Racial Violence and Competing Memory in Taylor County Florida, 1922

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ABSTRACT

This study engages historical memory and examines racial violence in Taylor County, Florida, in order to explore how memories concerning racial violence and southern identity are created and maintained. Special attention is paid to the way that white memory was commemorated in public spaces, while black memory was relegated to a more private sphere. Because black memory is underrepresented in archives and public spaces, black citizens of Taylor County have been, in large part, left out of the historical record. As a result, black memory is difficult to uncover unless it is specifically sought out.

The construction and commemoration of memory in the south has often favored white memory over black memory. Lost Cause memorials and Confederate battle flags became symbols of southern identity; while black achievements and racial violence against the black community have gone unrecorded. Contestation over historical memory is often reflective of the struggle between black and white southerners to remember history in a way that most reflects their identity.

In December of 1922 two black men, Charley Wright and Albert Young, were lynched by a white mob who sought revenge for Wright and Young’s alleged involvement in the murder of Ruby Hendry, a young, white, school teacher. Perhaps because of the prominence of Hendry’s family in Taylor County, the white community also acted out against innocent members of the black community by burning down a number of public spaces in predominantly black areas of town. Though these events garnered national attention at the time that they occurred, the memory of this violence has almost completely faded over time.

Although commemoration of memory in Taylor County privileged white residents, it did not succeed in completely oppressing black memory or identity. Black citizens resisted this forgetting and crafted a lasting historical memory that communicated their own perspective. Competing narratives emerge when black memory is evaluated alongside white memory. However, both perspectives must be equally considered in order to construct a more complete picture of the past.
INTRODUCTION

Annie “Ruby” Hendry was found, brutally murdered in Perry, Florida on December 2nd, 1922. Outraged by the murder of the young, white, schoolteacher, citizens of Perry moved quickly to avenge Ruby’s death. When the police investigation pointed toward a number of African American suspects, a posse of men from Taylor County and the neighboring Madison County gathered together with the intent of taking justice into their own hands. Over the course of ten days a mob of thousands lynched two men for the death of Ruby Hendry, murdered two other black men, and burned down at least four public buildings in the “negro quarters” of Perry, Florida.¹

In the 1920s, Americans were struggling with their views on racial violence. Even though politicians spoke out against the Ku Klux Klan, they failed to pass the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. With the support of The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, L. C. Dyer, of Missouri, introduced the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill into Congress in 1918 proposing that the federal government take on more responsibility for the prevention of lynchings. Though the Bill passed in the House of Representatives, and received a favorable report by the Senate committee that was assigned to report on it, a filibuster in 1922 blocked its passage.²

Along with many other southern states, Florida, too, was influenced by the Ku Klux Klan.³ However, more than being known for its “Klanvocations,“⁴ the state was known for its rampant lynchings. In particular though, the 1922 lynching and violence in Perry, Florida, illustrates the ways in which many southerners, not just Floridians, used lynchings as their own form of personal justice. A study of the lynchings of Charley Wright and Albert Young reveals

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¹ Florida Times-Union, December 9, 1922.

² James Weldon Johnson, Along This Way (New York: Penguin Books, 1933), 371; no efforts were made to pass legislation such as the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill again until the 1930s with the Costigan-Wagner Bill.


the ways in which white memory, in the south, persists and overshadows an African American voice.

W.E.B. Du Bois said, “The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with a second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.” In order to uncover the events that took place in Perry, Florida, in 1922 as fully as possible, two distinct voices and memories must be contended with. This effort avoids defining the event exclusively through white memory. However, there were a number of obstacles involved in finding facts that provided the perspective of black memory.

Southern newspapers in the 1920’s, which provided much of the basis for this research, were quick to herald the cause of white supremacy. Most articles concerning lynching blamed the victim for the event. In 1921, The Ocala Evening Star defended lynching by claiming that the victim, Elijah Jones, was a “bad nigger” and a “degenerate young devil.” The paper went on to argue that the lynch mob was made up of “representative citizens, and they consider it their duty to rid their country of rapists and rattlesnakes as soon as possible.” An article in the Gainesville Daily Sun blamed the events in Rosewood on a “brutish negro” who “made a criminal assault on an unprotected white girl.” Though newspapers in the 1920s readily quoted whites’ perspectives on lynchings, typically no official records pertaining to lynchings exist outside of what has been collected by the NAACP.

The nature of lynchings is such that official trial records were not left behind. No documentation remains concerning Charley Wright’s arrest. The charges brought against Wright, and the supposed evidence that linked him to the crime, were lost after the actions of mob vigilantism deemed official legislation unnecessary. Thus, the accounts of the lynchings of Charley Wright and Albert Young survive only in periodicals and in the memory of those who lived the events. Newspaper records provide a straightforward and often uncomplicated record of

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6 *Ocala Banner*, February 18, 1921.

7 *Gainesville Daily Sun*, December 3, 1922.
the events surrounding Ruby Hendry’s murder and the subsequent violence that took place in Perry, Florida.

Maurice Halbwachs wrote about the connection between memory and societal constructs. He argued that memory was based, not on an individual’s experience, but that it was constructed in direct relation to the social conditions that the individual experienced. Halbwachs argues that, "It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories..." For this reason, this study will include an exploration of the environment that Taylor County citizens inhabited in 1922 and the ways in which history was recorded there.\(^8\)

In December 1922, the Taylor County Herald reported that “one of the most atrocious crimes in the annals of Taylor County occurred Saturday afternoon...when Miss Ruby Hendry...was brutally beaten with some blunt instrument, her throat cut in such a horrible manner that death must have been instantaneous.” The newspaper account went on to describe Ruby as “one of the beloved young ladies of the community,” and reported that, though there were no “definite” clues as to who the murderer was, search parties formed quickly and moved in “every direction” to find the killer.\(^9\)

The murder of a young white woman in Taylor County, especially one who was the daughter of a prominent family, was certainly front-page news. Murderous acts were not typically the types of stories recounted in the Taylor County Herald. The periodical more often published articles related to local business, political, and social happenings. An article welcoming the “radio craze” to Perry celebrated the new technology, predicting that radio stations would bring to Perry “good music and other good things too numerous to mention.”\(^10\) As a community Taylor County citizens were especially proud of their school system. The Taylor County Herald’s coverage of the opening of a new high school was also front-page news.\(^11\)

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\(^9\) *Taylor County Herald*, December 15, 1922.

\(^10\) *Taylor County Herald*, June 9, 1922

\(^11\) *Taylor County Herald*, September 8, 1922
the stories that addressed criminal activity were not particularly salacious. An article printed in June of 1922 concerning the burglary of a local haberdashery seems to indicate that criminal activity in Taylor County was not often a problem. The newspaper reported that the theft of silk shirts and shoes was “the first burglary to occur in Perry in a long time.”\(^\text{12}\) Compared to the usual tenor of stories found in the local paper, the murder of Ruby Hendry was an especially provocative and violent story. The *Taylor County Herald* was not the only newspaper to report on the murder of Ruby Hendry. Other periodicals in Florida also covered the story of her murder and the lynchings of Charley Wright and Albert Young would become national news stories.

Ruby was found dead at “twenty minutes to five” on Saturday December 2\(^\text{nd}\), 1922. A freight train crew that was leaving Taylor County for Quitman, Georgia, discovered her body. Upon discovering the body, the crew returned to the depot and called Taylor County’s Sheriff F. L. Lipscomb.\(^\text{13}\) The sheriff arrived to find Ruby’s body lying in a pool of blood nearby a creek on the eastside of the train tracks. It took half an hour to identify the body because her “blood-stained” face was unrecognizable. Ruby was beaten with a “blunt instrument” and left badly disfigured; her throat was slashed with a razor. Newspapers also reported that $14.00 was stolen from her.\(^\text{14}\) Police determined that a coroners’ inquest was unnecessary because the cause of death was readily apparent. There were signs of a struggle, however, onlookers overran and disturbed the scene of the crime before a thorough investigation could be conducted.\(^\text{15}\) Police concluded only that Ruby was, “murdered a fiend.”\(^\text{16}\) The *Taylor County Herald* reported that, “the shock and enormity of the crime frenzied the whole crowd [of onlookers], the news soon spreading over the city and the county where [Ruby] was well known and loved by all.”\(^\text{17}\) Taylor county citizens were galvanized into action by the murder of Ruby Hendry. Businesses were

\(^{12}\) *Taylor County Herald*, June 9, 1922.

\(^{13}\) *Bradford County Telegraph*, December 15, 1922.

\(^{14}\) *Madison-Enterprise*, December 8, 1922. How this information was obtained is unclear.

\(^{15}\) *Bradford County Telegraph*, December 15, 1922.

\(^{16}\) *Florida Times-Union*, December 4, 1922.

\(^{17}\) *Bradford County Telegraph*, December 15, 1922.
closed and court proceedings were adjourned, “in order not to hinder the Sheriff’s office in its search for the murderer.”

Though initial reports indicated that hard evidence was scarce, search parties were quick to form in Taylor County. On Sunday December 3rd, four black men were taken into custody on suspicion of their connection to the crime. No charges were filed against the men. When the detainees were able to prove their innocence, they were released the next day. According to newspapers, every suspect that the police named in connection with the murder of Ruby Hendry was black. Though the Madison-Enterprise reported that, “citizens exhibited a marked degree of cool-headedness and were refraining from violence toward innocent parties,” the investigation for Ruby’s killer would soon involve violent attacks on the local black community in Perry.

On December 5th, police confirmed that they had a lead suspect. The Gainesville Daily Sun reported that the suspect was Charley Wright, a sawmill operator and alleged escaped convict from Dixie County who was living in Perry with his wife Mary and their two children at the time of the murder. Police said that they were able to link the murder weapons, a double-barreled shotgun and a bloody razor, which were found near the area where Ruby’s body was discovered, to their suspect. The police also found a suitcase and a handbag with barber tools inside of it. Charley Wright was accused of stealing these items from another resident of Perry. The Gainesville Daily Sun reported that, “authorities said their investigation pointed to Wright as

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18 Madison-Enterprise, December 8, 1922.


20 Jacksonville Journal, December 8, 1922.

21 Madison-Enterprise, December 8, 1922.

22 Gainesville Daily Sun, December 6, 1922. The Madison-Enterprise reported on December 8, 1922, that “Charley Wright” was in fact a Madison resident who also went by the name Jim Stalworth.

23 Bradford County Telegraph, December 8, 1922; Madison-Enterprise, December 8, 1922; Union County Blade, December 8, 1922; Florida Times-Union, December 3, 1922; Gainesville Daily Sun, December 3-6, 1922.
the party who waylaid the young woman Saturday afternoon. [Wright] slashed [Ruby’s] throat and administered blows about the body with a heavy instrument.”

With Wright named as the prime suspect, over three hundred citizens from Taylor and Madison Counties formed posses and went in search of the alleged killer. The mob spread throughout Perry into Shady Grove, Madison County, and southern Georgia. Deputized citizens who did not join the manhunt remained behind in order to “guard” the entrances into Madison and Taylor Counties from Wright and any others who may have been involved in Ruby’s murder.

Perry natives Walter Bunting and Chris Coffee were given the task of “guarding” Perry from Charley Wright. They patrolled Troy road, which was the main road into Perry from Madison County on the evening of December 6th; armed and instructed to keep watch for a black man, Bunting and Coffee encountered Cubrit Dixon. Dixon was a resident of Madison County who had no connection to the murder. The newspapers reported that Dixon was “commanded to throw up his hands, but refused, and, according to the statement of the guards, moved his hand toward his back pocket.” Believing that Dixon intended to reach for a gun, Bunting and Coffee drew their own weapons, opened fire, and killed him. A search of Dixon’s body revealed that the only weapon on his person was a “closed pocket knife.” Though Dixon was an innocent victim of white violence, no charges were brought against Bunting or Coffee for the murder. Instead, Bunting would soon be celebrated as one of the men who successfully apprehended Wright.

The white community neither condemned the murder of Cubrit Dixon nor ceased its persecution of the black community for the murder of Ruby Hendry. Race related violence would continue in Perry until white residents were satisfied that Ruby was properly avenged.

Although Charley Wright was thought to be in southern Georgia, and an armed mob made its way across the state line, from Florida, in pursuit of him, white citizens in Perry acted out violently against black citizens who had no connection to the death of Ruby Hendry or the search for Charley Wright. Papers reported that, “in addition to the official investigation of the past

24 *Gainesville Daily Sun*, December 6, 1922.


26 *Florida Times-Union*, December 7, 1922.

three days, impromptu searches have been made by groups of men here and there.”

With guns and bloodhounds at their side, citizens terrorized the black community in Perry.

Over the course of the six days that it took to apprehend Wright, white citizens in Perry burned down at least four buildings in the predominantly African American area of town. The *Florida Times-Union* reported that, “in the sporadic disorders of the past few days the Negro settlement here has lost four of its public buildings. A negro church is said to have been burned last night while a school house, a lodge building, and an amusement hall were burned earlier in the week.”

*The Madison-Enterprise* reported that, “a building in the Negro quarter [of Perry] has been burned each night since Ms. Hendry was found.” In addition to these acts of arson, there were also reports that several black families received threatening letters urging them to leave Perry or face violence. One black man in Perry was accused of writing “an improper note” to a white woman. As retribution for these actions, the man was shot to death in his home and his home was burned down on him.

While these events occurred in Perry, the manhunt for Charley Wright continued in northern Florida and southern Georgia.

Before Charley Wright was apprehended, groups of men from Taylor and Madison counties were successful in capturing and arresting Albert Young in Valdosta, Georgia, on December 7th. Young, an escaped convict from Kindlon, Georgia, was an acquaintance of Wright’s. Once arrested, authorities reported that Young confessed to having been in Perry with Wright on the night of the murder. Young was initially taken to the Lowndes County jail in Georgia but, at midnight, was moved to a jail in Madison County “for safe keeping.” However, Young would not remain alone in jail for long. Less than twenty-four hours later, Charley Wright was captured.

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28 *Gainesville Daily Sun*, December 6, 1922.

29 *Florida Times-Union*, December 6, 1922. The church that was burned down was Springhill Missionary Baptist Church.

30 *Madison-Enterprise*. December, 8, 1922.

31 Ibid.


33 *Florida Times-Union*, December 8, 1922.
After a search that lasted six days, authorities apprehended Wright in Madison County. Anticipating that white citizens in Perry were poised to take justice into their own hands, Sheriff Lipscomb reported to the crowds outside the courthouse in Madison that both Wright and Young were already incarcerated in Taylor County. The sheriff also claimed that the prisoners were barricaded inside their jail cells with deputies who would protect them from any mob violence. The truth was that Wright and Young were still in a cell in Madison County awaiting their extradition to Perry. Though some believed the sheriff’s story and returned home, a larger number of “angry men” remained to call Lipscomb’s bluff. It was reported that, “throughout the day, parties of angry men maintained a vigil on the road leading from Madison to Perry awaiting the coming of the sheriff.”

Sheriff Lipscomb attempted to transport Wright and Young to Taylor County on December 8th. Lipscomb and his prisoners were only seven miles outside of Perry when they encountered a mob estimated to include from 3,000 to 5,000 people from Taylor and Madison Counties as well as from Southern Georgia. The “human barrier” that stood between the sheriff and Taylor County overwhelmed the officers and took Wright and Young from police custody. The mob moved Wright and Young to the creek where Ruby Hendry’s body was found and conducted their own version of a trial where each man was “given an audience” and the opportunity to confess his crimes.

The Florida Times-Union reported that Wright confessed to murdering Ruby and accused another man, who he refused to name, of robbing her. Wright not only refused to name the man who allegedly robbed Ruby, but he also completely exonerated Albert Young of the crime. The Madison-Enterprise reported that Wright did not confess to the murder, but only to robbing the victim. The Madison-Enterprise also wrote that Young confessed to robbing Ruby, and also

34 Florida Times-Union, December 9, 1922
35 No report could be found specifying the number of deputies that assisted Sheriff Lipscomb in transporting Wright and Young back to Taylor County.
36 Gainesville Daily Sun, December 9, 1922.
37 Florida Times-Union, December 9, 1922.
38 Madison-Enterprise, December 15, 1922.
implicated Wright, as well as a third party, in the robbery. The mob considered their “trial” to be a legitimate proceeding and, having acquired a confession, was quick to sentence Wright to death. Having been found guilty of murdering Ruby Hendry, Wright “paid the penalty” for his crime. Newspapers reported that, “Following Wright’s talk, the mob proceeded to strap him to a stake pine. Wood and grass were placed at his feet, and then set on fire. The body was burned to a crisp.” Presumably because Wright exonerated him, Albert Young was not killed that day but was, instead, taken to jail in Taylor County for further investigation.\footnote{Florida Times-Union, December 9, 1922.}

The majority of the lynch mob disbanded after the execution of Wright. Newspapers reported that the mob’s decision to dole out different punishments to Wright and Young was proof that the “trial” was conducted with clear-headedness and precision. In covering the lynching of Wright, newspapers used language which suggested that justice had been served. The indication was that the white citizens of Perry actually restored order to Perry by acting out violently against African Americans citizens. According to the \textit{New York Globe}, after the lynching, “Quiet prevailed [in Perry] early today with the County and State authorities reporting no racial outbreaks after the burning at the stake of Charley Wright.”\footnote{New York Globe, December 9, 1922.} The lynching of Wright was perceived as justice and no retaliation was expected from the black community. However, though newspapers reported that no further “disorders” were expected, Albert Young would be taken from authorities for a second time.

On December 12\textsuperscript{th}, Florida Governor, and Perry native, Cary Hardee ordered Sheriff Lipscomb to transport Albert Young to a jail outside of Taylor County “for safe keeping.” Once again the Sheriff was met by groups of men who demanded that he turn over his prisoner to them. Unlike the mob that lynched Wright, the mob that took Young consisted only of, “a determined few.”\footnote{Florida Times-Union, December 13, 1922.} Though it was smaller in number, the mob overpowered Lipscomb and his men to kidnapped Albert Young. Young was taken several miles outside of Perry and again, on Troy Road, a black man who was suspected of violence against a white woman was lynched. \textit{The

\footnote{Florida Times-Union, December 9, 1922.}
\footnote{Bradford County Telegraph, December 15, 1922.}
\footnote{New York Globe, December 9, 1922.}
\footnote{Florida Times-Union, December 13, 1922.}
*Florida Times Union* reported that, “The negro’s body, riddled with bullets, was left dangling from a tree. The number comprising the mob could not be learned.”\(^{43}\) Though Charley Wright exonerated him, Albert Young was also lynched for the murder of Ruby Hendry.

In the South lynching was considered a right of the white community, as well as a reasonable punishment for certain crimes. Just as the African American community in Perry had suffered unwarranted attacks, so also Albert Young suffered a violent and deadly attack only because of his perceived association with the murder. The fact that Charley Wright had exonerated Young meant nothing to the lynch mob who considered Young a threat to their community.

Lynchings in Florida were common in the 1920s. However, the violence in Perry was unique because the white citizens there lynched black men from other communities. And, even though none of their lead murder suspects were native to Perry, white citizens in Perry also took out their frustrations on the local black community. The attack on Ruby Hendry, a young, white schoolteacher, was considered an attack on all white citizens of Perry. White Supremacy, which was especially important when the lives and virtue of white women were at stake, was an excuse for whites in Perry to react with violent authority.

G. E. Lang and K. L. Lang argue that, “practices like record-keeping…favor some kinds of reputation for preservation over others.”\(^{44}\) The collective memory concerning the incident in Perry provides a white memory that overshadows local black memory. The prevailing voice concerning the lynchings of Charley Wright and Albert Young, along with the murder of Cubrit Dixon offers justifications for the violence done in Taylor County. Newspapers refrained from condemning the lynch mobs that killed two men. Newspapers recorded the death of Dixon Cubrit, but focused on justifications for Cubrit Dixon’s death. Each mention of the murder of Ruby Hendry included biographical information that highlighted the tragedy of her death. Cubrit Dixon, himself an innocent victim, was given only one line in *The Florida Times-Union*, “Cubrit

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\(^{43}\) Ibid.

Dixon, colored, was shot and killed.” Historically, the record keeping in Perry has exalted the reputation of white, “native” citizens of Perry at the expense of recording black memory.

The incident in Perry, Florida, in 1922 illustrates the ways in which historians must contend with various memories concerning the past. In the case of lynchings in the south, black memory has been overshadowed by a more forgiving white memory. Unless black memory is specifically sought out it is difficult to find. This study engages historical memory and the racial violence that occurred in Perry in order to explore how memories concerning racial violence in the south are created and maintained.

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45 Florida Times-Union, December 6, 1922.
CHAPTER 1

MEMORY, POWER AND IDENTIT
Y: USING HISTORICAL MEMORY
TO READ RACE RELATIONS IN THE SOUTH

“The Past is what you remember, imagine you remember, convince yourself you remember, or
pretend you remember.” –Harold Pinter

The use of historical memory\(^1\) to study violence offers historians insight into what was
considered acceptable to people and communities in the past. What social groups chose to
remember, and what they chose to forget allows historians to study the collective values of that
time and place. Historical memory, as a theoretical framework, also highlights the need to
question the historical record and to search for the silences in texts. Historians must look for the
silences in those documents and for the voices that have not been remembered. Historical
memory offers a recovery of the voice of marginalized people and questions why and how those
in the minority have been forgotten.

The field of historical memory developed significantly in the United States in the mid
nineteen eighties and early nineties. One of the most influential works on the subject is Maurice
Halbwachs’ *On Collective Memory*.\(^2\) Halbwachs’ theories on collective memory provided much
of the theoretical framework for historical memory. Halbwachs was the first scholar to state that
human perceptions of the past were directly affected by the present.\(^3\) His book focused on the
connection between memory and societal constructs. According to the theory, memories were
not based on an individual’s personal experience, but instead were constructed in direct relation
to the social conditions that individuals experience in the present.

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1 W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern
terms ‘historical,’ ‘social,’ ‘public’, and ‘collective,’ memory elude precise definition. Whereas
some scholars have expressed concerns about their expansive and vague meaning, I believe that
all four terms can apply to any organized, explicitly public representations of the past.”

2 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. Though the book was written in French in 1941, it was not

3 Ibid., 1.
Halbwachs argued that the past is, not only remembered in the written word through biographies and histories, but that it is also remembered through symbols and rituals. He writes that, “It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories.” In large part, the past is remembered and interpreted by social institutions and ritualized commemorations. What is remembered depends on the social group who is doing the remembering and the ways in which they choose to celebrate their memories. For example, memories may be celebrated with a particular symbol, such as a flag, or an event, such as a parade; those commemorations of the memory ingrain the significance of the memory into history. As long as the memory is preserved in a ritualized way, it will grow stronger over time instead of weaker. Because the persistence of memories is tied to the social groups who decide what to remember and how to go about doing so, collective memory is also highly selective.

Halbwachs argued that, in collective memory, there is also a willful forgetting that takes place. While some events are deemed worthy of commemoration, and therefore afforded a place in the present, other events are purposefully left in the past. The persistence of memory is based on shared ideologies in social groups. The memories that persist are often the ones that define social groups according to the terms that they agree upon. Groups create and maintain a “genealogy of identity” by commemorating some memories and forgetting others. Because of this, power also plays a large part in memory studies.

The social group in power is in a position to determine what aspects of the past will be allowed to persist into the present and whose story those memories will tell. Historical memory provides groups with an identity that allows them to justify their past in whatever manner they choose to. Roland Barthes wrote, “[Memory] purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives

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4 Ibid., 38.

5 Ibid., 22. Halbwachs writes, “Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time.” Because Halbwachs’ interpretation of collective memory presupposes that the past is recalled only through the lens of the present, there is a danger of viewing the past in an overly presentist manner.

6 Barbie Zelizer, “Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies,” Critical Studies in Mass Communication 12, no. 2 (June 1995).

7 Zelizer, “Reading the Past Against the Grain,” 220.
them natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact.8 Because of this, memories of the past are significantly informed by the concerns of the present.

In Halbwachs’ view, memories of the past are, chiefly, reflections of the perspective of the present rather than accurate representations of past events.9 Although present day perspectives do inform collective memory, historical memory must also account for historical continuities. In this way Halbwachs’ collective memory suffers from an overly “presentist” view of the past. Halbwachs’ theories could not provide a useable framework for the study of history if they were not further developed by other scholars.

Jan Assman and John Czaplicka’s essay “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity” tackled Halbwachs’ presentist perspective by arguing that there were more constant elements of memory.10 They argued that, “memory has its fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passage of time.”11 In addition to this, Assman and Czaplicka also contributed to collective memory’s usefulness for historians by asserting that memory was maintained through symbols, which they referred to as “figures of memory,” and that those “figures of memory” allowed groups in the present to understand past cultures.

“Collective Memory and Cultural Identity” also explores the way that memory is tied to the formation of identity. Like Halbwachs, the authors argue that a social group’s shared experiences become markers that define who they are.12 Through formalized commemorative activities the memories that a group selects to be celebrated, over time, become increasingly central to the group’s identity. Those ideologies that are shared by the social group determine the normative standards for that society.

8 Roland Barthes, Mythologies, 143.


11 Ibid., 129.

12 Ibid., 130. The authors write, “Cultural memory preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity.”
The ability to determine what events and symbols are commemorated is a unique power that allows majority social groups to construct societal standards based on their personal memories. The histories of the minority population become aberrant to the majority standards. Though all members of society possess memories—not all memories are created equal or obtain equally lasting prominence in history. This power differential between social groups is especially apparent when exploring historical memory and race relations in the south. Assman and Czaplicka argue that, “One group remembers the past in fear of deviating from its model, the next for fear of repeating the past. Which past becomes evident in that heritage, and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation, tells us much about the constitution and tendencies of a society.”\textsuperscript{13} Remembering is not incidental. The choice to remember some events and forget others is purposeful. Memory studies allow historians to evaluate the past by examining what memories are most celebrated and commemorated and the reasons why those memories may be significant to the society who values them.

Barbie Zelizer dealt directly with memory and its relationship with identity formation, power, and authority in her essay, “Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies.”\textsuperscript{14} By asking why historical actors constructed their memories in a particular way at a particular time, Zelizer highlighted the subjectivity and selectiveness of memory making. Zelizer wrote, “Collective memory…presumes activities of sharing, discussing, negotiation, and often, contestation.”\textsuperscript{15} Where there is contention over how to interpret events one dominant memory may come to erase the other almost entirely. This contention over which memories will persist inexorably links memory making to issues of power.\textsuperscript{16}

Zelizer further developed the usefulness of memory studies for historians by asserting that memory studies offer scholars a framework in which to explore how history is actually

\begin{itemize}
\item[$\textsuperscript{13}$] Ibid., 128.
\item[$\textsuperscript{14}$] Zelizer, “Reading the Past Against the Grain.”
\item[$\textsuperscript{15}$] Ibid., 214.
\item[$\textsuperscript{16}$] Ibid., 227. Zelizer writes, “Remembering is tied up also with issues of social order.” In his work, History and Memory, Quoted in Olick, History and Memory, French historian Jacques Le Goff wrote, “To make themselves the master of memory and forgetfulness is one of the great preoccupations of the classes, groups, and individuals who have dominated and continue to dominate historical societies.”
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created and also allows historians a way to interpret society’s agendas.\textsuperscript{17} In addition, Zelizer contributes to Assman and Czaplicka’s assertion that historical memory is less presentist than Halbwachs believed it to be. For use as a tool of history, memory is anchored to archival sources in order to authenticate its claims.\textsuperscript{18} Zelizer writes, “Collective memory is always a means to something else…[it] is evaluated for the ways in which it helps us to make connections—to each other over time and space and to ourselves. At the heart of memory’s study, then, it its usability, its invocation as a tool to defend different aims and agendas.”\textsuperscript{19} Zelizer’s article marked an important evolution in the use of memory to study history.\textsuperscript{20}

In “Collective Memory and History: How Abraham Lincoln Became a Symbol of Racial Equality,” Barry Schwartz illustrated the complementary nature of memory studies and history by using historical memory to explore the image of Abraham Lincoln in American history and the ways in which Americans’ perception of Lincoln has changed as time has passed. Schwartz studied the transformation of Lincoln’s image from “a conservative symbol of the status quo during the Jim Crow era into the personification of racial justice and equality during the New Deal and Civil Rights Movement.”\textsuperscript{21}

Schwartz modified Halbwachs’ theories by adding that collective memory was not only the result of ritual and symbols but also of historical evidence.\textsuperscript{22} The past, Schwartz argued, was comprised of both persistence and change. Though historical memory changes, there are continuities in history that remain independent of varying perceptions. Schwartz’s essay

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 226.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 232.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 226.
\textsuperscript{20} Zelier, "Reading the Past Against the Grain," 216. Here Zelizer also notes that, “The French Annales school of social and intellectual history has…brought memory into the forefront of its attempts to link historical inquiry with other disciplines, notably sociology.”
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 469.
successfully reconciled the theory of collective memory with historical continuity by concluding that historical memory often was more of a constructive process than a simple retrieval process.\textsuperscript{23}

Schwartz developed Halbwachs’ notions of symbols by expanding the concept to include physical spaces and their part in memory construction. Memories, Schwartz argued, were often retained and evoked in physical spaces such as sacred sites and monuments. These spaces, termed by Pierre Nora as “lieux de memoire”\textsuperscript{24} or “sites of memory” are tied directly to memory creation. Commemorative events may have included the erection of monuments and those spaces where monuments are located became physical manifestations of group identity and power. Schwartz wrote that, “Commemoration, like ideology, promotes commitment to the world by producing symbols of its values and aspirations.”\textsuperscript{25} Acknowledging the significance of physical spaces, and the power that they have to commemorate memory, allows historians to have greater insight into societies in the past.

In their essay, “Social Memory Studies: From Collective Memory to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices” Jefrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins also address the importance of physical spaces in historical memory. Olick and Robbins argue that sites of memory are areas where struggles take place, “from above and below, from both center and periphery.”\textsuperscript{26} All groups in society engage in memory making and work to have their own perspectives entrenched in the cultural memory. The authors point out that, though a physical space may be claimed by a dominant social group to become a site of memory that espouses one particular perspective, “dominant memory is not monolithic, nor is popular memory purely authentic.”\textsuperscript{27} The desire to control memory making is shared by all members of society; and different social groups possess varying social, political, and cultural interests. The memories that

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 471.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 470.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 470.


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 127.
persist, through the years, are the product of great efforts put forth by groups who doggedly fought for their right to be the interpreters of history.\textsuperscript{28}

Memory studies offer insight into the power dynamics of societies in the past. The power to select why and how memories are commemorated are also directly tied to the formation of identity. Because of this, memory studies are particularly useful in studying race relations in the New South. Historical memory in the south is most often representative of a white southern perspective rather than a black southern perspective. Though contention between white and black cultures over the right to interpret history has continued, black memory has, most often, been overshadowed.

W. Fitzhugh Brundage was the first scholar to employ memory studies to study race relations in the New South. Brundage’s use of memory studies allows him to evaluate “history in motion” in regards to the emergence of the dominance of white memory over time. Particularly concerned with racial violence and the way that it has been remembered, Brundage writes, “To understand fully the significance of these controversies, we should pay attention to the history that southerners have valued, the elements of their past they have chosen to remember and forget, the ways that they have disseminated their past, and the uses to which their memories have been put.”\textsuperscript{29}

\textit{Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity} is a collection of essays edited by W. Fitzhugh Brundage. The essays fully incorporate historical memory into their readings of southern violence. By highlighting the ways in which memory was constructed in the south, the authors consider not only what has typically been remembered, but also what has been willingly forgotten. Brundage’s use of historical memory also fully incorporates several other aspects of new history into the study of violence such as anthropology, psychology, linguistics, literary criticism, and cultural studies. This wide range of fields incorporated into

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\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 127. Olick quotes Iwona Irwin-Zarecka’s statement that, “[Memory] is a product of a great deal of work by large numbers of people.”
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historical memory offers historians the opportunity to seek new sources and to ask new questions about the historical record.\textsuperscript{30}

Brundage specifically analyzes the formation of southern identity and the ways in which its creation excluded black southerners. Working off of Halbwachs’ assertion that memory provides social groups with a genealogy of identity, Brundage writes, “Groups invariably fashion their own image of the world and their place in it by establishing an accepted version of the past.”\textsuperscript{31} Whites in the New South were committed to creating a version of the past that venerated whites as heroes and justified violent actions taken against blacks.

Brundage argues that the persistence of white memory at the expense of black memory was not incidental. Because white southerners had the power to do so, they purposefully excluded black southerners’ perspectives from the historical record.\textsuperscript{32} The New South did not provide black southerners with a blank slate on which they could construct their identities as free citizens. Lost Cause monuments were erected to commemorate the legacy of white dominance in the south. Though memory making inherently involved conflict between social groups, southern blacks were at a distinct disadvantage. Brundage writes, “Whereas white social memory was both public and universal in its claims the black counter memory was neither.”\textsuperscript{33} For this reason, Brundage argues that black southerners perceived history as an unresolved concept.

Bruce E. Baker’s article, “Under the Rope: Lynching and Memory in Laurens County, South Carolina” explores the historical memory of lynching.\textsuperscript{34} The author investigates how memories of lynchings were formed as well as the ways in which they were perpetuated and used

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\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 23. Brundage also argues that the incorporation of these fields into historical memory have contributed to the “theoretical and analytical sophistication” of the field which Brundage considers, “its own category of general knowledge.”
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\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 4.
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\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 5.
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\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 11.
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\textsuperscript{34} Bruce E. Baker, “Under the Rope: Lynching and Memory in Laurens County, South Carolina,” in Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 319-345, 320. Baker also referred to lynching as, “one of the most glaring symbols of black oppression as long as the practice endured.”
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in one particular southern community. He claims that, “by examining the historical memory we
gain a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of lynching and the meanings it held for both
those who lived through it and those who have lived with its legacy.”  

Baker’s study of lynchings and historical memory is anchored in archival research as well as oral interviews.

One of the methods that Baker employs to study lynchings in Laurens County is to
distinguish the public and private “communities of memory.”  

Baker argues that most memories concerning lynching do not persist as a part of the public discourse. According to Baker, the
evidence that makes up public discourse includes archival sources such as newspapers, books
and legal documents as well as monuments, physical spaces, and actions that took place in public
places.  

While newspapers in Laurens County did report on lynchings, Baker’s article contends
that the periodicals failed to represent the perspectives of all citizens in the community. Though
the lynchings, as events, might be recorded specific information about the victims, such as their
names, were not facts that were published.

The newspapers in Baker’s study were more likely to include articles that focused on
positive reminiscences about the community’s past rather than articles on racial violence. Baker
wrote, “the purpose of this is to commemorate significance or curious local events, not to
perpetuate the memory of the less pleasant aspects of local history.”  

Also a part of the public collective memory, legal documents too proved insufficient in representing an accurate memory
of lynchings. Because victims of lynch mobs were rarely taken into official police custody, legal
documents concerning the vigilante activity were often left out of the public record.

The fact that lynchings, which took place within county lines and often in the presence of
county sheriffs and deputies, did not become a part of the public memory illustrates the selective
nature of memory making. Black victims of lynching who had no ties to the community where
they were lynched were especially vulnerable to violence and were most likely to be forgotten in

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35 Ibid., 320.
36 Ibid., 320.
37 Ibid., 321.
38 Ibid., 322.
death.\textsuperscript{39} Because of this, memories concerning racial violence, where they did exist, grew in the private discourse of the community rather than the public discourse. In his article, Baker concludes that, “by controlling the public discourse—the newspapers, the courts, the books…whites had the luxury of remembering or forgetting the past as they chose.”\textsuperscript{40} Much of Baker’s analysis of racial violence in the south is based on the work that Fitzhugh Brundage did to explore the nature of lynch mobs.

In \textit{Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930}, W. Fitzhugh Brundage provided a nuanced study of lynching in the South. Brundage’s attention to the complexities of mob violence and use of social anthropology to study mob violence provided important insights into the nature of lynchings and mob mentality. Though Brundage’s book did not directly relate historical memory to his examination of lynchings, \textit{Lynching in the New South} began to ask questions that the author would later answer with the application of historical memory in his work. In \textit{Lynching in the New South} Brundage identified that lynchings were a method employed by white southerners to retain power over blacks and deny black citizens access to their own political or social power.\textsuperscript{41}

Though he did not yet employ terms such as “sites of memory,” Brundage identified public spaces and the contestation over their ownership as a key component of race violence and the struggle for social groups to create an identity.\textsuperscript{42} Brundage also addressed notions of continuity and change in southern history that he would later expound upon.\textsuperscript{43} In \textit{Lynching in the New South} Brundage foregrounds the question of, to what extent was lynching, “a social ritual affirmed by traditional values?”\textsuperscript{44} Exploring the intricacies of lynch mobs in the south provides

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  \item \textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 322. Baker writes that victims who “lacked an extensive network of kin or a long-standing relationship with an employer to provide protection…were vulnerable to violence of mobs because their character was shrouded in mystery and their reputation [was] not part of local white memory.”
  \item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 336.
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Brundage, \textit{Lynching in the New South}, 110.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} Brundage, \textit{Where These Memories Grow}.
\end{itemize}
the foundation for its use in conjunction with historical memory to the interpretation of racial tension in the south. Events must be clearly defined before they are deconstructed.

Brundage did not treat all lynchings as similar events. He argued that, while lynchings did share some common characteristics, they were essentially multi-faceted occurrences that were only occasionally indicative of a set cultural ritual. Brundage contended that scholars placed too much emphasis on the cultural similarities of lynchings and urged scholars against a Geertzian cultural model of interpretation. According to Brundage, “Attempts to interpret lynching as a ritualized event thick with the deepest values of white southerners may lead to undue emphasis on the unchanging, ritualized, and mass character of mob violence.” The author concluded that lynchings were not texts to be read for cultural significance. Though they may have shared some commonalities, each lynching was an independent event.

Reading too much into the perceived cultural patterns inherent in lynchings could lead historians to teleological conclusions about the event. Brundage argued that lynchings were complex events that could not be defined by generalizations. The author pointed out that white motivations for lynchings were more varied and nuanced than simple exertions of white dominance. He writes, “Lynchings necessarily reflected differing notions of white supremacy and consequently were much more than a simple affirmation of white unity.” Mob violence carried different implications across space and time.

The perspective that each lynching was different marked an important evolution in the historical literature on lynchings. Prior to Brundage, the questions asked about lynchings were not specific enough to construct a nuanced portrayal of the events. For example, though Brundage conceded that lynchings were more typical in economically distressed areas, he did not conclude that all lynchings were primarily motivated by economic factors. Brundage differentiated between types and sizes of lynch mobs and explored the connections between social status of the victim and subsequent violence of the mob. His attention to the dissimilarities of lynching mobs offered historians new perspectives of the past and highlighted the role of the


individual in mob violence. Brundage acknowledged the continuities of mob violence but was also interested in the ways that lynching changed over time and space. He introduced new questions into the scholarship about how to explain the variation in mob violence.

Like *Lynching in the New South*, Brundage’s *Under the Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South* is another publication that does not directly employ historical memory but does add useful insights to the bigger picture of violence and memory in the south. *Under the Sentence of Death* is a collection of essays edited by Brundage. Brundage’s own essay, “The Roar on the Other Side of Silence: Black Resistance and White Violence in the American South, 1880-1940” recovers black memories in large part by acknowledging the existence of black resistance to lynchings. Early studies of lynching in the south failed to recognize that, as a group, black southerners resisted lynchings. 48

*A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America* by James H. Madison is a case study that incorporates historical memory directly into its analysis of the 1930 lynching of Abe Smith and Tom Shipp, two young black men, in Marion, Indiana. Madison’s work is important not only because its focus is a lynching in the north but also because the events of the lynching were well documented. Madison has the advantage of studying mob violence that left behind records in both public and private communities of memory. The lynchings in Marion left behind photographic evidence of the event and a survivor who wrote a book about escaping the lynch mob.

Perhaps because the lynching in Marion garnered the attention of the NAACP, Madison is also able to recover a black voice that is as well documented as the white voice. Lynchings that garnered national attention were more likely to leave behind public records which aided in the persistence of black memories. Unlike other studies of lynch mob violence, Madison’s book affords blacks more agency than previous scholarship by acknowledging that blacks resisted

48 James R. McGovern’s, *Anatomy of a Lynching: The killing of Claude Neal* is one of the first works to provide a psychological analysis of a specific lynching. 48 McGovern’s book is not specifically a work of historical memory, however the emphasis on the psychological aspect of the lynching of Claude Neal marks a significant development toward the use of historical memory to study lynchings. Though McGovern attempts to give voice to the black community, McGovern asserts that blacks never resisted lynching and cites their lack of resistance as a reason for the prevalence of lynchings in the South. James R. McGovern, *Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).
lynching. Madison writes, “In challenging the color line, blacks in this one place created a community of their own.”⁴⁹ The study is an important addition to the historiography of lynching and historical memory because it considers race violence in the north and also because it recovers a useable black voice. The book asks questions about how memories are made and illustrates how different versions of the same event are created.⁵⁰

Though W. Fitzhugh Brundage edited a volume of essays on historical memory and racial violence in the south, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* is Brundage’s first book that directly incorporates memory studies and his exploration of race relations in the south. Brundage’s work specifically looks at sites of memory in order to evaluate the ways in which the concept of the “southerner” has, historically, been defined. Brundage argues that public spaces offered social groups an opportunity to assert their cultural authority over minority groups as well as to celebrate collective solidarity and create long lasting memories.⁵¹ Physical spaces played an important role in defining group identities in the south and were most often claimed by white southerners. Brundage writes,

> Historically, access to the public sphere has required ‘social permission.’ Unwelcome parties can be ignored, thereby transforming the public sphere into a forum for exclusion as often as inclusion. In either case, public space serves to reproduce social relations that define some members of society as worthy of access to public life and others as unworthy.⁵²

The persistence of white memory in public spaces, in the south, is directly related to issues of power and identity. Brundage argues that black southerners could not claim public spaces for themselves because they were, ultimately, unable to combat the political and economic powers of the dominant white social groups. Brundage also asserts that black southerners never had the same opportunities that whites did to claim public spaces as their own.

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⁵⁰ Ibid., 3.


⁵² Ibid., 7.
Public spaces in the New South carried memories of the antebellum south in the form of Lost Cause statues and monuments.

*The Southern Past* also examines the role of archives and historical societies in the south. Brundage argues that history was often recorded and collected by voluntary organizations that were helmed by white southerners. As the group in charge of collecting historical artifacts, these organizations were given the power to determine which “facts” would become lasting southern memories. Brundage claims that, “The [southern] archives and museums, reflecting the ‘highest stage’ of white supremacy, were…for whites only.”53 Instead of creating public archives that represented the perspectives of all southerners, archives became “reliquaries of the Lost Cause.”54 Because of this, black churches and schools became the primary sites of memory for black southerners. 55

Historical memory acknowledges the diversity of identities in history. It attempts to resolve the tensions between those memories which have become normative and those of more marginalized peoples that have been forgotten. This is imperative because it helps historians to construct a more complete picture of past events. Historical memory provides a framework with which to evaluate the ways that collective memory “forges identities, justifies privilege and sustains cultural norms.”56 Because collective memory is highly selective it must be studied for the memories it does not represent as much as for the ones it does. As Brundage wrote, “historical memories are crafted intentionally by people for specific reasons.”57 The willful forgetting that has excluded minority groups from historical memory should be acknowledged and recovered. Evaluating the selective nature of collective memory provides insights into power structures in past societies.

Documentary evidence should be read not only for what is said, but also for what it does not say. Studies of racial violence must be reevaluated if they have not considered the memory of

53 Ibid., 107.

54 Ibid., 125.

55 Ibid., 138-182.

56 Ibid., 4.

the oppressed. Scholars must also consider that memory itself is not an objective or even very accurate rendering of past events. The white memory of violence has historically been privileged over black memory. White memory is recorded in local and national newspapers that rarely offered the perspective of black victims of racial violence. In addition, because southern communities often sanctioned violence against marginalized peoples, the white majority memories of events are most often those that are recorded. Historians should consider why certain memories have endured and whose voice they represent. This is especially true of southern history and the ongoing racial conflicts there.58

In addition to historical memory’s affect on the historiography of memory and violence, its implications for the present may also be profound. Brundage discusses the conflicts that have arisen from contested memories of the past. Specifically in the south, constructing an identity that is situated in the past has led to ongoing racial conflicts. The study of memory and racial violence in the south may serve to create a “community of memory” that allows black southerners a useable history to strengthen their claims to southern identity. The racial violence in Perry illustrates the ways in which historians must contend with various memories concerning the past. In the case of lynchings in the south, black memory has been overshadowed by white memory. Eudora Welty, an author and southerner herself wrote, “Trust me. The south is no place for beginners. Its power of denial can turn a lost war into a vibrant, necessary form of national chic.”59

58 Brundage, The Southern Past, 99. Brundage wrote, “White history exalted white civilization, legitimated white power, and virtually excluded any admission of meaningful black agency in the region’s past....This jealous defense of sectional honor that was at the heart of the white southern memory had no parallel in black memory.”

59 Eudora Welty, quoted in Brundage, Where These Memories Grow, 349.
CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTING A GENEALOGY OF IDENTITY:
WHITE HISTORICAL MEMORY IN TAYLOR COUNTY

“We think Taylor County is a beautiful place to live in. It
is surrounded by trees, rivers, and good people.” —W. T. Cash

In February of 1895, the Monumental Association in North Carolina stated that, “A land
without monuments is a land without memories.” The south is certainly a land with a past.
Statues of Confederate generals and obelisks have been built to commemorate southern valor and
values. These monuments—memories carved into marble, are more than simple reminders of the
past, they are markers of southern identity—stone images that turn memories into facts. The
United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) played a significant role in commemorating
Confederate soldiers with memorials that exalted “the valorous dead.” The fact that the UDC
had the influence and financial resources to have monuments erected is testament to the role of
power in memory making. The women’s group not only worked to erect monuments, they also
lobbied lawmakers to build state archives and museums. Though the south lost the Civil War,
members of the UDC sought to define the legacy of the Confederacy on their own terms. Like
soldiers in combat, they would “wield the pen as a sword of redemption.”

Monuments not only commemorate the past because of the images that they promote, but
also because of the spaces that they occupy. Fitzhugh Brundage wrote, “By insinuating their
memory into public spaces, groups exert their cultural authority, express their collective

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2 Quoted in Brundage, Where These Memories Grow, 143.

3 David Goldfield, Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 111.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 112.
solidarity, and achieve a measure of the permanence that they often crave.\(^6\) In the years following the Civil War, public spaces were claimed by white southerners whose memories were memorialized as statues on state capital grounds and in town squares.\(^7\) The universality of white memory failed to recognize any representations of black southerners. Monuments in the south are examples of the intentionality of memory making and the purposeful exclusion of blacks in public memory.\(^8\)

Lynchings were no unique events in the south in the 1920’s. Between the years 1880 and 1930, there were 4,697 recorded lynchings in the United States. Of those who were lynched, 3,344 of them were black and ninety five percent of all lynchings occurred in the south.\(^9\) Lynchings in Florida, such as the ones that took place in Taylor County, were common occurrences.\(^10\) If commemorating events in the past creates lasting memories, then lynchings have gone largely unremembered. No monuments were built to memorialize the deaths of Wright or Young in Perry, Florida. Though lynchings have been commemorated, informally, in some places in the south, no memorials comparable to those erected for the Lost Cause have been built to remember lynching victims in the south.

Evaluating the memories that Southerners value and the ways in which they have distributed those memories into public spaces exposes the white southern biases that have venerated some events and forgotten others. Of his study on the lynchings in Marion, Indiana, James Madison wrote, “By focusing a spotlight on one place and one event we can see more clearly the persistence and fluidity of racial matters as white and blacks struggle with its complexities.”\(^11\) In this way Taylor County and, more specifically, Perry, Florida, serves as a

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\(^6\) W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 6. In her essay, “Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past in Raleigh and Wilmington, North Carolina,” Catherine W. Bishir stated, “The location of monuments in the state’s principle civil places lent authority to the version of history they represented, white, at the same time the monuments claimed those public spaces and thereby defined the setting for public life.”

\(^7\) Ibid., 7. Brundage writes, “For a century after the Civil War, whites ensured that public spaces conspicuously excluded any recognition of the recalled past of blacks.”

\(^8\) Ibid., 140.


case study in which historical memory and race relations in the south can be evaluated. As Halbwachs argued, it is in society where people acquire their memories. Using historical memory to study race relations in Taylor County requires an in-depth evaluation of the citizens who lived there and the principles that they esteemed. There was a purposeful attempt, by those with the power to write history, to deliberately deny black citizens of Taylor County an identity. Official records were occasionally racist in tone but, more often, left out black citizens altogether. This systematic forgetting also left the violent atrocities that occurred in Perry, Florida, largely unrecorded.

W. Fitzhugh Brundage wrote, “Every group of southerners…seeks some form of a useable past, some degree of control over the social memory of their town, state, or region.”\textsuperscript{12} Taylor County citizens fashioned their historical roots out of a sense of connection to the founding fathers and created a local body of stories that tied them to the national mythology. Locals recounted stories about Andrew Jackson battling Seminoles near Natural Bridge in 1818.\textsuperscript{13} Local historian turned state librarian, W. T. Cash, claimed kinship to Benjamin Franklin because his father, Benjamin Franklin Cash, was related to Benjamin Franklin’s common law wife Deborah Read.\textsuperscript{14} Taylor County itself was named after President Zachary Taylor. Identity in Taylor County was inexorably linked to notions of white America. Those who lived in Taylor County saw themselves as a part of the larger American landscape. Related through blood and spirit to the greatness of their American heritage, they created an identity, which was rooted in history, where they were kin to national heroes and contributors to the country’s future.

\textsuperscript{12} Brundage, \textit{Where These Memories Grow}, 349.

\textsuperscript{13} “History of Taylor County,” n.d., W. T. Cash Collection; Taylor County Historical Society (hereinafter, Cash Collection).

\textsuperscript{14} William Thomas Cash Papers, 1918-1951, N2004-5. Box 1 FF 53, (hereinafter referred to as FSA).
The 1920’s were a particularly important time of change in Taylor County. The twenties brought new developments in the form of industrial and local accomplishments. More than ever citizens considered themselves a significant part of the national scene. The Burton-Swartz Cypress Mill in Taylor County became the highest producer of turpentine in the country. Locals W. T. Cash and Cary Hardee brought prestige to the community by becoming involved in state politics as State Librarian and Governor of Florida, respectively. Taylor County citizens celebrated these developments, along with the new paved roads and railroad tracks that were built in the twenties. As they moved into the future though, they maintained an eye on their past.

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15 “Pine Grove School Student’s Accomplishments,” n.d., Cash Collection.
Residents of Taylor County valued their history as hardworking men who “lived simply.”\textsuperscript{16} Those families who first settled the area that would become Taylor County, were held in great esteem. Cash’s version of local history included no mention of conflict, instead claiming that, “Settlers cooperated with each other one hundred per cent, helping out at log-rollings, rail-splittings, house-raisings, fodder pullings and hog-killings.”\textsuperscript{17} In the 1920’s, local newspapers still reported on the comings and goings of the families who first settled in Taylor County. However, the twenties were also a time period that reshaped residents’ notions of who their local heroes were. New ideas about identity were formed when ordinary men became extraordinary by graduating from local positions as teachers and principals to more prominent positions in the state legislature. Taylor County citizens always associated themselves with great men, but in the 1920’s those great men were no longer far removed from their everyday lives. The twenties were a time of progress when residents had to reconcile their notions of the past with the developments that moved them into the future.

Historical societies also emerged in the twenties. In April of 1923, just four months after Ruby Hendry’s murder, Cash asserted that Taylor County was in need of its own archives, “to gather information which could be systematized in such a manner as would be helpful in writing a history of the county.”\textsuperscript{18} One of the first public spaces devoted to collecting materials was a clubhouse that was built for the Woman’s Club of Perry, Florida. The woman’s club was comprised of local white women; and the City Council granted them space to erect their clubhouse in 1921, “for a period of fifty years.”\textsuperscript{19} Archives allowed Taylor County residents an official space to store their memories. Made up mostly of donations from white members of society and run by white residents, the Taylor County Historical Society became, exclusively, a

\textsuperscript{16} “History of Taylor County,” n.d., Cash Collection.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} “Reminiscences 14,” April 6, 1923, Cash Collection.

\textsuperscript{19} Taylor County, County Commissioner Minutes. June 7, 1921; Taylor County Historical Society, “Court Documents from 1920s.”
space for white memory. The Florida legislature would also establish a state archive and a state library in 1927.20

Taylor County was officially created on December 23, 1856. The county was named after Zachary Taylor because Taylor served as a general in North Florida in 1838 and 1839 fighting in the Second Seminole War. Cash recalls that, “General Zachary Taylor, for whom Taylor County is named, was very active in this area, clearing the country of Indians in 1838 and 1839.”21 At the time that Taylor County was created the most valued resources in the community were livestock and slaves.22 The county seat was established in the area that would become Perry when Taylor County was created. A wooden courthouse was built to establish the area as the political center of Taylor County and, in 1869, a post office was built there as well. The post office was given the name “Rose Head” because of the wild roses that grew nearby.23 Though the county seat went years with no actual name, it too became known as Rose Head and was officially given the moniker in May of 1875.24

In May of 1875, Rose Head was renamed for the Confederate General, Edward A. Perry who eventually became governor.25 Perry’s campaign for the political position included speechifying that opposed the Independent party for its integration of black and white constituents.26 According to Cash, Taylor County’s residents were “perfectly oblivious” to the


21 “Taylor County’s History is Traced,” May 26, 1946, Cash Collection.

22 “Historical Sketch of Taylor County,” n.d., Cash Collection. The largest slave holding was 31 slaves. The assessed valuation of all property in Taylor County, in 1857 was $279,152. Of this $82,580.00 was for slaves and $89,430 was for livestock.


24 “Historical Sketch of Taylor County,” n.d., Cash Collection.

25 Ibid.

26 Paul Ortiz, Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 44. Ortiz writes that Perry’s campaign speech partner, Richard Call Long stated in one speech, “In this State, we have a multiplicity of political parties, but out of all the isms or theories which are being advanced and advocated there can be but two words.
struggles of the Civil War when the fighting began. However, the war impacted the community when it became a center for assembling deserters. The chief contribution of Taylor county residents to the Confederate cause was to hunt down the deserters who hid in the nearby swamp areas to escape combat. Any dwelling spots established by deserters were burned down and those captured were sent to the military headquarters in Tallahassee. Cash asserts that there were no more than one hundred deserters captured in the Taylor County area and that less than half of those men were local community residents. Taylor County remained a small community throughout the Civil War with a population of less than 1,500 people. However, the turn of the century saw an increase in population and industrial development.

Most citizens of Perry, in the 1920s, worked as farmers or were employed by the Burton-Swartz Cypress Company. The white farmers in the area looked to the politics of Ben Tillman for guidance. Tillman, a US Senator representing South Carolina, was not only a champion of low-income farmers, but also as a proponent of Jim Crow laws. Residents could purchase

spelled—one of these is ‘white man’ and the other ‘nigger’—and this practically is the only question which the white men of this state are called upon to solve at the coming election.”


28 “W. T. Cash writes about Taylor County,” 1938, Cash Collection.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.; U.S. Bureau of the Census. Population and Housing, 1920. The total population in Taylor County was 11, 219 residents. Of those 3, 739 were black residents and 6, 544 were native white residents.

32 U.S. Bureau of the Census. Population and Housing. 1920. There were 64, 458 acres of farmland in Taylor county and 36 manufacturing establishments. Of the 507 farms in Taylor County, 484 of them were owned by whites and 8 were owned by blacks.

33 “Schoolhouse Speeches and Debates,” n.d., Cash Collection.

34 Francis Butler Simkins, Pitchfork Ben Tillman, South Carolinian (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), citations are to the South Carolina edition. In this biography, Simkins writes that Tillman, a senator who represented South Carolina in the US Senate, incited a “genuine mass movement in the history of
medicine and other household items at The Bloodworth Drugstore. The Bloodworth Drugstore remains today as the oldest drugstore in Perry and a monument to the unchanging nature of Perry and the high esteem in which native Taylor County residents are held. Perry was also home to Cary Hardee, the governor of Florida from 1921 to 1925. Before becoming governor, Hardee served as a high school principal in Perry. Each year high school students participated in debates that were meant to encourage oratorical skills. Hardee addressed race relations when he chose the “Back To Africa Movement” as a topic for his students to debate.

The Burton-Swartz Cypress Company of Florida was responsible for contributing the most significant industrial development in Perry. Burton-Swartz ran the largest cypress mill in the country and was lauded as “the pride of the County.” After exhausting resources in Louisiana, the company moved south in search of more plentiful natural resources. In 1913, the Perry town council approved the Burton-Swartz Cypress Company’s request to build a mill in Perry. The company brought lumbering and naval yards to the town and Burton-Swartz Cypress Company gave Perry, “the biggest impetus it ever received.” With the cypress mill also came paved roads, railroads and ice and electric plants. The Burton-Swartz Company not only helped develop Perry’s industry, but also employed many of its citizens. Burton-Swartz developed logging communities with living quarters where employees could live near work sites. Because

white Carolina, but at the same time, the force and unity of Tillmanism, derived from its anti-black racial policies.”


37 They Were Here, Number 13, Taylor County Historical Society.


the industry often employed poor white and black workers, living areas were segregated.\textsuperscript{40} Typical workdays lasted twelve hours and began at four thirty in the morning. The company became an integral part of life in Perry.

Perry proved a lucrative site and the Burton-Swartz Cypress Company national headquarters moved there in 1917. In the twenties, the cypress mill became the most productive producer of turpentine in the United States.\textsuperscript{41} In addition to the mill itself, Burton-Swartz also brought other enterprises to Perry that became central to the community.

The Burton-Swartz Mercantile Company, “a complete drug store,” was initially built to accommodate mill workers but grew to service the entire community. High school class photos were taken at Burton-Swartz Park and marriage notices in the newspaper often included that the bride or groom was a “faithful employee of Burton-Swartz.” When one of the Perry Electric Company’s water wells collapsed, the town looked to the cypress mill to help correct their “water situation.”\textsuperscript{42} Another business that provided employment in Taylor County was The Burton-Swartz Hotel. Ruby Hendry’s sister, Eugenia “Hattie” Miller, worked at the Burton-Swartz Hotel; and Hattie’s husband, Henry Miller, worked for Burton-Swartz mill from the day that it began operation until the day it closed. At the time that she was killed, Ruby Hendry was living with her sister and brother-in-law in Shady Grove.\textsuperscript{43}

Shady Grove was the first land entry in the area that would become Taylor County in 1835.\textsuperscript{44} The Hendrys, who established themselves in Shady Grove in 1854, were among the

\textsuperscript{40} Sarah H. Brown, “Turpentine Laborers of Florida: Peonage in the New South.”

\textsuperscript{41} Harrington, 2. Burton-Swartz would remain in Perry until December 31, 1942 when natural resources were finally depleted. Harrington wrote that, “The closure of the mill devastated the economy of Perry,” 8; Harrington, 3.

\textsuperscript{42} The Taylor County Herald, August 8, 1916; The Taylor County Herald, June 9, 1922; The Taylor County Herald, June 9, 1922. The Burton-Swartz Mercantile Company advertised many products in the local paper including ladies’ umbrellas.


\textsuperscript{44} “First Land Entry Near Shady Grove,” n.d., Cash Collection.
pioneer families who settled there.\textsuperscript{45} Shady Grove held special significance for W. T. Cash whose wife, Gracie Lou Wentworth, was from the area. Cash also taught school in Shady Grove for three years during his tenure as an educator. Because of these connections, Cash had a great affection for Shady Grove and its community.\textsuperscript{46} Cash referred to the Hendrys specifically as “the leading citizens of Taylor County” noting also his friendship with Alton C. Hendry, the County Tax Collector.\textsuperscript{47} The murder of Ruby Hendry would provoke an especially violent and mass response because of the prominence of the Hendrys in Taylor County. Cash wrote, “What has impressed me more that [sic] the health and longevity of Shady Grove people is the beauty of its girls (Florida Advertising Commission please take notice).”\textsuperscript{48} Protecting the virtue of white women was a tenet of the southern honor code, and an attack on one of Shady Grove’s most popular daughters increased the level of retribution.\textsuperscript{49}

With the official history of Perry written by W.T. Cash, little has been recorded concerning the history of African Americans in Taylor County. The Taylor County Historical Society in Perry is filled largely with the history of Perry’s white citizens. Documents concerning Claude Pepper, Cary Hardee, and Cash himself are housed in the Historical Society, along with volumes of information about Perry’s role in the Confederacy; however, black citizens of Perry are represented in relatively few documents. Only recently has Perry’s black community begun to appear in Perry’s historical society. Neither in the historical society, nor in the Taylor County Public Library are there any records predating the 1930s. Cash’s history of Perry is important because it persists as the official history of the town even today. If "identities [personal or collective] are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.; “Old Shady Grove,” February 9, 1926, Cash Collection.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48} “The Shady Grove Community,” n.d., Cash Collection.

\textsuperscript{49} Goldfield, \textit{Still Fighting the Civil War}, 12. UDC leader, Elizabeth Lumpkin addressed a crowd of Confederate soldiers, stating, “I love you, you grand old men who guarded, with your lives, the virgin whiteness of our south.”
position ourselves in, the narratives of the past,“\(^{50}\) then the identities of Perry’s citizens are bestowed upon them by the white, patriarchal figure of Cash.

William Thomas Cash was born in Jefferson County, Florida, on July 23, 1878. Benjamin Franklin Cash, died when his son was thirteen and W. T. Cash was left to make a living on his own. Cash attended school in Jefferson County and worked as a farm hand until 1897 when he met Cary Hardee. Hardee offered to act as Cash’s mentor and so Cash took the opportunity to learn how to become an educator. After six months of working with Hardee, Cash passed the teacher’s examination in Taylor County and became a teacher there.\(^{51}\)

December 13, 1897, marked Cash’s first day of work as a teacher and he continued to teach at Taylor County high school until 1921. During his tenure as an educator Cash was lauded as, “the toughest school teacher in Taylor County.”\(^{52}\) Cash continued his own education by taking classes on teaching at Florida State University in the summer of 1917.\(^{53}\) He also taught Florida History and Civic courses at the university while he was in Tallahassee.

Cash, an “ardent democrat” eventually left Taylor County for Tallahassee when he became involved in state government. He served as a member of the State House of Representatives in the Florida Legislature. He was elected to serve three terms in 1909, 1915, and 1917. Cash was also elected to serve a single term in the Senate in 1919, resigning before his term was up in order to become eligible for the position of school superintendent for Taylor County. During his time in the House, Cash authored the Cash Primary Law of 1909\(^{54}\) and the Campaign Expense Bill.\(^{55}\) Between 1921 and 1925 Cash served as both a high school principal


\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Florida State Archives, N2004-5, Box 1, FF53. It is noted that the law “received some amendment from others.”
and the county superintendent of public instruction of Taylor County.\textsuperscript{56} During this time Cash worked to build up the educational system in Taylor County by lobbying for the enforcement of the compulsory attendance laws as well as the construction of new school buildings.\textsuperscript{57}

Cash made some of his most significant contributions to Taylor County as a newspaperman. In addition to teaching, Cash founded a weekly paper called \textit{Taylor County Topics} in 1904. He sold the \textit{Taylor County Topics} less than a year later but in 1905, bought half interest in another newspaper, \textit{The Taylor County Citizen}. In 1925, Cash became an associate editor of the \textit{Perry Herald} where he penned a column initially titled, “Reminiscences” but later coined, “Country Jottings,” which consisted of Cash’s own observations of local events and people as well as the retellings of personal stories from his childhood. Soon after he began writing for the \textit{Perry Herald}, Cash was named editor-and-chief of the periodical. Cash owned half interest in the \textit{Perry Herald} from 1923 to 1925, but, again, sold his holdings less than a year after buying in to the paper. Cash also contributed to a Madison County newspaper, The \textit{Madison Enterprise-Recorder}, for which he wrote a column called “Observations.” Though he did not retain ownership over either of the papers he worked for, Cash’s stint as a writer allowed him to sculpt the history of Taylor County.

Cash also gained further notoriety for the books that he published. “Truth and Other Verse,” as well as “Wine and other Poems,” were collections of poetry. He also contributed two significant historical works to the scholarship on Florida with \textit{History of the Democratic Party in Florida} in 1936 and \textit{The Story of Florida: A State History} in 1938. In the 1930s Cash helped found the Florida Historical Society and as the Tallahassee Historical Society. Cash became an active member of the Florida Historical Society and served as the president of the Tallahassee Historical Society in its first two years.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{55} H. G. Davis Jr., “W. T. Cash, Veteran State Librarian,” n.d., Cash Collection. This Bill Required candidates for political office to make a sworn financial statement of their campaign expenses. It was the first such law in the State’s history.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57} “Narrative Report of Taylor County Schools for years 1920-1922,” n.d., Cash Collection.

\textsuperscript{58} Elliot, Cash Collection.
Cash’s most prestigious role was that of State Librarian. In 1927, when the state library board and the state library were established, Cash was named the first secretary of the board, “which office carries with it the position of state librarian.” Of Cash’s contribution to the state library it was said, “From a very small nucleus and with limited resources, [Cash] has, in addition to this other duties, accumulated many manuscripts, documents, maps, newspapers and books relating to Florida. Thereby building up an invaluable collection of Florida.”

Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins argued that, “Communities…have a history. In order not to forget the past, a community is involved in retelling its constitutive narrative.” W. T. Cash constructed the narrative that became the official history of Taylor County. His books and articles were considered the most accurate representations of people, places, and events in the past. Cash was seen as the ultimate authority on local history. An article in the Tallahassee Democrat marking the death of Cash stated, “It is doubtful that any man in the state had a firmer grasp of Florida’s history from the earliest times, including it’s folk ways and lore—the very life stream of our state. Although he had no string of initials after his name, his knowledge was profound and his scholarship impressive.” Cash’s columns in Taylor County newspapers linked residents to a larger American mythology and crafted a local history that described them only in glowing terms.

Cash described citizens of Taylor County as, “superior people” who were prone to “nothing but sanity and reason.” Little was recorded of conflict. Less was recorded of black residents. If memory constructs identity, then Cash denied black citizens in Taylor County an identity in his writings. As a local historian and state librarian, Cash intentionally forgot black people and their accomplishments. A man who was quick to name people, Cash never named any black residents of Taylor County in his writings. Black citizens were largely left undocumented by Cash whose only references to them were as punch lines.

59 Florida State Archives, N2004-5, Box 1, FF53.

60 Ibid.

61 Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies," 122.

62 The Tallahassee Democrat, July 12, 1951.

One anecdote, which Cash reprinted several times in his “Reminiscences” column under the heading “Stories That Made Me Laugh” was the tale of a black student whose misunderstanding of “Women’s Suffrage” to mean “Women’s Suffering” presented a caricature of a black resident rather than represent a real person.64 A similar joke told of two white men who set out on a fishing trip. Not knowing the optimal fishing spots themselves, the two men sought out a local black fisherman who they believed could take them to the most prosperous areas. The men succeeded in outsmarting the “lazy,” black fisherman into working for them by promising him alcohol in return for his services.65 These stories, though told as jokes, offer some of the only representation of blacks in Cash’s newspaper columns.

In addition to these anecdotes, Cash also recounted a story about two white men from Perry who journeyed to Madison County. The story was told in a column celebrating “Madison and Madisonians” and was meant to illustrate that, “Even the road to Madison had its romantic associations.” Walking along Troy Road, the same road along which Wright and Young were lynched, the men made “an agreement to knock down every negro they met” along their way. Cash wrote,

After the pledge they made the first negro they met as [sic] a woman, but the man on whose side of the road she walked, faithful to his agreement, gave her a mighty blow toppling her over. The next culled personage was a crippled man, but he, too, was laid low on the earth. The third was a big buck negro with a physique quite equal to that of the “white gemmum,” and it took hard and tiring blows—perhaps from both—to land him on the ground. According to the story they agreed to let the other negroes they met go on without disturbance.66

Cash followed this story with another that illustrated the cleverness of whites and inferior intellect of blacks.67 Again, Cash gives no names or descriptions of the black southerners that he recalls. He affords them no identity at all beyond that of foil to the white protagonists.

Cash not only acted purposefully to exclude blacks from his recollections of Taylor County. His own racist views were expressed in a more official capacity. Cash refused to

64 “Stories That Made Me Laugh,” 1920s, Cash Collection.

65 A Fishing Story: mullet roe, codfish balls, and biscuits,” n.d., Cash Collection.


67 Ibid.
acknowledge black memory as a part of Taylor County’s history and championed the politics of white supremacy that denied black citizens political power. Cash noted in his work, *History of the Democratic Party in Florida*,

The negro voters in the counties of larger populations, where they predominated, were kept from control of local affairs, because the constitution of 1868 gave the governor the power of appointing all county officials, and most of those he named were white men. Those were the bright spots in a bad situation, and they were needed in order to prevent Florida Democrats from completely losing faith.68

Olick and Robbins argued that, “Memory inevitably gives way to history as we lose touch with our pasts...we can celebrate even what we did not directly experience, keeping the given past alive for us, or it can be alive only in historical records.”69 W. T. Cash, as the creator of memories and the author of histories must be examined for his personal biases. Memory is a purposeful construction and Cash purposefully upheld the principles of white supremacy in his formal historical writings and in his more informal reminiscences. His writings provided Taylor County residents with a genealogy of identity that continues to exist in their community.

Though Cash proclaimed great affection for the Shady Grove community, neither his historical works, nor his newspaper columns addressed the murder of Ruby Hendry or the racial violence that ensued. The violence in Perry was unique because white citizens there lynched black men from other communities, in addition to taking out their frustrations on the local black community, even though the murder suspects were not from Perry. The attack on Ruby Hendry, a young, white schoolteacher, was an attack on all white citizens of Perry. White Supremacy, which was especially important when the lives and virtue of white women were at stake, was an excuse for whites in Perry to react with violent authority.

Ruby Hendry was the youngest daughter of Alderman Carlton Hendry and his wife Atlanta Williams Hendry. Alderman’s family was a large one—Ruby had twelve siblings. The Hendry’s represented an elite class in Taylor County. Though many of them worked as farmers, they were also prominent local political and church leaders. It is recorded in *Hendry of Clan MacNachtan: A Genealogy* that, locals said of Alderman, “When no preacher was on hand,

68 William Thomas Cash Papers, 1918-1951, N2004-5. Box 1, FF6, FSA.

69 Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies," 111.
[Alderman] would take over and hold services. Though never licensed to preach, he was recognized as one of the great spiritual leaders of his community by people of all faiths.”

In 1922, Ruby was twenty-four years old and living with her sister Eugenia “Hattie” Hendry and Hattie’s husband, Harry A. Miller, in Shady Grove. Shady Grove was inside of Taylor County and only a quarter of a mile from Perry. Miller worked as a carpenter for Burton-Swartz; Hattie, at thirty-four years old, retired from teaching and worked as a manager and hostess for the local Burton-Schwartz Hotel. Hattie was also recognized as a spiritual leader in the community. She worked at the First Methodist Church where her father occasionally gave sermons. As a schoolteacher, Ruby worked less than a quarter of a mile away from her sister’s home. It was on this short walk, between her home and her work on December 2, 1922, that Ruby Hendry was murdered.

The day after Ruby’s murder, the local community “turned out almost to a man…to attend the funeral of the young victim.” The parishioners of First Methodist Church, where Ruby’s funeral was held, had seen Ruby at their morning service every Sunday of their lives. The slain young woman was buried in the Hendry family cemetery located a short distance away from the church. The men in attendance at Ruby’s funeral were probably the same men who later formed a mob to hunt down her killer.

The Hendrys were community leaders, businessmen, and even spiritual leaders in Taylor County. Shady Grove was home to the Robert M. Hendry Memorial United Methodist Church. Hendry Realty and Abstract Company as well as Hendry and Hendry Fire Insurance were both successful businesses that operated in Perry. The Old Temple Theater, owned by Scott Hendry in the 1920’s, provided entertainment for locals who could catch a matinee or evening performance every night of the week.

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70 Paulk, *Hendry of Clan MacNachtan: A Genealogy of John Hendry, His Descendants and Related Families*, 64.

71 Ibid., 65.

72 Ibid.

73 The Hendry family continued to hold family reunions at the site until an electrical fire caused a fire that burned down the property on May 23, 1976.
Mass mobs, like the one that lynched Charley Wright were often galvanized by the social status of the victim who they sought to avenge.\textsuperscript{74} Because the Hendry family played a prominent role in Taylor County, the retribution for Ruby’s murder received widespread community approval. Mobs comprised of thousands were also more difficult to appease and often required more than one person to pay for violence committed against white women. This too was a component of the race violence in Perry. Initially thwarted in their search for Wright, the mob in Perry acted out against its own black community. Even when Wright was captured, the lynch mob, unsatisfied with only one death, returned to also lynch Young.

Mob rule was accepted as an appropriate response to violence and perceived violence against whites in Taylor County in the 1920’s. However, even though three hundred armed men from Taylor County and Madison County conducted “impromptu searches” locally and moved into Georgia in pursuit of Charlie Wright, they probably never considered themselves a mob. In Tennessee one publication expressed local distaste for the term “mob.” In 1908, The \textit{Taylor-Trotwood Magazine} wrote, “The men who hunted for two days and nights for the robber and rape-fiend were not a ‘mob,’ as too many headline architects are fond of calling them. They were representative citizens, and they consider it their duty to rid their county of rapists and rattlesnakes as soon as possible.”\textsuperscript{75} In “The American Vigilante Tradition” Richard Maxwell Brown argues that whites in the South may have, not only justified, but celebrated their actions because they felt they were working in the spirit of the American tradition of popular sovereignty.\textsuperscript{76}

The mock trial that was held for Charlie Wright was not a unique phenomenon. Lynch mobs throughout the south often conducted mock trials to justify their actions and legitimize their claim that their victim was guilty of a crime.\textsuperscript{77} In the case of Charlie Wright, the mob did not have to conduct a “full trial” because Wright confessed to the crime. 

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\textsuperscript{74} Brundage, \textit{Lynching in the New South}, 37.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Taylor-Trotwood Magazine}, November 1908.


\textsuperscript{77} Vandiver, \textit{Lethal Punishment}, 91.
Margaret Vandiver writes, “It seems strange that anyone could put faith in the confession of a person who was in the hands of a mob, facing torture and death. But perhaps to quiet their own doubts or to try to justify their actions, mobs very frequently sought confessions from their victims.” As was the case with Wright, newspapers frequently recorded the events of mock trials as if they had been legal proceedings.

The lynch mobs that preformed mock trials may have sought to give their actions an appearance of legal authority. However, the existence of mock trials also highlights the fact that lynch mobs themselves did not fear any legal action would be taken against them. Lynch mobs were not concerned with any intrusion from legal authorities when they held mock trials. In one instance in Dyersburg, Tennessee, a former sheriff was called as a witness during a mock trial. Full authority was in the hands of the mobs that would never face punishment for their involvement in lynchings.

Before retiring as a schoolteacher, Hattie Hendry’s students described her as having, “those personality traits that caused her to be loved by her pupils.” After her death, Ruby Hendry would be described in similar ways. The Florida Times Union newspaper wrote, “In the words of one of those who knew her well, [Ruby] was ‘a kind, unobtrusive, wholesome country girl, loved and esteemed by the community.’” The language used to describe white women in the South, in their lives and in their deaths, justified white, males’ right to violence toward the black community. White women became symbols that white men fought for in their battles to protect white supremacy. In the case of Ruby Hendry, the violence was especially justified because the Hendrys represented an elite, white legacy in Taylor County.

In covering the lynching of Charley Wright, newspapers in Florida used language that suggested that justice had been served. Those who lynched Wright acted to protect the white community from a dangerous “fiend.” The actions of the mob were heralded as honorable. Lynchings were not seen as monumental events; they were considered to be common occurrences.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., 92.

80 Paulk, Hendry of Clan MacNachtan, 64.
On June 15, 1920, a lynch mob attacked and killed three black circus workers in Duluth, Minnesota. Though there was no evidence to support the accusation, it was rumored that the men had sexually assaulted a local teenage girl. On October 10, 2003, the event was memorialized with three seven-foot-tall bronze statues crafted in the likeness of the three men who were killed, Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie. The Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial is the largest lynching monument in the United States. No similar memorials have been erected in Taylor County or in any other county in the south. Perry, Florida, is also without any monuments reflecting black achievement. Perhaps the most prominent memorial in the town is a high flying Confederate flag that is marked at the base with a marble headstone that reads, “This site is dedicated to the living memory of our Confederate ancestors...Lest they be forgotten.”

Those in power have memorialized white memory. Memories deemed worthy of commemoration involve the bravery of white Confederate soldiers or the tragedies that affected the white community. In an article entitled, “Tragic Events of Taylor County of Long Ago” Cash recounted the story of a young boy who disappeared in 1857. Though members of the community searched for the boy, they never located him. Of this incident Cash concluded, “Perhaps most Florida counties near and far, have had such tragic events, but as most of us tend to forget sad things, the great majority of them have been lost to history.” Both tragedies and achievements involving black residents of Taylor County have been eclipsed by white memory.

Although memory making in Taylor County privileged white residents, it did not succeed in completely oppressing black memory or black identity. Black citizens resisted this intentional forgetting and crafted a special historical memory that allowed a persistence of history that included their perspective. In The Invisible Man, by Ralph Ellison, the protagonist concluded the

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82 Ibid.

83 This monument is located along North Byron Butler Parkway, State Road 19.

84 “Tragic Events of Taylor County of Long Ago,” n.d., Cash Collection.
novel by offering that, though he was invisible to the white community, “Who knows but that, on
the lower frequencies, I speak for you?”\textsuperscript{85} Though black memory in Taylor County is not
preserved in stone monuments, or published works, it does exist.

\textsuperscript{85} Ellison, 3.
CHAPTER 3

RESISTANCE IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE:
BLACK MEMORY IN TAYLOR COUNTY

“‘A whole unrecorded history’ was spoken in the gin mills, barber shops, juke joints, churches, and beauty parlors of black neighborhoods” – W. Fitzhugh Brundage

In the south identity is often associated with the Civil War. Whether through Lost Cause monuments or the iconography of the Confederate battle flag, the public image of “southerners” often places the Civil War at the center of southern identity. Lost Cause images also presume that white heritage and southern identity are inexorably linked. Southerners not only identify the Confederacy as an integral aspect of their community’s identity, but also interpret the Civil War as a defeat that must be overcome. The problem with this perspective is that, to presume that the term “southerner” is a label that only applies to white southerners, is to deny black southerners a claim to their southern identity.

Many black southerners claim the Civil War as an important aspect of their heritage. However, their interpretation of the event is not one that considers the Civil War a defeat. Black Southerners in Florida remembered the Civil War with parades and memorials that celebrated emancipation and directly contradicted the tenets of the Lost Cause. Though both black and white social groups consider themselves southerners, defining southern identity has proved to be a divisive task. The struggle between southerners to establish memories and carve out identities is a battle that is often fought along the color line. Fitzhugh Brundage wrote, “When southern identity is assumed to be interchangeable with white identity, much more than semantics are at stake. White claims to power, status, and collective identity are advanced at the same time that black claims are undercut.”

While white southerners erected monuments to commemorate their

1 Brundage, The Southern Past, ?.
3 Ortiz, Emancipation Betrayed, 93.
victories and wrote racism into their historical texts, black southerners resisted this whitewashing of southern history and established their own genealogy of identity.\(^5\)

Black memory, in Taylor County, is more difficult to uncover than white memory because it is less public. Rather than commemorating events with monuments in the town square, black memories are more often filed away in black churches or recounted, privately, at family gatherings. Halbwachs argued that there are as many collective memories as there are social groups in any given society.\(^6\) Neither the black community in Taylor County, nor the white community there were simple homogenous groups; however the racial divide did construct at least two distinctly different memories.

The black community in Taylor County had no W. T. Cash of their own. There was no single person sanctioned to record “official” history. If there were any periodicals published by the black community in the twenties none have been collected in archives. The white community has not erased black memory, but white memory has endured as the more public and accessible version of local history. There are no official black archives in Taylor County and the Taylor County Historical Society is predominantly a repository for white memory. A great deal of Black memory persists as a part of oral tradition or, what Paul Ortiz termed, “testimonial culture.”\(^7\)

Jefrey K. Olick wrote that, “Cultural memory is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history.”\(^8\) White memory in Taylor County often left out black members of society but that memory can be evaluated for what those glaring silences indicate about the white community. Black residents established a memory that existed in the private sphere rather than the public one and was based, in large part, in oral tradition.\(^9\) The

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\(^5\) Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, 86. “Florida’s history books made one thing clear: African Americans were completely unfit for equality or citizenship.”


\(^7\) Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, 86.

\(^8\) Olick and Robbins, “Social Memory Studies,” 335; Olick also wrote that, “By definition, Collective Memory thereby presumes activities of sharing, discussing, negotiation, and often, contestation, identity formation, power and authority, cultural norms, and social interaction.”

\(^9\) NAACP records do provide official accounts of race violence in the south but they did not have an active presence in Taylor County in the 1920s.
testimonial culture that black southerners established counteracted the white memories that sought to denigrate black character or to forget blacks altogether.

The black community in Taylor County was a social group that created a historical narrative contradictory to W. T. Cash’s record. They remembered events that white memory left out. Black memory recorded the achievements of African American citizens as well as the violence done to them. This was not a practice unique to blacks in Taylor County. Mary McLeod Bethune was greatly influenced by the history that was recounted to her by her mother and grandmother. Bethune’s belief that African American women should be treated as equals to African American men was based on stories she was told about female slaves resisting the sexual advances of their masters.

This testimonial culture was cultivated within the private sphere of the black communities, where it did not have to openly contend with white southerners. Brundage wrote, “During the era of Jim Crow, blacks had looked to their communities, their “home sphere,” to provide a sense of security and affiliation that American society otherwise denied to them.”

Black memory has not been forgotten in Taylor County, but it persists in the private sphere rather than in the public one. This method of memory making was no less effective in keeping memories alive in the black community than other forms of memory making were for the white community; however, the lack of public commemoration does make it difficult for community outsiders to uncover local black memories. Memories are often too personal, or too hidden to be revealed to outsiders.

Black memory was not wholly internal. Black Floridians commemorated history with parades and other festivities that celebrated their triumphs. However, those specific claims to

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10 Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, 87; “African Americans fashioned democratic narratives honoring slavery’s survivors, the Union Cause, and the egalitarianism of Reconstruction. These lessons enhanced black pride by providing examples of black accomplishments.


13 Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, 93. Ortiz wrote, “To enshrine the sacrifices that African America Civil War vets had made toward the liberation of all black Floridians created a tradition
public spaces were less permanent than planting flags or erecting statues in prominent public areas. Parades eventually concluded and the memories commemorated during those celebrations became permanent fixtures only in the minds of those who attended the event. Black residents in Taylor County set up more lasting sites of memory in private spaces.

Within the home sphere of the black community physical spaces became important sites of memory. Living in a segregated society, black residents in Taylor County could not claim ownership of prominent white public spaces; however, they were free to commemorate their memories in predominantly black spaces. As a social group, black residents were separate from the white community and defiant of the labels that white residents tried to impose upon them. Contrary to Cash’s record of Taylor County history, black residents were neither lazy, nor non-entities. These physical spaces, which Brundage refers to as “memoryscapes,” included churches, school buildings, private residences, and even natural landscapes. For black citizens in Taylor County, Springhill Baptist Church provided a memoryscape that was rich with testimonial culture.

Springhill Missionary Baptist Church was originally built in 1853. Erected in the area that would become Perry, Florida, the church was established before Taylor County was officially created. Black residents marked the 140th anniversary of Springhill Missionary Baptist Church in 1993 by noting that, “Before their was a president Abraham Lincoln, before there was a Civil War or an Emancipation Proclamation, before Florida seceded from the Union, there was Springhill Missionary Baptist Church in a place called Rosehead [sic] that was later named Perry, Florida.” While Cash’s narrative of local history consisted of stories about Indian removal and heroic Confederates, black memory was rooted in their struggle for freedom. The

of observing Memorial or Decoration Day in a manner that clashed with surrounding customs of the Lost Cause. In their memorial services, African Americans contrasted their service to the nation with the sedition of their ex-Confederate antagonists.”


15Springhill bulletin; Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, 100. “[Blacks] had fostered a testimonial culture that undermined white efforts to glorify slavery and denigrate black character. Black Floridians did not believe their stories of suffering, heroism, and endurance merely added to the nation’s historical record; rather, they believed that their experience in slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction changed the meaning of the nation’s history altogether…Black Floridians cited their own histories as the foundation for their demands for equal citizenship.
particular events that were chosen as important historical markers were all related to freedom from slavery.\(^{16}\)

Ideas of freedom were central to the memories of the black community in Taylor County. The Colson family, who were all born as free blacks, founded Springhill Missionary Baptist Church. Their status as free blacks was a significant aspect of the heritage that church members claimed. Stories concerning how freedmen came to live in Taylor County were a part of the historical memory of the church. Church members speculated that the Spanish offered freedom to blacks in Florida while the state was still under Spain’s control. Some speculated that the first free blacks in the area were several generations removed from runaway slaves who were aided in their escape by Seminole Indians. Others believed that the founders of Springhill Missionary Baptist Church were descendants of free blacks who landed in St. Augustine with Ponce de Leon. Historical memory that connected Taylor County’s black community to freedmen, rather than to slaves, comprised a genealogy of identity that focused on black achievements and independence.\(^{17}\)

Though they did not warrant a mention in Cash’s history of Taylor County, the Colson’s were among the first settlers in Perry, Florida. Rueben Colson worked as a farmer and was one of the men who founded Springhill Missionary Baptist Church and his granddaughter, Bernetha B. D. Colson Williams, was church secretary from the age of twenty-two, in 1935, until she passed away in 1993.\(^{18}\) As a lifelong member of the Taylor County and Springhill Church community, Williams was considered a keeper of memory and an integral part of testimonial culture.\(^{19}\) Williams recalled that Springhill Missionary Baptist Church was founded by eight to ten free blacks and that her father’s brother, Tony Colson, was the church’s first pastor.

\(^{16}\) Springhill Missionary Baptist Church bulletin.

\(^{17}\) Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed*, 101. “African Americans throughout the nation organized institutions of mutual aid, especially secret societies, lodges, churches, women’s clubs, and labor unions, in order to sustain black dignity, testimonial culture, and economic security.”

\(^{18}\) *The Fifth Census of the State of Florida: 1920*.

\(^{19}\) H. U. Baskins, personal communication with Tom Dye, graduate assistant. In possession of Dr. Maxine D. Jones at Florida State University, October 10, 1993. (hereinafter, Baskins Interview), October 10, 1993. Another longtime Taylor County resident, Ms. H. U. Baskins recalled, “You know who could tell the history of Taylor County, is B. D. Williams. She born in Perry and died in Perry.”
William’s father, Peter Colson, served as a deacon as well as church secretary prior to his daughter taking over that position.20

Church members paid monthly dues of twenty-five cents for church expenses. The pastor was not paid monetarily for his services but instead was compensated with the meat and eggs that farmers provided. The church opened its doors for weekly Sunday school lessons as well as educational classes for its parishioners. Baptisms were performed in a creek that ran through church property. Williams also recalls that, “the choir was everybody who attended each Sunday morning.”21 The church also had ties to neighboring Madison County. Occasionally guest preachers from Madison journeyed to Taylor County to preach at Springhill Missionary Baptist Church.

Brundage wrote that, “Places provide the ‘raw material’ for collective memory of blacks… Southerners’ sense of place and identity was bound up in their memories of historical associations with distinct locations in their past. Physical settings became sites of memory that elicited enduring and intense recollections of emotion and experience.” Springhill Missionary Baptist Church provided its members with a physical space where the black community was free to store memories. Members like B. D. Williams were a part of the testimonial culture that kept these memories alive. Housed in hallowed halls, and recalled in private, these memories were not simple anecdotes or historical facts they were the black community’s claims to equality.22

Halbwachs argued that institutions afford social groups a specific context in which they create and interpret memories.23 Black residents of Taylor County who attended Springhill Missionary Baptist Church interpreted their heritage as one that linked them to freed people. These notions bound them together as a community and empowered them to resist the attempts of the white community to erase black residents from the historical record. Ortiz wrote, “African Americans drew upon the secular and sacred ties they had forged with one another in their

20 Springhill Missionary Baptist Church Bulletin.
21 Ibid.
22 Ortiz, Emancipation Betrayed, 100.
23 Halbwachs, On Collective Memory, 22.
organizations and used these ties as a starting point for creating new political insurgencies…”

B. D. Williams did not hold the political positions that W. T. Cash did. She never published any texts on the history of Taylor County and she received no state recognition when she died, but she was a keeper of memory. Williams was considered an authority on local history and provided a direct connection to those freed blacks who founded Springhill Missionary Baptist Church.

The Springhill Missionary Baptist Church was the only black church in Taylor County until 1910. Taylor County residents considered Springhill Church to be the “Mother Church” because all other churches founded in the area were “direct descendants of Springhill.” Churches like New Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church and Old Brooklyn Missionary Baptist Church would become important sites of memory themselves, but they were forever linked to the historical memory of Springhill Church.

When Ruby Hendry was murdered the white community responded by attacking important memoryscapes in the black community. Newspapers reported, “A negro church is said to have been burned last night while a school house, a lodge building, and an amusement hall were all burned earlier this week.” Though the alleged perpetrators of the crime were not from the local black community in Taylor County, white mobs attacked their own black neighborhood. The “negro church” that whites burned down was Springhill Missionary Baptist.

Unfortunately, no account remains concerning the details of these arson attacks. Both the white memory and the black memory concerning the events recall only that they happened.

The violent attack on buildings in Taylor County were not only acts of physical intimidation, they were attacks on black memory and identity. Not only were actual documents likely lost in the fires, these public spaces also housed counter memories that challenged the dominant discourse on historical events. This violence against physical space was a reminder that whites held political and social power in Taylor County.

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24 Ortiz, Emancipation Betrayed, 102.

25 Springhill Missionary Baptist Church Bulletin.

26 Florida Times-Union, December 6, 1922.

27 Baskins Interview, October 10, 1993. It would not be the only time that Springhill Missionary would become the victim of racially motivated violence. White citizens of Perry burned down the church again in 1943.
If Cash ever addressed the murder of Ruby Hendry or the violence that followed it, his version of events did not survive. The memory of this particular racial violence does not exist outside of testimonial culture anywhere except for newspapers. The Taylor County Historical Society has no documents referring to the events and the Taylor County Courthouse has only a sparse collection of legal documents from the time period. There is one record of Town Council Minutes from December 5, 1922, that does appear to make reference to the incident. A motion was made to instruct local police officers to, “prohibit the shooting of guns and pistols over town when a fire occurs.” The motion stipulated that only police would be allowed to use firearms in such cases. This motion was perhaps passed in response to the arson attacks that occurred daily between December 3, 1922, and, at least, December 8, 1922.

The attack on the black community in Taylor County was not the only incident of white violence against innocent black communities in North Florida. In nearby Alachua County, black residents in the community of Newberry came under attack in 1916 when two black men were accused of murdering a local sheriff. The NAACP reported that, at least four black residents who had no connection to the crime were hanged or shot as a result of mob actions. The man accused of murdering the sheriff, Boisy Long, was eventually caught, but not before his wife was tortured and murdered.

Perhaps the most well known instance of white violence toward black communities in Florida is the incident that occurred in Rosewood in 1923. When a white woman in Rosewood accused a black man of accosting her, the white citizens responded quickly and violently. Though six black residents of Rosewood were killed, and the rest of the black community was completely driven out of the town, none of the members of the mob were ever arrested for any crime. The incident in Rosewood highlights the way in which newspapers reported on mob activity. The Gainesville Daily Sun wrote, “law or no law, courts or no courts—as long as criminal assaults on innocent women continue, lynch law will prevail.” Southern newspapers echoed the sentiments of white supremacy that prevailed in the south at that time.

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28 City of Perry Council Minutes, December 5, 1922, Taylor County Historical Society.

29 Vandiver, Lethal Punishment, 25.

30 NAACP, Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States: 1890-1918, 24.
Southern, white newspapers, like those that covered the violence surrounding Ruby Hendry’s murder, presumed the guilt of black suspects who journalists described in inflammatory language. White mobs, however, were more often described in language that was forgiving of their crimes. Though mobs in Perry terrorized the black community, and broke the law, newspapers never condemned their actions. Not only did newspapers refrain from condemning mob activity but, “the southern press was extremely creative when it came to providing moral, if not legal, justification of lynch mobs.”

In order to combat this racist interpretation of events, the NAACP took up the task of recording incidents of racial violence. In this way, the NAACP provided black social groups with an official recording of history that contributed a black perspective of racial violence to the historical memory. As they created a separate historical memory in physical spaces, black, southerners also created a separate historical memory recorded in print. African American author Pauline Hopkins wrote, “No one will do this for us. We must ourselves develop the men and women who will faithfully portray the inmost thoughts and feelings of the Negro.”

Unlike white newspapers, the published reports of the NAACP, “refrained from editorial comment, restricting [their] text to a brief summary of the facts.” The NAACP’s coverage of the violence in Alachua County, in 1916, was absent of any language that passed judgment on the events that occurred or the people who were involved. The aim of NAACP reports was to educate and inform Americans about racially based violence in the South. Southern, white newspapers occasionally spoke out against NAACP reports. In 1919, The Dublin (Georgia) Courier Herald remarked, “the best thing [the NAACP] can do for the betterment of negroes of the country is to shut its filthy mouthpiece and organs of racial equality and die in a grave filled with hogs and slop.” Though the NAACP was not actively involved in recording the violence

31 Gainesville Daily Sun, January 6, 1923.

32 Richard M. Perloff, “The Press and Lynchings of African Americans,” Journal of Black Studies 30, no. 3 (January 2000), 320; Though an attempt was made to locate black newspapers’ reactions to the violence in Taylor County, none could be found in Florida.


34 Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States: 1890-1918, 5.
that took place in Taylor County in 1922, the testimonial culture of black residents kept black memory of the events alive.

Ms. H. U. Baskins was born just outside of Taylor County on August 29, 1907. Her father moved their family, Baskins’ mother and five siblings, to Madison County when he got a job at a turpentine mill. Baskins was primarily a homemaker, but also occasionally worked for Ruby Hendry’s sister, Hattie Miller. Baskins’ recollection of the lynching of Charley Wright, as well as of the events surrounding Ruby Hendry’s murder, offer a different record of the violence that took place in Taylor County, “in 1922…when they burned that man up.”

In addition to providing a first hand account of the lynching of Charley Wright, Baskins also carried with her a memory of life in Taylor County that W. T. Cash did not record in his newspaper column. Instead of remembering Taylor County as an abundantly prosperous and jovial community, Baskins recalled that, “[Taylor County] used to be real rough, you’d be scared to go anywhere unless your bossman sent you, whoever you were working for.” She also recalled that the county jailhouse was, “so full they couldn’t open the door.” According to Baskins, it was common for police offices to arrest black residents for vagrancy. She recalled, “if you didn’t have a job they’d pick you up, but if you had a dollar in your pocket they would let you go.”

Baskins recounted the events surrounding Ruby Hendry’s death differently from what the newspapers reported. Baskins remembered that there was a question of whether or not Ruby’s murderer was a black man. Outside of black, oral tradition, no such question exists. There is no account of any white suspects ever being so much as questioned in connection with the murder of Ruby Hendry. Baskins also recalled that, as days passed with no convictions for Ruby’s murder, conditions in Perry became increasingly tense. Though white newspapers reported that the white community in Taylor County remained “reticent,” Baskins recalled a more antagonistic

35 Quoted in Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 361. *The Dublin Courier Herald* was a newspaper that Taylor County citizens would have been familiar with as the *Taylor County Herald* often reported on the travels of local citizens to and from Dublin, Georgia.

36 Baskins Interview.

37 Ibid.
environment. Baskins remembered that, “Through the woods you could hear the dogs. [My family] sat up all night. Daddy had us all out there on the porch listening at the dogs running.”

Though the newspapers described the vigilante mob as an “organized party,” Baskins remembered the mob as a more violent group. According to Baskins’ account, “Anybody [the mob] found they would kill them. Black people...they met two families coming from Madison to Perry in a wagon. They killed all of them in the wagon...grown ups and children.” Outside of Baskins’ memory of the events in Perry, these acts of vigilante violence have not been recorded in Taylor County’s history.

The surviving accounts recognize mob activity but focus on the organization of the mob. The newspapers do not question whether or not the white citizens of Taylor County had the right to conduct “impromptu searches” for Ruby’s killer. Even though they were not apt to condemn the mob activity, the newspapers’ acknowledgement of these searches corroborates Baskins’ memory insofar as it admits that armed groups of white men imposed themselves on the black community unchecked. Baskins remarked that the mobs who attacked black residents were not community outsiders, but simply, “white people of Taylor County.”

In her recollection of the lynching of Wright, Baskins’ memory corroborated the story that was reported in southern newspapers. In this case, black memory and white memory offer similar versions of an event. Ms. Baskins’ description of the event offers a first hand account of the lynching:

They was [sic] burning that man that morning, peoples [sic] coming across it and everything. And they had him standing and that chain around him and all that wood, that cord of wood and turpentine poured over it. And he asked him [if] anybody have [sic] any word to say. And this lady was pregnant and she walked up close as she could get and spit on him before they threwed [sic] that match and burnt him up. And this women [sic], that I worked for, she said a lady was standing aside a tree both hands up like that and they set him afire. The skin off of his head popped like a pistol...And I think he was fifty-seven years old when he died right here in Perry.

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
Baskins’ memory of violence in Perry has not been recorded in any official documents. Southern newspapers interviewed no black residents in Taylor County at the time that the violence occurred. As keepers of the historical record, white citizens wrote about the events in the exact way that they wanted them to be recorded. Ruby Hendry was a “pretty, young schoolteacher” who was murdered by a black “fiend.” The actions of the mass mob that tracked down Charley Wright and Albert Young were just in doling out punishments. White historical memory presented a simple story of transgression and retribution. Lynchings themselves became commonplace in the south, so even the more grisly details of mob violence were familiar to Floridians in the 1920’s.\textsuperscript{42} Lynching had become “A routine, everyday sort of villainy.”\textsuperscript{43}

When questioned about the presence of the Ku Klux Klan in Taylor County, Baskins recalls that she, “never heard of them being involved”\textsuperscript{44} in mob activity in Perry. A community that recognized the actions of lynch mobs as legitimate legal proceedings had no need for the presence of men cloaked in white hoods. In “Lynch Law and Its Remedy” Charles J. Bonaparte argues that lynch mobs acted, “not to violate, but to vindicate, the law…the law is violated in form that it may be vindicated in substance.”\textsuperscript{45} The actions of the lynch mobs in Taylor County demonstrate that citizens of Perry considered lynchings to be an orderly and acceptable reaction to real or imagined black violence.

The mock trial that was offered to Charlie Wright further represented white citizens’ claim that their actions worked in the spirit of legal sanctions. Politicians in the United States could speak out against the Ku Klux Klan because the Klan represented an anarchy that Americans were not supportive of. Lynching was believed to be an action that was fully sanctioned by an entire community. However, though lynchings were considered an acceptable

\textsuperscript{42} Perloff, "The Press and Lynchings," 315. In 1933 in Alabama locals responded to the journalist’s presence by stating, “What the hell are you newspaper men doing here: We’re just killing a few negroes that we’ve waited too damn long about leaving for the buzzards. That’s not news.” (AL, 1933).


\textsuperscript{44} Baskins Interview.

aspect of southern life for whites in the 1920’s, lynching eventually came to be seen as a shameful practice. As white southerners moved into the future, they hoped to leave memories of lynchings in the past. Jacqueline Dowd Hall wrote, “atrocities banished from official memory are not, in fact, forgotten; rather conflicting memories are buried near the surface of consciousness: real memories, secondhand memories, memories of silence, memories we are supposed to forget.”

The white community’s willingness to forget lynchings was purposeful. If “lynchings in the south were often motivated by the desire of the white community to exert and retain social control over black communities” then the practice of forgetting racial violence was also an attempt to control the historical record. Hall also argued that lynching was an effective method of repression because it was, “arbitrary and exemplary, aimed not at one individual but at blacks as a group.” Many different battles in the south were waged along the color line. The violence that erupted between white social groups and black social groups became contests over historical memory. However, though white memory has left lynch mob violence largely unrecorded, memories persisted as a part of the southern black culture.

Lynchings were recorded, not only by the NAACP, but also as a part of black testimonial culture. Joel Williams wrote that, “Black culture taught black children that death by rape, fire, and gunshot was the possible price that black people, especially males, might pay for defying the superior power of white people.” Memories of lynching persist as a part of southern culture even if those memories were commemorated primarily in the private sphere. Zora Neal Hurston wrote that, “White people could not be trusted to collect the lore of others.”

46 Quoted in Rice, Witnessing Lynching, 23.; Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching, Lynchings and What They Mean, 54. “After a time, the ‘best citizens’ usually come to feel that ‘it is all over now, the sooner the better’.”


49 David Kadlec, “Zora Neale Hurston and the Federal Folk,” Modernism/Modernity 7, no. 3 (2000): 477; Joel Williamson agreed with Hurston’s assertion, writing, “Superbly talented writers and scholars worked within a culture that was amazingly effective in erasing some part of its history and creating others. In effect, lynching was the coup de grace that cut black people violently and decisively away from the white world. It did its work thoroughly, it dissolved, and
and white southerners in Taylor County each constructed memories that often contradicted each other.

W. T. Cash’s granddaughter, Wanda T. Cash, wrote of her grandfather’s collection of remembrances about Taylor County,

William Thomas Cash wrote about the people and communities of this coastal county in the hope and thought that some portions of their wisdom, ingenuity, and individuality would remain long after to touch us all. We have done our best to collect what we could of the past traditions that W. T. Cash preserved. These traditions are to be treasured, now and forever! Although just a small part of the heritage of the life and times of Taylor County, this book is a reflection of the way life was then and what it has become today.  

The memories of H. U. Baskins and B. D. Williams were never collected and bound together in book form. Neither woman has a collection of papers filed away at the Florida State archives. However, each woman contributed significantly to black memory in Taylor County and, therefore, to the construction of identity. It was said of Cash that he, “familiarized himself with the lives of great men, past and present, and devoted more and more time to the study of history.” The “great men” who Cash familiarized himself with were all white men. The history that Cash recorded did not represent all aspects of southern identity—it favored whites. Because Cash held a powerful and public position, his narrative played a more prominent role in telling the story of Taylor County’s history. Baskins and Williams, less public in their remembrances and with less access to power, stored their memories in the private sphere.

The 140th anniversary of Springhill Missionary Baptist Church commemorated the institution by writing,

Before there was a Ku Klux Klan and the west was lost and this nation was a mere infant of 77 years, there stood Springhill Missionary Baptist Church. It was a time before Thomas Edison’s light bulb and Henry Ford’s Model T and the Wright Brother’s first airplane ride. Today it still stands as a monument to an illustrious past and an embarkment [sic] of an empowering time.

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Though they had no statues in public places to celebrate their accomplishments or remember the atrocities committed against them, the black community in Taylor County created sites of memory which kept them linked to their heritage. As a social group they fostered an identity that was separate from the one that the white community attempted to create for them.\textsuperscript{53} Zora Neale Hurston wrote, “A thing is mighty big when time and distance cannot shrink it.”\textsuperscript{54} Though it was less public than white memory, black memory proved to be just as lasting.

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\begin{flushright}\textsuperscript{53} Ortiz, \textit{Emancipation Betrayed}, 94. Black memory not only offered black southerners an identity on their own terms. They would also cite their memories in their fight for civil rights. “African Americans laid claim to equal citizenship by fashioning a historical past that emphasized black service to the republic.”

\textsuperscript{54} Zora Neale Hurston, \textit{Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica}.
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CONCLUSION

“Certain memories live on; the rest are winnowed out, repressed, or simply discarded by a process of natural selection which the historian, uninvited, disturbs and reverses.”

–Y. H. Yerushalmi

Today, Taylor County continues to be a community that is primarily defined by white memory. The CSA monument honoring “our Confederate ancestors” that marks the entrance into Perry, Florida, identifies the community, not only as southern, but also as white. The Hendrys remain a prominent family in Shady Grove where Ruby Hendry’s gravestone is often still adorned with flowers. The memories of Charley Wright and Albert Young are less lasting. If there are gravesites for either man, they have not been commemorated in such a way as to make the sites easily found. Neither are there any makers that denote the specific area where the lynchings occurred. Perhaps Wright and Young remain unremembered because they were community outsiders. Because neither man was native to Taylor County, they were less likely to warrant a place in local memory. However, there are also no memorials or outward symbols that pay tribute to those local black residents who were terrorized by angry mobs.

Although white newspaper reports, along with personal testimony of H. U. Baskins, verify that white residents of Taylor County burned down at least four prominent black public spaces, and acted violently toward the black community, the incident remains largely forgotten both in public spaces and in archival repositories. Black members of the community have begun to contribute documents and pictures to the Taylor County Historical Society; however, those memories are filed away in spaces such as, “The Hendry Genealogy Room.” The fact that the documents are now welcome in the historical society is a sign of improvement. However, even in the historical society, the Hendry name remains central to the identity of Taylor County residents. W. T. Cash commissioned Taylor County residents to open an archive and, today, the president of the historical society is Cash’s granddaughter, Wanda T. Cash. Where public spaces and local archives are concerned, white residents in Taylor County remain the gatekeepers of history.

Legal documents in the Taylor County courthouse are scarce and, often, unavailable. Court records from Madison County’s courthouse proved equally inaccessible. The public records in Taylor County reflect a desire, whether by past residents or current ones, to fashion historical memory by forgetting. As Halbwachs argued, collective memory is always selective. Because white social groups occupy a position of power in Taylor County, they have acted with the authority to determine which memories to commemorate and which memories to forget. Because of the record-keeping practices in Taylor County official documents that speak to violence committed against black members of the community are largely out of the reach of community outsiders if they exist at all.

Similarly, access to black memories in Taylor County is difficult to obtain. Black memory has persisted in more private spaces and locals accustomed to keeping their memories in the home sphere are reticent to share those remembrances. However, though the specifics of black memory may elude southern historians, the questions of why and how some memories are commemorated while others are forgotten are important questions. Historians must uncover the silences in historical narratives. Social groups construct their identities by looking to their past, and to eclipse the memory of any social group is to deny them their identity.

Though black residents of Taylor County could not commemorate their memories in public spaces, they did create lasting sites of memory. In doing so, “black southerners offered up an alternative historical vision.”

Competing narratives emerge when black memory is evaluated alongside white memory and both perspectives must be equally considered. White, southern memory has attempted to forget racial violence, and to simplify the circumstances surrounding violence by assuming that black suspects were always guilty. This is especially true of black men who were accused of violence against white women. However, black southern memory is less forgetful of racial violence. Joel Williamson wrote, “The past is not past. Black people have never forgotten the wave of horrendous lynchings that swept over the south during turn-of-the century years. That memory informs black culture today and touches, however remotely, the thinking and behavior, the emotions of every African American.”

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2 Williams, *Wounds Not Scars*, 1227.

3 Ibid, 1227.
When Ruby Hendry was murdered, whites responded with lynch mobs and acts of arson. If a black “fiend” had murdered the girl, then the white community had to remind blacks of “their place.” The subsequent forgetting of these violent events was another form of social control. Public spaces in the south are filled with structures and images that are primarily endorsed by the white community. However, blacks did resist this forgetting. Not only were black memories recalled in private spaces, but they were also recorded for the public record by anti-lynching activists such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett. The work of Ida B. Wells-Barnett was an effort to resist the forgetting of racial violence against the black community. If black and white memories are both considered, southern identity includes images of both, Confederate flags and lynch mobs.

Constructing a cohesive southern identity must include both white and black memories. In order to uncover black memories, white southerners must be willing to confront past atrocities. “To understand the legacy of previous contests over the meaning of southern as well as the implications of ongoing debates over the south’s past is to sharpen our awareness of how competing histories divided southerners and how contests over the past eroded or strengthened public civility and democratic culture in the region.” The recovery of historical memory can be a complex process. Halbwachs argued that there are as many collective memories as there are social groups. Social groups do not always easily divide into black and white communities.

Some whites worked to record racial violence. Mark Twain wrote, “The United States of Lyncherdom,” in 1901, as a scathing indictment of the practice. His essay not only attacked the south’s acquiescence of lynching, but also recorded specific details concerning an incident in Missouri. Additionally, black social groups do not all work toward the recovery of black memory. Of the lynchings in Marion, Indiana, James H. Madison recounted a conversation with local black woman who commented, “It makes it worse when people drag it up all the time. There’s nothing you can do, the boys are dead and buried. No need stirring up all that stuff. Forget it and just try to live life.”


6 Madison, 152.
James. H. Madison’s *A Lynching in the Heartland* is unique because memories of the event have endured in the public sphere. The survival of one of the intended victims of the lynching, along with the involvement of the NAACP in the affair, also helped to give the lynching more public prominence. However, the case is also somewhat anomalous because the lynching took place outside of the south. Lynchings occurred outside of the south, as did other acts of racial violence, but perhaps white southerners have tighter control over the public memory of racial violence than do Northerners. Southerners have been slow to assume responsibility for the violence of their past. Taylor County provides a setting in which memory making and racial violence in the south can be studied closely. However, the past can never be uncovered in full. Ira Berlin wrote, “Memory speaks, not to a desire to understand the whole and to include all in the story, but to personal, individual understandings based on the most intimate experiences in families, churches, and communities.”

Even considering white memory and black memory equally will not result in a perfect reconstruction of the past. However, unless black memory is specifically sought out it is difficult to find. E. P. Thompson argued that the English working class deserved to be liberated from the “condescension of posterity.” So too black memory is valid in terms of its own experience. In addition to this, uncovering black memory may help to resolve lingering racial tensions in the south.

Only one month after the violence that occurred in Perry, the black community in Rosewood, Florida, also came under attack. Prompted by the alleged attack on a white woman, Fannie Taylor, the white community in Rosewood reacted by killing at least six black residents. Just as in Perry, whites in Rosewood burned down a black church as well as several private residences in black neighborhoods. The mob’s actions forced the entire black community to abandon their homes and flee from the area.

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Taylor County’s Cary Hardee was the Governor of Florida when the violence in Rosewood occurred. Governor Hardee ultimately condemned the attacks against the black community; however, an official inquiry into the incident was not conducted until over a month after the violence took place. Though the majority of newspapers in Florida, and around the country, condemned the lawlessness of the mob most periodicals also argued that whites in Rosewood were justified in their actions because they acted in defense of a white woman’s virtue. *The Gainesville Daily Sun* reported that, “a brutish negro made a criminal assault on an unprotected white woman.” The newspaper went so far as to add that, “In whatever state it may be, law or no law, courts of no courts—as long as criminal assaults on innocent women continue; lynch law will prevail, and bl[ood] will be shed.” In Rosewood, just as in Taylor County, an alleged attack on a white woman by a black man was considered a justifiable reason for the white community to react with vigilante actions.

Though Governor Hardee ordered a special grand jury, as well as a special prosecuting attorney to look into the incident in Rosewood, legal proceedings concluded that “insufficient evidence” existed to prosecute any individuals for crimes against the black community. Even though it was covered, nationwide, by newspapers at the time that it happened, the violence in Rosewood was soon forgotten by the white community. However, the black memory of Rosewood did not fade away so easily.

The survivors of Rosewood filed a suit against Florida’s state government in 1993. They accused the state of failure to protect black residents there from mob violence and requested compensation for the destruction of their community. In response, the state commissioned a report on the events to uncover details concerning the violence committed there. The report included interviews with both black and white survivors who offered their memories of the incident. In 1994, Florida Governor Lawton Chiles approved the Rosewood Compensation Bill and awarded survivors, and their descendants, monetary compensation for their losses. This decision was significant because it indicated an admission of guilt of the part of the state.

Submitted to the Florida Board or Regents, December 22, 1993 (hereinafter as “Rosewood Document History”).

9 *Gainesville Daily Sun*, January 6, 1923.

10 Rosewood Document History.
It was the recovery of black memory that forced the State of Florida to assume responsibility for its failure to protect black citizens in Rosewood. If the state had not been willing to engage in an investigation that uncovered historical memory, the white memory of the incident may have completely eclipsed black memory. Because the black community remained vigilant in their insistence that their memories be recovered, and fairly considered, memories of events in Rosewood were not forgotten or recalled, simply, as the tale of a “brutish negro” who attacked a white woman.

In 2004, Rosewood was declared a Florida Heritage Landmark. A sign was erected to commemorate the event publicly and Florida Governor, Jeb Bush, attended the ceremony. The violence in Rosewood was no longer remembered only in the home sphere of the black community. Located alongside State Highway 24, the sign marked a successful black claim to public space in the south. The historical memory of Rosewood offers a voice to the black victims of mob violence. White residents of Rosewood, Leslie and Ernest Parham, recalled that Rosewood’s black residents were “people [who] had nice homes and were law abiding and took care of themselves…they did not deserve what happened to them.” Neither did the black community in Perry, Florida.\(^\text{11}\)

Of black southerners’ relationship with the south, John Hope Franklin wrote, “The south as a place is as attractive to blacks as it is to whites. Blacks, even when they left the south didn’t stop having affection for it. They just couldn’t make it there.”\(^\text{12}\) Contestation over historical memory is often reflective of the struggle between black and white southerners to remember history in a way that most reflects their identity. If southerners can agree that the term “southern” does not apply exclusively to white history, there may be opportunity to focus more often on the similarities that exists between southerners rather than the differences. However, a more complete concept of southern identity can only be constructed when more complete black memories are acknowledged and uncovered.

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\(^{11}\) Rosewood Document History

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