Total Eclipse: The Destruction of the African American Community of Harrison, Arkansas, in 1905 and 1909

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For most of the twentieth century, Harrison, Arkansas, was all white. This homogeneity was not always the case, however, nor was it achieved without bloodshed. The census taken in Harrison in April of 1900 lists 1,501 residents. Of that number, 115 were African American or of mixed race. A decade later, census takers in Harrison recorded an African American population of one. Two separate episodes of mob activity, in 1905 and 1909, destroyed Harrison’s black community. A dearth of local coverage from the period, combined with uncertain memories that have been conflated into a single and inaccurate, “they hung a nigger from the bridge,” have obscured what actually occurred. Files of the Harrison newspaper have gaps that coincide with the events of 1905 and 1909. However, reports in other papers around the state, federal court records, and one eyewitness account make an examination of these events possible. The evidence demonstrates that the ethnic purity of Harrison was the result of intentional violence.

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directed at what had been an established African American community of long standing.¹

In 1900 Harrison was a diverse, if rather isolated, Ozarks town. Its square consisted of mixed dwellings and businesses of all classes and kinds. Fine Victorian homes overshadowed shacks and vacant lots. A dusty brickyard, the dominant industry of the day, stood where the city park was eventually built. The Clemisher Hotel, a frame furniture store, the Boone County Bank, Tyson's General Store, Gamble's Book Store, and Hudson's Grocery drew in many a Saturday crowd from fields and woods.² At the center stood the courthouse. “The fence around it was of boards,” former Harrison newspaperman Jessie Russell recalled, “furnishing an ample supply of horse-racks. Streets were rendered very unsightly at times on account of the numerous hog wallows. The pride of the elite was often cramped by the lack of a stock law.”³ Prior to locomotive access, traveling in and out of Harrison proved challenging. Muscled teamsters, continually forced to deal with mud and flooding along their Ozark routes, carefully negotiated the daily stages drawn by three relays of horses. A railway was the only real means of keeping pace with progress, but the expense of engineering and constructing mountainous grades proved to be an obstacle for many years.⁴

This turn-of-the-century town was home to an apparently stable and rooted black community of fifty-three children and sixty-two adults—thirty-one men and thirty-one women—who were hardworking, religious, and family-centered. Some men worked as day laborers, porters, and in saloons. A few were barbers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, and teamsters;

¹There is a general perception that Ozark highland populations enjoyed relatively easier racial relations during this period. “Those from communities in northwestern Arkansas, where the black population was relatively small, left little doubt that the color line there, especially in politics, was less rigidly drawn than in the black belt of the eastern counties,” wrote Willard Gatewood in “Arkansas Negroes in the 1890s: Documents.” Arkansas Historical Quarterly 33 (Winter 1974): 297. A lack of racial proscription along with comparative freedom in exercising their political rights prompted one black correspondent from Bentonville to write in the nation’s foremost black newspaper, the Indianapolis Freeman: “The two races get along as agreeably [here] as anywhere in the North.” Most particularly, Eureka Springs, Bentonville, and Fayetteville were a comfortable fit for African Americans seeking economic and political autonomy (ibid., 298).


³Ibid., 36.

⁴Ibid., 37, 117.
one man was both schoolteacher and preacher. Many of the women worked as cooks, housekeepers, laundresses, and servants. In some cases these families can be traced back to the census of 1870 and are referred to in a local history as ex-slaves or descendants of slaves who had come into the county with their white owners. Eleven of these families owned their own homes, indicating that blacks felt secure enough to settle in, sign mortgages, and pay off their notes. According to Boone County historian Ralph Rea, “They had their church, their social life, and in the main there was little friction between them and the whites.”

Harrison’s black neighborhood was composed of small homes along Rush Avenue and Sycamore Street, running east to Chestnut, then northward up along the Dry Jordan Creek and southeast of Rose Hill Cemetery. A cul-de-sac of black-owned homes was also built at the present location of Woodland Heights School. Typical turn-of-the-century African American settlements were in less than desirable areas of town: Harrison’s blacks settled in tracts of bottomland subject to intermittent flooding. Although a few black-owned homes could be found within Harrison’s white-owned neighborhoods, overall little residential integration existed, as was also typical of early black neighborhood development in the South.

Despite their relative poverty, the town’s African Americans forged a vibrant community life. To raise funds for a black schoolhouse, a community-wide barbecue was held at the fairgrounds, where later the railroad shops and roundhouse were built. “Both whites and colored people alike turned out in great numbers for the barbecue, and soon the Negro children had a school,” wrote Rea. In 1900 Professor James Watkins was teaching the children, and the black schoolteacher’s progress was followed

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5 Manuscript Census Returns, Twelfth Census of the United States, Boone County, Arkansas, 1900.
7 Manuscript Census, Boone County, 1900.
8 Rea, Boone County, 121.
10 Rea, Boone County, 122.
in the local newspaper.\textsuperscript{11} Published reports in the local press referred to Harrison’s growing black community as “our colored,” even as on the editorial page African Americans were—in the context of national politics—referred to as “nigs.”\textsuperscript{12}

The schoolhouse also served for many years as the home of St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church. A single lightpole illuminated the entrance to the unpainted wooden building, referred to in one area history as “the negro shack.”\textsuperscript{13} By January 1902 the congregation’s leaders were working to build a new church for this black community, which one history of Harrison Methodism has described as “very religious. When they had a singing, their voices filled the air in that part of town.”\textsuperscript{14}

This seemingly stable community life was soon to be interrupted, however, and one of the chief causes was to be the coming of the railroad. In the 1880s a group of St. Louis entrepreneurs set their sights on the healing resort of Eureka Springs, fifty miles west of Harrison, and constructed a rail line from Seligman, Missouri. In 1899 a new company of St. Louis capitalists began plans to extend the line from Eureka Springs eastward through the northern Ozarks. They christened their enterprise the St. Louis and North Arkansas Railroad. Harrison residents waxed optimistic about the incoming line bringing prosperity to their previously isolated county. Russell wrote:

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Harrison Times}, May 12, 1900. Such positive reporting was anomalous: at the turn of the century, African American communities received virtually no coverage by the white press, except when crimes were committed by blacks. See Gatewood, “Arkansas Negroes in the 1890s,” 293.

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Harrison Times}, June 23, 1900.


In order to make the dream come true, the people of each community touched by the road gladly made up a cash bonus and freely gave it for the promotion of the road. Harrison residents gave more than forty thousand dollars, which at that time greatly taxed their resources, and in some instances, it was necessary for subscribers to actually mortgage their homes or their business in order to pay the amount which they had voluntarily subscribed. Practically every farmer whose land was touched by the right-of-way donated part, if not all, of the land desired by the company, and in many instances it split their little bottom fields ‘wide open,’ reducing the acreage of cultivated land sometimes in half. This represented a real sacrifice in many instances, but they were made without complaint.\textsuperscript{15}

In February 1901 a track-laying train, heralding the incoming line, cut through John Watkins’ farm seven miles outside of Harrison. Five hundred yards from the Watkins’s front door, the entire family gathered to watch a heavy coal-burning engine pull six flatcars loaded with creosote-soaked wooden ties and thirty-foot heavy steel rails.\textsuperscript{16} Word spread and soon over three hundred people from the surrounding area turned out to watch the fifty railway workers dig, level, and spike down the track. In April 1901 the first passenger train of the St. Louis and North Arkansas Railroad (later renamed the Missouri and North Arkansas Railroad) steamed into Harrison, filled with curious passengers with money to spend. Located near the center of the growing black neighborhood, the bustling depot and numerous nearby businesses serviced the trainloads of visitors. Rea later declared the arrival of the train as “one of Harrison’s greatest days, and the people were enthralled by the promises that they would someday be a great and prosperous city.”\textsuperscript{17}

These expectations of prosperity were met with bitter disappointment, however. On July 1, 1905—less than one hundred days before the town was to erupt in a bloody race riot—the Missouri and North Arkansas Railroad defaulted on the interest due on its bonds. The railroad that had arrived in Harrison to such fanfare four years earlier was now bankrupt. The people of

\textsuperscript{15}Russell, \textit{Ozark Hills}, 117, 118.
\textsuperscript{17}Rea, \textit{Boone County}, 139.
Harrison and Boone County had contributed heavily to the railroad, and its failure was personally painful to them. In fact, the bankruptcy of the railroad created real hardship for many along its line. Records exist of a railroad worker’s family running up bills with their grocer that took a year to pay off. One note promises payment “if we ever have another payday.”

A further disappointment to the people along the train route was the decision taken by the owners of the line to run the southern and eastern end of the railroad to Helena rather than to Little Rock, where most people were hoping and expecting it would go. Thus the M&NA ended up running from Seligman, Missouri, to Helena, Arkansas, or in the local parlance, “from nowhere to nowhere.” In addition, north of and parallel to the M&NA railway, Jay Gould’s family had been building the White River line of the Missouri Pacific from Carthage, Missouri, to Newport, Arkansas. This line was a serious rival to the train through Harrison and prospered long after the M&NA had finally and completely failed.

Compounding the instability that economic hardship and assorted disappointments almost certainly bred were the social changes that railroad construction brought to the area, particularly an influx of unfamiliar black males. As early as 1900 census takers were counting African American railroad workers in their tents in nearby Carrollton. And at about the time of the M&NA’s failure, unemployed black railroad workers began arriving in Harrison following the completion of the rival Missouri Pacific line. Fifteen miles from Harrison at Omaha, Arkansas, a large railroad camp had grown up, which accommodated both white and black laborers working on two long tunnels and the great trestle between them. “The completion of railroad work at Omaha and other points on the Missouri Pacific,” reported the Arkansas Gazette in the autumn of 1905, “has left many Negroes out of work, and many of them have come to Harrison.” These young, strong, and mostly single men, were used to being paid well for hard work, and had grown accustomed to the rough life of the camp. In Harrison their mere


20 Manuscript Census Returns, Twelfth Census of the United States, Carroll County, Arkansas, 1900.

21 Arkansas Gazette, October 7, 1905.
presence, homeless and unemployed, was no doubt perceived as threatening in a way that the deferential “aunts” and “uncles” of Harrison’s indigenous African-American community, with their children and church, never had been. Resentment toward the growing number of jobless African American men escalated with allegations of “Negro men speaking disrespectfully to white women,” and “a white laundress giving birth to mulatto twins.” But scholars have found that just such circumstances—relatively isolated communities experiencing economic growth and an accompanying increase in black population—often bred racial violence in the New South.

But more than local circumstance pushed Harrison toward violence. By 1905 racial tolerance was clearly deteriorating in the South as a whole and, indeed, around the planet. Worldwide, ethnic cleansing was in vogue. The violence in Harrison coincided with the last and most terrible of the czarist-era pogroms in Russia, which took place between October 1905 and January 1906. Thousands of Jews were killed and many thousands more were driven from their homes. And in this country, in so cosmopolitan a city as San Francisco, Pierre Beringer wrote in the Overland Monthly immediately after the earthquake of April 1906: “Fire has reclaimed to civilization and cleanliness the Chinese ghetto, and no Chinatown will be permitted in the borders of the city. Some other provision will be made for the caring of the orientals.”

The proliferation in these years of racist theories and doctrines espoused by biologists, social scientists, and historians who argued for Anglo-Saxon superiority made life particularly difficult for African Americans. Bigotry

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22 Rea, Boone County, 141.
23 See, for instance, Edward L. Ayers, The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 156–158, 495–497. Ayers writes, “Lynchings tended to flourish where whites were surrounded by what they called ‘strange niggers,’ blacks with no white to vouch for them, blacks with no reputation in the neighborhood, blacks without even other blacks to aid them. Lynching seemed more necessary and more feasible in places such as the Gulf Plain, the cotton uplands, and the mountains” (ibid., 157).
permeated American popular culture. Nothing better symbolizes this than Thomas Dixon’s *The Clansman* (on which D. W. Griffith’s film, *Birth of a Nation* was based), published early in 1905. Widely read in the South, this book, with its glorification of white mob violence against blacks, “opened wider a vein of racial hatred which was to poison further an age already in social and political upheaval”\(^{27}\)

The rising spirit of racial radicalism was as active in Arkansas as anywhere, leading to both legal proscription and extralegal violence. In her analysis of the black experience in Arkansas, Fon Louise Gordon claimed this radicalism as the organizing principle undermining black enfranchisement. “No longer subject to the civilizing influences of slavery, [blacks were perceived as] rapidly retrogressing to their natural state of bestiality.” As evidence, extremists pointed to a growing black crime rate and alleged “frequent assaults on white womanhood.”\(^{28}\) The “Negro exclusion movement” peaked in January of 1906 with the statewide adoption of the Democratic “white primary,” which barred African American participation. The rule resulted in white nominees voted in by a white-controlled Democratic Party, which monopolized politics and government in the state. This calculated disfranchisement of the black voter and institutionalization of segregation contributed in turn to increased mob violence and lynchings of African Americans statewide. Denied the right to vote, blacks were perceived as second-class citizens in need of discipline by white paternalistic forces.\(^{29}\)

Fanning the fire were southern demagogues such as Arkansas governor Jeff Davis with his much quoted, “We have come to a parting of the way with the Negro.” An articulate racial radical whose treatment of Arkansas’s blacks was appalling, Davis freely spewed racist epithets during election campaigns and stump speeches and justified the lynching of blacks as a southern tradition: “if the brutal criminals of that race . . . lay unholy hands upon our fair daughters, nature is so riven and shocked that the dire compact produces a social cataclysm, often, in its terrific sweep far beyond the utmost


counter efforts of all civil power." In 1906, in a widely reported lecture given in Little Rock, U.S. senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina stated that racially motivated violence illustrated "the dangerous conditions that exist wherever there are whites and Negroes and wherever Negroes abound in any considerable number. . . . Twenty years ago, criminal assaults were [sic] comparatively an unknown thing in the South, while now you can't pick up a paper without reading about one or several assaults or attempts to assault." Tillman ended his speech with this: "My policy would be to drive all the Negroes to the North. Those people up there have been teaching the Negro equality and have been breeding all this unrest. If they all should be driven to the North there would be the same sort of blood riots up there as we have had down here. It couldn't be prevented." In Harrison such words fell on the ears both of those who would act on them and of those who would allow others to act on them.

The prevailing climate of violence was more than the product of racism, however. Public displays of punitive aggression were an acceptable part of life in this region in the early years of the twentieth century—even white-on-white aggression. In 1909 "A Mrs. Thomas, a widow woman, got a good whipping on the streets of Fayetteville last Saturday. Two other ladies concerning whom Mrs. Thomas had made slanderous remarks, administering the dose. Switches were the weapons used and the dispatch intimates that they were administered in a way calculated to make the recipient think twice before she does any more slandering." In Springfield, Missouri, in October 1905, a group of white men drove a white family with a sick infant from their home out into the cold. Over in Ada, Oklahoma, four wealthy white ranchmen were lynched by a mob for killing a deputy U.S. marshal. "This is considered uncivilized justice," commented a newspaper editor, "but when courts are appealed to and they seem powerless to carry out the tenets of the law what else can a law abiding and a law loving community do."

Harrison itself had a long tradition of violence, established well before 1905 and continuing long after 1909. Rea describes the town in the 1890s

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30Ibid., 215 [first quote]; Gordon, Caste and Class, 50 [second quote].
31Berryville North Arkansas Star, October 26, 1906.
32Ibid., August 27, 1909.
33Springfield Leader, October 14, 1905. Tried and convicted, these men were sentenced to twenty days in the county jail.
as being "like a chapter from a story of the wild and woolly West. . . . Saturday night brawls and gun plays were common, and so many fights, which resulted in fatalities, took place at the southeast corner of the square during this period and the succeeding twenty years, that this particular part of the square was dubbed 'dead man's corner.'" In the years after 1909, mob violence continued to erupt in Harrison, though there were no longer African Americans at which to direct it.  

By 1905, then, a violent heritage, the sharpening racism of the day, and local circumstance conspired against Harrison's African American community. The progress and outcome of racial violence in Harrison, however, would be different than in many places in the New South. W. Fitzhugh Brundage has studied lynching in southwestern Virginia, which, like northern Arkansas in 1905, was a mountainous, once isolated region whose economy and population were being transformed by railroad building. There, Brundage says, "lynchers intended to establish codes of acceptable black behavior rather than purge the region entirely of blacks. The targets of the violence, as was so often the case, were young, itinerant workers whose raucous and sometimes violent life-styles provoked considerable concern." By contrast, while the unemployed black railroad laborers in Harrison surely provoked similar anxieties, racial violence there was, from the first, directed

35Rea, Boone County, 119, 121. In the early 1920s, in the well-reported and well-documented rioting that broke the strike on the Missouri and North Arkansas Railroad, many were flogged and intimidated into leaving town. One man was hanged by the mob. No one was indicted or convicted for these acts (Russell, Ozark Hills, 122–166). On January 21, 1933, a self-selected delegation of Harrison men forced a longtime administrator of the M&NA railroad, a Mr. W. Stephenson, to suddenly resign his post. Stephenson was an unmarried middle-aged man with "strange, city-type mannerisms" who retained a black male servant named Jessie (Fair, North Arkansas Line, 157, 183–184). In the summer of 1946, the owners of a packing plant in Harrison, unable to hire local workers to operate their machinery, "brought in 12 Mexican workmen who were experienced in this type of work. The Mexicans were given quarters in the packing plant so that no unpleasant incidents would arise in regard to their lodging. Within a few days however, a small group of local men went to the packing plant and there told the management that the Mexicans could not stay in Harrison. Of course the laborers left, and since then none but whites have dwelt here. This conduct was not sanctioned by most people in Harrison, but no definite steps were taken to rectify the wrong" (Rea, Boone County, 203).

not just at railroad workers from outside, but also at blacks who had been long resident in the town—men, women, and children living peacefully in their own homes, people whose families had in some cases been part of the life of Harrison since there had been a town. Rather than intending to keep black people “in their place” or offer up exemplary justice, mob violence in Harrison would be used to completely destroy a community, to “purge the region entirely of blacks.”

The spark that ignited this combustible atmosphere came on Saturday night, September 30, 1905. A black man, identified only as Dan, reportedly seeking shelter from the cold, was arrested for breaking into the Harrison residence of Dr. John J. Johnson and was jailed with another African American prisoner, called Rabbit.37 Two days later, on the night of Monday, October 2, a white mob stormed the building “and took these two Negroes from jail, along with several others, to the country, where they were whipped and ordered to leave.”38 The rioters swept through Harrison’s black neighborhood with a terrible intent. In 1978 long-time Harrison resident Loren Watkins wrote: "Some eight to ten [blacks were] tied to trees, [and] whipped with five foot bull whips [while] several men and women [were] tied together and thrown into a 3 to 4 foot deep hole in Crooked Creek. Twenty or thirty well-armed men with guns, clubs, etc., burned three or four of the Negroes’ homes, shot out windows and doors of all the other Negroes’ homes they could find and warned all Negroes to leave town that night,

37Arkansas Gazette, October 6, 1905, 1. What part, if any, Dr. Johnson may have played in the events that followed this break-in is unknown. However, his views on the use of mob violence as an instrument of social change are clear. Sixteen years later, at the height of the unrest attendant on Harrison’s infamous railway strike, Johnson gave a speech on the courthouse square in which he claimed that: “The majority of the men on strike were being used by a few of the leaders. These men, [Johnson] asserted, are responsible for the tense situation and if blood is shed or mob violence resorted to by persons, [Johnson] asserted, strikers will be responsible and not the people of Harrison who have counseled peace. Addressing himself directly to the strikers, Dr. Johnson declared that if they ever did force the issue to a showdown, as they seemed determined to do, the guns and ammunition with which they were reported to be stocking their homes would not last them longer than the proverbial snowball” (Russell, Ozark Hills, 144–145). After his death in 1941, Johnson was described in his obituary as “coming up the hard route, [and] having had to practice the most rigid economy in his early life, he was naturally conservative” (Harrison Daily Times, June 26, 1941).

38Arkansas Gazette, October 7, 1905.
which most of them did without taking any of their belongings. Rea describes the rioting as follows:

A mob moved through the dark streets and alleys of the town. From house to house in the colored section they went—sometimes threatening, sometimes using the lash, always issuing the order that hereafter, 'no Nigger had better let the sun go down on 'em.' Many Negroes left that very night and made their way on foot to Eureka Springs, Springfield or Fayetteville. Some of the older ones remained for a few days, hurt and dejected. They knew no other home. They and their parents had been brought here by their white people, and now they no place to turn. . . In a few days most of the older Negroes had moved on too.

Loren Watkins, then a small boy, recalled seeing an exhausted black man show up on the family farm seven miles west of Harrison the morning after the riot:

Father and I were working near the road early morning about seven a.m. the next day after the riot in Harrison that drove the Negroes out. A large Negro man by the name of Clark, bare headed and bare footed, face scratched and legs below the knees bleeding, stopped by where we were working and stated that he had been whipped, beaten and ordered out of town by a mob the night before, along with all the other Negroes in town. He was on his way to Oklahoma. Stated he got scared, ran out into the woods, and got lost from his group. That was the reason he was by himself. He also stated that the homes of the Negroes were destroyed by fire and wrecked by the mob. Very few of the Negroes, if any, ever returned to Harrison.

On the Tuesday night following the mass rioting, as if to make clear that no African American was safe, "a party of five unknown men attacked Thos. Armstrong, colored, as he was on his way home from his work. After beating

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40Rea, Boone County, 141-142.
him severely with a leather strap, they notified him that he must leave town immediately or he would be killed.” The reporter continued: “We have been unable to learn of any conduct on Armstrong’s part which would justify such treatment, and are inclined to think that the matter calls for an investigation by the federal grand jury next week.”

In this case the victim was not an outsider, as the objects of such attacks often were. Thomas Armstrong was the twenty-eight-year-old son of Elijah and Millie Jane Armstrong. Elijah Armstrong—of both African and Chinese descent—worked as a shoemaker, a highly skilled trade. When the quarterly conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was held in Harrison in October of 1897, Millie Armstrong served as one of the stewardesses. Armstrong’s family had owned property in Harrison since 1891. Records indicate their buying and selling houses at a profit in the black district. The house where the family of ten lived in 1905 was near the Connerly Hotel and the home of Thomas Horton, an African American blacksmith. Other nearby homes were owned by white families with occupations including harness maker, house painter, banker, saloon keeper, merchant, teacher, lawyer, and real estate agent. The value of the Armstrong’s home was assessed at forty dollars in an area where assessments ranged from twenty to fifty dollars. All records and the opinion of the hometown paper indicate a very respectable, law-abiding, church-going family which was a threat to no one.

Following the Tuesday night attack on Tom Armstrong, the Arkansas Gazette summarized the situation in Harrison: “Crowd Whips Negroes Who Reportedly Leave—Negro Residents in Panic—Reports That Others Are to be Treated In Same Way Is Expected to Cause Exodus of Blacks: It has been rumored that other Negroes are to be given the same treatment and these reports have caused a panic among a number of Negro families residing here. It is said that several of these families are preparing to leave the town.”

No one was reported to have been killed during these two days of terror, though federal records suggest victims of the mob violence probably

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42This article was picked up from the Harrison Times and printed in the October 14, 1905, issue of the Marshall Mountain Wave.
43Manuscript Census, Boone County, 1900; Deed Book N, pp. 48, 49, 1905 Tax Records, p. 220, Boone County Courthouse, Harrison, Arkansas; Records of Quarterly Conference, October 9, 10, 1897, Eureka Circuit of the A.M.E. Church.
44Arkansas Gazette, October 6, 1905.
included a fourteen-year-old girl, her twelve-year-old brother, and a sixty-five-year-old woman.\textsuperscript{45} The killing, four days after the attack on Armstrong, of a black railroad worker at the nearby Omaha camp offers an indication of the probable outcome if any of Harrison’s blacks had offered armed resistance:

George Richards, a Negro cocaine fiend at the Omaha railroad camp, ran amuck last Saturday, and armed with a Winchester, proceeded to terrorize the camp. A warrant was sworn out for him, and Constable Davis, accompanied by a posse, started to arrest him. When found the Negro was hunting Constable Davis, declaring that he would shoot him on sight, and for fear he might be able to do this, Davis turned the matter over to merchant, J. E. Hibdon, one of the posse, who marched out to disarm the Negro. He had gone so far as to take hold of the gun when Richards commenced hostilities by pulling the trigger, —and for a time the two were obscured by powdersmoke, the Negro trying to turn his weapon on Hibdon, who in the meantime emptied a forty-four revolver effectively into the body of the negro. When the smoke had cleared away Davis and the rest of the posse found the Negro dead and Hibdon unhurt.\textsuperscript{46}

As in the violence that ended the railway strike at Harrison in 1923, the only victim known to be killed was the one man known to have offered armed resistance to the will of a mob.\textsuperscript{47}

The response of Harrison’s white community to the events of early October was reported in the \textit{Arkansas Gazette}. “No one professes to know anything about what occurred, [and] no effort has been made to learn the

\textsuperscript{45}Records of the U.S. Attorneys and Marshals, Records of the Western District of Arkansas, Grand Jury Minutes, Harrison Division, April 1906, 57, Record Group 118, National Archives and Records Administration, Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

\textsuperscript{46}\textit{Springfield Daily Leader}, Monday, October 9, 1905. Cocaine and black criminality seem to have been linked in the white mind. “Cocaine,” warned Theodore Roosevelt’s drug adviser, “is often a direct incentive to the crime of rape by Negroes” (quoted from David Musto’s \textit{The American Disease} in “America’s Altered States” by Joshua Wolf Shenk, \textit{Harper’s}, May 1999, 46).

\textsuperscript{47}Russell, \textit{Ozark Hills}, 150.
identity of those who composed the crowd which drove the Negroes away.\textsuperscript{48} None of the reports indicate that the members of the mob were masked, robed, or in any way disguised, making their continuing anonymity the more mystifying. Diligent research has failed to reveal any records of actions taken by law enforcement officers or any other local officials to protect Harrison’s African American community at any time preceding, during, or after the attacks.

But if local authorities seem not to have taken action during or after the riot, official notice was nevertheless taken of the events in Harrison. Because federal court was held in Harrison every April and October, two federal jurists were present during the mob violence: John Henry Rogers, judge of the Western District of Arkansas, and James Kent Barnes, district attorney for the Western District. These gentlemen took remarkable steps in response to the rioting that had gone on around them.

Judge Rogers seems to have been intent on seeing the mob brought to justice and sought to have those responsible prosecuted. In his charge to the grand jury, which was already scheduled to be impaneled, he called “special attention to the reported whipping and intimidating of Negroes in Harrison recently by mobs. He said every participant in the affair should be punished to the full extent of the law without regard to their standing in the community.”\textsuperscript{49} Judge Rogers’s charge implied that the mob was, at least in part, composed of people of standing.\textsuperscript{50}

This reference to civic stature is telling. Judge Rogers clearly intended to circumvent the local power structure in order to bring the perpetrators to justice. Enjoying life tenure and having been appointed by the president and Congress, federal officials in the South were not necessarily beholden to such local elites. Unlike some federal appointees, however, Rogers could not be accused of having political axes to grind. The \textit{Carroll Progress} described him as follows: “Mr. Rogers is a southern democrat and holds his office for

\textsuperscript{48}Arkansas Gazette, October 6, 1905.
\textsuperscript{49}Carroll Progress, October 21, 1905.
\textsuperscript{50}That such was generally the case when it came to mob violence is suggested by a surviving black editorial voice from this time and region. The editor of the \textit{Muskogee Cimenter} had written on June 22, 1905, “We contend that the many lynchings, white-cap maraudings, peonage and agitations for supressing [sic] the Negro and robbing him of the fruits of his toil and his inherent rights as a man and a citizen, are originated by, led by, and brought to their fruition, by some of the most intelligent and high standing white men of the south, and many of these members of the Christian church.”
life, so that it cannot be said that his efforts to preserve the rights of citizenship are in any way partisan.” Yet if he was a Democrat, like most among Arkansas’s governing classes in this era, this former Confederate and former U.S. congressman from Fort Smith did not hew to the orthodoxy of his place, race, or time. He made his views on slavery known in a keynote address to a 1903 reunion of Confederate veterans in New Orleans: “It was the bane of our social order, and it was the chronic cancer which gnawed at the vitals of our future greatness. It perished like secession, as one of the incidents and results of the war. Thank God it is gone forever!” Possessed of a sense of fairness and belief in the rule of law, Judge Rogers—along with District Attorney Barnes—challenged Harrison’s acceptance of the racial violence that had occurred.

After several days spent mainly in disposing numerous moonshining cases, the grand jury met Wednesday, October 11, to consider the Harrison riot. District Attorney Barnes began presentation of evidence in the cause entitled, “The United States versus certain persons unknown for a conspiracy

51 Carroll Progress, October 21, 1905.

52 Rogers fought in nine major battles during the Civil War. “In April 1865, only nineteen years of age, he was promoted by special order of General Johnston to the rank of First Lieutenant, and he commanded Company F of the ninth Mississippi Regiment until the capitulation of Johnston’s army. . . . When the war ended, he walked one thousand miles to his family’s home in Mississippi. . . . He served four terms in the United States House of Representatives, where he was instrumental in securing the right of appeal from a felony conviction in federal court” (S. A. Cunningham, John Henry Rogers, The South Vindicated [Nashville: Confederate Veteran, 1903]), 37, 39.

53 Ibid., 19–20. Concluding his speech, Rogers said: “Our deepest concern should be for a better and more righteous national character. All the bounteous elements of earth and sky beckon us away from the base fascination of pelf (or ill-gotten gain) which dishonors and destroys our country. Let us invite all her people into the paths of law and order, inculcating peace, and keep alive our sense of justice and human freedom, and let all our advancement and growth be characterized by such a recognition of the rights of man as shall make her people feel that the blessings of providence are theirs under a government of just and equal laws” (ibid., 36).

54 Barnes was later praised as a careful, thorough, and unimimidated prosecutor. “As a practicing attorney and United States District Attorney, he always went to trial with his cases well prepared, fortified by both law and evidence. He never sought conviction when he doubted the justness of a conviction. He took no unfair advantage of the defendant, through technicalities, in the interest of the government. In the trial of cases he seldom went amiss. He performed his duty as he saw it, unhampered by the influence of friends or the fear of enemies” (Fay Hempstead, Historical Review of Arkansas [Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1911], 1299).
to deprive of civil rights persons of African descent."55 Unfortunately, from the beginning the history of this episode has been censored. For most of the cases heard by this grand jury, complete notes of the witnesses’ testimony exist in the recorded minutes, transcribed by the clerk, signed by the witnesses, and attested by the clerk and foreman. In the matter of Harrison’s mob violence, the record consists of a note handwritten by the grand jury foreman, Max Dampf of Searcy County, which states: “Investigation begun October 11, 1905 and concluded October 12, 1905 and this cause was referred for further investigation to the next grand jury.” The minutes of the next grand jury do offer a clue to the evidence that Barnes attempted to present. They state: “In the matter of conspiracy to deprive of civil rights, the witnesses Hanna Dixon, Dick Dixon, Ruby Dixon, one Slim, Tom Armstrong, Dan Lay, one Rabbit, not being present, the further investigation of this case is referred to the next grand jury this April 11th, 1906.”56

All of these witnesses were black, most were established residents of Harrison, and now they had vanished. Hanna Dixon was sixty-five years old. In the 1900 census she is the only black woman whose occupation was listed as day laborer. Dick Dixon was born in June 1893, thus he was twelve years old in October 1905. His sister Ruby, also a witness, was fourteen. Dan Lay was a thirty-six-year-old married man with a nine-year-old son. As noted above, Tom Armstrong was from a Harrison family of long standing. “One Rabbit” and “one Slim” were perhaps among the unemployed railroad workers who had come to Harrison. Because Tom Armstrong, Rabbit, and Dan were among those named in newspaper accounts as being victimized by the mob, it is a reasonable conjecture that the other witnesses were also among those singled out for violent treatment by the mob.57

This effort on the part of Judge Rogers and District Attorney Barnes to seek indictments against the members of the mob is an unusual, though not unique, instance during this period of federal officials in the South attempting to use the Enforcement or Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 to protect the rights of African Americans. That they did not succeed may speak less to the cause and evidence they presented and more to the frame of mind of the members of the grand jury. Clearly, the jurors in October 1905, both

55U.S. Attorneys and Marshals Records of the Western District of Arkansas, Grand Jury Minutes, Harrison Division, October 1905, 78, RG 118, NA.’
56Ibid., April 1906, 57.
57Manuscript Census, Boone County, 1900.
petit and grand, were not afraid to indict and convict, as demonstrated by the first case presented, that of a fourteen-year-old illiterate boy who had confessed to breaking into a post office and stealing twenty-two cents. Indicted by the grand jury, the youth was promptly tried before the petit jury, convicted, and sentenced to five years at hard labor and a one-hundred-dollar fine.\textsuperscript{58} What this grand jury was apparently unwilling or unable to do was indict a group of white men for death threats and acts of violence against African Americans and their property. While they stopped short of dismissing the charges, they referred them to the next grand jury, who referred them to the next grand jury, at which point no further note was made of the matter.

For African Americans fleeing the October 1905 riot, two major routes led away from Harrison: the "Big Road" heading west toward Eureka Springs, then on to Oklahoma, and a northern route which led to Springfield, Missouri. It seems likely that a number of Harrison blacks sought refuge in Springfield's large and prosperous black community, which included a number of doctors and prominent business owners. Any notion that Springfield was safe would prove folly, however. Six months later, on Easter eve 1906, a lynching mob incinerated three African American youths wrongfully accused of raping a white woman. Hundreds of Springfield's long-time black residents fled for their lives.\textsuperscript{59} The Springfield rioters were

\textsuperscript{58}U.S. Attorneys and Marshals Records of the Western District of Arkansas, Grand Jury Minutes, Harrison Division, October 1905, 43, RG 118, NA; \textit{Carroll Progress}, October 21, 1905. Nor was this grand jury unwilling to indict for threatening behavior, as they proved on October 12, 1905, with the indictment of a man who had mailed a threatening postcard which read: "If you intend to settle with me please do so by the 15th or I will proceed to collect. Amount due is $22.80. Please settle & save cost & trouble" (U.S. Attorneys and Marshals Records of the Western District of Arkansas, Grand Jury Minutes, Harrison Division, October 1905, 79, RG 118, NA).

\textsuperscript{59}Katherine Lederer, "Many Thousands Gone: Springfield's Lost Black History," (Springfield: Southwest Missouri State University monograph, 1986), 3. Grand jury indictments were brought against twenty-one men with little effect. Public pressure resulted in the dismissal of charges (Mary Newland Clary, "The Easter Offering: A Missouri Lynching, 1906" [M.A. thesis, Southwest Missouri State College, 1970], 30). So justified in the minds of many Springfieldians were the Easter lynchings, that the event was celebrated with the striking of a commemorative bronze coin. One side reads, "Easter Offering," the other, "Souvenir of the hanging of three niggers, Springfield, Missouri, April 14, 1906." These words appear in a photograph of the commemorative coin, Katherine
no doubt encouraged by the impunity the mob in Harrison had enjoyed. Paroxysms of violence against African American communities pulsed with terrible regularity through the Missouri Ozarks region during this time. Pierce City, Missouri, saw a heavily armed lynch mob hang two black youths and torch all black-owned homes, including one occupied by an elderly disabled man. Several months later a lynch mob in nearby Mt. Vernon hanged Edward Bateman—a black youth alleged to have raped an Aurora waitress.\(^60\)

Wherever they looked in the years immediately following, northwest Arkansans might have seen the violence of the Harrison mob seemingly endorsed. As if to remind its readers to watch for ongoing “Negro troubles” locally, Berryville’s North Arkansas Star in 1906 printed a vox populi from a former resident then living in Texas: “On last Friday night a Negro who on the night before had gone to the house of Mr. Cummins who was away from home and made a disrespectful request of his wife, was taken from his house about nine o’clock by a mob, tied to a tree and given about 250 lashes. The other Negroes living in that part of town were also called upon and ordered to move out on the following day.”\(^61\)

Reports of lynchings became more vivid with each passing year. The North Arkansas Star, for instance, reprinted an account of the lynching of a black prisoner in Pine Bluff, reporting that “the lynching was done with all the advantages given by an advanced civilization. Convenient electric lights shone brightly and the electric light poles served in place of the traditional trees. There were so many poles that there was a dispute among the mob as to the most proper pole. The rope had been well selected and an accurate reporter tells us it broke the first time the Negro was strung up. On the second trial, however, the job was done without a hitch.”\(^62\)


\(^61\) North Arkansas Star, June 29, 1906.

\(^62\) Ibid., June 4, 1909.
Harrison residents doubtless noticed that an effort to stem the tide of violence increasingly being reported throughout Arkansas—an anti-lynching bill submitted to the state legislature in 1907—failed.63

By January 1909 more than three years had passed for those African American families, such as the Fanchers, Hortons and Stinnetts, who had managed to weather the 1905 riot. They had endeavored to reestablish themselves in the community only to suffer a second blow that completed what had been left unfinished by the first riot.64 This last attack on Harrison’s black community came following the arrest and trial of nineteen-year-old Charles Stinnett who, with no prospects for work elsewhere, had moved back to Harrison to the home of his mother and stepfather, Tom Stinnett, a well-respected black resident.65

A dark winter chill enveloped the Ozarks in January of 1909, forcing many to stay inside near the woodfire for warmth. Intending to capitalize on the cold spell, Charles Stinnett set out in search of a rick of wood needing splitting and stacking. Walking down a side street, he noticed an elderly white woman by the name of Emma Lovett laboring over some heavy logs and offered his assistance. After Stinnett carried the wood into the house, the sixty-year-old spinster invited the young man to warm himself by the fire.

The events which followed will remain forever murky. According to Lovett’s account, when Stinnett rose to leave, he drew a knife, robbed her, raped her, and threatened to kill her if she ever told. Fearing his return, she hid in the barn until morning, then reported the crime to some neighbors. Stinnett was apprehended early on the morning of January 18, arrested and charged with rape. The Boone County Courthouse, already busy with a circuit court session, filled with people when word of the assault became known. A special grand jury was summoned by Judge B. B Hudgins, who

63"The anti-lynching bill was defeated in the house on Saturday," reported the North Arkansas Star. “If it had become a law any sheriff who held a prisoner against whom the community was aroused, and who feared that such prisoner would suffer from lynch law, [sic] could order the Circuit Court in session for immediate trial of the case” (ibid., May 3, 1907). Arkansas was one of ten states in the union that had the most lynchings: between 1889 and 1918, 213 lynchings were reported statewide; of those murdered, 80 percent were black. The peak period of these illegal executions occurred around the turn of the century (Graves, Town and Country, 294).

641909 Tax Records, p. 284, Boone County Courthouse, Harrison, Arkansas.

65Arkansas Gazette, January 19, 1909.
gave the jurors instructions to investigate the case. Sentiments ran high and before noon Stinnett had been indicted. As angry whites gathered on the town square, Judge Hudgins—concerned that mob action would erupt—appealed to the people to remain calm, insisting that the law be allowed to take its course. To further placate the crowd, Hudgins promised a fair and speedy trial.66

News of a potential conflagration spread throughout the area via newspapers such as the *Eureka Springs Times*, which ran the following under the headline, "Mob Violence Threatened at Harrison":

Telephone messages from Harrison announced that the officials there had a hard time to restrain mob violence last night. The cause of the mob's wrath is explained in the following dispatch: Harrison has been in great excitement this week over an outrage perpetrated on an aged and highly respected spinster there by a Negro. But from the fact that court was in session and a special grand jury impaneled at once there would have been a lynching. The case was put on trial yesterday morning.67

When first arrested, Charles Stinnett admitted to being at Lovett's house but denied committing any crime. He was arraigned the following day. Because he was unable to employ counsel, Judge Hudgins appointed Guy L. Trimble to defend the black youth. W. F. Reaves was the prosecuting attorney.

An entire afternoon was dedicated to securing unbiased trial jurors—a difficult task, for most of the jury pool had to be disqualified due to expressed opinions. By five o'clock selection was complete and the evidence presented. Court adjourned until the following morning. Taking the stand the next day, Emma Lovett swore positively to all in the room that she had been brutalized and robbed. Stinnett was then placed on the stand. The teenager swore under oath that he made no effort to assault the old woman but admitted to going into Lovett's home with the purpose of robbery. At eleven A.M. arguments in the Stinnett case ended, and the jury went into closed session.68 Four hours later the twelve jurors returned a verdict of guilty on

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66Ibid.
all charges. Although a vigorous defense had been made by Trimble, it was reported that the jury was in favor of conviction from the outset. Only one juror held for a lower offense but gave in toward the end of the four-hour session. Sitting silently with his head lowered, Stinnett revealed no emotion when the verdict was read. Sentencing was scheduled for the following day. The punishment specified by statute for the offense of which Stinnett was convicted was death by hanging. 69

Harrison’s African American survivors of the 1905 riot now faced another terrifying situation. New information that Lovett, the alleged victim, was reportedly gravely ill, spread through Harrison’s white community. A mob quickly formed and moved through town, heading toward where Stinnett was jailed. To avoid a lynching the prisoner had to be removed from the Harrison jail and transported to nearby Marshall, Arkansas. 70

The threatening presence of this mob proved the last straw for even the most resilient of the 1905 survivors. Fearing for their lives, most of Harrison’s black residents fled town the night of January 28. One news account of the mass exodus of Harrison’s African American community, however, attempted to discount the event by reporting that “most of [the blacks] were arranging to leave before the outrage.” 71 The suggestion that these people left for reasons other than to avoid personal violence amounts to sheer denial of events that displaced an entire population on two separate occasions.

Eighty-three-year-old Hugh Cotton, a third generation Harrisonian, recounts the story of how his grandfather, George H. Cotton, helped one black resident to safety. “Grandad used to have an abstract office and a saloon on the south side of the square, and Nigger George done all the cleanin’, washing out the shot glasses and sweepin’ and all. And then when they had all the trouble they run ’em out. They hung one and gave the rest of ’em 24 hours—all ten, eleven, twelve [of them]—to leave. Then they got hot and heavy after Nigger George because him and one old lady was still in Harrison. They threatened to lynch him, so Grandad put him in the buggy one night at midnight and took him to Eureka Springs. All the rest of the

69Ibid., January 23, 1909.
70Ibid., January 29, 1909.
71Ibid.
night and the next day at noon, it took him, twelve hours to drive him from here to Eureka Springs. And I think he lived there until he died.”

Cleansed of the black populace, Harrison’s white community awaited Stinnett’s execution, scheduled to take place February 23. In the days preceding the hanging, however, public sentiment shifted. Many who had sought to lynch Charlie Stinnett were apparently doing their best to get the death sentence commuted to life imprisonment. Central to this effort was Stinnett’s mother, Fannie, who was waging a one-woman initiative to save her son from the gallows. Traveling from her home in Muskogee, Oklahoma, to which the Stinnett family had fled following Charlie’s conviction, Mrs. Stinnett spent several weeks in Harrison circulating a petition requesting the death sentence be commuted. Her petition was signed by nearly one thousand residents—including seven of the twelve jurors who convicted Charlie Stinnett. Attorney Trimble reportedly assisted the woman in her struggle to save her son’s life.

Fannie Stinnett’s efforts seemed to bear fruit. At the eleventh hour a most unexpected announcement was made by Gov. George W. Donaghey granting a thirty-day stay of execution. Signed by Judge E. G. Mitchell and Guy L. Trimble, the reprieve was ordered to enable the governor to further investigate the case. But tragically, at the end of the thirty days, Donaghey, finding no reason to commute Stinnett’s sentence, allowed the execution to

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72Hugh Cotton, interview by authors, Harrison, Arkansas, March 3, 1998. 1909 Boone County property tax records (p. 284) revealed that Hugh Cotton’s father, George, in fact rented to Harrison’s black residents.


74Ibid., March 5, 1909; Arkansas Democrat, March 25, 1909. Muskogee archives revealed no record of the Stinnett incident. However, Muskogee County’s prosperous African American population could surely have extended legal resources and support to the Stinnett family.

75North Arkansas Star, February 26, 1909, 1. Elected to office only several months earlier, Donaghey’s concern for Stinnett was uncharacteristic. Although a promoter of social welfare—including constructing of a tuberculosis sanitarium at Booneville, creating a state department of public health, and sponsoring an amendment to the Arkansas Constitution which authorized the initiative and referendum process—Donaghey supported an end to black political participation. “From every point of view it is better to eliminate the Negro from politics,” he said. “Until this is done, honest elections cannot be secured in Arkansas” (Gordon, Caste & Class, 52–53); O. E. McKnight and Boyd W. Johnson, The Arkansas Story (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing, 1955), 271.
proceed. On the day of the hanging it was reported that Fannie Stinnett’s presence in the jail corridor brought tears to the eyes of hardened criminals incarcerated along with her son. A number of visitors streamed in to pay their last respects. Stinnett reportedly exhibited no trace of fear.

The scaffold was enclosed to prevent public viewing. Although hundreds of the morbidly curious were willing to pay admission to the execution, only twenty-five—the legal witnesses, press, and physicians—were allowed to observe the proceedings. When the hour had arrived, the 1 p.m. hanging had to be delayed: a sympathizer had smuggled whiskey to the condemned man. He was too drunk to stand. Four hours later the prisoner was sober, acknowledged being ready, and walked to the back of the jailhouse where the gallows stood waiting.

A late winter mist enveloped the crowd as Stinnett entered the canvas covered enclosure and stepped up to the scaffold. Earlier in the day the youth had signed a statement admitting he had robbed Miss Lovett with a drawn knife, which was exhibited at his trial, but claiming that he had no intention of killing her. “This is the truth,” the statement concluded, “so help me God, and on the eve of my execution I ask all who hope for the sinner’s return to pray for me. If I had told the truth at my trial I would have come clear of death.”

Stinnett stood without a tremor as an inch-wide seagrass rope was placed around his neck. Fifteen minutes after the trap was sprung, he was pronounced dead by Dr. Charles Bouth. The medical report stated that Stinnett’s neck had not been broken and that death occurred from strangulation. Afterward, a collection was taken to send the body to be interred in Muskogee, Oklahoma. “This is a gloomy day for Harrison,” wrote a female correspondent to a friend from Harrison who was attending school in Tennessee. “The Negro, I guess, has already been hanged.”

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*Arkansas Democrat*, March 25, 1909.


*This appeared as a postscript on a card written by an unidentified Harrison resident to a Miss Clara Pass living in Peniel, Tennessee, and postmarked March 24, 1909 (private collection of David Zimmermann).*
Little remained of the once dynamic black community—only a few of its members lingered on. One of the last to leave was Richard Fancher, who, according to the *Arkansas Gazette*, "has been here for many years and who is well behaved and has no fears of violence." The paper indicated that the only reason Fancher had stayed was to try to sell his home.80 The other survivor of Harrison's race riots had resided in the home of a white family for many years. She was known as Aunt Vine. Rea recounted:

One old Negro woman called Aunt Vine, but who insisted that her name was Alecta Caledonia Melvina Smith, remained with her white people, the James A. Wilsons, until her death in 1914. [Existing records indicate she died in 1916]. Aunt Vine often said that she was 'the best niggah evah bawn, cuz all de rest was run off.' Since Aunt Vine died no colored people have made their homes in Harrison, and in spite of this inglorious chapter in our history some are wont to brag of our 'all white' population.81

Harrison's black neighborhood had been completely vacated. The former residents were no longer able to pay the taxes on their homes. For instance, Boone County tax records for this period reveal that the Stinnett property was forfeited to one Edgar Pierce. Even white-owned black

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80 *Arkansas Gazette*, January 29, 1909. After being forced out of Harrison, the family of Richard Fancher lived the remainder of their lives in Eureka Springs, whose black community gradually withered away in the middle years of this century. Richard died in 1911. One of his daughters married and had one child, a son, Richard Banks, named after his grandfather. He died in Eureka Springs in 1975, the last member of a once-thriving black community. Richard Fancher had sent his children to school in Harrison every month that school was in session (Manuscript Census, Boone County, 1900). His grandson did not attend school. All of the Fanchers are buried in the front left-hand corner of the Eureka Springs cemetery. Richard Fancher's tall tombstone faces backwards to the road, as was customary for graves of African Americans in that time and place. His family chose as his epitaph the appropriate and poignant motto, "Sheltered and Safe from Sorrow" (Records of the Odd Fellow's Cemetery, Carroll County Eastern District Courthouse, Eureka Springs, Arkansas).

81Rea, *Boone County*, 141–142.
residences were forfeited, perhaps indicative of the houses having been burned.\textsuperscript{82}

The impact of the events in Harrison may not have been limited to the town itself. "It is entirely possible that the trouble that was experienced in Boone County affected the black populations in surrounding counties," wrote Gordon Morgan, author of \textit{Black Hillbillies of the Arkansas Ozarks}. "The Census shows precipitous drops in black numbers in the 1900–1910 decade in Carroll and Madison counties, both of which adjoin Boone. Communication being what it was in those days and [in] the absence of sympathetic newsmen who would fairly report the facts, it is not hard to see that blacks may have been molested but this was neither reported or punished by authorities of the respective counties." Morgan asks: "To what extent are those counties liable legally for allowing the forcing of blacks out, under duress, without assuring that they or their descendants were adequately compensated for loss of life, property, or opportunities?"\textsuperscript{83} This perfectly reasonable question represents the view of one of the few black scholars to ever write about this matter.

In northwest Arkansas in 1900, there were sizable black communities not only in Harrison, but in Eureka Springs and Fayetteville. Eureka Springs from its beginning had been and remained a diverse, urbane, small city. In the same summer that Harrison was getting ready to explode in racial violence, the railroad that served Eureka Springs was advertising special excursion rates in an Oklahoma black-owned newspaper.\textsuperscript{84} Far from succumbing to violence, Eureka was a refuge for many of the blacks who fled Harrison. Some went on to other places, some remained. Thomas Armstrong's mother lived out her life in Eureka Springs as did the descendants of Richard and Hannah Fancher.\textsuperscript{85} To date Fayetteville remains the home of a vibrant black community, as it was in 1905.

\textsuperscript{82}1909 Boone County Tax Records, p. 259–261, Boone County Courthouse, Harrison, Arkansas. Black property owners' names were crossed out with a red pencil and the words "state" or "forfeit" were written in the margin.

\textsuperscript{83}Gordon Morgan, \textit{Black Hillbillies of the Arkansas Ozarks} (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas monograph, 1973), 64, ii

\textsuperscript{84}\textit{Muskogee Cimeter}, May 18, 1905.

\textsuperscript{85}Manuscript Census Returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, Carroll County, Arkansas, 1910.
"Aunt Vine" (Alecta Caledonia Melvina Smith), ca. 1908, the only African American to remain in Harrison after the destruction of the black community there. Courtesy David Zimmermann.
Of these three cities, only Harrison experienced race rioting. The Wilsons apparently protected Aunt Vine; George Cotton drove his black employee to Eureka Springs; and the local paper called for an investigation into the beating of Tom Armstrong. No note is made of any other voice among the white people of Harrison contesting the will of the mob. It is possible that the missing issues of the *Harrison Times*, should they exist, might shed more light on this matter. In the record as it stands, no county or city official, no minister or civic leader, no law enforcement officer is noted as expressing any opposition to the mob violence. This acquiescence was crucial to the mob's success. The existing record indicates that Harrison at least allowed these events to occur.

What was it about white Harrison—the Protestant, Anglo-Saxon "capital" of the hill people—that made this violence both possible and permitted? Perhaps violence born of hatred was tolerated in Harrison because it was seen by some as a solution to what they perceived as a social problem. As one area resident recalled, "I've heard my dad talk about it and a lot of other people talk about 'em hanging the black folks down there and draggin' them through town behind the wagon...They didn't like black folks."86 Another admitted, "I hate to say it but this town all my life has been pretty racist."87

Harrison is to this day a rather close-knit community. In 1905 and 1909 it was undoubtedly even more so. Most whites who might have wished to speak up for the blacks perhaps were intimidated into not doing so by the violent atmosphere of the town at the time. To address the evil acts of one's friends, neighbors, and relatives requires an extraordinary degree of character and courage apparently not present in Harrison at the time.

Early twentieth-century mob violence, as exemplified in Harrison in 1905 and 1909, the lack of economic opportunity, racist rhetoric, political exclusion, and sanctioned segregation displaced many Arkansas African Americans from their Ozarks communities. After 1910 few African Americans resided in extreme northwest Arkansas. This trend persists to the present.88 Not until the 1980s did any African American children again

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86Pearl Gatlin, interview by authors, Harrison, Arkansas, March 5, 1998.
87Hugh Cotton, interview by authors, Harrison, Arkansas, March 19, 1998.
88According to the census, only seven blacks remained in Boone County in 1910; *Negro Population 1790–1915* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1918), 799.
attend school in Harrison. The ethnic cleansing of Harrison, never fully documented before this writing, is arguably the most important event in the town's social history—devastating the lives of those African American citizens for whom Harrison had been home, encouraging the use of violence to force social change and protect local interests, and petrifying the town's approach to race for many years to come.

In his speech proposing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Lyndon Baines Johnson said, "It is not just Negroes, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice." Having destroyed its black community, Harrison effectively sidestepped the adventure in healing that the rest of the white South began, however reluctantly, one hundred years after Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

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89 Mrs. Hugh Cotton, interview by authors, Harrison, Arkansas, March 20, 1998.