish it.”

Atkinson’s statement was indicative of the realities of the time, as it was essentially impossible to prosecute members of a lynch mob, since the community worked in concert to maintain these individual’s anonymity. Later, Governor Atkinson addressed the reign of mob law during his administration, which resulted in his request for the enactment of legislation by the Georgia State Assembly. This law sought to impede lynching through a change of venue and the use of excessive force against lynch mobs. The governor believed that “in a free government like ours there is no excuse for lynching. If there is evidence to convict, the courts will punish . . . the courts of our state can be trusted to punish the guilty and protect our property, our persons, and the honor and virtue of our

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135 “Rewards for Lynchers: Governor Atkinson Aroused to Action by the Lynching at Monticello,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 13, 1894.
women.” And, as Crystal Feimster recounted, it was not uncommon for Atkinson to receive mementos from lynching that occurred during his administration, as the members of the mobs needed to remind him of the true powerbrokers within the state.

In 1899, Governor Allen D. Candler of Georgia exemplified an acceptance of Southern dogma when addressing mobocracy. Candler reflected that assaults against Blacks have happened to

avenge these foul crimes (i.e. robbery, arson, burglary, assassinations, murder . . . and rape), lynch law, the most dangerous of all remedies has been resorted to by misguided citizens . . . [Moreover], the purity of the fair mothers and daughters of Georgia must and shall be preserved, and at the same time the lives and liberties of all of the law abiding Negroes in Georgia must and shall be protected . . . [and] the ordinary processes of the law are amply sufficient to punish all crimes. 

Candler also appealed to law enforcement and attorneys and asked that police commit to their duties and protect alleged criminals. Also, he asked lawyers to refrain from exploiting the legal system with tactics that impeded justice. Moreover, Governor Candler considered black sympathizers myopic in their views, unwilling to understand the perspective of Whites and appreciate their problems. He said that “they are blinded by race prejudice and can see but one side of the question. This is unfortunate . . . to secure protection against lawless Whites they must show a disposition to protect the white people against lawless Blacks.” Candler exhibited a belief in the negative stereotypes that still plagued the South and blamed most of the South’s racial problems on Northern agitators.


137 “Candler Appeals,” *Union Recorder*, August 8, 1899.

Lynch mobs continued to frequently abuse black and poor white Georgians. When Governor Joseph M. Terrell was elected to office, he asked for stringent laws from the state legislature to hinder lynch mobs. Terrell also offered rewards for the arrest and conviction of members of the mobs, to no avail.

Georgia governors encountered administrative difficulties when dealing with the local sheriffs, as Governor Joseph Brown discovered when lynch mobs assaulted Blacks in the northern and southern parts of the state. The lynching that occurred in Columbia and Heard counties prompted the governor to request official reports regarding these types of assaults and offered state rewards to the sheriffs of the county for the arrest and conviction of members of the mob. The governor “directed that offers of rewards be [circulated] and that in each proclamation the following expressions be made: ‘the state’s process for enforcing her laws is definite and complete. She has not abdicated the power to apply that process nor does she permit her power to be usurped by any person or combination of persons. She does not concede that anarchy in any form nor to any degree shall supplant her plans.” Members of the mob were seemingly, undaunted and continued their assaults with condonation.

Two infamous lynchings occurred during the administration of Governor John M. Slaton. The Barber family of Monticello was executed at the hands of unknown persons and Leo Frank, was taken from a state prison and summarily lynched. After Governor Slaton pardoned Leo Frank, the Jewish manager of a pencil factory that was convicted of the rape and murder of Mary Phagan, a mob took him from authorities and lynched him.

139 "Offers $100 Reward for Negro Lynchers," The Atlanta Constitution, May 18, 1913.
Subsequently, Slaton was repeatedly threatened as many Southerners were so incensed that the chief executive of the state would grant a pardon to Frank, who had been convicted of murder Mary Phagan which forced the governor to be sequestered in protective custody at an undisclosed location. Governor Slaton publicly denounced the lynching of the Barber family and compelled the local sheriff to justify his actions in protecting the Barber family. Slaton also offered a reward for arrest of the members of the mob, and obliged the circuit court judge to investigate the matter. In an editorial, the publishers asserted that “it is a fact that the officials of Jasper County would work more earnestly and it may be effective if they knew the Governor was behind them and was helping them and encouraging them in every possible way.”\textsuperscript{140} Slaton requested that Joseph E. Pottle, solicitor general of the Ocmulgee circuit, complete a full investigation into the lynching of the Barber family, but Pottle surmised “that he had little hope of securing any indictments”.\textsuperscript{141} An astute observation, as they were unable to obtain indictments for the attacks.

The lynching of black women continued during the administration of Nathaniel E. Harris, as Mary Conley was assaulted during his tenure. Harris noted that the failure to cease mobocracy was the ineffective state laws that did not adequately equip the governor with the authority to legally intervene. Harris implored the Georgia State

\textsuperscript{140} “The Governor's Answers to Attacks on the State,” \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, January 26, 1915.

\textsuperscript{141} “Pottle Promises Probe of Monticello Lynching,” \textit{Union Recorder}, February 9, 1915.
Legislature to amend the statutes in order to grant the governor more latitude in dealing with lynching.\(^\text{142}\)

Antilynching activists continued to beseech the state executive for deliverance from lynch lawlessness. Governor Hugh Dorsey was influenced by both the information gleaned from statements submitted by law enforcement agencies regarding the lynchings and his indoctrination of racist rhetoric and the myth of the black male rapist. This is best illustrated by his response to the Colored Welfare League of Augusta. After receiving a resolution from the organization that requested his intervention, Dorsey responded that:

> Unfortunately, your resolutions and similar protests heretofore emanating from representative organizations of your race, dealing with kindred subjects outrage upon law and civilization, which too often provokes communities to substitute summary vengeance for the form of organized justice recognized by law. Your organization should have great influence for good among all classes of your race, and you should take every occasion to impress upon them the indisputable fact that lynching is an evil which can only be effectively suppressed by removing the aggravating cause. I trust that your organization will, by concerted action among similar organization of your race, perform its great responsibility to your State, and especially to every member of your race, by disseminating this doctrine among them; that personal outrages and violence, especially against helpless women and children, will not be tolerated in any civilized community, but will provoke prompt retaliation of community vengeance which is difficult, if not impossible to control, and that the surest way to discourage lynchings is to convince the lawless element that such provocative outrages will not be palliated, tolerated or shielded by good citizens of any race, but that all races will join in rebuking the offense and bringing the offenders to justice, with the same zeal which characterizes their criticisms of those citizens who, in the wrong exercise of natural indignation, wrongfully unite to personally punish the original offense and offenders.\(^\text{143}\)

\(^{142}\) "Stand on Lynching by Harris Praised," *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 5, 1921.

\(^{143}\) "Lynchings Never Will Stop until Barbarous Outrages Cease," *The Georgian*, May 24, 1918.
Dorsey’s response to the group’s application infuriated lynching opponents and initiated the editorial in the *Atlanta Independent* that “the governor is utterly mistaken when he attributes the cause of lynching to rape on women. It is not due to that, and nobody knows that better than the Governor. It is due to race prejudice and hate.”

Dorsey warned that the lack of effective and efficient legislation regarding lawlessness could result in intervention by the federal government. Deeming the current statutes as a failure, Dorsey corresponded with Georgia state attorney general, Clifford Walker regarding the legality of state executive’s role in prohibiting lynching. At that time, the governor could not send the state militia until the local sheriff requested support. Subsequent to the lynching of Mary and Hayes Turner and Sidney Johnson, Dorsey “put the issue of mob violence on the agenda of an executive meeting . . . [he] seemed willing to move to stop mob violence only because he did not want federal officials in his state.” Eventually, Dorsey proposed that the laws be amended to empower the governor to be able to hold sheriffs responsible for the lynching of an inmate when that officer was derelict in his duty. Thus, the statutes provided the local sheriffs with more power than the governor in impeding the assaults. Dorsey became the object of contempt and ridicule when in 1921 he disseminated the pamphlet, “A

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Statement from Governor Hugh M. Dorsey as to The Negro in Georgia”, in which he documented injustices endured by Blacks in Georgia, including lynching. "Judge Searcy, of the Superior Court of Georgia, charged the former Governor with having done Georgia and her institutions and her people ‘greater and more lasting harm than any plague or pestilence could have inflicted upon them.’ Mass meetings were held to answer Dorsey. Feeling ran so high in some parts of the state that there was talk of impeachment, in spite of the fact that his term was to expire in two or three weeks."¹⁴⁷ Some newspaper editors theorized that the pamphlet was published in an attempt to secure a federal judgeship. However, some states, including North Carolina and Alabama successfully implemented some of his suggested measures to curb lynchings in their respective states.¹⁴⁸

Terminating lynching was difficult because many of Georgia’s governors perceived that the duty of prohibition belonged to local officers. This stance was both problematic and ineffective as some officials were complicit in mob violence. Others blatantly refused to adhere to their sworn duties or their allegiance was divided between loyalty to their constituents and obligations mandated by their job. Conversely, historically “lone law officer[s] [were] often powerless or afraid to intervene [as] the rate of death by violence to peace officers was very high . . . [and] even if caught, the murderer was unlikely to be convicted and was seldom given a heavy sentence,”¹⁴⁹ an assertion illustrated by the lynching of Matthew Deason. Detractors encouraged officials

¹⁴⁷ "Trying to Stamp Out Peonage in Georgia," Current Opinion, 71 (July-December 1921), 76.


at the state level to create laws that would make participation in a lynch mob a crime. Some officials affirmed that the policies adopted by the state legislature were adequate and the problem was in the application of the law by police chiefs and sheriffs throughout the state. The excessive number of Georgia's 159 counties (previously there were 161 counties) made executing lynch laws and adequate oversight of officers challenging. With few exceptions, the state of Georgia did not censure or prosecute law enforcement officials who failed to attend to their duties, and even more rarely, punished members of lynch mobs.

**Georgia Lynch Laws**

Critics have often assessed that lynching was able to proliferate because of a lack of laws to properly address the crime. The difficulties in getting legislation passed reflected the indoctrination of the legislators by the racist culture. In 1897, when Governor William Atkinson requested that the state legislature approve a new, more stringent measure to efficiently deal with the lawlessness of the mob, he encountered difficulty garnering support from state legislators. Members of the state legislature grappled in coming to a consensus regarding which issues should be addressed. Legislator T. B. Felder of Fulton County espoused sentiments reflective of many Georgians of this time by placing the impetus upon the speedier trials for black rapists of white women. The only assemblyman of color, J. W. Law, supported both a program of education for Blacks to deter the rape of white women, as well as Governor Atkinson’s quest for harsher laws punishing lynchers. Senator C. E. Battle of the Twenty-Fourth District maintained that the existing laws were adequate for the prevention of lynching,
but citizens needed a "good, strong, and healthy respect for the laws." Senator Yancey Carter deduced that lynchings ensued because of the incompetency of law enforcement officials, who were often accomplices with members of the mob.  

The disparity in ideology regarding allegations of crime and the acceptability of mob violence prevented a number of proposed bills from being passed into law. However, the state of Georgia passed two key measures addressing the lawlessness of mob violence. The first law, *For the Prevention of Mob Violence, Number 347*, was passed in 1893, and officers were mandated to summon a posse to suppress a lynch mob, implement measures to contain the mob, and arrest the members of the mob. The law stipulated that mob members tried and convicted could be sentenced from one to twenty years or put to death. Any law enforcement officer who refused his obligation would be guilty of a misdemeanor and punished accordingly.  

The state legislature passed another measure, Section 964 of the Georgia Penal Code of 1910 that provided for a change of venue for alleged criminals in danger of mob violence. This provision made it possible for the judge to change the venue for a defendant if he believed that the person would not get a fair trial. Again, the dilemma with this statute relates to the volatile and unpredictable nature of lynching. An accused person would often be lynched before a lawman arrived and the precarious nature of the

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mob increased the likelihood that innocent persons would be swept up in the madness of lawlessness.\footnote{152 Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, 1911, \textit{Section 964 of the Georgia Penal Code of 1910} (Georgia, 1910), 76.}

Georgia's governors often cited the ineffectiveness of statutes to check lynching. Some citizens seemed to agree and an editorial in the \textit{Atlanta Constitution} expressed the belief that "the laws of Georgia . . . seem to have been framed to encourage mob violence, and . . . certainly are not framed to act as a deterrent."\footnote{153 "The Laurels of Lynchdom," \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, May 24, 1918.} The Persons Bill was an attempt to amend ineffective laws that had previously been passed. According to this measure the sheriffs of local communities would be responsible to the governor of the state. After an investigation, if the governor found that the officer of the law was derelict in performing his duties, due to conspiracy or ineptness, then the governor would have the power to remove him from his position and appoint a successor. The Persons Bill was akin to, but not as severe as, the Fullbright Bill proposed during the same legislative session, which would have prohibited the sheriff from ever holding office should his guilt be proven. The Persons Bill passed successfully in the Senate, whose version granted the sheriff the right to appeal the governor's decision to the state Supreme Court. An alternative proposal would have granted the General Assembly the power to decide if the sheriff would retain his job. But, the measure failed to pass the House of Representatives by a vote of 113 to 29 on the last day of the session. Supporters for these bills "[believed]
there is not a sheriff in Georgia who could not prevent a lynching by exercising proper vigilance and regard for law”.  

Other critics of mob violence viewed the problems of the legal system in Georgia to be a factor in the proliferation of the practice. “Judge Emery R. Speer of the Federal District of Georgia . . . pointed out that there is no record of lynchings of prisoners of federal courts, and declared that if ‘lynchers knew to a certainty that they would suffer even a fine of $50 apiece there would be no lynchings.’” The lack of state oversight for local courts was another problem that impeded the eradicating of lynching. Halliburton Hall disclosed that county courts had complete and absolute control, with the state courts only providing appellate jurisdiction. As a result, the local courts were heavily influenced by the local community and decided guilt or innocence, based on political or fraternal motivations. Indictments were not issued on behalf of the state, but rather each county. The court system, state and local, could only be altered by the General Assembly, thusly, some anti-lynching activists proposed intervention by the highest court in the country. Associate Justice David J. Brewer of the United States Supreme Court said that lynching was murder and that the crime of summary justice would continue unless laws in the country were replaced. He also related that the Supreme Court was powerless to act on the subject . . . [because] somebody must prosecute before the law


155 “Georgia Judge on Lynching,” Evening Globe, April 7, 1916.

156 “Hall, Halliburton, Dangerous Tendencies and Some Results of Despotic Government,” Manufacturers Record, August 1, 1918.
can take its course." Unfortunately, cases involving lynching never made it before the
Supreme Court, partly because the actions of the mob were sanctioned at the local levels
and members of the community rarely divulged the names of mob members, either as a
show of solidarity, or for fear of repercussions.

Proponents of mob violence justified their actions by alleging the ineffectiveness
of legal systems to deal with alleged criminals, “yet collective violence also [occurred]
where legal agencies [were] well established and may even [competed] with law, a
phenomenon seen when suspects [were] forcibly abducted from police or jails and
punished by private citizens.” Each lynching of a black woman in Georgia occurred in
a community with an established police force that was either unable or unwilling to
effectively protect these women. So, why were violent acts acceptable as a form of social
control to be used against these blacks regardless of gender? Inherent to the South was a
code of honor in which violent behavior was sanctioned, encouraged, expected and
“supported by spoken and unspoken norms and cohesive social organization that [helped]
sustain these norms [and] also [sustained] this culture.” African-American women
were lynched in Georgia because Southern culture perpetuated violence as an acceptable
norm and these individuals were victimized because “lynchings [were] more likely to be
physically violent and lethal when the offender is poor or a member of an inferior ethnic

158 Roberta Senechal de la Roche, “Collective Violence a Social Control,” Sociological Forum 11
(March 1996): 104.
159 Dov Cohen, “Culture, Social Organization, and Patterns of Violence,” The Journal of
group, race, or caste." Because of their "insignificant" status as a Black and a woman, mobs gave little consideration to lynching them as they purposed to maintain the dynamics of subordination by exercising and exhibiting their power. The lynching of African-American females in Georgia corresponds to the finding of Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Walter White. None of these women were lynched because they were directly involved in the rape of a white woman and Sula Padgett’s son, Arthur, was found not guilty of the charges. But, the motivations that ended their lives, with the exception of Mary Hollenbeck who was allegedly lynched by Blacks, can be attributed to breaches of racial etiquette, from the murder and assault of a white person to failing to acquiesce to the sexual advances of a white man. A manifestation of Southern culture, the racist etiquette was an expression of the standards that governed the ideology and behavior of Whites and Blacks. These standards were so embedded in the Southern psyche that the governor and legislature were lax to enact measures that could have effectively impeded these assaults prior to the 1930s.

Southern culture promoted stereotypes that objectified women, attributed criminality to blacks and facilitated mobs to lynch with impunity. An analysis of the lynching of black women in Georgia would be incomplete without a closer examination of lynching statistics per Georgia county, African-American population, property ownership, tenancy rates and cotton production as provocation for mob violence.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The objectification of black females contributed to an environment in which these individuals were assaulted by lynching bees in the state. These assaults were often precipitated by an infringement of social mores, either perpetuated by the woman or her relatives. These were manifested in a culture of fear and hatred by a complicit community, capricious execution of the law and dereliction of duty by peace officers. This chapter seeks to quantify the reasons for lynching by utilizing numerical data to determine correlations between lynching and population distribution of African Americans, property ownership and tenancy, as well as cotton production and prices.

For most black families, survival depended upon the employment of the parents and often the children. For many individuals, the lack of an adequate education and training limited the types of employment available to them. In an effort to maintain their livelihood, family members typically engaged in manual, menial labor that included sharecropping and domestic work. Poor wages and the depression of the 1890s were contributing factors to black women continuing to work outside of the home. According to historian Donald Grant, Georgia's wages for tenant farming were among the worst in the nation, and he indicates that black women and children earned only one-half or one-
third of a black male’s wages. These vocations often placed black females in direct contact with white males, which increased the possibility for these women to be abused. There was little recourse for the victims, as abusers were rarely convicted or sentenced. Moreover, retaliation by a family member was often met with violence and the entire family could potentially be further victimized.

Data Analysis

The lynching of black women in Georgia was isolated to twelve counties. In three of these twelve jurisdictions, more than one female was victimized by a lynch mob. This was the case in Tattnall County, which was the scene of the lynching of three women, Mary Hollenbeck, and mother and daughter, Sula and Mary Padgett. Similarly, Jasper County was the location of the lynching of the Barber Charles sisters, and in Walton County Mae Murray Dorsey and her sister-in-law, Dorothy Malcolm, were lynched. Table 4.1 lists the seventeen Georgia counties with the most documented cases of lynching. Six of these seventeen counties or 35% of this subset are entities where African-American women were lynched. Surprisingly, these seventeen counties represent only 11% of the total number of counties in the state, which is currently 159 (this number

1 Grant, *The Way It Was in the South*, 141.


had been 161, but presently, the counties of Campbell and Milton are now defunct as those were merged into Fulton County in 1932), but account for 171 or 32% of lynchings out of the 530 assaults documented for in the state. Seven counties, Brooks, Jasper, Mitchell, Oconee, Pulaski, Coffee and Spalding, are noted to be where black females were lynched and in those counties, 71 people became the victims of Judge Lynch, 13% of the total for the state.

Table 4.1 Georgia Counties with the Most Documented Cases of Lynching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of cases of documented lynching</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brooks*</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decatur</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early*</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jasper*</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mitchell*</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oconee*</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pulaski</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee*</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Bibb</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulloch</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Colquitt</td>
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<td>Emanuel</td>
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<td>Habersham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miller</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spalding*</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates the counties where black females have been lynched

Table 4.2 lists the 45 Georgia counties without any documented cases of lynching. However, this information can be misleading, particularly in states where the number of districts fluctuated. Comprised of 159 counties, Georgia has the second highest number of counties of any state in the country, and some of these regions were formed by either extracting land from existing entities, or merging counties, which may lend to some
inaccuracy in the reporting of lynching at the county level. For example, Atkinson, Brantley, Dodge, Jeff Davis, Jenkins, Peach, Seminole and Treutlen counties have no documented cases of lynching, but because these entities were created from other districts where lynching did occur, therefore, there is a possibility that the mob violence may have occurred within the geographical confines of that community.

Table 4.2 Georgia Counties without Documented Incidents of Lynching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>Year of Origin</th>
<th>Derivation of other counties after 1870</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atkinson*</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Clinch and Coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacon*</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Appling, Pierce, Ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin</td>
<td>1803</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>1858</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Hill*</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Irwin and Wilcox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brantley*</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Charlton, Pierce and Wayne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catoosa</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlton</td>
<td>1854</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>1854</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook*</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Berrien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodge*</td>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Montgomery, Pulaski and Telfair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dougherty</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elbert</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans*</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Bulloch and Tattnall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hart</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Davis*</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Appling and Coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenkins*</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Bulloch, Burke, Emanuel, Screven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamar*</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Monroe and Pike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanier*</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Berrien, Clinch and Lowndes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long*</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Liberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumpkin</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton</td>
<td>1858</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulding</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peach*</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Houston and Macon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickens</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putnam</td>
<td>1807</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>1858</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sixteen black women were lynched in Georgia between 1871 and 1946 (see Table 4.3). Tolnay and Beck noted in *A Festival of Violence* that the mob violence was most prevalent in the central and southwest regions of Georgia. Of the 16 women that were lynched in Georgia, 18.75% were attacked in the Upper Piedmont region of the state, 37.5% were assaulted in the Cotton Belt (Central Region) of the state, and 43.75% of the lynching of women occurred in the South Georgia region of the state.
Table 4.3 African-American Females Lynched in Georgia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Allegation</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 30, 1871</td>
<td>Unidentified woman</td>
<td>Toomsboro, GA Wilkinson County, GA</td>
<td>Adultery</td>
<td>CB+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 29, 1880</td>
<td>Milly Thompson Johnson</td>
<td>Jonesboro, GA Clayton County, GA</td>
<td>Dispute</td>
<td>UP+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 25, 1886</td>
<td>Mary Hollenbeck</td>
<td>Tattnall County, GA</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>SG+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 7, 1906</td>
<td>Meta Hicks</td>
<td>Pelham, GA Mitchell County, GA</td>
<td>Husband accused of murder</td>
<td>SG+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 21, 1907</td>
<td>Mrs. Sula Padgett Mary Padgett</td>
<td>Hogwallow, GA Tattnall County, GA</td>
<td>Son and brother accused of rape</td>
<td>CB+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 23, 1912</td>
<td>Belle Hathaway</td>
<td>Hamilton, GA Harris County, GA</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>SG+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 25, 1912</td>
<td>Ann Boston</td>
<td>Pinehurst, GA Dooly County, GA</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>CB+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15, 1915</td>
<td>Eula Barber Charles Ella Barber Charles</td>
<td>Monticello, GA Jasper County, GA</td>
<td>Parents were bootleggers</td>
<td>CB+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 4, 1916</td>
<td>Mary Conley</td>
<td>Arlington, GA Early County, GA</td>
<td>Complicity in murder</td>
<td>CB+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 17, 1918</td>
<td>Mary Turner</td>
<td>Brooks County, GA</td>
<td>Taught a lesson</td>
<td>SG+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 18, 1920</td>
<td>Minnie Ivory</td>
<td>Douglas, GA Coffee County, GA</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>SG+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 23, 1924</td>
<td>Pennie Westmoreland</td>
<td>Sunnyside, GA Spalding County, GA</td>
<td>Dispute</td>
<td>CB+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 25, 1946</td>
<td>Mae Murray Dorsey Dorothy Malcolm</td>
<td>Monroe, GA Walton County</td>
<td>Identification of mob members</td>
<td>UP+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Georgia Regions: CB- Cotton Belt, SG- South Georgia, UP- Upper Piedmont

*Similar charts are included in “Ladies and Lynching” by Crystal Feimster, “Stranger Fruit” by Maria DeLongoria and Lynching in the New South by W. Fitzhugh Brundage.
Population Distribution

From 1870 to 1950, African Americans comprised approximately 70% of the average population for Burke, Hancock, Houston, Lee, Quitman and Stewart counties (see Table 4.4). Lee County was rife with mob violence and was the scene of nine assaults, the most of any county in the state. Conversely, the counties of Quitman and Stewart have both the distinction of not having any documented lynching and a large population of Blacks. Hence, it can be determined that a large community of African Americans did not guarantee absolution from mob violence.

Table 4.4 Select Georgia Counties with the Greatest Percentages of Blacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burke</td>
<td>77.53</td>
<td>74.04</td>
<td>79.58</td>
<td>82.37</td>
<td>80.35</td>
<td>77.67</td>
<td>68.39</td>
<td>71.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>70.30</td>
<td>72.37</td>
<td>74.56</td>
<td>85.56</td>
<td>72.02</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>71.94</td>
<td>72.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>73.12</td>
<td>75.61</td>
<td>75.11</td>
<td>73.65</td>
<td>66.05</td>
<td>67.62</td>
<td>64.74</td>
<td>35.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>83.55</td>
<td>84.22</td>
<td>85.43</td>
<td>85.56</td>
<td>71.28</td>
<td>77.82</td>
<td>75.82</td>
<td>71.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>59.63</td>
<td>68.22</td>
<td>73.33</td>
<td>78.10</td>
<td>71.12</td>
<td>69.14</td>
<td>69.14</td>
<td>66.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart</td>
<td>68.74</td>
<td>73.23</td>
<td>74.65</td>
<td>77.26</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>71.35</td>
<td>72.82</td>
<td>72.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>72.15</td>
<td>74.12</td>
<td>77.11</td>
<td>80.42</td>
<td>68.47</td>
<td>72.52</td>
<td>70.46</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dawson, Lumpkin, Towns and Union counties consistently had few black residents, but mob violence against African Americans was never documented in those communities. However, the counties of Fannin and Gilmer have documented evidence indicating the activity of lynch mobs (see Table 4.5). The minuscule percentage of Blacks comprised less than 5% of the people in 1870 with an average of 4.6% that decreased to

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an average of 0.63% of the total population by 1950, with some areas, like Towns County that lost almost all of their black citizens. If there is safety in numbers, apparently, Whites in these communities were confident in their control, which was evidenced by fewer occurrences of lynching. Also, black economic power was insignificant as Blacks owned less than 1% of farm land in these counties, with the exception of Lumpkin County, where black ownership barely exceeded 5% at its height in 1940, so there was little need to use violence to control the wealth in the area.

Table 4.5 Select Georgia Counties with the Lowest Percentages of African Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fannin</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilmer</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumpkin</td>
<td>6.91</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>10.96</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μ</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographics of the percentages of African Americans for select counties (see Table 4.6) where there were no instances of documented lynching indicate that these communities maintained relatively high concentrations of Blacks. In the earlier periods of the study, it was not uncommon for these communities to have an approximate average of

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67% of the population as people of color. During the twenty year period, when the lynching of black women was most prevalent, the average decreased slightly to 66%. However, these communities began to decrease during the Great Depression. The population of Blacks in five of the six counties declined but remained at more than 50% of the total documented in the 1880 census. The exception was Chattahoochee County that decreased to only 22.5% of the 1880 records. Over the span of 80 years, the total average of Blacks in those areas was approximately 57.12% with the highest year, 1900, and lowest year, 1940.

Table 4.6 Demographics of the African-American Population in Select Counties without Documented Lynching (percentages)\(^7\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin</td>
<td>63.34</td>
<td>63.96</td>
<td>63.34</td>
<td>59.96</td>
<td>55.68</td>
<td>46.92</td>
<td>47.53</td>
<td>39.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>68.40</td>
<td>66.96</td>
<td>68.40</td>
<td>66.49</td>
<td>61.31</td>
<td>59.08</td>
<td>57.85</td>
<td>50.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>68.01</td>
<td>62.53</td>
<td>68.01</td>
<td>69.17</td>
<td>37.37</td>
<td>30.02</td>
<td>19.97</td>
<td>15.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dougherty</td>
<td>82.08</td>
<td>83.82</td>
<td>82.08</td>
<td>75.14</td>
<td>66.64</td>
<td>57.45</td>
<td>54.39</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putnam</td>
<td>74.85</td>
<td>73.46</td>
<td>74.85</td>
<td>73.35</td>
<td>68.78</td>
<td>62.28</td>
<td>33.68</td>
<td>55.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>48.86</td>
<td>50.49</td>
<td>48.86</td>
<td>48.21</td>
<td>44.96</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>18.21</td>
<td>33.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μ</td>
<td>67.59</td>
<td>66.87</td>
<td>67.59</td>
<td>65.39</td>
<td>55.79</td>
<td>49.53</td>
<td>38.61</td>
<td>39.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^7\) Historical Census Browser, accessed December 23, 2010, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html.
An examination of the census records for the percentages of Blacks in the counties where black women were lynched (see Table 4.7) indicates that there was a strong black presence as people of color comprised an average of 41% to 53% of the people for the 80 year span from 1870 to 1950. Interestingly, the population remained relatively steady, with a difference of only 11.53% for years with the highest and lowest average. However, population distribution as an independent variable does not adequately determine definitively the propensity of mob violence. Rather, it is the melding of population distribution and other factors that determine the fervor of lynching bees.

Table 4.7 Demographics for the Percentage of African Americans in the Total Population (Counties Where Black Women Were Lynched)\(^8\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brooks</td>
<td>51.65</td>
<td>54.63</td>
<td>58.60</td>
<td>59.11</td>
<td>58.06</td>
<td>52.78</td>
<td>51.26</td>
<td>48.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton</td>
<td>38.48</td>
<td>37.07</td>
<td>41.94</td>
<td>44.31</td>
<td>44.86</td>
<td>31.67</td>
<td>25.60</td>
<td>16.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>20.55</td>
<td>36.80</td>
<td>40.89</td>
<td>35.23</td>
<td>31.64</td>
<td>26.58</td>
<td>24.96</td>
<td>24.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dooly</td>
<td>46.92</td>
<td>49.12</td>
<td>55.27</td>
<td>61.92</td>
<td>59.83</td>
<td>55.83</td>
<td>55.26</td>
<td>53.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>60.39</td>
<td>62.52</td>
<td>60.46</td>
<td>62.21</td>
<td>58.42</td>
<td>53.29</td>
<td>51.47</td>
<td>52.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris</td>
<td>58.93</td>
<td>64.27</td>
<td>67.67</td>
<td>71.93</td>
<td>71.06</td>
<td>69.06</td>
<td>59.52</td>
<td>56.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>64.07</td>
<td>61.15</td>
<td>64.16</td>
<td>69.38</td>
<td>71.01</td>
<td>60.94</td>
<td>56.94</td>
<td>56.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>55.40</td>
<td>55.99</td>
<td>54.10</td>
<td>52.68</td>
<td>54.98</td>
<td>50.22</td>
<td>52.72</td>
<td>50.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spalding</td>
<td>56.78</td>
<td>55.51</td>
<td>51.95</td>
<td>50.96</td>
<td>46.58</td>
<td>34.70</td>
<td>31.45</td>
<td>27.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattnall</td>
<td>28.25</td>
<td>30.38</td>
<td>34.84</td>
<td>31.46</td>
<td>24.48</td>
<td>21.60</td>
<td>25.65</td>
<td>25.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walton</td>
<td>40.33</td>
<td>40.96</td>
<td>39.83</td>
<td>39.66</td>
<td>40.12</td>
<td>32.05</td>
<td>31.81</td>
<td>31.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkinson</td>
<td>45.69</td>
<td>48.36</td>
<td>52.72</td>
<td>51.15</td>
<td>49.44</td>
<td>47.16</td>
<td>49.04</td>
<td>48.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>47.29</td>
<td>49.86</td>
<td>51.87</td>
<td>52.50</td>
<td>50.87</td>
<td>44.66</td>
<td>42.97</td>
<td>40.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An increase in farm ownership by Blacks burgeoning on economic independence and success was a cause for lynching (see Table 4.8). The data indicates that the black farm ownership fluctuated but steadily increased in these communities, which is evident in each county during the 30 year period from 1900 to 1930 when most of the women in Georgia were lynched, including Sula and Mary Padgett and Pennie Westmoreland, who owned their own farms. However, the data for the 1940 census year is skewed because black farm ownership was not documented as an independent variable. Rather, the group was lumped into a data field that included sharecroppers, tenant farmers (lease), partial owners and farm managers making it difficult to assess.
Table 4.8 Black Farm Owner Demographics as a Percentage of Total Farms (Counties where Black Women Lynched)\(^9\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brooks</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>12.55</td>
<td>28.96</td>
<td>44.75</td>
<td>111.31</td>
<td>39.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>30.17</td>
<td>51.17</td>
<td>16.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>10.14</td>
<td>14.96</td>
<td>36.08</td>
<td>12.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dooly</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>15.92</td>
<td>53.55</td>
<td>152.66</td>
<td>40.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>8.05</td>
<td>30.11</td>
<td>55.64</td>
<td>233.62</td>
<td>52.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>32.36</td>
<td>69.31</td>
<td>122.13</td>
<td>41.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>43.55</td>
<td>54.56</td>
<td>154.07</td>
<td>44.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>17.15</td>
<td>46.96</td>
<td>143.38</td>
<td>40.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spalding</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>22.44</td>
<td>45.83</td>
<td>66.39</td>
<td>26.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattnall</td>
<td>8.53</td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td>11.72</td>
<td>15.36</td>
<td>29.42</td>
<td>16.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walton</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>29.98</td>
<td>104.31</td>
<td>24.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkinson</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>61.71</td>
<td>88.56</td>
<td>31.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>20.39</td>
<td>43.57</td>
<td>107.76</td>
<td>32.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census data regarding African-American farm ownership was unavailable for 1880-1890. Beginning in 1930 the data for black farm owners as an independent strand was unavailable.

Farm demographics for counties with the most documented cases of lynching (see Table 4.9) also indicated that economic success as black farm owners doubled in the 20 year period that coincides with the prevalence of the lynching of black women.

Moreover, black ownership of farms grew exponentially in Decatur, Oconee and Pulaski counties from 1920 to 1930, with Blacks owning 55% of farms in Pulaski County by 1930.

Table 4.9 African American Farm Demographics for Counties with the Most Documented Cases of Lynching (percentages)\(^{10}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brooks</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>12.55</td>
<td>28.96</td>
<td>44.75</td>
<td>111.31</td>
<td>39.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decatur</td>
<td>12.85</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>14.86</td>
<td>36.47</td>
<td>66.76</td>
<td>33.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>8.05</td>
<td>30.11</td>
<td>55.64</td>
<td>233.62</td>
<td>52.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>43.55</td>
<td>54.56</td>
<td>154.07</td>
<td>44.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>17.15</td>
<td>46.96</td>
<td>143.38</td>
<td>40.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oconee</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>26.93</td>
<td>61.05</td>
<td>22.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulaski</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>54.69</td>
<td>224.06</td>
<td>49.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\mu)</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>20.73</td>
<td>45.71</td>
<td>142.04</td>
<td>40.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census data regarding African American farm ownership was unavailable for 1880-1890. Beginning in 1930 the data for black farm owners as an independent strand was unavailable.

Alternatively, in counties with small populations of African-Americans black farm ownership increased only .08% during the 20 year period between the 1900 and 1920 when most lynching of black women occurred in Georgia. Unfortunately, by 1950, black farm ownership was negligible in the six counties with the lowest concentration of African Americans (see Table 4.10), which compares to a decrease in the black populace.

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\(^{10}\) *Historical Census Browser*, accessed December 23, 2010, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html.
Table 4.10 African American Farm Demographics for Counties with the Lowest Percentages of Blacks\textsuperscript{11}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fannin</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilmer</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumpkin</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census data regarding African American farm ownership was unavailable for 1880-1890. Beginning in 1930 the data for black farm owners as an independent strand was unavailable.

African-American farmer ownership increased substantially in the counties where blacks comprised the greater percentage of the community. With the exception of McIntosh County, where black farm ownership was already roughly 60% in 1900, the other five counties experienced rampant growth by 1920. Farm ownership for people of color, a grouping comprised of both Blacks and non-whites, consistently through 1930, with the exception of McIntosh County, where the rate of farm ownership began to reduce and continued to do so through 1950. The 1940 census did not document black farm ownership as a singular variable, but combined all operators of color into one grouping, making it difficult to differentiate the number of farm owners from those that operated farms under tenancy agreements. This accounts for the skewed percentages

\textsuperscript{11} Historical Census Browser, accessed December 23, 2010, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html.
reflected in the 1940 census. By 1950, each of the counties had sustained significant
African-American farm ownership with only McIntosh County experiencing a slight
decrease. Polemists, Ida B Wells-Barnett, Walter White, Stewart Tolnay and E.M.
Beck, asserted that economics and lynching were intrinsically linked. Their
expostulations are confirmed by the data provided in Table 4.8, Table 4.9, Table 4.10 and
Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 African American Farm Demographics for Counties with the Greatest
Percentage of Blacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farms of colored farms owners</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>49.15</td>
<td>82.66</td>
<td>385.95</td>
<td>71.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms of Negroes and other non-white farm owners</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>8.17</td>
<td>30.59</td>
<td>68.94</td>
<td>288.08</td>
<td>67.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms of Negroes and other non-white farm owners/Total farms (percent)</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>6.77</td>
<td>44.96</td>
<td>79.98</td>
<td>470.07</td>
<td>67.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms of Negroes and other non-white farm owners/Total farms (percent)</td>
<td>59.85</td>
<td>69.01</td>
<td>83.43</td>
<td>67.54</td>
<td>84.31</td>
<td>48.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms of Negroes and other non-white farm owners/Total farms (percent)</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>39.74</td>
<td>66.53</td>
<td>396.83</td>
<td>68.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms of Negroes and other non-white farm owners/Total farms (percent)</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>30.66</td>
<td>73.20</td>
<td>256.78</td>
<td>71.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms of Negroes and other non-white farm owners/Total farms (percent)</td>
<td>13.06</td>
<td>16.73</td>
<td>46.42</td>
<td>73.14</td>
<td>313.67</td>
<td>65.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages may be skewed as the reference for operators may have encompassed both owners and tenant farmers.
*Census data regarding African American farm ownership was unavailable for 1880-1890. Beginning in 1930 the data for black farm owners as an independent strand was unavailable. Each decade is identified with the specific terminology utilized for the census records for that year.

Farm Tenancy

Competition for jobs and tenant agreements was often a source of angst between poor Whites and black tenant farmers. Furthermore, the contentious relationship between the two was often capitalized upon by the planter class, as a means to bolster their political, social and economic agendas. As a result, mob violence became a means to deprive African Americans of accessing jobs and resources. In counties without documented lynching, the rate of black tenancy agreements varied from single digits in Camden County to practically 90% in 1910 in Dougherty County (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12 Demographics of Black Tenant Farms (Cash and Share) in Select Counties without Documented Lynching (percentages)\(^{13}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin</td>
<td>59.44</td>
<td>63.08</td>
<td>63.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>47.48</td>
<td>55.94</td>
<td>48.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dougherty</td>
<td>86.07</td>
<td>88.17</td>
<td>74.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putnam</td>
<td>64.42</td>
<td>70.55</td>
<td>69.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>25.93</td>
<td>37.13</td>
<td>46.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{13}\) Historical Census Browser, accessed August 12, 2012, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html.
In counties with documented cases of lynching of black women, the numerical range was not as extensive, but still significant, as African Americans worked as little as 7% of tenancy agreements in Coffee County and as many as 66% of those agreements in Jasper County (see Table 4.13). However, most of the counties where women were lynched had tenancy rates that fluctuated between 30% and 66% for black farmers according to the census records for the years 1900 to 1920 (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13 Demographics for Black and Non-white (Cash and Share) Tenant Farms in Counties Where Black Women Were Lynched (percentages)\(^\text{14}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brooks</td>
<td>33.95</td>
<td>39.19</td>
<td>41.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton</td>
<td>31.87</td>
<td>41.07</td>
<td>43.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>14.25</td>
<td>23.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dooly</td>
<td>34.60</td>
<td>53.69</td>
<td>53.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>29.18</td>
<td>54.76</td>
<td>52.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris</td>
<td>56.25</td>
<td>64.80</td>
<td>65.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>49.69</td>
<td>65.56</td>
<td>61.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>45.55</td>
<td>54.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spalding</td>
<td>41.82</td>
<td>48.47</td>
<td>57.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattnall</td>
<td>11.12</td>
<td>18.69</td>
<td>15.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walton</td>
<td>31.94</td>
<td>35.39</td>
<td>39.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkinson</td>
<td>40.68</td>
<td>39.01</td>
<td>36.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\mu)</td>
<td>34.02</td>
<td>43.37</td>
<td>45.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census data regarding cash and share tenant farming was unavailable for 1880-1890. Beginning in 1930 the data was no longer differentiated by ethnicity.

Moreover, mob violence occurred with more frequency in communities where the black tenancy agreements represented 28% to 66% of tenant farms (see Table 4.14). These findings correlate with the data presented in Table 4.13. Hence, lynching was an incessant activity in counties where approximately 30% to 66% of the tenant farms were operated by African Americans.

Table 4.14 Black (Cash and Share) Tenant Farm Demographics for Counties with the Most Documented Cases of Lynching (percentages)\textsuperscript{15}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brooks</td>
<td>33.95</td>
<td>39.19</td>
<td>41.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decatur</td>
<td>27.87</td>
<td>32.50</td>
<td>29.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>46.18</td>
<td>54.76</td>
<td>52.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>49.69</td>
<td>65.56</td>
<td>61.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>45.55</td>
<td>54.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oconee</td>
<td>38.77</td>
<td>40.24</td>
<td>38.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulaski</td>
<td>40.72</td>
<td>49.02</td>
<td>58.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μ</td>
<td>39.60</td>
<td>46.69</td>
<td>48.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{15} Historical Census Browser, accessed August 12, 2012, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html.

Counties with a small black populace also had few black tenant farmers (see Table 4.15). Approximately 1% of African Americans worked as sharecroppers in 1900, which diminished to .30% by 1920.
Table 4.15 Black (Cash and Share) Tenant Farm Demographics for Counties with the Lowest Percentages of Blacks\textsuperscript{16}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dawson</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fannin</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilmer</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumpkin</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census data regarding cash and share tenant farming was unavailable for 1880-1890. Beginning in 1930, the data was no longer differentiated by ethnicity.

Tenant farming was a favored in counties with the large populations of blacks (see Table 4.16). Accordingly, 56% to 80% of the arable land in those communities was farmed by African Americans. McIntosh County was the exception, where tenant farming capped at 10% in 1900 and diminished to less than 4% by the 1920 census, because Black ownership of farms was predominant. Moreover, the data reflects that the competition for available tenancy agreements was an impetus for lynching, as reflected in the status of Lee County, with more lynchings than any other Georgia county, where Blacks engaged in tenant farming at an average of 73% to 80%.

Table 4.16 Black (Cash and Share) Tenant Farm Demographics for Counties with the Greatest Percentage of Blacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia County</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burke</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>79.88</td>
<td>75.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>58.74</td>
<td>63.33</td>
<td>65.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>72.46</td>
<td>78.78</td>
<td>79.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntosh</td>
<td>10.35</td>
<td>8.92</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>59.87</td>
<td>71.00</td>
<td>56.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart</td>
<td>61.39</td>
<td>69.87</td>
<td>66.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census data regarding cash and share tenant farming was unavailable for 1880-1890. Beginning in 1930, the data was no longer differentiated by ethnicity.

**Cotton Production**

The production of cotton has been an integral aspect of the Georgian economy. In Tolnay and Beck’s *A Festival of Violence*, they concluded “that economic conditions did not affect the likelihood of mob violence in general, but rather affected the likelihood that Whites in the Cotton South would engage in mob violence against their African-American neighbors.” Although Tolnay and Beck proved that economic conditions impacted violence against Blacks, this study seeks to determine if there was a correlation between cotton production and prices and vicious attacks by mobs inflicted upon black females.

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18 Tolnay and Beck, *A Festival of Violence*, 137.
Cotton production was designated for either lint that was eventually processed for the production of fabric and the remaining seed and the hull that were used as cooking oil and feed for animals. Because of the different uses for the products, the prices for lint and seed could differ significantly. Production decreased as the boll weevil arrived in Georgia to the chagrin of farmers in 1915, forcing them to implement new preventative strategies to append the havoc that the beetle inflicted on their crops and the economy. There was a general decrease in yearly cotton production after the 1911 yield that was the largest harvest in Georgia’s history.

Although a number of factors contributed to the lynching of women, an examination of available data indicates that negative economic conditions in the state caused by a decrease in cotton lint production occurred during the same years as 37.5% of the total number of Black women were lynched. Additionally, when comparing the years when African American females were lynched, in 31.25% of the years when these assaults occurred there was a smaller yield in the cotton crop, albeit it garnered a higher price. Conversely, there was 25% positive correlation between the lynching of women and higher harvest and price for cotton. In 1880, the crop harvested increased, but the price remained constant from the previous year (see Table 4.17).
Table 4.17 Total Cotton (Lint) Production in Georgia for Select Years\textsuperscript{19}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Bales (weight of 500 lbs per bale)</th>
<th>Pounds of Cotton (Lint)</th>
<th>Price per Pound (cents)</th>
<th>Total Value of Cotton Crop for Lint in American dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>567,000</td>
<td>283,500,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>373,000</td>
<td>186,500,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>814,000</td>
<td>407,000,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4,070,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1,050,000</td>
<td>525,000,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5,250,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>960,000</td>
<td>480,000,000</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>40,800,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>870,000</td>
<td>435,000,000</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>35,670,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>1,683,000</td>
<td>841,500,000</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>91,723,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>1,593,000</td>
<td>796,500,000</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>78,057,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>1,816,000</td>
<td>908,000,000</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>96,248,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>2,769,000</td>
<td>1,384,500,000</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>132,912,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1,777,000</td>
<td>888,500,000</td>
<td>11.61</td>
<td>103,154,850.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>2,718,000</td>
<td>1,359,000,000</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>101,517,300.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cotton seed prices were typically higher than lint prices. However, data was unavailable for the selected years 1870-1907, although subsequent years provided the prices per tonnage. There was a 31.25% correlation between a higher yield and/or price of cotton seed during years when Black women succumbed to a mob. A smaller measure
of seed was harvested, yet it garnered a higher price during years when 43.75% of women were assaulted. However, the opposite is reflected in 18.75% of the years when black women were attacked by lynch mobs in Georgia as there was a parallel relation of poor yield and low price. The year Pennie Westmoreland was attacked by a mob in Spaulding County there was a 6.25% correlation between seed and price as the price decreased, despite a significant increase in the measure of seed reaped (see Table 4.18).

Table 4.18 Total Cotton (Seed) Production in Georgia for the Years When African-American Women Were Lynched\textsuperscript{20}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Tons of Cotton (Seed)</th>
<th>Price per Ton (cents)</th>
<th>Total Value of Cotton Crop for Seed in American dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>153,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>343,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>448,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>413,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>375,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>747,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>706,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>806,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,229,000</td>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>210,159.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>788,000</td>
<td>19.37</td>
<td>152,635.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>1,207,000</td>
<td>16.79</td>
<td>202,655.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>847,000</td>
<td>32.03</td>
<td>271,294.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>808,000</td>
<td>49.16</td>
<td>397,212.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>837,000</td>
<td>65.40</td>
<td>54,739,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>942,000</td>
<td>67.60</td>
<td>636,792.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>736,000</td>
<td>70.90</td>
<td>521,824.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>627,000</td>
<td>31.27</td>
<td>196,062.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>261,000</td>
<td>45.11</td>
<td>117,737.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>445,000</td>
<td>36.12</td>
<td>160,734.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>268,000</td>
<td>51.40</td>
<td>137,752.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>223,000</td>
<td>67.50</td>
<td>150,525.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total value of cotton lint and seed production fluctuated from 1880-1946. Data on the value of lint and seed was unavailable for 1871, but the lynching of the unidentified woman from Toomsboro, Georgia represented 6.25% of the cases. The death of Milly Thompson Johnson in 1880 represented a 6.25% correlation between mob violence and an increase in the value of lint, as seed prices were not documented. However, the deaths of Mary Hollenbeck, 1886 and Meta Hicks in 1906 represented a 12.5% correlation of lynching and prices. The mob violence inflicted upon Sula and Mary Padgett reflected a 12.5% connection. However, it is important to note that these results are skewed as data during these years was available for lint prices only (see Table 4.19).

Belle Hathaway was a tenant farmer, and it has been duly documented that Norman Hadley's tenants were embroiled in a disagreement with their landlord. If this was due to the decrease in cotton production is unknown; however, the state lost $30 million dollars in revenue from the previous year because of a decrease in cotton. The boll weevil arrived in Georgia in 1915, the same year the Barber sisters were lynched in Monticello, and despite the decimation of the cotton crop revenue increased by over $6 million dollars. There was a substantive increase of revenue through 1916, when Mary Conley, employed as a laborer in the Cotton Belt, was lynched. Revenues continued to increase through World War I, nevertheless there was a decrease in the total value of the cotton harvest when comparing 1917 and 1918, when Mary Turner was attacked. This steady decrease continued until the next woman was lynched in 1920, yet rebounded in
1924 when Pennie Westmoreland was assaulted. By the time Mae Murray Dorsey and Dorothy Malcolm were lynched in 1946, the value of cotton production had continued steadily to decrease (see Table 4.19).

Table 4.19 Total Value of Cotton (Lint and Seed) Production in Georgia during Select Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Value of Lint Cotton</th>
<th>Value of Seed Cotton</th>
<th>Total Value of Cotton Crop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>4,070,000.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4,070,000.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>5,250,000.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>5,250,000.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>40,800,000.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>40,800,000.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>35,670,000.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>35,670,000.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>91,723,500.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>91,723,500.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>78,057,000.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>78,057,000.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>96,248,000.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>96,248,000.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value 1</th>
<th>Value 2</th>
<th>Total Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>132,912,000.00</td>
<td>210,159.00</td>
<td>133,122,159.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>103,154,850.00</td>
<td>152,635.60</td>
<td>103,307,485.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>101,517,300.00</td>
<td>202,655.30</td>
<td>101,719,955.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>108,049,400.00</td>
<td>271,294.10</td>
<td>108,320,694.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>164,072,100.00</td>
<td>397,212.80</td>
<td>164,469,312.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>264,136,800.00</td>
<td>54,739,800</td>
<td>318,876,600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>311,827,900.00</td>
<td>636,792.00</td>
<td>312,464,692.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>296,214,450.00</td>
<td>521,824.00</td>
<td>296,736,274.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>119,779,750.00</td>
<td>196,062.90</td>
<td>119,975,812.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>87,229,800.00</td>
<td>117,737.10</td>
<td>87,347,537.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>115,259,200.00</td>
<td>160,734.00</td>
<td>115,419,934.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>77,135,700.00</td>
<td>137,752.00</td>
<td>77,273,452.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>94,745,700.00</td>
<td>150,525.00</td>
<td>94,896,225.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The estimations for the total value of the cotton crop for 1871-1907 are based solely on available data.*
Southern culture promoted stereotypes objectifying black females fostering the opinion that they were insignificant and expendable. Of the sixteen black women previously noted five or 31.25% of these victims were accused of the crime for which they were lynched. The majority of the victims, ten or 62.5%, were lynched because of immorality or presumptuous behaviors, as well as relational affiliations. The lack of adequate education relegated most of these women to manual labor, either as hired hands or as domestics, which placed in direct contact with white men and accessible for exploitation. The predilection for summary justice was further exacerbated by the failure of police and the governor’s office to administer lynch laws and punish members of lynch mobs. Having the excessive number of 159 counties (161 counties before 1932), second only to Texas, made administering lynch law a futile exercise. Lynching was less common in the counties with the smallest and greatest percentage of African Americans. These attacks were more prevalent in the communities where Blacks comprised between 40% and 50% of the total population, a reflection of the competition for resources and need to reinforce the ethos of white supremacy.

The lynching of African Americans has often been attributed to a number of factors. The lack of appropriate documentation for 43.75% of the cases makes it impossible to determine the correlation between lynching and the value of seed. However, when considering the available statistics regarding lint prices and utilizing that information, in addition to, the values of lint and seed that was provided for subsequent years, only 37.5% of the cases of the lynching of black women could be linked to years of economic distress with lower revenues earned from cotton lint and/or seed.
Furthermore, 56.25% of lynchings occurred during years of lint and seed production and/or revenue. Because data was unavailable for 1871, this case reflects the final 6.25%.

The analysis of the collected data examining population distribution, farm tenancy and ownership, and cotton lint and seed production reveals there is a strong correlation between the lynching of black women and economic issues. Population distribution did not positively correlate in terms of the lynching of African American women. Blacks in Georgia did not experience relative safety in numbers as these women were lynched in communities where African Americans comprised approximately a third of the society and as much as 70% of the general population of the county. Very few blacks owned farms in areas where black women were lynched. As previously mentioned, Sula Padgett and Pennie Westmoreland were the only two lynching victims that owned their farms. By comparison, black tenant farmers were more prevalent in counties where black women were lynched. In Harris County where Belle Hathaway and her friends disagreed with their landlord about their tenancy agreement, 66% of the tenant farms were operated by African Americans. Further, this premise is also reflected in the communities where Mary Turner, Mary Conley and Meta Hicks were attacked by lynch mobs. An exception is Tattnall County where Mary Hollenbeck and Sula and Dosia Padgett were lynched. In this community, black farm ownership and tenancy were both low, because blacks comprised only a third of the population and the turpentine industry in that region employed a number of individuals. African American females were more likely to be assaulted when the production of cotton lint and seed diminished. However, lynching and the decreased value of the cotton crop corresponds to approximately 50%. Hence, the
data quantifies economic exploitation as an element contributing to the lynching of black women in Georgia.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

During the nadir, the vast proliferation of stereotypes of Blacks fostered an atmosphere of incompetence, immorality and ignorance about African Americans. These judgments were a dire incongruity to the "New Negro" embraced by erudite, professional Blacks, a symbol of overcoming the dark days of slavery and the adherence of new philosophies that would propel Blacks, intellectually, economically and politically. The white supremacist culture of the Jim Crow South proferred a stance that afforded Whites the opportunity to dominate the political, economic and social sphere. This intolerant position contributed to a myriad of stereotypes to characterize Blacks. Specifically, for black women, the conjecture of these depictions was a stark contrast to the Cult of True Womanhood attributed to white women. The characterizations of African-American women were negative and intended marginalize them socially, economically and politically.

The culture of the South was intrinsically bound to the ideal of personal, familial and societal honor. The culture manifested a racial etiquette that governed the behaviors of Whites and Blacks. The culture also promoted negative disparagements of Blacks and volatile white mobs successfully employed lynching as a means to further suppress African-Americans, whose lives were regarded to be insignificant escalated. The implementation of lynching terrorized the black community and was an unfortunate,
albeit successful, means of control. In order to pacify possible detractors, members of the mob associated lynching with the Cult of True Womanhood, elucidating that lynching was imperative to ensure the sanctity of white women and the punishment of the black rapist.

According to this premise, it was evident that the brute was defiant of the law and flouted societal values, thus deserving to be hanged and/or mutilated. Excuses burgeoned as supporters of the practice declared that neither law enforcement nor the judicial system could ensure that these alleged criminals would be punished. Professedly the mob wanted to ensure that the victims were protected from the embarrassment and trauma associated with recounting the events in a trial. Furthermore, the inefficiency of the justice system was deemed problematic, whereas mob law, according to its participants, was effective in punishing these alleged criminals. The “threadbare lie” was generally accepted as the rationalization for lynching black men, but what was the justification for lynching women and children? In order to substantiate attacks on women, Southern society facilitated a culture of degradation in which black women were maligned and objectified. Thusly, by dehumanizing these individuals, society accepted the use of mob violence against these females as both the psychological manifestations and the physical assaults served the same purpose – complete control by white men.
Empirical Findings

How did the behaviors of female victims correlate to the stereotypical black woman? These characterizations provided lynch mobs with justification for their extralegal activity. Ultimately, in the state of Georgia, there were 16 cases of lynching of African-American females. In fewer than 15% of these cases, the woman was charged with wrongdoing. In three-fourths of these incidents, the women were lynched because they were deemed guilty by association.

The unidentified woman lynched with Sheriff Matthew Deason was not hanged for an act of violence. The lynch mob mutilated her and then tied her to an iron bar before drowning her in the mill pond as punishment for publicly engaging in miscegenation, an affront to the racial standards of the day. Newspaper articles gave only cursory details about this female, which is perhaps an indication of the reporter or their source’s perceived indifference to her race, breach and plight. Although not specifically labeled a Jezebel in the newspaper, this perception can be inferred from news accounts and Henry Lowther’s testimony.1 As was typical for that era, authorities determined that the couple died at the hands of persons unknown.

Milley Thompson Johnson was shot in the head by a lynch mob while in bed with her two small children. Johnson was not portrayed in the media as a person that was

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threatening, loud, or lascivious; hence the sentiment expressed in newspaper articles was sympathetic and favorable towards Johnson and her parents. These types of expressions are typically reserved for the Mammy persona, the most favorable of the stereotypes attributed to black women according to societal norms. Furthermore, this depiction may have encouraged the guilty verdict and incarceration of her assailants.

White women were expected to adapt to the tenets of the Cult of True Womanhood and those of ill repute garnered unwelcome attention from lynch mobs. The lynching of Jane Wade demonstrated that mobs were intent upon strict adherence to societal codes of behavior. As mistress of John Dorsey, she and her lover were described in unflattering terms in newspapers articles that referred to Wade as a woman of the worst sort, who drank alcohol and consorted with numerous men. Thus, her attack reflected the realization that poor, uncouth, white women were lynched with impunity just like black women. The standards established by the Cult of True Womanhood were not to be challenged and that white male honor was inextricably linked to the chastity and virtue of all white women and these men refused to tolerate any affront to their integrity.

The only lynching attributed to Blacks was that of Mary Hollenbeck, who allegedly killed and served the remains of the young daughter of Samuel Frick as an entrée at a picnic. Because of her perverse acts, Hollenbeck has the distinction of being the only black woman in Georgia allegedly lynched by Blacks. The media’s representation of Hollenbeck for her crime was that of a barbarian. Some news outlets impugned the character and intelligence of Blacks in the community, when they reported
that the individuals ate the ‘meat’ although it had a funny taste, thereby, intimating that
Blacks are depraved and indifferent beings.2

Meta Hicks was a farm laborer on John Akridge’s farm near Pelham, Georgia, in
1906. Meta Hicks’ transgression was hiding her husband on the farm, although they both
knew he had been banned by Akridge. After her husband had killed Akridge, he fled the
farm and left his wife behind. As the news of Akridge’s death spread, a lynching bee
formed. As the mob attempted to track Hicks, his wife, Meta, was discovered and shot to
death in retaliation. There are few details known about Meta Hicks, which makes a
determination regarding the categorization of her lynching based upon stereotype
problematic.

The appearance of prosperity and failing to know one’s place could result in
violent repercussions for Blacks. Sim and Sula Padgett’s family owned their farm in
Hogwallow, Tattnall County, Georgia and educated their children. When one of their
sons was accused of sexually assaulting his employer, Laura Moore, the family was
attacked by a large lynch mob. Their home was shot upon to the point of shreds, and in
this fray, the ten year old Mary Padgett died from injuries that she sustained. Like many
victims of lynch mobs, she suffered death from the lynch mob because of a relation’s
alleged crime. Sula Padgett miraculously escaped with one of her sons, only to be taken
into police custody and ferreted from the police by members of the lynch mob. An
account of the night’s events declared that Sula Padgett claimed credit for the assault on
Hare, Preston, Kennedy and Daniel. The reasoning for her boldness is unknown, but if it

is accurate, it is reflective of the Sapphire persona, which is loud, bold and disrespectful. Her alleged confession provided the mob with the justification for lynching her. Furthermore, the action of law enforcement officials is in question as the officers may have been complicit in the lynching. ³

Belle Hathaway lived and worked on Norman Hadley’s farm in Harris County. Hathaway, along with three male tenants, was involved in a dispute about the tenancy agreement and debts with Hadley. This was an issue that was further compounded by the sexual harassment that she endured at the farmer’s hands, an unfortunate reality for many black women employed by white men at that time. Although she continually rebuffed his advances, Hadley refused to be resisted. In his pursuit, he came to Hathaway’s cottage Sunday afternoon, January 14, 1912, and demanded that she come out to see him. Later that day, while Hadley sat in his home, he was shot to death. A mob took Hathaway, Moore, Crutchfield and Heming from jail, and they were marched out of town to a predetermined location for the lynching. Belle Hathaway suffered further indignity by being forced to take off her clothing and, subsequently; she was violated with a limb from a tree. ⁴ After the assault, the four captives were hanged from a tree until they were dead, and their bodies were riddled with bullets. The sexual assaults that Belle Hathaway endured were justified by white men who ascribed to the belief that black women were innately, sexually amoral Jezebels.

³ “She Finished Killing Hare,” The Atlanta Constitution, May 23, 1907.

⁴ “Georgia Negroes,” The Chicago Defender, January 27, 1912.
The complicity of the Sheriff’s Department is a possible issue in this lynching. The four alleged criminals should have been transferred to a jailhouse in another county, particularly since Sheriff Hadley was the uncle of Norman Hadley. This was clearly a conflict of interest. The sheriff was aware of the community’s sentiment, but left the jail improperly supervised with only one jailer. Sheriff Hadley’s negligence represented one of the major problems of the enforcement of lynch laws in Georgia. It was difficult to monitor police officials, require them to conduct the law appropriately, and enforce the punitive assessments against them when they failed to follow rules. Such officials often opted to abide by community beliefs, rather than state mandates, and usually feigned ignorance when confronted about their disregard.

The second woman to be lynched in 1912 was Annie Boston, who at sixty years of age, was one of the oldest woman lynched in Georgia (Mary Conley was also 60-years old). Boston, who had a history of mental instability, stabbed her employer, Mrs. R. E. Jordan of Pinehurst, Georgia, to death. The abuse that Boston experienced at the hands of her employers may have aggravated her mental illness, but the depictions of Annie Boston in newspapers were unsympathetic and vicious. Not surprisingly, black owned newspapers, like the Chicago Defender, endeavored to provide a more considerate portrayal of Boston and other lynching victims.

Upon arriving at Jordan’s home, Dooly County Sheriff Bennett took Boston into custody, and thusly, prevented the impromptu lynching planned by Jordan’s neighbors. Perhaps fearing another attempted lynching, the officer traveled initially to Hawkinsville. Because he was concerned that the car would be overtaken, Bennett took Boston to
Cordele, a shorter distance away for safekeeping. That night, Sheriff Ward of Crisp County and another officer were surprised by a lynch mob as they attempted to take Boston to an undisclosed location in town for safekeeping. Boston was later hanged from a tree in Pinehurst by the mob. Boston is often counted twice on lists of victims because of confusion about the spelling of her name and the location of the lynching, which was between Crisp and Dooly County.

In 1915, when Eula Barber Charles and her sister Ella Barber Charles, along with their family members assaulted the local police chief, the group essentially signed their death warrants as Blacks were never to strike a white person. Their father owned and operated an illegal and unlicensed bar. The impertinence that the Barber Charles sisters exhibited when they hit a white man and their presence in a place of opprobrium were attributes of both a Sapphire, who exhibits emasculating qualities, and Jezebel with deviant traits. Gossip spread quickly throughout the community about the Barbers' attack on Chief Williams, but Sheriff Ezell did not take additional precautions to prevent the inevitable lynching. The mob made quick work after nightfall, taking the family from the jail, marching them to the outskirts of town, hanging each of them and riddling their bodies with bullets. Shortly thereafter, public officials met and wrote a resolution that publicly denounced the action of the lynch mob. Although an effort was made to determine the identity of the members of the mob, no one was ever arrested and held accountable for the crime.

According to Southern tenets, Mary Conley exhibited behavior that was inconsistent with accepted social customs. Conley and her son, Sam, worked for E. M.
Melvin, a local farmer in Leary, Georgia, with a reputation for being disagreeable. When Melvin accused Sam Conley of not completing the work assigned to him, an argument ensued and Mary Conley attempted to intervene on behalf of her son. This was a bold and risky move by Conley, which resulted in an assault upon her person by Melvin. Sam Conley then retrieved a weight and struck Melvin in defense of his mother and killed him. She was arrested shortly thereafter, but Sam Conley escaped. That night a lynching bee took Mary Conley from the unguarded jail, drove her to a remote area, and hanged her. Her actions reflected the Sapphire stereotype as her behavior was disrespectful to her employer. This did not negate the responsibility of the officers to ensure her safety and through their gross ineptitude, demonstrated collusion in the lynching.

Eleven Blacks were lynched in the Valdosta, Georgia, area as the result of the murder of Hampton Smith by Sidney Johnson after an argument between the two. As the mob searched for Johnson, some of his associates were blamed as accomplices in the commission of the murder and were subsequently lynched. Mary Turner, widowed by the lynching bee, was inconsolable and voiced her resentment and intention to seek legal recourse against the mob. Members of the mob were evidently enraged at the audacity of Smith to speak against them as her behavior was indicative of the characteristic Sapphire. The mob pronounced a death sentence on Turner and her child. In an attempt to deflect attention from the lynch mob, the story was circulated that the Germans were going to use Blacks to start a race war in the city. However, this story was never validated.\(^5\) Both

\(^5\) "The Lynchings of May, 1918, Of Brooks and Lowndes Counties: An Investigation by Walter F. White, Assistant Secretary for the National Advancement of Colored People, Georgia", *The Daily Herald*, May 22, 1918; "Negroes Lynched For Smith Murder," *Macon, Georgia News*, May 19, 1918, Reel 221
the lynching of Mary Conley and Mary Turner reflected the widespread belief that any action that was an infraction of the social code was offensive to Whites and justification for the mobocracy.

This premise was also evident in the lynching of Minnie Ivory. Jud Hutto stated that he and Pearly Harper were assaulted by a number of African Americans in a black-owned store. Later, Minnie Ivory, Willie Ivory and Will Perry were arrested by police officers for the murder of Pearly Harper. While en route to a safer location they were captured by the lynch mob and hanged. If Hutto’s declaration about Ivory’s actions was accurate then, her behavior was indicative of the Sapphire representation.

Was Deputy W.F. Wiggins, who had custody of the three accused, involved in the lynching? According to Wiggins, his vehicle was surrounded, and the suspects taken from him by a mob seven miles from the jailhouse. The mob then lined the Ivories and Will Perry up and shot them to death. Wiggins, however, did not immediately return to the jail, nor did he make an effort to contact the sheriff and inform him of the attack. An individual driving down the road happened upon the dead bodies and reported these findings to law enforcement.

Pennie Westmoreland and her son, Marcus, were killed after a disagreement with Raymond Shockley, a white man, after an incident involving the Westmoreland’s cow and their watermelon patch. The lynch mob was apparently angry about the perceived disrespect that Pennie Westmoreland, a Sapphire personality according to their precepts,
and her family directed at Shockley, as racial etiquette mandated a deferential position. In retaliation, they came to the family’s home and killed the mother and son.

Mae Murray Dorsey and Dorothy Dorsey Malcolm, along with their husbands, George Dorsey and Roger Malcolm, were lynched after Malcolm stabbed Barney Hester, a local farmer for whom they served as tenants. The Malcolms were embroiled in an argument when Dorothy Malcolm asked Hester to mediate. Roger Malcolm then accused Hester of engaging in a sexual relationship with Dorothy and the heated argument became physical, and Hester was stabbed in the stomach. Allegations that Dorothy Malcolm was engaged in an illicit relationship with Hester, reflects the Jezebel persona that white men ascribed to black women to justify sexual relations with them. After his arrest and ensuing release, Roger Malcolm, his wife and in-laws were lynched. J. Loy Harrison stated that the mob turned on the women after they identified a member and the decision was made not to leave any witnesses.

Contributing to this state of affairs was Georgia’s chief executive, the governor, who was entrusted to execute the law in the state. Although some of Georgia’s governors endorsed legislation that condemned the practice, most of them did not actively seek to nullify the practice; however, Nathaniel Harris asked the General Assembly to pass laws granting the governor more power to contend with lynch mobs. The lack of consistency in executing laws and the continued adherence to the negative stereotypes of Blacks influenced several of Georgia’s governors, who placed the blame on the black community and the criminal element, rather than addressing the failure in the administration of the laws that had already been passed by the General Assembly. It was often inconsequential in situations where the governor or local officials offered a reward
for information leading to the arrest or identification of members of the mob. Racial
etiquette mandated a code of silence in the white community that was more important
than remuneration, which was proven in the lynching of the Barber family. Another
problem of law enforcement that resulted in the inability to obstruct lynching was the
inconsistent administration of existing laws. Whereas, some officers made a concerted
effort to protect the accused, others assisted lynch mobs by providing access without
apprehension. These issues were further aggravated by the excessive number of counties
that made it difficult to supervise local official’s implementation of the statutes. As a
result, the practice of lynching went unabated, as men, women, and children were
victimized by mobocracy.

Perhaps, some politicians were intimidated after the violent backlash endured by
Governor Dorsey, who commuted Leo Frank’s sentence. Although, Dorsey was the chief
executive of the state, the outcry and threats of violence from the public required him to
leave the governor’s mansion and be hidden for his own safety. The temerity of
advocates of mob rule intimidated many elected officials who would not seek to stop the
attacks on Blacks.
Theoretical Implications

Lynching as a form of extralegal violence proliferated in Georgia because of political, social and economic factors. In an effort to analyze the correlation of lynching of black women in various counties, a number of indicators were selected based upon overall population distribution, property ownership and tenancy, and cotton seed and lint production.

Seventeen counties of the 159 counties in the state of Georgia were locations that accounted for 32% of the total lynchings in the state. Six of these seventeen counties were places where black women were lynched. Particularly, the lynching of black women parallels the generalized lynching of African Americans as the regions where these individuals were most vulnerable to mobocracy were in the central (Cotton Belt) and southern counties of the state. Generally, counties with the lowest population of African Americans were also communities with fewer instances of mob violence because Blacks were not deemed a threat.

Economic prosperity led to violence against African Americans as data showed that both farm ownership and lynching increased between 1900 and 1920. Lynching was most prevalent in communities where Black tenants farmed 30% to 66% of the available land.

The production of cotton was integral to the economic viability of the state and the encroaching boll weevil endangered Southern livelihoods. There was a general decrease in cotton lint production after the largest cotton crop in 1911, but for 31.25% of
the years when black women were lynched the smaller crop garnered a higher price and for 25% of those years, there was an increase in price and harvest. Additionally, cotton seed data reflected a 31.25% correlation between higher yield and/or price of cotton seed during these years. When the seed harvested decreased, it sold for a higher price for 43.75% of the years. Overall, the analysis of cotton statistics indicates that 37.5% of the lynching of African-American females occurred during years of an economic difficulty and 56.25% of these violent acts were committed when either the crop and/or price for cotton lint or seed increased.

Limitation of Study

There were a number of issues that I encountered when conducting this research. I relied primarily upon newspaper accounts, in part because these resources were most available, but, I was unable to access any diaries of the victims, their families or the perpetrators. I believe those resources would have allowed me insight into their lives and thoughts. Further difficulties that I encountered included accessing documents from some Probate Courts and small town newspapers as some materials were no longer available because of damages by floods and fires. Even researching in the Georgia State Archives, I was surprised at some of the gaps that existed in available resources. Initially, my intention was to examine the lynching of women in Georgia through a comparison of newspaper articles from black-owned and white-owned newspapers. However, I discovered that a number of the smaller black and white dailies merely reprinted excerpts of events from the larger state, regional and national publications. Additionally, because of the span of years researched for this work, from 1871 through 1946, it was difficult to
locate eye witnesses or individuals that lived in the communities who were willing to provide me with an interview. For example, I had a lead for the Westmoreland lynching, but when I approached the gentleman, he indicated that he did not know anything about it. The man was a lifelong resident of that community, and I could hear the trepidation in his voice; I suspect that he was unwilling to discuss the lynching because he knew some of the individuals involved and was concerned about possibly maligning either their or his community's reputation.

**Recommendation for Future Study**

Perhaps another perspective of the study of future research would be to conduct an in-depth examination of the correlation of rage and fear that drove Whites to act in violent ways. Whites participated in mobs or refused to speak against them because they were afraid of being ostracized and losing status and honor, which was seemingly inherent to the psyche of white Southerners. They were also privy to the shunning and harassment directed toward those who publicly denounced the practice. The irrational fear that Whites professed about possible Black retribution for the objectification, disenfranchisement, and economic exploitation endured.

The practice of lynching continued to proliferate in Georgia through the first two decades of the twentieth century. After World War I, Blacks began moving to the North to in hopes of a better standard of living and self-determination. This mass exodus caused a shortage of available black laborers. In some areas, the supply of cheap labor became so scarce that farmers used their influence to help check the practice. In other areas, Blacks
moved in such vast numbers that law enforcement officials waited at the train stations and refused to grant Blacks entrance on the trains in an attempt to force them to stay.

Greater interracial cooperation also helped deter the lynch mobs. Organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) worked tirelessly to facilitate change. Additionally, media perception and public acceptance of lynching changed significantly. Newspapers that produced sensational articles to sell papers changed their rhetoric and as this type of commentary subsided, the vicious cycle of lynching began to decelerate.

Eventually, Southern support for lynching was impacted when federal legislation, the Dyer Anti-lynching Bill seemed to gain momentum. This caused Southern congressmen to seek to hinder the practice of lynching in an attempt to avoid federal intervention in their respective states. Although, the Dyer Bill failed to pass into law, lynching continued to decrease significantly and by the 1960s these assaults were a bitter memory in the state’s shameful past.
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