

Bruce E. Baker, "Under the Rope: Lynching and Memory in Laurens County, South Carolina," in W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

In March of 1996, the Redneck Shop opened on the town square of Laurens, South Carolina. Selling Ku Klux Klan souvenirs, the shop owner John Howard has consistently emphasized that he "only opened the store so people could better understand a part of the region's history." He tries to carry out this program by operating in the back of the store what is billed as "the world's only Ku Klux Klan museum."¹ Spontaneous protests against the very existence of the shop, later led by Rev. David E. Kennedy, soon degenerated into what everyone involved agrees was a "media circus."² And yet, what was really going on here? Is there more to it than the national media's portrayal of a backwards Southern community filled with anachronistic hate and simmering racial tension? A more complete examination of the situation, such as the one journalist Rick Bragg gave in November 1996, accounts for the fact that memory of the "ugly history" of Laurens affects the way people today react; David Kennedy, as Bragg points out, is the great-nephew of Richard Puckett, victim of the "last lynching in Laurens" in 1913.³ The Redneck Shop, then, stirs up memories of a time when hate and prejudice could result in terrible injustices and cruelties. The Shop has become the site of a conflict between differing views of the past. On the one side, Howard and the Redneck Shop seek to rekindle racial pride among everyday Southern whites, and on the other hand, citizens black and white warn against the hate and violence they see associated with the ideas the Shop espouses. And yet, even this more nuanced view of the controversy in Laurens is not complete. For Richard Puckett was hardly the only person lynched in Laurens County.⁴ In fact, he was not even the last person lynched in Laurens. The use of the memory of Richard Puckett's lynching in Laurens affords an excellent opportunity to examine in detail the ways in which the historical memory of lynching is formed, perpetuated, and used within a particular community.

This study is not a chronicle of the eight lynchings of African Americans that occurred in Laurens County between 1880 and 1940.⁵ Rather, these lynchings serve as a starting point to ask questions about what lynchings are remembered and by whom, how such events are remembered and in what forms the memories exist, and how the various memories and silences of memory have been used. By examining the historical memory of lynching in Laurens County, we gain a fuller understanding of both the phenomenon of lynching and the meanings it held for those who lived

through it and have continued to live with it.⁶

Determining who remembers the lynchings in Laurens County involves defining several "communities of memory."⁷ A community of memory may be simply all those individuals who share a direct or indirect memory of a given event. A community of memory, therefore, includes all those individuals, whether in the present or the past, who are engaged in what Iwona Irwin-Zarecka terms "memory work" — "concerted efforts to secure presence for certain elements of the past."⁸ The creation of such communities of memory is not the result of an event itself, but rather the result of "the most basic and accessible means for memory articulation and maintenance — talk."⁹ Differing perspectives based on a variety of factors such as race, gender, age, family, or occupation may influence not only how events are remembered, but even whether events are remembered, helping to form a network of overlapping but distinct communities of memory.¹⁰

Because communities of memory are created and oral traditions built through talk, often in small groups, it becomes necessary to draw a distinction between public discourse and private discourse in order to trace the flow of memory. Public discourse includes all those statements (conceived in a broad sense) made in such a context that the eventual addressees are unknown and uncontrollable. Articles in newspapers, books, legal documents, items deposited in public archives, actions in public places, and so forth are all part of the public discourse. A person who speaks to a reporter for the local newspaper presumably understands that his likely audience will be from the local community, but his remarks pass beyond his control. No constraints can be tied to the statements which enter public discourse. Private discourse, on the other hand, consists of statements addressed to an audience whose members are known and limited. More control can be exercised over these statements, as when guidelines are given along with the statement about appropriate ways of passing the information along or shielding it.

Statements about lynching in private discourse take several forms. The simplest of these would be a general awareness that a lynching or lynchings had occurred, but without any specific information about the events. Slightly more elaborate is a simple report of a specific lynching that may often contain information about the person lynched, the place where the lynching occurred, or

both. In other cases, a more complete, but not necessarily longer, narrative of the lynching may be preserved. These narratives may include additional information such as sequenced events within the story or specific details, such as the means of death or the time of day, added on. Linking the victim to other members of the community through an explanation of his family connections or place of residence is another type of statement in private discourse about lynching.

Some statements may cross the boundary between public and private discourse. Preservation of newspaper clippings is an act within private discourse since it takes statements from public discourse and appropriates them for the collector's use as prompts for both remembrance and perhaps transmission of historical memory to others. Helen Brown of Laurens, for instance, has an extensive collection of clippings dating back to the 1940s and including several articles on the last lynching in South Carolina in 1947. Ed McDaniel, also of Laurens, has boxes full of newspaper clippings which he has been saving since he was in college thirty years ago. One of those clippings contains an account of a lynching in Laurens. Photographs are also items that straddle the border between public and private discourse. A photograph of Richard Puckett was made the morning after he was hanged, and several versions of that photograph exist today, suggesting it has been copied and recopied over the intervening decades.

Lynching is largely absent from the general public discourse on the history of Laurens County at the local level.¹¹ The original newspaper accounts exist on microfilm at the public library, but these sources of information do not seem to inform most people's views of the past.¹² The local newspapers often run features about older citizens reminiscing about the past, and while they may mention the difficulties of the Depression or life on the farm, lynching is not something they mention. Other published memoirs also fail to record the lynchings in Laurens County. William Watts Ball, an influential newspaper editor in South Carolina, was living in Laurens in 1893 when Heyward Barksdale was lynched, and although he recorded the incident in his diary years later, he did not mention it in his memoir, *The State That Forgot*, in 1932.¹³ Local histories and genealogies, which bring memory and history into the public discourse, are the primary sources of information on Laurens history. Julian S. Bolick's *A Laurens County Sketchbook* combines sketches of prominent

local houses with brief historical essays about the houses and their occupants. The *Scrapbook* combines brief sketches on a number of historical events, churches, and small communities with histories and genealogies of local families.¹⁴ The purpose of these two books, of course, is to commemorate Laurens County history, not to perpetuate the memory of the less pleasant aspects of local history. The memory work of lynchings, therefore, falls to various communities of memory operating principally in private discourse.

The most obvious community of memory would be the lynchers themselves. It was, unfortunately, not possible to include their memories in this study. Lynch mobs are usually anonymous, if not at the time, then at least in the historical record. Even were their identities known, the decades that have passed make it doubtful that many survive. And if they did, interviewing people about lynchings they themselves had participated in would be an extremely difficult task.¹⁵

White residents of Laurens County comprise a broad but more or less coherent community of memory. Setting aside their many obvious differences, whites all occupied a position of advantage and power relative to blacks in the era before the civil rights movement, and moreover, there is no record of any whites being lynched in Laurens County since Reconstruction. One event stands out in the memories of the white community: seven of the eight whites I interviewed had heard of the lynching of Richard Puckett in 1913, and most tended to remember it simply as a brief report that a nameless black man had been lynched at a particular location. Puckett was arrested on suspicion of having assaulted a young white woman near Madden's Station. Later that day, he was taken from the jail in Laurens by a mob of nearly two thousand people and hanged from the railroad trestle over River Street. Bill Cooper had "heard a story of where they've lynched at least one person on a railroad bridge not far off the downtown area." It was probably also the Puckett lynching Cooper was referring to when he said an elderly lady he knew "was talking about being downtown one day and a lynch mob came through, and her father made her get in the store and not look out till it had gone." Bill Cooper's mother, Dorothy Cooper, stated, "There were some lynchings in the county in my lifetime, but I did not see them. I heard about them. I do not remember the names or anything about the lynchings. I just heard they had happened." In some cases, the memory centered

primarily on the site where Puckett was lynched but left out any other particular details. Elaine Martin said, "I don't know as I heard about any of them particularly. I just heard about, you know, where they lynched them. You know, it was over there on East Main over at the railroad trestle. That's where they did the lynchings." Only Brock Coggins' account provided any details about the lynching: "Only one that I ever remember, I mean, hear them talk about it. This colored man raped a white woman. And the lynching took place up there in town. On a railroad trestle. That's the only one I know of. . . . It was in the early 1900s. It happened, I reckon, in 1910 or 1912, somewhere along in there." This is more than a brief report; with the explanation of the reason for the lynching, the place, and the dating of the event, it is a short but complete narrative.

Apparently, whites generally did not hear about lynchings while they were still children. Even those who were living at the time were shielded from the lynchings. The elderly woman Bill Cooper spoke of was not allowed to watch a lynch mob pass by when she was a girl, and in telling about his mother's recollection of the lynching of Joe Stewart in Laurens in 1920, Cooper said that "she said what she remembered was going to school and they were talking about it. And the teacher had actually gone down there to see it. And, of course, her father would not have let her see something like that." Elaine Martin's mother told her about the Puckett lynching but also said that "when she was a child, grownups wouldn't have talked about things like that where children could hear." Lynchings may still be discussed by whites, particularly older residents; Bill Cooper explained that his mother had discussed the Puckett lynching with companions at the retirement center where she lives. More common, however, would seem to be the reaction of a white woman upon seeing the photograph of Richard Puckett that photographer Lonnie Adamson had: "Why do you keep that awful thing around? Who would want to remember this?"¹⁶

An event which some whites remember nearly as much as the Puckett lynching was the 1957 killing of a black tenant farmer, Ammon Harris, by his landlord and the landlord's son. Bill Cooper recounted the story while explaining the changes in race relations over time in Laurens County: "A black man that had been a sharecropper with my grandfather Cooper for years and years was working for another man, and they had an altercation which resulted in the man and his son shooting

the guy and killing him. And that was in fifty-four. And, of course, there was a trial, but they were let off on self-defense." Dorothy Cooper related the same story: "But we had a man to be killed on my father-in-law's place because he didn't want to work on 4th of July. He had worked for my father-in-law for many years." The Harris killing was memorable partly because of the personal connection to these two consultants, but also because by 1957 this sort of altercation between landlord and tenant had become an anachronism. Dorothy Cooper's comments on what happened to the landlord after the trial suggest a level of community disapproval:

The trial, it was just a "done deal" because he [Harris] was a black man and the man that shot him was white and that man was cleared. But, he did not do well for the rest of his life. He had a lot of trouble.

BB: When you say "a lot of trouble," what do you mean?

DC: I don't know. He just didn't do well in business. The people didn't openly condemn him, but they did silently. So things didn't go to well for him after he killed that black man.¹⁷

Helen Brown, who is black, kept a newspaper clipping about the Harris killing and, when asked, identified it as occurring about thirty years ago. Brown's oral account of the event was largely the same as the other two, suggesting that perhaps non-lynching killings of blacks by whites are remembered more uniformly across racial lines.

A lynching in and of itself does not seem to have made a deep impression on the white community of memory except to the extent that it was memorable in other ways. What makes the Puckett lynching most memorable was its sheer scale. If newspaper accounts of two thousand participants and spectators are accurate, that would mean that over 40 percent of Laurens' population was present.¹⁸ Such an event almost certainly would be inherently memorable. The other lynchings were not remembered largely because the victims were further removed in time and space from Laurens itself. For the white community few details of a lynching were usually remembered beyond the site of the execution. In fact, memory of lynchings may be actively discouraged because it reflects badly on the white community at large and perhaps on specific individuals. As common sense might suggest, historical memory of lynching is generally stronger and deeper among blacks

than among whites. Blacks remember more lynchings, and they use those memories in more varied and complicated ways.¹⁹

Virtually every black consultant I spoke to had heard of the lynching of Richard Puckett, and most knew precisely where it had occurred. Even Rachel Watts, who grew up on a farm in the Mount Zion community several miles west of Laurens, had heard of "when they took the man down to the trestle." "When we would go over that trestle," Watts said, "Daddy would say, 'So-and-so was lynched here.' That's all I remember." Those who lived in Laurens had more detailed accounts of the lynching. Mary Clark explained Puckett's family connections and the year the lynching occurred: "I know about the Garlington family, about a hanging we had in Laurens County. Mr. Garlington . . . [it] was his brother-in-law. And they hung him in 1913 down here in Laurens at one of the trestles." Lillie Williams-Tims heard about the lynching from her mother, who mentioned it while explaining the family connections of one of Puckett's nieces. Helen Brown, whose mother grew up in Jersey, the largest black community in Laurens, recalled

Well, they killed, hanged a man on this trestle, used to be a trestle down here on River Street. But

that was before my time. He was a Puckett. They lynched him. In fact, my mother said she heard the shots when that happened. She lived up there on the same street, up there on the hill on River Street. And her mother was living, and she said, "What is it, what is all that noise?" She said, "You get back in the house. They're killing somebody." So it was true. He was a Puckett. They killed him.

Alice Dendy began by identifying the lynching site: "I can take you to the place where they hung a man right now. . . . Well, it's River Street because it's down there in that swamp." Dendy learned about the lynching and the site of the lynching from members of Puckett's family themselves.²⁰

Rachel Watts, drawing on her own memory and consulting her brother, Edward Cunningham, told a detailed story of a lynching that occurred "in [her] father's lifetime." The grandson of Frank and Catherine Simpson was working in the field and a little white girl twelve or thirteen years of age . . . asked the Simpson man to walk with her and he did. She would pass this black man on her way to school and he would say to her

just things like: "What have you got in that lunch box? Give me some of that lunch!"

There were some [white] men who saw this black man. In fact, sometimes he would walk a little distance with her. She would ask him, say, "Come and walk with me down to wherever." He didn't have any more sense than to do that. So these white people saw him and they took him and lynched him. Now, Lillie, you know their relatives. Leroy Campbell? His great-grandmother's son, Simpson. They lived right up here off of Highway 76; Gibbs Road, that's where they lived. What happened when they got after the Simpson boy, he ran and hid in a ditch. You know, he was just running away from them, not that he had done anything. He hadn't done anything, but they lynched him anyway.

Two other consultants, Walker Merrill and Willy Eichelberger, when asked, both affirmed that they had heard of a lynching in this location, although neither could remember the circumstances or the victim's name.

None of the lists of lynchings mention anyone named Simpson being lynched in Laurens County, but there was one lynching recorded which bears remarkable similarities to the account Watts gave. In May 1893, two girls "who live[d] in the neighborhood of Chestnut Ridge Church, about five miles from this city [Laurens], were attacked in a lonely place in the woods by a young negro boy about 18 or 19 years of age."²¹ After a couple of false starts, a party of white men headed by the girls' father captured Heyward "Monk" Barksdale early the next morning and brought him before the girls, who identified him as their attacker. By that afternoon, a mob of four hundred people had gathered, and Barksdale was hanged from a hickory tree alongside the Old Greenville Road. Several details of this story correspond to Watts' account. First, Watts mentions that "the Simpson boy" lived on Gibbs Road, which lies within a mile or so of S.C. Highway 14, which leads to Greenville, and near Chestnut Ridge Baptist Church.²² Second, both Watts' account and the newspaper accounts mention a girl on her way to or from school. Third, one of the details of the story that Watts dwells on is the comments about the girl's lunch box. One newspaper account reports that "the elder girl, thinking that he [the assailant] only wanted something to eat, offered him

her lunch basket."²³ Finally, just as Watts says that Simpson ran and hid in a ditch, the newspaper accounts say Barksdale ran from the field where he was working.²⁴ Given the numerous similarities, it seems very probable that Simpson and Barksdale were the same person. A final connection is the fact that Rachel Watts' grandfather, Priest Miller, was a member of the coroner's jury which made a brief investigation of Barksdale's death.²⁵

Although black consultants tended to recall more specific lynchings than whites, the families of lynching victims remember those lynchings more clearly and more strongly than either other blacks or whites and constitute a distinct community of memory.²⁶ In two cases, a family member mentioned a lynching that had occurred within the family but which has proven impossible to corroborate conclusively through documentary evidence. Walker Merrill told of a relative of his father who was drowned near Pooletown, north of Laurens:

But, you know, you could take a black man off, you know, and hang him if they wanted, you know.

But it wasn't so much right in here. But then they would carry you to Pooletown. . . .

Some of my daddy's people were living down there. His name was Merrill and he drowned in one of them there, the Pine Hole you call it down there. Yes sir, the Pine Hole down there next to Pooletown. See, the Pine Hole, that's like a suck hole, you know what I'm saying? When they throw you in there, you don't know where you're going. I can't think of his name right now, but he was a Merrill. . . . That was what Dad always told me. And that's why he got drowned in that pool, you know.

It is possible that what Merrill refers to is the same death that a coroner's jury investigated in 1872 when a man discovered a body on the banks of the Enoree River (about a mile from Pooletown) that "had a rock weighing about thirty pounds tide [*sic*] to it with a leather strop."²⁷ Merrill confirmed that the lynching he described did happen near the Enoree River: "Yeah, it was next to the Enoree River. See, the Enoree River come back down in that way the other side of Pooletown." Similar to this lynching story was the account Ed McDaniel gave of his great-uncle who was lynched at Madden's Station, just south of Laurens:

I have always heard about a great-uncle of mine who was lynched in the Madden's Station area.

And that was why of the McDaniel brothers, my grandfather's brothers, only two remained in this area and the rest left. Now we were always told that that was the reason. He was a McDaniel, but I don't know his particular name. I would never know exactly who he was.

In both of these cases, it is entirely possible that the accounts in the family oral tradition of the lynchings are accurate, an example of an event which is preserved in private discourse but which never surfaced in public discourse.

The last lynching in Laurens County had a considerable presence in public discourse for a time after the event, but eventually the lynching was remembered primarily within the family. On July 4, 1933, Norris Dendy of Clinton was arrested for fighting with a white man and lodged in the jail. About nine o'clock that night, four or five men took Dendy from the jail as Dendy's wife and mother watched. The next morning, officers found his bludgeoned body in a churchyard several miles from Clinton. Nearly a year later, a grand jury returned no bill on the indictments against five men for the lynching.²⁸ The indictments gave the Dendy lynching a life in public discourse that no previous lynching in Laurens County had experienced, and the event remained active as an object of public discourse for almost another year. Noah Williams, Bishop of the AME church, cancelled an annual church conference planned for 1933 in Clinton.²⁹ *The Crisis*, the publication of the NAACP, reported the lynching briefly in the September 1933 issue, and in December, it devoted two pages to the story. As late as October 1934, *The Crisis* carried an editorial about the Dendy lynching.³⁰ After it was clear that the men indicted for the lynching would not be tried, Young Dendy, Norris's father, hired an attorney in Laurens to bring a civil suit against the county under the provisions of South Carolina's 1896 statute which held counties financially liable to the legal representatives of lynching victims. Dendy's attorney, W. R. Richey, presented a claim for two thousand dollars to the Laurens County Board of Commissioners at their December 27, 1934, meeting.³¹ The Board, which had just paid a man twenty-five dollars for an injury to his mule, unanimously declined to approve the claim.³² In April 1935, Richey served a summons and complaint in the case on the County Supervisor.³³ However, the case does not appear in any of the court records for that time, making it

unclear whether the case was ever officially filed.³⁴ Even after this, the family still talked about the lynching among themselves to some extent according to Lillie Williams-Tims of the African American Historical Foundation of Laurens County.

Although Richard Puckett's lynching in 1913 did not enter contemporary public discourse to the extent that Norris Dendy's did, Puckett's extended family has remembered his lynching for over eight decades. David Kennedy, as a minister and community activist, acts as an unofficial spokesperson for the extended family. His account of the Puckett lynching is detailed and moving: Richard Puckett was my great-grandfather, James Malachi Puckett's, brother. And I knew my great-

grandfather very well and called him Pop. But the sisters [James Malachi Puckett's sisters, including David Kennedy's grandmother] remembered what was told to them about their uncle. And he was accused, they called him the "would-be rapist." A white lady said something about him. . . . And then they would tell me that my great-grandfather was a bold man because the first time they tried to come and get Richard Puckett, he had his shotgun. And he told the white people [who] came to get him they were not going to take him. And they had to tell the sheriff to come over and get him. And so a mob of over one thousand men came and took Richard Puckett from the jail and brought him down to the trestle over River Street. And according to the Laurens *Advertiser*, the sheriff, chief of police or sheriff at that time, said Richard Puckett whispered in his ears that he was guilty while the mob was taking him out. And he was helpless. He couldn't do anything. But a reporter said while they were shooting his body up with bullets — and sometimes the black community said they also castrated black men during the lynching process, and they didn't put in the paper about the castration — said that Richard Puckett was crying that he was innocent. While they were lynching him, he was constantly crying that he was innocent. So, we saw the rope.

What is immediately apparent in this account is the unusual level of detail and completeness of the story. Two details, castration and James Malachi Puckett's defense of his brother, were not included

in any of the contemporary news accounts. Another interesting feature of this account is the way Kennedy weaves together information from oral tradition with information from newspaper accounts of the lynching.

Kennedy added more detail to the story than others and provided more complex interpretations of those details. Although nearly everyone who knew of the lynching knew the location, Kennedy explained that the trestle was significant because it marked the entrance to Jersey, the largest black community in Laurens. Blacks going to and from the downtown area would have to pass beneath the very trestle from which Puckett was hanged. Other consultants mentioned the rope hanging from the trestle, but Kennedy explained that "there was an unwritten law that whoever took the rope down, the same thing that happened to Richard Puckett was going to happen to them." Older people would tell children that the ghost of Richard Puckett would keep them from taking the rope down to prevent them from meeting a similar fate. Lillie Williams-Tims, however, felt the rope "was not left there as a reminder"; rather, someone "climbed up to a certain point and just cut the rope and the rest of it just hung there."

As in other cases, stories like Puckett's tended to stay within the family. "In my family," Kennedy said, "the family trusted the family. And they would talk about it to family. . . . But most of the times I heard the story, it was only family present." These stories came primarily from the older members of the family, the nieces of Richard Puckett who had probably learned about it from their father, James Malachi Puckett, or perhaps from first-hand knowledge. Kennedy related a very powerful account of one particular telling of the story when he was in college which had a strong effect on him:

I learned a lot from my grandmother and her sisters, who told the story over and over again when they were with us of the lynching of Richard Puckett. Sitting around after dinner. Or sitting around sometimes late at night on the porch. And the most memorable time was when I sat with my grandmother and her sisters alone. And my grandfather. And they told the story. And they took me back, and I relived it on that porch that night. It was a strange feeling. And it's overshadowed me. It was like I

was really seeing it happen right before my own eyes because they were very descriptive in their language. About what happened. Nobody could tell it like the sisters sitting together telling that story. It was dark, so to a very large extent you could hardly see anything that night. Except for the light shining on their faces. And their expressions that night. As they sit, very still, and the only thing was moving was their mouth, their mouths. And the look they had in their eyes, the anger and the frustration. About the injustice. And also a sense of helplessness that overshadowed. And almost in the words of James Weldon Johnson in *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, "Hope unborn had died." I saw that in their faces. Also their warnings to me. Be strong, but be very careful. They will kill you. [Pause]. Let's talk about something else.

Comparing the lynchings of Richard Puckett in 1913 and Joe Stewart in 1920 yields some important understandings of how and why some lynchings are remembered and others are forgotten. Puckett was lynched at the entrance from downtown Laurens to the main black community, a liminal zone which separated two very different places from one another. Stewart, on the other hand, was hanged from the North Harper Street bridge over Little River, a place that does not clearly delineate community boundaries. Puckett was lynched by a mass mob, whereas Stewart was lynched by a much smaller group of people, probably no more than fifty. The Puckett lynching was a spectacle created for public consumption in a way that the Stewart lynching was not. Finally, Puckett was a member of a large extended family which had roots in Laurens and whose members still live in Laurens. Stewart had few such connections. He was born in Virginia and moved to Laurens as a teenager with his family sometime between 1910 and 1917. In 1920, just months before his death in April, he was living with his wife but no children. With no children and no siblings in the community, Stewart's memory simply had fewer minds in which to reside than Puckett's did. Although Stewart's lynching happened more recently than Puckett's, it is the Puckett lynching that people still remember.³⁵

To some extent, the lynchings of Richard Puckett and Joe Stewart have become conflated in the collective memory. Elaine Martin identified the site of the "lynchings" as "over there on East Main over at the railroad trestle." Puckett was lynched on a railroad trestle over River Street, fairly close to East Main Street. Later, Martin describes the trestle as "over Little River on East Main, right after you go over the railroad tracks." Here, she describes a road bridge rather than a railroad trestle going over Little River rather than a street, a description much more in keeping with the site of the Joe Stewart lynching on the North Harper Street bridge over Little River. Similarly, Ed McDaniel had a photocopy of a newspaper clipping on the same page as a separate photograph of a lynching. The photograph is the widely-known photograph of Puckett, yet the newspaper story is an Associated Press account of the lynching of Joe Stewart. In both these cases, the core fact—that a man was hanged from a bridge—remains constant, and the less memorable event is drawn toward the well-known site of the more memorable event.

While private discourse maintains the historical memory of some lynchings in Laurens County, others seem to have disappeared from historical memory, if they were ever there at all. Two of these lynchings happened in the southeastern portion of the county. On April 10, 1881, a black woman named Eilza Cowan who was suspected of burning an outhouse belonging to J. S. Blalock was lynched in Martin's Depot (now Joanna).³⁶ Several years later, a black farmer named Dave Hunter had a dispute with his landlord, Lee Hunter, over the settlement of his yearly account and was beaten to death with a buggy trace by his landlord and others in Clinton.³⁷ Because the interviews focused on Laurens and the surrounding communities in the northern half of the county, it is not surprising that no one mentioned these lynchings. Two other lynchings occurred closer to Laurens, but no one I interviewed remembered them either. In September 1904, James Calvert Stuart was accused of raping his employer's daughter. A mob of forty to fifty men, including some members of the girl's family, took Stuart into Greenwood County, where they shot him once and left his body in the road.³⁸ In July of 1897, Henry Gray was working on a farm near Ora when he was accused of trying to rape a young girl. He was arrested and sent to jail, and the next day a judge made arrangements to convey him by train to the penitentiary in Columbia. After a gun battle in

Joanna, a mob managed to seize Gray from the train. They carried him back toward the site of the alleged attack in Ora and hanged him around nightfall in the presence of several hundred people. Of all the people I interviewed, only David Kennedy had ever heard anything about this lynching.³⁹

Discovering why these last two lynchings did not figure more prominently in local memory requires a deeper explanation than does the absence of historical memory of Eliza Cowan and Dave Hunter. (Of course, it is entirely possible that some people do remember these events and I just did not find them.) The size of the mob involved may affect the way a lynching is or is not remembered. The Stuart lynching was a small affair, carried out by a mob of only forty or fifty people, and the victim was never in legal custody. If a relatively small number of people were involved, most probably from the immediate community and many probably related, the people in the surrounding area may well lack any connection with the events and the people involved. The Stuart mob was a private mob as opposed to a mass mob, and "the furtive violence of private and terrorist mobs was not (at least in the eyes of whites) so clearly set off from other more mundane and quickly forgotten forms of violence."⁴⁰

The Gray lynching would seem to be more memorable. A mass mob, numbering in the hundreds, killed him after a drama that had stretched out over most of the day and much of the county. Although the prisoner was seized at Joanna, the lynching took place near the scene of the alleged crime, and the victim had been carried near Laurens itself. Various public officials, including a judge, the sheriff, a deputy, and a mayor, were involved in trying to prevent the lynching. Yet, it is barely remembered. Even Walker Merrill, who has lived in Ora all his life, had never heard of a lynching at Ora.

A common thread linking both of these forgotten memories involves the identity and social position of the victims. Stuart was young, only twenty-two, and the reports do not mention a wife or family. One newspaper account states that after the Greenwood County coroner's inquest, the body was turned over to Stuart's father, but the father is not identified further. Henry Gray seems to have had even less substantial connections to the local community. Even his name is in question. One witness testifying before the coroner's jury knew him as John Gray, and one account in the

Charleston News and Courier named him Jim Gray. The article in the *Laurensville Herald* never listed his name at all. Newspaper accounts provided no further information on him, and witnesses before the coroner's jury stated they had only know him for two years.⁴¹ Gray lacked an extensive network of kin or long-standing relationships with an employer to provide protection. Such blacks "were vulnerable to the violence of mobs because their character was shrouded in mystery and their reputations were not part of local white memory."⁴² Other consultants confirmed the protective role white employers could play for their black tenants. Walker Merrill, whose father always got along well with his employers, the Flemings, claimed that in addition to relaxing the norms of racial interaction, the Flemings would protect the Merrill family from other whites who might be inclined to give them trouble. Thomas Garrett stated that the Wasson brothers played a similar role in Hickory Tavern, where they were among the leading landowners. While Gray's lack of a supporting network of respected family and protective white advocates may have contributed to his death, it also helps to explain why his death is not remembered.

People may not remember some incidents of collective violence for other reasons. The widespread violence, often lethal, of the Reconstruction era in Laurens County seems to be little remembered, perhaps simply because it is more remote in time from the present. The early 1880s also saw substantial levels of black emigration from Laurens County, and it is possible that those who emigrated may have included many who found Laurens County too dangerous and violent a place to remain, like the great-uncles Ed McDaniel mentioned.⁴³ Other acts of collective violence which were not lethal were perhaps too common to remain in memory. For instance, when two black men living near Tylersville on the plantation of Dr. W. A. Shands were whipped by six disguised men in 1887, newspapers as far away as Hickory, North Carolina, reported the story, but the act was probably not unusual enough to become part of the local collective memory.⁴⁴ Individual killings of blacks by whites, under a variety of circumstances, seem not to be remembered except when they deviated from the general pattern in some way.

A final incident, which occurred within living memory, is conspicuous by its absence from local collective memory in Laurens County. In early March 1933, Barnett Smith, a young black

man from Ware Shoals, critically wounded his wife and another woman and then hid in the woods for several days. He stopped at a farm in the Princeton area and asked the white woman there for matches. Frightened, she fled upstairs with her baby, and Smith broke in and threatened her. Greenwood County authorities arrested him later that afternoon just before a mob of one hundred men from Princeton, Ware Shoals, and Honea Path caught up with him. Smith was rushed to Columbia for safekeeping. Within a week after the alleged assault, reports began to appear in local newspapers that nightriders were whipping and threatening blacks in the area. After beating black tenant farmers, the nightriders ordered them to "leave the country" and set a deadline of midnight on Saturday, March 18, for them to leave the area. Investigations by the sheriffs of Laurens and Greenville revealed that at least fifty blacks had indeed fled the area. The terror campaign covered an area estimated at one hundred square miles in Laurens, Greenville, Anderson, and Greenwood counties. Sources claimed that approximately fifteen hundred men participated in the nightriding, with as many as 128 in one band. Vigorous patrolling by sheriff's deputies and highway patrolmen finally restored calm to the area after about one week.⁴⁵

And yet, this event seems to have made no impression on the collective memory of the Laurens County residents I interviewed. Thomas Garrett of Hickory Tavern lived closest to the area affected and was himself born in 1933, but he had never heard of the event. No one else, even when asked directly about it, indicated they had heard of the nightriding. There may be several reasons for this. First, there were no bodies. Despite the wide scope of the terror, no reports mentioned that anyone was killed, although one terrified, old black man attempted suicide. Second, the nightriding took place over a period of at least a week. Rather than remembering a specific event, people would have to remember a series of events over a period of time. If the nightriding covered such an extensive area and people's sense of community was often focused on a very small area, it is possible that those involved, both as victims and perpetrators, may not have connected events happening in different places at different times in their memory. Isolated incidents would thus fade from memory over time. Finally, the direct victims of the terror, the blacks who were beaten and forced to flee the area, were no longer in the community. The *Greenville News* reports that of those who had fled

"some are now staying with relatives and friends in Greenville while others are scattered over the state" and there is no reason to think they returned.⁴⁶ As tenants, they probably had precious little to take with them and nothing to return to.

All of the memories and silences about specific lynchings in Laurens County reveal some general patterns about the way lynching becomes part of a community's historical memory. Briefly, they are these: memories of lynchings are attached primarily to the families of the victims; lynching victims are more likely to be remembered as part of a genealogical landscape; memories of lynching have a socializing function; and memories of lynching act as covert evidence in private discourse of wrongs that cannot be corrected in the public discourse.

The role of the family in preserving the memory of lynching victims is paramount. In some cases, such as the Merrill and McDaniel lynchings, it is only the family who remembers the event. The reasons why families may often guard such memories so closely lie in the potential danger of such knowledge and the fear that sharing such knowledge could lead to betrayal. Walker Merrill's father used the story of the lynching of his relative to warn him against idle talk, saying, "Now, if you know anything don't tell, don't talk about it, because you might get hurt." David Kennedy made the same point when he emphasized that "in [his] family, the family trusted the family." Another reason such memories might be kept within the family is the powerful feeling of vulnerability such memories would create. Kennedy described seeing this effect in his aunts as they told the story of Richard Puckett, and he himself, remembering the experience, used the word "helpless" and decided to "talk about something else."

Those lynching victims who were remembered most clearly were nearly always remembered as part of what folklorist Barbara Allen has described as a "genealogical landscape," an "association of people with place, of kinship with landscape."⁴⁷ Walker Merrill made this connection between place (Pooletown), family ("Some of my daddy's people were living down there. His name was Merrill"), and history ("he got drowned in that pool"). The clearest example of placing a lynching victim in a genealogical landscape was in Rachel Watts' identification of the lynching victim at Chestnut Ridge. Watts introduced the story by explaining the victim's family connection: "Cass

Simpson's grandson was taken out of his house and killed." As soon as the story of the lynching itself was completed, Watts explained to Lillie Williams-Tims who the victim and the family were by placing them in the genealogical landscape: "Now, Lillie, you know their relatives. Leroy Campbell? His great-grandmother's son, Simpson. They lived right up here off of Highway 76. Gibbs Road, that's where they lived." With that identification complete, Watts went on to elaborate on the story and add details to the account. Next she told a seemingly unrelated story of a time when her father had been cheated out of some molasses by his landlady; the connection was made clear, however, when I asked for some clarification about details of the lynching. Watts explained in more detail who the victim's family was, naming his mother and father and several of his aunts and uncles. When I asked where it happened, Watts responded, "That happened in Chestnut Ridge right up here on Highway 76, right across from that brick house where the lady lived that told Daddy he had to give her the molasses." The event, the family, and the place are all linked. Even if little information was known about a lynching, that information may be conveyed in this sort of context. David Kennedy explained,

I heard of the last name [of Henry Gray, lynching victim] because Reverend James Gray is our moderator. And some people . . . say that there could have been a relation with Reverend James Gray. . . . They would say Reverend Gray from Enoree. . . . And they would talk about a Gray man from Enoree. So that's the same guy.

Here Kennedy links family with place. The "Gray man from Enoree" was lynched, and Reverend Gray was from Enoree, so the not unreasonable conclusion is that he may well be related in some way. The nexus of genealogy and geography provides an anchor for memory.

Historical memory of a lynching can be a socializing tool, more so for blacks than whites. Primarily, stories of lynchings were used as warnings. Rachel Watts, for instance, said, "So then, my father was forever talking to his boys, telling them, you know, 'Don't get yourselves involved in instances where you could get lynched' for doing things like that." David Kennedy and Walker Merrill also spoke of hearing about lynchings as warnings. It is probably significant that those who were warned were those most in danger of lynching — young black men. Other blacks such as

Helen Brown's mother or the children in the photograph of Richard Puckett also learned about lynchings while they were still children, exactly the opposite of white children.

Historical memory of lynchings became the object of an unequal contest between those who could forget and those who could not or could not afford to forget. By controlling public discourse — the newspapers, the courts, the books, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the schools — whites had the luxury of remembering or forgetting the past as they chose in order to form a usable history. Even those who actively condemned lynchings before, while, and immediately after they occurred may well have chosen to silence the memory of those same lynchings in order to maintain a positive version of local history or to prevent the memory of the lynching from further damaging race relations.⁴⁸ Blacks, on the other hand, might well not be able to forget the sudden and violent death of a family member, a friend, a neighbor. Even if they could forget, it was often wiser to quietly remember the lesson the lynching was meant to teach. Yet, even though blacks remembered the lynchings in private discourse, they could seldom break the silence of the public discourse with memories of lynchings.

Individual lynchings, by their very nature, tend not to be objects of public discourse. W. Fitzhugh Brundage points out that "not every lynching was an event laden with symbolism," but even the most private of lynchings occurs to some extent within public discourse.⁴⁹ While some lynchings, like Richard Puckett's, were elaborately staged and deeply encoded with cultural significance, others, like Joe Stewart's, were quiet, private affairs. What all types of lynching share is that they remove an individual from participating in public discourse. Obviously, the lynching victim can no longer be a speaker in public discourse. Most often, the victim was not in a position to contribute to public discourse in the first place. When a person was lynched, one of the messages communicated was that this person was no longer to be an object of public discourse either. As a way of reasserting values about the social order, lynchings act as silencings. Someone who has made a statement challenging a social order in the realm of public discourse — Joe Stewart standing up for a young black boy who was being threatened by whites, for instance — is removed, silenced. The silence is continued when a coroner's jury fails to name those responsible. Lynching is, then, a

self-effacing event. First it silences an offender; then the anonymity of the mob and the silence of local public discourse mutes any attempt to name the lynching as a crime and to exact justice. The effect is amplified when, as in Laurens County, all the lynching victims were black, all the mobs were white, and whites would exercise nearly complete control over public discourse for several decades after the lynchings.

The silence imposed on the lynching within the public discourse divests the victim's family of the means to prove that a damage was done.⁵⁰ The silence of witnesses removes the possibility of proving that specific individuals lynched the victim; without testimony, the mob disappears, disperses into anonymity. Those who have evidence may be intimidated into not coming forward. When Norris Dendy was lynched, the solicitor twice subpoenaed Hugh Mims, a black man who had witnessed the unmasked lynchers take Dendy from the cell. Mims ignored the subpoenas and did not come to Laurens from New York to testify. There were no trials, and thus the county government could dismiss the lawsuit when it came later.

Various consultants stated that blacks had no means of recourse when a damage was done them. Commenting on the killing in 1957, Bill Cooper said, "And even as late as that, the black man had no legal recourse. Or his family. . . . You know, there was that system that the blacks really had no recourse when something like that happened. They had no legal protection." Helen Brown gave a more succinct answer to my question of "What became of that, after [Harris was killed] ?": "Nothing. He [Harris's killer] was acquitted." Another example involved the fencing off and theft of land belonging to Rachel Watts' father. When asked, "Why wouldn't they make a noise about it if it was clearly an illegal act," Watts replied, "If whites said they were going to do something, blacks could not try to stop them. Dad and Uncle Ford were those type people that when whites did things to them, they more or less said nothing." With no recourse, the damage became a wrong incapable of being righted. And what could be done in such a situation? As Walker Merrill stated, "You couldn't do anything about it! You had to swallow it and keep it to yourself." Those who suffered the damage of the lynching itself had to add their own silence within public discourse to the silence of those controlling public discourse, to become, in effect, complicit in the final stage of the very

injustice being perpetrated against them. Yet, as we have seen, the memory of the lynching persists within the private discourse of various communities of memory.

This persistence of the memory of lynching within private discourse is what gives such memories their power and what fuels memory conflicts of the sort we see in the furor over the Redneck Shop. The past which the Redneck Shop seeks to evoke in today's public discourse is one that is clean of any wrongs. When John Howard hands out a copy of the photograph of Richard Puckett, he emphasizes, probably correctly, that the Ku Klux Klan was not involved, that the citizens of Laurens lynched Puckett.⁵¹ Besides, as the newspaper accounts tell us, Puckett confessed to his crime. There was no wrong because the lynching was justified. Even the governor at the time, Cole Blease, supported the lynching and assisted in carrying it out by refusing to call out the militia.⁵² As David Kennedy points out when he says that "the family . . . would talk about it to the family," even Puckett's family members kept the memory of his lynching in private, not public, discourse. It would not have been safe to have attempted to bring the injustice of the lynching into public discourse. And as the case of Norris Dendy shows, doing so probably would not have accomplished much. This situation creates a tension between history as presented in public discourse and memory preserved in private discourse.

But a time arises when the power relationships governing the production and maintenance of public discourse have changed and shifted to such an extent that the memory of the lynching, long sustained in private discourse, can be brought back into public discourse.⁵³ While these old wrongs might not be righted, they can now at least be acknowledged in the public discourse. The change which makes this possible, of course, is the civil rights movement. Ed McDaniel emphasized this when he explained that

when integration was coming about, my grandmother would talk about how things used to be. . . . Things were better now than they once were, so you need to capitalize on that. . . . So anytime we would talk about those type of things [lynchings], it would be to show a contrast and to let us know that things could be better.

When David Kennedy took the lead in protesting the Redneck Shop, he used the memory of Richard

Puckett, even the same photograph that Howard used, as a way of establishing that a wrong had been done and that racism and hate were not vague generalities that were merely bad for business but conditions that had led to specific damages. The photograph, preserved in private discourse by those like the man who had it copied at Lonnie Adamson's studio, and its story re-entered public discourse.

The situation in Laurens is both typical and atypical of the fate of historical memory of lynching and other examples of collective, reactionary violence in the South.⁵⁴ It is typical in that those who have passed along the stories of specific lynchings are getting older and passing away, and there is less and less need to tell the stories today. Unlike the days when Walker Merrill or Rachel Watts' brothers were growing up, the stories are not needed to warn against imminent danger. Unlike the time when Ed McDaniel, David Kennedy, and others of their generation were growing up, stories of lynchings are not needed to inspire young people to take advantage of new opportunities not available to their elders.⁵⁵ What is atypical about Laurens is that a very vocal community activist happens to be directly related to the victim of the town's most spectacular lynching. David Kennedy is in the unusual position of being able to force the memory of a lynching, a terrible wrong buried in the past, into the midst of contemporary public debate. Will lynchings in other parts of the South also become part of the public discourse on historical memory? Given similar circumstances, it is possible, but it will not be a widespread phenomenon. Instead, lynchings will remain in the public discourse as a vague symbol of black oppression, but the historical memory of specific lynchings will slowly fade away in most cases.

Notes

- 1.. *Greenville News*, April 28, 1996.
- 2.. The emergence of the Redneck Shop and the subsequent protests and legal battles were covered in the *Greenville News* in a series of articles by April E. Moorefield in March, April, and May 1996.
- 3.. Rick Bragg, "'Ugly History' haunts S.C. town," *Charleston Post and Courier*, Nov. 19, 1996. A1+
- 4.. Two consultants, Alice Dendy and Helen Brown, both mentioned that Kennedy used the photograph during the protests, and Kennedy himself mentioned having a blown-up version of the photograph.
- 5.. My list of lynchings for Laurens County is based on the work of Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck whose *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995) uses what is currently the most comprehensive list of lynchings in the South. Professor Beck kindly supplied me with the South Carolina portion of the list. One of those, the lynching of Dave Shaw in 1892, turned out not to be a lynching after all. See articles in the *Charleston News and Courier*, June 23, July 8, July 12, and July 26, 1892. I also found one prior lynching in 1881 in a local newspaper and was referred to an account of a 1933 lynching in *The Crisis*. Based on these sources, I have documented eight lynchings in Laurens County for this period, but in the course of the interviews, there were references to two or three others which I was not able to conclusively document.
- 6.. In addition to archival research, this study draws upon a series of directed oral history interviews I conducted in Laurens County between fall of 1997 and spring of 1998. Altogether, I conducted approximately twenty hours of interviews with twenty-three different individuals. Of this group, nearly all were over fifty years old, but a few were somewhat younger. Fifteen consultants were black, and eight were white. The black consultants were: Walker Merrill, James Merrill, Lucy Hunter, Rachel Watts, Thomas Garrett, Carrie Hunter, Willy Eichelberger, Eddie Eichelberger, Helen Brown, John Arthur Brown, Mary Clark, Ed McDaniel, Alice Dendy, Lillie Williams-Tims, and David Kennedy. The white consultants were: Bill Cooper, Dorothy Cooper, John Howard, Elaine Martin, Frances Weathers, Lonnie Adamson, Brock Coggins, and Carolyn Coggins. Of these, all lived in Laurens unless otherwise noted in the rest of the essay. I would like to thank these consultants for their time and assistance with this project. Several other scholars interested in lynching have studied memory both directly and indirectly. Arthur Raper's classic *The Tragedy of Lynching* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933) included references to prior lynchings in several communities. Folklorist Richard M. Dorson discussed oral accounts of a lynching in Michigan in "The Oral Historian and the Folklorist" in *Selections From the Fifth and Sixth National Colloquia on Oral History* (New York: Oral History Association, 1972), 48. James McGovern used interviews as an important source for *Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), xi. In the introduction to *Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940: Lynchings, mob rule, and "legal lynchings"* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 5, George C. Wright notes, "Folk traditions tell of people who were murdered in isolated counties and dumped into rivers and creeks, or who—according to biased white newspapers—escaped from the authorities and simply disappeared." Charlotte Wolf has written about the effects of a lynching in 1900 in Tennessee on the socialization of blacks and whites in "Constructions of a Lynching," *Sociological Inquiry* 62 (February 1992):83. Although not

focusing specifically on lynching, Lynwood Montell has used oral history as a way of documenting and understanding lethal violence in a local community in *The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study in Oral History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970) and especially *Killings: Folk Justice in the Upper South* (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986).

My consultants tended to consider lynchings as one item on a broader spectrum of racially-motivated violence and injustices. Lynching differs from other examples of what Walker Merrill called "the way the white people treated them [blacks]" more in degree than in kind. Bill Cooper, after mentioning two lynchings he had heard of, referred to the killing of a black tenant by a white landlord, saying, "But that was a case of the same type thing." Rachel Watts, when asked about "violent events in this area that [she] heard about while . . . growing up," recalled that she "sat and listened to my father tell the stories about not so much violence but how blacks were treated." Folklorist Henry Glassie emphasizes the importance of using community ontologies as a guide in his sublime study of an Irish community, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Irish Community* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), especially Chapters 2 and 32. Glassie employs and expands the ideas of Dan Ben-Amos, "Analytical Categories and Ethnic Genres," *Genre 2* (September 1969): 275-301. Recent historical scholarship has also sought to place lynching within a larger framework of violence and oppression. Nearly twenty years ago, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) explained how the lynching of black men for alleged crimes against white women worked to keep white women in a subject position. Hall expanded upon the ideas in her book in a later article, "'The Mind That Burns in Each Body': Women, Rape, and Racial Violence" in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 328-349. George C. Wright in *Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940*, 1, claimed that "racial violence in Kentucky [was] evident in many forms" besides just lynching. More recently, Wright has shown the very direct continuities between lynchings and "legal lynchings" in "By the Book: The Legal Execution of Kentucky Blacks" in W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 250-270. William S. McFeely, in the afterword to *Under Sentence of Death*, 318, uses examples from Columbus, Georgia, to show that "African Americans in Columbus saw" the murder of a civil rights activist in 1956 "as belonging to a chain running back" to a 1912 lynching "and to others still more terrible in detail." This study, however, separates lynching as an analytically useful category from the broader native genres of racial injustice. George B. Tindall, concluding the chapter on violence in his 1952 work *South Carolina Negroes, 1877-1900* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1952), 259, writes, "The fear of violence is a basic context in which the history of South Carolina Negroes during the period must be studied to be clearly understood."

7.. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 47-65.

8.. Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance*, 8.

9.. Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance*, 54.

¹⁰ In folklorists' terms, a community of memory consists of those individuals who share a largely consistent oral tradition about certain events or groups of events. As Barbara Allen and Lynwood Montell point out in *From Memory to History*, 92, "Because individuals perceive events from their own personal vantage points, the local history researcher is likely to encounter conflicting attitudes toward the same event from different people within the same community, especially when political,

social, or moral issues are involved." Arthur F. Raper gives an example of this in *Tragedy of Lynching*, 94.

11.. Many scholarly works mention Laurens in passing while discussing larger topics, but these are not the principal source of local history for community residents, and Laurens does not yet have a county history comparable to that of its neighbor: Archie Vernon Huff's *Greenville: the history of the city and county in the South Carolina Piedmont* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1995). Lynching is not always absent from the public discourse on local history, however. In contrast to Laurens County, see Stanly County and Cabarrus County, North Carolina, as discussed in Bruce E. Baker, "North Carolina Lynching Ballads," in *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 221, 226.

12.. An exception to this would be the case of community scholars or local historians. While many such community scholars rely primarily on oral tradition, some may use old newspapers and other records to go into more detail on particular subjects. Lillie Williams-Tims is a good example of this phenomenon in Laurens. While looking through microfilmed newspapers for something else, she read about the lynching of Norris Dendy, about which she had already heard vague accounts. Two other community scholars in North Carolina who used newspapers to augment their knowledge of lynchings of which they had heard are Eddie Gathings of Wadesboro and George F. Hahn of Mt. Pleasant. Both are mentioned in Bruce E. Baker, "Lynching Ballads in North Carolina" (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1995), 43-44, 100.

13.. John D. Stark, *Damned Upcountryman: William Watts Ball, A Study in American Conservatism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke U P, 1968), 29.

14.. William P. Jacobs, ed., *The Scrapbook: A Compilation of Historical Facts About Places and Events of Laurens County, South Carolina* (Clinton, S.C.: Laurens County Historical Society and Laurens County Arts Council, 1982).

¹⁵ Will Gravely, in researching the 1947 lynching of Willie Earle in Greenville, South Carolina, has had no success in talking to several of the surviving alleged members of that mob. Personal communication from Will Gravely, Denver University, May 5, 1998.

16.. This view is similar to that expressed in *Lynchings and What They Mean: General Findings of the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching* (Atlanta: Commission on Interracial Cooperation, 1932), 54: "After a time, the 'best citizens' usually came to feel that 'it is all over now, and the sooner it is forgotten, the better for the community.'"

17.. Earlier incidents like this would not have been as unusual. For instance, in 1899 a white landlord told his black tenant to finish hoeing some cotton. When the landlord reached for a whip, the tenant grabbed an axe. The landlord shot the tenant to death, and the coroner's jury ruled it self-defense. As late as March 20, 1930, the *Laurens Advertiser* reported that a white foreman shot a black farm hand for not working on a Saturday; the employee apparently recovered, and no charges were brought.

¹⁸ United States Bureau of the Census. *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in 1910, Statistics for South Carolina*. (Washington: GPO, 1913), 577. Distinctions among the types of mobs that carried out lynchings and the reasons for the lynchings are important and affect the way lynchings are remembered. For a thorough consideration of the various types of mobs, see the first chapter of W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

¹⁹ For another example of historical memory of lynching within a black community and the transmission of that information, see David Frost, Jr.'s memoir, *Witness to Injustice*, ed. Louise

Westling (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 5-8, 12-20.

20.. Consultants sometimes knew of other lynchings from outside Laurens County, but often remembered them less clearly. Willy Eichelberger, who was ninety-seven years old at the time of our interview, had heard of the 1906 lynching of Bob "Snowball" Davis in Greenwood County. Eichelberger's son, Eddie, explained,

This guy was on the chain gang. They called him Snowball. He used to drive the road scraper. That was his job on the chain gang. And they claimed that he raped a white girl. That's what he was hung for. I think it was in the thirties, or first part of the forties, I think.

Terence Finegan gives an account of this lynching in "At the Hands of Parties Unknown": Lynching in Mississippi and South Carolina, 1881-1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1993), 264-269. David Kennedy had heard about the lynching of Anthony Crawford in Abbeville in 1916 (described in Finnegan, "At the Hands of Parties Unknown," 173-188), and many consultants knew of South Carolina's last lynching, the death of Willie Earle near Greenville in 1947.

21.. *Laurensville Herald*, May 12, 1893.

^{22.} In Laurens County, and probably elsewhere throughout the South, rural communities are often known by one name to their black residents and another name to their white residents since communities are often centered around churches. The community of Chestnut Ridge, the name of the white church, therefore, is coextensive with the community of Mount Zion, the name of the black church.

23.. *Charleston News and Courier*, May 11, 1893.

24.. *Charleston News and Courier*, May 11, 1893.

25.. Laurens County Coroner's Inquisition Book, 1897-1901, microfilm at Laurens County Public Library, 81. I spoke with Mrs. Watts by telephone on March 24, 1998, and she agreed that Heyward Barksdale probably was the person to whom she was referring.

^{26.26.} For an intriguing account of memory in the family of a lynching victim, see Will Gravely, "Reliving South Carolina's Last Lynching: The Witness of Tess Earle Robinson," *South Carolina Review* 29:2 (Spring 1997), 5-17.

27.. Laurens County Coroner's Inquisition Book, 1872-1876, microfilm at Laurens County Public Library, 15.

28.. *Laurens Advertiser*, July 6, 1933; July 13, 1933; June 14, 1934.

^{29.} Edwin D. Hoffman, "The Genesis of the Modern Movement for Equal Rights in South Carolina, 1930-1939," *Journal of Negro History* 44:4 (October 1959): 256.

30.. *The Crisis* 40:9 (September 1933), 209; "Too Rich To Be a Nigger," *The Crisis* 40:12 (December 1933), 282-283; "Norris Dendy's Children," *The Crisis* 41:10 (October 1934), 300.

31.. *Laurens Advertiser*, December 28, 1934. The statute is Section 15-51-210 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina. The county in which a lynching takes place is liable for not less than two thousand dollars to the legal representative of the victim. The county can, however, recover the amount of the judgement from parties engaged in the lynching, thus offering criminal courts an incentive to convict lynchers.

32.. Laurens County Board of Commissioners Minutes, 1934-1936, microfilm at South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia.

33.. *Laurens Advertiser*, April 18, 1935.

34.. Taking, or at least considering, legal action against mobs in Laurens County did not begin with the Dendy case. In 1892, Dave Shaw was tortured by a mob near Tumblin Shoals to extract a

confession of burglary. Shaw would probably have been lynched but for a lucky escape. After hiding out in Georgia for a few weeks, he returned to Greenville to seek the advice of an attorney. For a brief time, it appeared that Governor Tillman was interested in using the Shaw case as an example to discourage lynching, but he soon abandoned the effort. See the *Charleston News and Courier*, May 31, June 1, 5, 23, July 8, 12, and 26, 1892.

35.. Stewart's lynching is reported in the *Charleston News and Courier*, April 3, 1920, and the *Laurensville Herald*, April 9, 1920. Other information comes from Death Certificate, Vol. 14, No. 7952, April 1, 1920, at SCDH; 1910 census; *City Directory, Laurens and Clinton, S.C. 1917* (Columbia, S.C.: Southern Directory Agency, 1917), 182; 1920 census, Laurens Township, City of Laurens, Ward 4, Jennings Street, 109.

36.. *Pickens Sentinel*, April 21, 1881; *New York Times*, April 18, 1881.

37.. Laurens County Coroner's Inquisition Book, 1891-1894, microfilm at Laurens County Public Library, 103. Brief mention of the lynching is made in a few newspaper articles: *Charleston News and Courier*, January 7 and 10, 1898, and *Laurensville Herald*, January 14, 1898.

38.. *Charleston News and Courier*, September 25 and 27, 1904; *Laurensville Herald*, September 30 and October 7, 1904; *Columbia State*, September 24, 1904.

39.. *Charleston News and Courier*, July 24, 1897; *Laurensville Herald*, July 30, 1897.

40.. Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 48.

41.. Laurens County Coroner's Inquisition Book, 1897-1901, at Laurens County Public Library, 81.

42.. Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 82.

43.. George B. Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes, 1877-1900* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1952), 174-178.

44.. *Hickory Western Carolinian*, September 23, 1887.

45.. *Greenville News*, March 8, 18, 19, and 20, 1933; *Anderson Independent*, March 8, 9, and 18, 1933; *Laurens Advertiser*, March 9 and 23, 1933; *Charleston Evening Post*, March 8, 1933; *Charleston News and Courier*, March 8, 9, 17, and 20, 1933.

46.. *Greenville News*, March 19, 1933.

47.. Barbara Allen, "The Genealogical Landscape" in Allen and Schlereth, *Sense of Place*, 161.

48.. W. W. Ball's reaction to the lynching of Heyward Barksdale in 1893 is one of many examples of what I am describing here. See also Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 32.

⁴⁹ Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 15.

⁵⁰ This analysis is based on Jean-François Lyotard's idea of the *differend* as explained in his book *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, Theory and History of Literature Vol 46 (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). He writes, "This is what a wrong [*tort*] would be: a damage [*dommage*] accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage" (5). Thus, a lynching is itself a damage, but the silence about the lynching within the public discourse imposed on the victim and the victim's family and community removes the possibility of proving that a damage was done, giving the victim no opportunity for redress in the public discourse. This is what Lyotard describes by the term *differend*: "A case of differend between two parties takes place when the 'regulation' of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom." (9)

51.. I observed Howard hand a copy of the Puckett photograph to a customer at the end of a transaction on November 22, 1997, when I spoke with him for a couple of hours about this project. I do not know if Howard always distributes copies of the photograph as he declined a follow-up

interview on February 21, 1998. Howard did have many copies of the photograph in November, one of which he generously gave to me when I requested it.

52.. Letter from Governor Coleman L. Blease to Col. John M. Cannon, August 13, 1913, Box 22, Governors' (1911-1915: Blease) Papers, SCDAH.

^{53.} An example of the successful use of the memory of lynching as a means of providing recourse for a damage is the case of the lawsuit against the state of Florida brought by survivors and descendants of victims of the destruction of Rosewood in 1923. For a full account, see Michael D'Orso's *Like Judgement Day: The Ruin and Redemption of a Town Called Rosewood* (New York: Boulevard Books, 1996).

^{54.} To take only a few examples from South Carolina of the varied fate of historical memory of this sort of conflict, we might consider Edwin D. Hoffman's claim that "No South Carolinians could be found [in 1957] who recalled these events in Greenville in 1931 [the violent police and Klan suppression of the biracial Greenville Unemployed Council]," made in "Equal Rights in South Carolina, 1930-1939," *Journal of Negro History* 44:4 (October 1959): 360n20. More recently, the film "The Uprising of '34" has brought the General Textile Strike of 1934 back into public discourse. The *Greenville News* devoted three pages in its Sunday edition to the shooting at Chiquola Mill in Honea Path. Deb Richardson-Moore and Jim DuPlessis, "Generations of Silence: The Chiquola Mill Shootings," *Greenville News*, Apr. 28, 1995, 1G, 4-5G.

^{55.} For a similar argument about the decline of ballads about lynchings, see Baker, "North Carolina Lynching Ballads," 240-241.