

Without Due Process: Lynching in North Carolina 1880-1900

Sarah Burke

East Carolina University

Faculty Mentor: Wade Dudley

East Carolina University

ABSTRACT

In North Carolina, the last two decades of the nineteenth century were marked by significant sociopolitical changes. Attempts for improvement in areas like education and agriculture were challenged by the never-ending struggle for power between the state's various political parties. As North Carolinians attempted to reconcile traditional values with the shifting political climate, lynching emerged as a brutally visible symbol of the tumultuous internal struggle. Between 1880 and 1900, North Carolina recorded fifty-eight lynchings. Of the victims, forty-five were black and thirteen were white. Although race certainly played a significant role in lynchings, it was not the only deciding factor. Many North Carolinians were not only skeptical of the state's legal system, but also deeply vested in the ideas of self-governance, honor, and communal justice. Coupled with the rising popularity of white supremacists in the 1896 and 1898 elections, the final years of the nineteenth century were marked as some of the most violent in North Carolina's history.

In an 1893 speech, North Carolina Governor Elias Carr declared “the South...the best governed, the most contented, the least disturbed and in truth the most prosperous and inviting section of this country.” As the first president of the North Carolina Farmers’ Alliance and an advocate for progressive policy, Carr spent his term as governor working to improve education and transportation within the state. He published several articles highlighting the “Resources & Advantages of North Carolina,” and genuinely believed his state was among the most forward-looking in the South.¹ In some ways, it was. Under Carr’s administration, public school facilities were available for both races; tobacco and textile mills brought industrialization to the region; and in 1894, more than one thousand black men were elected to public offices.² But the South Elias Carr imagined in his speeches did not exist. His South, one

of equal protection under law and advancing social institutions, was far more fiction than fact. The real South of the late nineteenth century was much harsher. Antebellum racial attitudes hardened, rather than softened, following emancipation. The Civil War brought an end to slavery, but it did not bring an end to cultural dogmas created by the institution.

The period between Reconstruction and the introduction of de jure segregation is often eclipsed by the volatile nature of the war years and the sweeping impact of Jim Crow laws in the twentieth century. To be sure, the introduction of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments were landmark

1 Elias Carr Papers (#160), East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, USA.

2 North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP v. Patrick Lloyd McCrory, Civil Action No. 1:13-cv-658, U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina. Expert Report of James L. Leloudis II, Ph.D., “Fragile Democracy: Race and Voting Rights in North Carolina, 1860-2013.” http://b.3cdn.net/advancement/c42ea59118ecaaa39c_ybm623yv9.pdf

events. The same can be said for the rapid disenfranchisement of African-Americans and the stringent tightening of segregation standards across the South at the start of the twentieth century. Yet the twenty-three-year gap between the Civil War and the introduction of legal segregation is critically important for understanding the quickly changed socio-political status of African-Americans. In less than one quarter of a century, black men went from holding office to barred from political participation of any kind. There was no faster downhill slide of African-Americans' rights than that found in the South. Across the region, the shifting political climate coincided with a staggering rise in extraordinary acts of vigilantism and extralegal violence. Simply by virtue of its sheer brutality, lynching became the defining symbol of race relations in the post-slavery, pre-Jim Crow South.

Much has been written about lynching, its role as a form of vigilante social justice, and its notorious place in American history as a distinguishing characteristic of the former Confederate states. But lynching cannot be singled out as a solely southern phenomenon. In 1879, the *New York Times* offered a justification for racially motivated violence. Blacks "were overeager for their rights, walking around with chips on their shoulders, while whites felt powerless and outnumbered."³ Yet, although it was not a solely southern event, lynchings in states like Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and North Carolina were far more frequent, and often far more brutal, than those occurring in the North. Historians like W. Fitzhugh Brundage and Christopher Waldrep point towards the long-valued ideas of southern honor, self-governance, and communal justice as the reason for the prevalence of lynching in the southern states.⁴ Other factors commonly referenced in an

examination of the rise of extralegal violence in the post-Civil War years include the war itself, the culture of militaristic justice created by the conflict, and the mistreatment of blacks during slavery.⁵ In recent decades, historical analysis of lynchings has expanded to include those lynchings that were not racially motivated. As Waldrep points out in his study of how African Americans confronted the reality of lynching, "white people have quite often lynched other white people, we cannot say that lynching only means racial violence."⁶

Perhaps more than any other state in the South, North Carolina offers diverse examples of lynching cases involving both black and white victims. North Carolina did not lead the nation in terms of the number individually lynched – in fact, North Carolina trailed behind nearly every other state in the region. The *Chicago Tribune* began tallying national lynchings in 1882. The 1886 report credited North Carolina with five lynchings – thirty-eight less than Texas.⁷ The African-American activist Ida B. Wells conducted a similar study of lynching in 1893. North Carolina ranked 13 out of 26 for the number of recorded lynchings in 1892. With 5 in 1892, the Tar Heel state had 24 fewer lynchings than Louisiana, the state with the most during that year.⁸ Despite the seemingly low number, lynching was a prominent issue between 1880 and 1900 in North Carolina. Both blacks and whites were lynched, and public reaction was well documented. The act was sensationalized, and though never fully accepted by Tar Heel society, the act provoked incredible responses by supporters and opposition alike. As North Carolina continued to progress in the closing years of the nineteenth century, lynching became the reactionary mark of a deeply rooted, regressive

3 As quoted in Christopher Waldrep, *African Americans Confront Lynching: Strategies of Resistance from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Era* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), p. 17.

4 Waldrep, p. 1; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Introduction" in *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage, 1-20 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 3.

5 Claude Clegg III, *Troubled Ground: A Tale of Murder, Lynching, and Reckoning in the New South* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 25.

6 Waldrep, p. xiii.

7 Yuri Han and Deborah L. Shelton, "A Laundry List of Lynchings," *Chicago Reporter*, February 12, 2015. <http://chicagoreporter.com/a-laundry-list-of-lynchings/> (accessed August 6, 2015).

8 Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law," in *The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition: The African American's Contribution to Columbian Literature*, ed. Ida B. Wells (1893). <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/wells/exposition/exposition.html#IV> (accessed August 6, 2015).

struggle between traditional values and shifting period politics.

In North Carolina, as in other states in the South, white lynchings were not nearly as common as black lynchings. Between 1880 and 1900, fifty-eight individuals were lynched. Forty-five of the victims were black – the other thirteen were white.⁹ Although the difference between forty-five and thirteen seems great, the fact remains that out of approximately every four lynchings, one victim was white. The role of race cannot be dismissed in any examination of lynching, but in North Carolina, such numbers suggest the motivations for lynching ran much deeper than skin color.

The primary drivers behind white-on-white lynchings are deeply rooted in the same individualistic, self-governing, honor driven mentality Waldrep references in his study of African-American resistance to mob violence.¹⁰ A lynching, especially when the victim was white, exposed a legitimate fear among the populace that the legal system would fail them. Because the death penalty was an integral part of North Carolina law, and had been since the colonial period, white lynchings reflected a genuine belief that the state's judicial system was soft on crime and slow to dispense justice. Fearful of delayed judgment, many North Carolinians chose to opt for a quicker solution.¹¹

The lynching case of Thomas Frazier in May of 1885 fits well within typical parameters for white-on-white lynchings. On the afternoon of May 5, 1888, Thomas Frazier shot and killed Joshua A. Cox of Blount's Creek, North Carolina. Frazier entered Cox's store and demanded liquor. Cox refused. Angered, Frazier "seized a gun, loaded with buckshot, from the hands of one of his friends standing near," and opened fire on Cox. The shooting

left the storeowner "literally riddled" with buckshot.¹² Cox died instantly. Frazier was detained immediately after the shooting by Cox's brother and tied to a nearby mill to await transportation to the county jail. In the early hours before dawn on the morning of May 6, a mob of masked men slipped past watchmen, "took possession of Frazier," and dragged him "near the exact spot where he stood when he fired the first shot at his innocent victim. Here a volley of gun and pistol shots was emptied into his body, instantly killing and mutilating him almost beyond recognition; and then the lynchers dispersed, having done their work in much less time than it does to tell the story."¹³ Three days later, the local newspaper published a detailed account of the incident, describing Frazier as a "desperate character" who had confessed to "several other murders." The lynchers were praised for "adroitly evading" Frazier's temporary guard, and the community of Blount's Creek was left "greatly excited" by the entire ordeal.¹⁴

Frazier's death was the first in a series of white lynchings between 1888 and 1894. During that six-year period, nine other white men were lynched. All were alleged murderers. Like Frazier, most of the men were lynched before they had the opportunity to stand before a judge. The due process guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment was largely ignored. Such disregard was deeply reflective of North Carolinians' discontent with the state's legal system. Perpetrators of an earlier 1887 lynching in Tarboro summarized their feelings on North Carolina's criminal laws in a note attached to the victim's body:

We hang this man not in passion, but calmly and deliberately with a due sense of responsibility we assume. We take executive power in this case and hang this man because

9 Vann Newkirk, *Lynching in North Carolina: A History 1865-1941* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2009), 167-169.

10 Waldrep, p. 1.

11 Patrick Huber, "Caught Up in the Violent Whirlwind of Lynching: The 1885 Quadruple Lynching in Chatham County, North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 75 (April 1998): 135.

12 "A Murderer Lynched," *Chatham Record*, May 10, 1888. <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn85042115/1888-05-10/ed-1/seq-2/#> (accessed August 6, 2015).

13 Walter L. Daniels Papers (#96), East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, USA.

14 "A Murderer Lynched," *Chatham Record*.

*the written law provided no adequate penalty to the crime. And be it understood, we have done this act and will repeat it under similar circumstance.*¹⁵

For white lynching victims in North Carolina, it was simple enough to acknowledge that their capital offenses were met with an extralegal sort of capital punishment. For black victims of lynching, the crimes committed were not always so severe. Between 1880 and 1900, no white man was lynched for an offense other than murder. Furthermore, there is no record of a white woman ever being attacked by a mob and strung from a tree to die. The same cannot be said for black lynching victims. In North Carolina, black lynchings recognized no gender restrictions and no crime requirements. Though less likely to be lynched than black men, black women often fell victim to being guilty by association.¹⁶ And unlike white victims, blacks were lynched both for serious offenses and for minor infractions, including political activity and breaking the unspoken social code of behavior. In the autumn of 1885, Chatham County residents demonstrated the astonishing brutality of coed lynching events with a quadruple hanging of four black residents – three male and one female. Various newspaper accounts questioned the motivations behind the quadruple lynching. Unlike other lynchings, the four victims had been imprisoned for months. John Pattishall, a young black tenant farmer, was awaiting trial for an 1883 double murder of two local white women. The three other accused, Lee Tyson, Harriet Finch, and Jerry Finch had already been found guilty of a triple axe murder on September 7, 1885. A date was set during the court's next term for sentencing. None of the accused lived to face the judge.¹⁷

On the night of September 29, three weeks after the guilty verdict, twenty masked men

overpowered the jailer and forced him to release Harriet Finch, Jerry Finch, Lee Tyson, and John Pattishall from their cells. They were dragged one mile outside of Pittsboro and found the “next morning hanging to a tree near a public road.”¹⁸ Spectators of the lynching recalled later that Jerry Finch and Tyson were hanged first. Ten minutes passed before the men succumbed to death. Pattishall was more fortunate. When a lyncher jerked Pattishall's rope, his neck snapped and killed him instantly. Harriet Finch's arms and legs were bound before she was hanged, and the act was later interpreted as merciful on the part of the lynchers. Like her husband, she too struggled against the noose for several minutes before dying.¹⁹ The Roanoke News called the event “a terrible sequel to the triple murder.”²⁰ No one was ever convicted for the crime.

Henry London, editor of the local newspaper, The Chatham Record, penned a scathing condemnation of the lynching in the following week's edition. London felt the lynching was “the most horrible...that [had] ever disgraced the State of North Carolina.”²¹ His editorial provided a detailed account of the lynching and focused heavily on the public's reaction to the event:

*This terrible tragedy is to be deeply deplored, and we are pleased to know that it is condemned by every person of whom we have heard speak of it. The Record has so often and so strongly condemned lynch law.... All good citizens regret it now, and we doubt not that most of the misguided men who participated in the lynching will themselves soon regret it.... the lynching of a woman was especially horrible, and we doubt not that her piercing screams and piteous appeals for mercy...will often be recalled with a shudder of remorse by those who so cruelly put her to death.*²²

15 “A Negro Lynched,” *Raleigh State Chronicle*, May 12, 1887.

16 Patrick Huber, “Caught Up in the Violent Whirlwind of Lynching: The 1885 Quadruple Lynching in Chatham County, North Carolina,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 75 (1998): 135–160. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23522619> (accessed March 1, 2015), p. 155.

17 *Chatham Record*, September 10, 1885.

18 “State News,” *Roanoke News*, October 8, 1885. <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn84026524/1885-10-08/ed-1/seq-2.pdf> (accessed August 6, 2015).

19 Huber, p. 155.

20 “State News,” *Roanoke News*.

21 “Lynch Law!,” *Chatham Record*, October 1, 1885. <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn85042115/1885-10-01/ed-1/seq-1.pdf> (accessed April 2, 2015).

22 *Ibid.*

In some ways, the 1885 Chatham County quadruple murder was a deviation from typical North Carolina lynchings. Unlike most victims, black or white, the victims had been arrested and successfully provided, at least to some extent, their right to due process under the Fifth Amendment. For most lynching victims, such was not the case. Black individuals specifically were often denied basic constitutional rights. Like Harriet Finch, who was tied only to the murders by a pair of her husband's trousers, most blacks were arrested with little or no proof to support their involvement in a crime.²³

On the morning of June 9, 1899, the tiny village of Bogue, North Carolina was rattled when local white merchant Elijah B. Weeks was found dead in his store. Officials determined Weeks died from strangulation, and less than twenty-four hours later, a young black man was arrested and charged with murder. When Lewis Patrick was detained, a lone piece of pork in his possession became the evidence needed to corroborate his guilt.²⁴ He was taken to the county jail in Beaufort to await trial. On the night of June 14, Patrick was taken from his cell and shot. Local newspapers reported that Patrick "implicated other parties" in an effort to save himself, "but the lynching party thought he was lying and gave no weight to his words."²⁵ More than one week passed before Patrick's body was "found by the roadside, riddled with bullets."²⁶ Members of the lynch mob from Bogue were never caught.

In today's legal system, a slice of pork would hardly be incriminating enough to sentence an individual to death. Yet in the late nineteenth century, some blacks were lynched without any evidence to confirm their role in an alleged crime. This was especially true in cases involving black men and white women. In the patriarchal structure of Southern

society, white women were sheltered and fiercely guarded. Protection of their innocence was directly linked to the honor of their menfolk; and in culture divided by race, their white skin became a symbol of purity. Their virtue was starkly contrasted with the sullied darkness of black men. Since the early days of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, black men had been portrayed as overly sexualized.²⁷ Depictions placed them on the same level as livestock, and white women were taught to be cautious of their proximity.

In terms of lynch-worthy crimes, offenses against women were second only to murder. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People published an examination of lynching in 1919. The report, titled "Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1913," included statistics on the offenses that appeared to cause lynchings. Of all black lynching victims during the 30-year period (2,522 individuals), 28.4 percent were lynched for rape or other "attacks upon women."²⁸ Although rape is certainly not a slight offense, most of the alleged transgressions were flimsily supported. Often, evidence was no stronger than "entering the room of a woman or brushing against her."²⁹ Hearsay generally provided enough proof to justify lynching a black man accused of assaulting a white woman.

The NAACP's publication was a national report, but in North Carolina, as in the rest of the country, untoward behavior in the presence of a white woman was a primary cause for many lynchings. The South may have lost the war, but antebellum values had not been surrendered at Appomattox. During the 1896 and 1898 election cycles, Democrats in the Tar Heel state fabricated an "imminent" rape threat that capitalized on traditional values and fears. In an 1897 editorial piece printed on the front page of the *Goldsboro Headlight*,

23 Huber, 155

24 Vann Newkirk, *Lynching in North Carolina: A History 1865-1941* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2009), p. 162.

25 "A Nation's Doings: The News From Everywhere Gathered and Condensed," *The Goldsboro Headlight*, June 22 1899. <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068337/1899-06-22/ed-1/seq-1.pdf> (accessed August 6, 2015).

26 "State News," *County Union*, June 21, 1899. <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068061/1899-06-21/ed-1/> (accessed April 2, 2015).

27 Donald Matthews, "The Southern Rite of Human Sacrifice: Lynching in the American South," *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Cultures* 61 (2008): p. 40-41.

28 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1913* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 10.

29 Ibid.

W.C. Brann decried the depravity of black men:

The fact that a negro has been hanged, or even burned for ravishing a white woman, makes others fearful, but it also suggests to their foul minds the crime itself. To a negro a white woman is as Dian [sic] to Satyr or Athena to old Silenus. That one of these superior creatures has actually been enjoyed by a lustful black sets them all adreaming and makes them dangerous. A white woman is found unprotected; all visions of the rope and the stake vanish, drowned in the hell of desire and Judge Lynch claims another victim.... Have we the moral right to apply such a drastic remedy? I answer yes – that we would be amply justified in slaughtering every Ethiop on the earth to preserve unsullied the honor of one Caucasian home.³⁰

Such deeply rooted social fears, however ill founded, were instrumental in the

introduction of legalized segregation in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Brann's dream of eradicating all blacks from the earth was unrealistic – but the turn of the century witnessed blacks pushed even further to the fringe of North Carolina society. As in all southern states, the North Carolina government fought a fierce battle to ensure blacks lost all political rights during the 1890s. The introduction of new limitations slowed lynchings, but not before racial violence reached a fever pitch in 1898.

Between 1890 and 1900, North Carolina reported 21 lynchings – 15 fewer than the previous decade. The decrease was largely due to strengthened legal sanctions against blacks and a spike in the influence of white supremacist politics. The sociopolitical changes that came to define North Carolina in the last years of the nineteenth century were the result of an aggressive, and often violent

struggle between the state's three political parties – the Republicans, the Populists, and the Democrats.

When Elias Carr ran for governor in 1892, he was the last in a string of plantation-based leaders. His personal politics reflected the Populist platform, and his primary goal was to improve the plight of North Carolina farmers. Unlike the Democrats running for office in the 1896 and 1898 elections, Carr often collaborated with black leaders, like Baptist minister Walter Patillo, to bolster the success of the NC Colored Farmers Alliance.³¹

The 1896 election cycle brought a new collaboration to North Carolina politics, when the Republican and Populist parties aligned to defeat the Democrats. This fusion of political parties was a great success. Together, the two groups swept the 1896 election. For the first time since Reconstruction, North Carolina did not elect a Democrat for governor. More than 1,000 black men entered office, and black voter turnout peaked at 87 percent.³² The Fusionist legislature continued to push for improvement of education and charitable institutions, as well as focusing heavily on agriculture in the state. More importantly, Fusionist politicians strove to protect black and poor white voters from discrimination or disenfranchisement at the polls. Emphasis was placed on prioritizing the localness of elections, especially those deciding county offices.³³

If lynching was a reaction by whites to their perceived loss of power during the post-war years, then the introduction of Jim Crow legislation and the rise of the Democrats during the last four years of the nineteenth century marked a significant restoration of white power. Unwilling to succumb to the obscurity of a biracial government, the Democratic Party, notably Furnifold Simmons, Josephus Daniels, and Charles Aycock, launched

30 W.C. Brann, "The Rape Fiend Remedy," *Goldsboro Headlight*, September 2, 1897.

31 Nikki Brown and Barry Stentiford, eds., *The Jim Crow Encyclopedia: Greenwood Milestones in African American History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=oLjYbkGWk8C&pg=PP1&pg=PR4#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed April 9, 2015).

32 North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP v. Patrick Lloyd McCrory

33 Ibid.

a campaign to topple Fusionist politics. Guided by harsh white supremacist values, the Democratic Party flooded the state with racist propaganda prior to the 1898 election. Daniels, the editor of the Raleigh News & Observer, printed cartoons depicting blacks as flying satanic monkeys. Phrases like “Negro Rule” and “Negro Domination” were splashed across editions of the newspaper.³⁴ Paired with other inflammatory advertising, the Democratic Party struck fear in both the white and black communities of North Carolina. As the chair of the Democratic Party in the state, Simmons spoke frequently on the dangers of a politically active black populace, and often invited fellow white supremacists to speak at political rallies. In November of 1898, Dr. J.D. Hufham, a Baptist reverend, penned an opening prayer for the State Democratic Convention. It encapsulated the core belief of the party: “for the good of both races, white men and white men alone must rule in North Carolina.”³⁵

Rhetoric was enough to garner white support, and enough to deter some blacks from voting. Yet for the Democrats to be triumphant in the 1898 election, black voters had to be barred from the polls. Legislation would later be passed to disenfranchise black voters, but Democrats quickly found more effective methods to deter political participation. White supremacists formed paramilitary groups aimed at terrorizing and intimidating black voters – essentially lynch mobs without the ropes. Known as Red Shirts, the groups were most active in counties with large black populations. Lynching was not a commonplace tactic for Red Shirt groups, but they were notorious for violence. Republicans, Fusionists, and especially politically active

blacks fell victim to night raids and mass intimidation. People came by the thousands to attend political rallies and witness the “rough-and-tumble” lawless men dressed in crisp red shirts and mounted on horseback.³⁶ Some four hundred Red Shirts gathered at a rally near Laurinburg in November of 1898, forming a “procession nearly a mile long.”³⁷ By day, the Red Shirts were truly a sight to behold. They exuded strength and dominance, and no person could question the hold white supremacy had over the state. Yet by night, they terrorized black settlements with “staged torchlight processions” and whippings.³⁸

North Carolina’s outgoing governor, Daniel Russell, condemned their actions. He feared that the deliberate agitation of racial tensions would ignite full-scale riots, and went so far as to contact President McKinley to ask for the support of federal troops.³⁹ News of Russell’s worries only further encouraged the Democrats. Although the election was a landslide for the Democratic Party, insecurities persisted – and on November 10, 1898, the standoff between white supremacists and the rest of North Carolina society flared violently in Wilmington.

Two days prior, on Election Day, “perfect peace seemed to pervade” in the Port City. The governor assured the city’s voters that so long as black voters “cast their ballots quietly” and returned home, there would be no great disturbance.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the governor’s promise held for less than twenty-four hours. The following night, Alex Manly, the proprietor and editor of the state’s only daily African-American newspaper, became the target of a gang of angry white men. Some months prior, according to whom “a climax

34 *The North Carolina Experience: An Interpretive and Documentary History*, ed. Lindley Butler and Alan Watson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 333.

35 *Chatham Record*, November 3, 1898.

36 H. Leon Prather, “The Red Shirt Movement in North Carolina: 1898-1900,” *The Journal of Negro History* 62, no. 2 (1977), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2717177> (accessed April 21, 2015), 178.

37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*

39 Charles David Phillips, “Exploring Relations among Forms of Social Control: The Lynching and Execution of Blacks in North Carolina, 1889-1918,” *Law & Society Review* 21 (1987), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3053375>, 368.

40 J. Allen Kirk, “A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, N.C. of Interest to Every Citizen of the United States. (Wilmington, NC: 1898), p. 3. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/kirk/kirk.html> (accessed August 6, 2015).

[had been] reached when the Negro paper published an article so vile and slanderous that it would in most communities have resulted in the lynching of the editor.”⁴¹ The city’s white population had not forgotten his social misstep. Manly’s office was set afire, and though demands were made for Manly’s capture, he managed to evade the mob and slip from the city.⁴²

The mob, which numbered more than 500 Democrats by morning, paraded through the streets, sending “fear and terror to the hearts of the Negroes in the City of Wilmington.” When night fell, the firing began. Kirk reported:

*The shrieks and screams of children, of mothers, of wives were heard, such as caused the blood of the most inhuman person to creep. Thousands of women, children and men rushed to the swamps and there lay upon the earth in the cold to freeze and starve. The woods were filled with colored people. The streets were dotted with their dead bodies. A white gentleman said that he saw ten bodies lying in the undertakers office at one time. Some of their bodies were left lying in the streets until up in the next day following the riot. Some were found by the stench and miasma that came forth from their decaying bodies under their houses.*⁴³

Most black residents never returned to Wilmington, permanently changing the city’s sociopolitical dynamics. The massacre of the city’s blacks was reflective of the spectacle-lynchings elsewhere in the state. After the riot, Democrats scaled back intimidation tactics. They adopted legislative means of social control instead of violent strategies. Poll taxes, literacy tests, and the grandfather clause prevented blacks from participating politically and ensured whites remained in control of the North Carolina

government. Additionally, Jim Crow laws, which restricted black rights and segregated the races, were well established by Charles Aycock’s term as governor. In 1896, the Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* upheld state laws requiring separation of the races in public facilities. North Carolina’s transportation facilities were segregated by 1899. The state legislature even went so far as to bar black medical students from dissecting white cadavers.⁴⁴ Such legislation slowed lynchings by the early years of the twentieth century. Yet even though whites appeared satisfied with their regained power, the “old demon” of lynching occasionally reared its ugly head and reminded North Carolina’s blacks that they were always just one misstep away from the mob’s noose.⁴⁵

It would be remiss to say all North Carolinians supported mob violence, vigilantism, and lynching in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Although most citizens certainly did not favor integration or racial equality, most communities were appalled by the unrestrained brutality of extralegal justice. Many newspapers followed the pattern of Henry London, editor of the *Goldsboro Headlight*, and openly criticized lynchings. Even staunch white supremacists and politicians were tiring of lynch law by the 1890s. In an 1891 edition of the *Wilson Advance*, a man who believed all blacks should be sent to Africa expressed his frustration with lynching. The act, he said, did “not reform or intimidate.”⁴⁶ Instead, the act only served to further exacerbate relations, stir tension, and incite more violence. In 1895, state representative J.D. McCall introduced a bill to prevent lynching to the House. The act called for the governor to “thoroughly investigate the circumstances” and ascertain “whether or not the sheriff or...other officers

41 Ibid., p. 6.

42 “Jim Crow Stories: Wilmington Riot 1898,” *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*, Public Broadcasting Service, http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jim-crow/stories_events_riot.html (accessed April 17, 2015)..

43 J. Allen Kirk, p. 9-10.

44 Clegg, 32.

45 Clegg, 24.

46 “Bill Arp’s Letter: The Rising Boy Watching the Struggles of Genius,” *Wilson Advance*, October 15, 1891.

47 “To Prevent Lynching,” *The Charlotte Democrat*, January 25, 1895. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn91068247/1895-01-25/ed-1/seq-3.pdf> (accessed August 6, 2015).

48 North Carolina General Assembly, House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at its Session of 1895*. <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p249901coll22/id/516749/rec/2> (accessed August 6, 2015).

of the law...have done their duty as required by law to prevent such lynching.”⁴⁷ The bill was met with an “unfavorable recommendation” by a House committee. ⁴⁸

Given the horrendous status of race relations in other southern states – Georgia lynched 423 people to North Carolina’s 75 during a 50 year period – Tar Heels could be loosely classified as moderates.⁴⁹ Yet in a society defined by generational traditions of white superiority and black inferiority, there was no easy solution to curtail mob-style justice. White men who chose to participate in lynching did so because they felt it was their southern-born rite. The act came to symbolize “elemental justice, a necessary, even moral, act in a drama of punishment that portrayed good and evil in a way that could sacralize white supremacy....”⁵⁰

In North Carolina, the justifications for social sanctioning crossed gender, racial,

and criminal lines. As traditional values and shifting politics jostled for dominance at the dawn of a new century, lynching became the most brutally visible symbol of a tumultuous internal struggle. Elias Carr’s claim that “the laws of the state are enacted and enforced impartially, without distinction as to class or color,” was contradicted by nearly every lynching that occurred in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.⁵¹ Most lynching victims, black and white, were already “poor, illiterate, and marginalized” by society. They died in “virtual anonymity,” and newspaper accounts of their deaths would refer to them only as a “Negro” or by their alleged crimes.⁵² Future generations would strive to humanize such an inhumane act by matching names to events, but at the close of the nineteenth century, North Carolinians tragically swapped due process for a “due sense of responsibility.”⁵³

⁴⁹ Donald Matthews, “The Southern Rite of Human Sacrifice: Lynching in the American South,” *The Mississippi Quarterly* 61 (2008), 32..

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Elias Carr Papers.

⁵² Huber, 141.

⁵³ “A Negro Lynched,” *Raleigh State Chronicle*, May 12, 1887.

References

Primary Sources

- “Bill Arp’s Letter: The Rising Boy Watching the Struggles of Genius.” *Wilson Advance*, October 15, 1891.
- Brann, W.C. “The Rape Fiend Remedy.” *Goldsboro Headlight*. September 2, 1897.
- Chatham Record*. November 3, 1898.
<http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn85042115/1898-11-03/ed-1/> (accessed August 6, 2015).
- Chatham Record*. September 10, 1885.
<http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn85042115/1885-09-10/ed-1/> (accessed August 6, 2015).
- Elias Carr Papers (#160), East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, USA.
- Ida B. Wells. “Lynch Law.” In *The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition: The African American’s Contribution to Columbian Literature*, edited by Ida. B Wells, 1893. <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/wells/exposition/exposition.html#IV> (accessed August 6, 2015).
- Kirk, Allen J. “A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington N.C. of Interest to Every Citizen of the United States. (Wilmington, NC: 1898).
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/kirk/kirk.html> (accessed August 6, 2015).
- “A Murderer Lynched,” *Chatham Record*, May 10, 1888.
<http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn85042115/1888-05-10/ed-1/seq-2/#> (accessed August 6, 2015).
- “A Nation’s Doings: The News From Everywhere Gathered and Condensed.” The *Goldsboro Headlight*, June 22, 1899.
<http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068337/1899-06-22/ed-1/seq-1.pdf> (accessed August 6, 2015).
- “A Negro Lynched.” Raleigh State Chronicle. May 12, 1887.
- North Carolina General Assembly, House of Representatives. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at its Session of 1895*.
<http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p249901coll22/id/516749/rec/2> (accessed August 6, 2015).
- “State News.” *County Union*. June 21, 1899.
<http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068061/1899-06-21/ed-1/> (accessed April 2, 2015)

“State News.” *Roanoke News*. October 8, 1885.

<http://newspapers.digitalinc.org/lccn/sn84026524/1885-10-08/ed-1/seq-2.pdf> (accessed August 6, 2015).

“To Prevent Lynching.” *The Charlotte Democrat*, January 25, 1895.

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn91068247/1895-01-25/ed-1/seq-3.pdf> (accessed August 6, 2015).

Walter L. Daniels Papers (#96), East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, USA.

Secondary Sources

Clegg, Claude A. III. *Troubled Ground: A Tale of Murder, Lynching, and Reckoning in the New South*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010.

Han, Yuri and Deborah L. Shelton. “A Laundry List of Lynchings.” *Chicago Reporter*, February 12, 2015. <http://chicagoreporter.com/a-laundry-list-of-lynchings/> (accessed August 6, 2015).

Huber, Patrick. “Caught Up in the Violent Whirlwind of Lynching: The 1885 Quadruple Lynching in Chatham County, North Carolina.” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 75 (1998): 135-160. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23522619> (accessed March 1, 2015).

The Jim Crow Encyclopedia: Greenwood Milestones in African American History. Edited by Nikki Brown and Barry Stentiford. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005. Google Books.<http://books.google.com/books?id=oLjYbzkGWk8C&lpq=PP1&pg=PR4#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed April 9, 2015).

“Jim Crow Stories: Wilmington Riot 1898,” *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*. Public Broadcasting Service. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_riot.html (accessed April 17, 2015).

Matthews, Donald. “The Southern Rite of Human Sacrifice: Lynching in the American South.” *The Mississippi Quarterly* 61 (2008): 20-47. <http://search.proquest.com.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/docview/233501926?accountid=10639> (accessed March 1, 2015).

Newkirk, Vann. *Lynching in North Carolina: A History 1865-1941*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2008.

The North Carolina Experience: An Interpretive and Documentary History. Edited by Lindley S. Butler and Alan D. Watson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP v. Patrick Lloyd McCrory, Civil Action No. 1:13-cv-658, U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina. Expert Report of James L. Leloudis II, Ph.D., “Fragile Democracy: Race and Voting

Rights in North Carolina, 1860-2013.” http://b.3cdn.net/advancement/c42ea59118e-caaa39c_ybm623yv9.pdf

Phillips, Charles. “Exploring Relations among Forms of Social Control: The Lynching and Execution of Blacks in North Carolina, 1889-1918.” *Law & Society Review* 21 (1987): 361-374. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3053375> (accessed March 1, 2015).

Prather, H. “The Red Shirt Movement in North Carolina: 1898-1900.” *The Journal of Negro History* 62 (1977): 174-184. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2717177> (accessed April 21, 2015), 178.

Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South. Edited by W. Fitzhugh Brundage. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Waldrep, Christopher. *African Americans Confront Lynching: Strategies of Resistance from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Era*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009.