7-2010

Beyond the sunset : race and ethnicity in Cullman County, Alabama

Miles Laseter
University of Mississippi

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Miles Laseter entitled "Beyond the Sunset: Race and Ethnicity in Cullman County, Alabama." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in southern studies.

Ted M. Ownby Ph. D., Major Professor
Professor of History and Southern Studies

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Ted M. Ownby, Ph. D., Professor of History and Southern Studies

David Wharton, Ph. D., Assistant Professor of Southern Studies

Jeffrey T. Jackson, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Sociology

Accepted for the Council:

Dean of the Graduate School

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's degree at The University of Mississippi, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under rules of the Library. Brief quotations from this thesis are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgment of the source is made.

Permission for extensive quotation from or reproduction of this thesis may be granted by my major professor or in his absence, by the Head of Interlibrary Services when, in the opinion of either, the proposed use of the material is for scholarly purposes. Any copying or use of the material in this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature Miles Lassiter

Date July 22, 2010

Beyond the Sunset

Race and Ethnicity in Cullman County, Alabama

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Mississippi

Miles Laseter

July 2010

ABSTRACT

This southern studies master's thesis explores the racial and ethnic environment of Cullman County, Alabama from a number of perspectives. Critical readings of archived newspapers as well as local histories provide the foundation for this study. Oral history interviews and census data also figure prominently. The research aimed mainly at illuminating the elusive history of race relations in Cullman, an overwhelmingly white county. Much of the thesis focuses on Cullman's history of racial exclusiveness. Secondary sources, primarily works by historians and sociologists, contextualize Cullman's racial past and present. The county emerges from this study as an unusual if not truly unique racial environment that has demonstrated streaks of racial progressivism as well as racial prejudice. Today, denial of racism on the part of many white residents plays a major role in preventing Cullman from fully confronting the racial oppression of its past, which—in turn—impedes progress toward a more equitable racial and ethnic environment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

In January 2008, the voters of Cullman County, Alabama, elected Rev. James Fields, an African American, to the State House of Representatives. On February 21, 2008, an article about the election appeared in the *New York Times*. The headline read, "Race Matters Less in Politics of South." The article explored the election's apparent lesson about the growing propensity of southern white voters to elect African Americans. In the midst of then-senator Barack Obama's presidential campaign, Cullman had made news for racial progressivism.

Prior to 2008, most Alabamians living outside of the county would not have expected Cullman to make positive news within the realm of race relations. Many Alabamians associate the county with extreme racism, and Adam Nossiter, who wrote the *New York Times* article, did not neglect this association. He related travel writer Carl Carmer's 1934 account of a roadside sign in Cullman "bearing a chilling and crude inscription telling blacks: 'Don't Let the Sun Go Down on You in this Town.'"[1] Nossiter continues,

> It had always been a place of few blacks because there were few plantations, and the whites wanted to keep it that way. The sign has long since passed into half-remembered folk memory. But the sentiments behind it lingered; the Ku Klux Klan and Citizens Councils were strong in these hills, and blacks in Cullman were effectively confined to a forlorn hillside hamlet known as The Colony, which is where Mr. Fields grew up.

Thus, Cullman emerged from the article as a county with a strongly racist past, and while Nossiter opened by stating, "The racial breakthroughs have come gingerly in Alabama

over the years," he portrayed Cullman as a community that is transcending its racist history.

Although Nossiter's characterizations of Cullman were confident, the county's reputation is contested. It seems as though everyone familiar with the county has a firm opinion about the degree of racism that exists within it. Most tend to pronounce Cullman as either more or less racist than other parts of the South. For most outsiders, Cullman is an exceptionally racist town that has prevented African Americans from moving in. For many white Cullman residents, Cullman is no more racist than any other county in the state. This thesis confronts the issue of race and Cullman from a different perspective. It does not seek to answer the question of whether Cullman is more or less racist than other counties. Pronouncing Cullman as either more racist or less racist than the average county would be subjective, based on my ideas of what constitutes racism and—even more problematic—my ideas of which manifestations of racism are especially malignant. Furthermore, the tendency to deem specific individuals or communities racist can generate defensiveness and often shuts off thoughtful dialogue. The concept that racism is a phenomenon subject to a litmus test, with everyone categorized as either racist or non-racist, is problematic. The fear of being deemed racist often discourages the honest consideration of racial issues. In response, some adopt a defensive mindset and consider discussion of race a kind of trial. Debates and projects about race that adopt a less judgmental and more inquisitive approach promise to generate more thoughtful and open-minded consideration. Perhaps this project will make a small contribution to this transition. Perhaps it will challenge its readers to reevaluate the way they think about race

and racism, which is a worthwhile endeavor. This topic needs objectivity, and the best way of achieving that objectivity is to avoid pronouncing particular incidents, trends, and attitudes as either racist or non-racist.

The rejection of judgments of the existence or levels of racism does not entail avoiding the sundry attitudes and myths about Cullman. Indeed, these representations are important, and this project seeks to mine the wealth of representations of Cullman's racial environment for the insights they offer. On the most obvious level, the supporting evidence that informs representations suggests avenues of further research. Representations also offer a means of uncovering the characteristics of race relations within the county; their content suggests the aspects of Cullman's racial environment deemed important by those who shaped Cullman's image. Representations are also important in and of themselves. Considered as texts, representations of race in Cullman reveal the values, problems, and goals of the people who promote them. For instance, the changes in Cullman's self-representations throughout its history reflect the way it wished both residents and outsiders to think of race relations within the county. While some representations of Cullman register its dynamism, most representations fall into two categories: ultra racist characterizations and non-racist characterizations. In other words, people tend to see Cullman as either an extremely racist community or a community plagued by misleading associations. Groups with conflicting interests have crafted and popularized these competing myths for a variety of reasons: to advance their interests, to forge solidarity, to fulfill psychological needs, or simply to entertain. These competing narratives should be viewed as myths that—for diverse purposes—distill complex

realities into comprehensible, oversimplified interpretations of the county's peculiar racial environment. Neither interpretation is wholly incorrect; both sides lean—to an extent—on facts and plausible generalizations. Likewise, neither myth is the authoritative truth about Cullman. In order to move beyond the reductionist explanations posited by these myths, it is necessary to deconstruct them. A critical assessment of the racial myths about Cullman provides a step in this direction.

The following four chapters provide a rough and incomplete sketch of the central racial and ethnic issues that have shaped Cullman's history. The opening chapter traces the origins of Cullman's sundown policy—the unwritten rule that African American settlement was prohibited. Beginning with accounts of the initial expulsion of the city's African American population, it provides an overview of the initiation, enforcement, and the motivations of the community's sundown policy. The second chapter focuses on 1913, a particularly turbulent year for race relations in Cullman County. The first known reference to the Cullman's infamous alleged sundown sign was printed in 1913, and the latter half of the chapter assesses both the evidence for and against the existence of the sign. The third chapter surveys the history of Cullman's reputation for racism from 1880 through 2010. The fourth chapter assesses differences between Cullman's racial environment and those of more typical southern communities. Because thesis is not exclusively chronological, some basic issues and incidents recur in multiple chapters. However, each chapter brings a different perspective to the central questions about race and ethnicity in Cullman County.

[1] This and the following excerpt from: Adam Nossiter, "Race Matters Less in Politics of South," *New York Times*, 21 Feb. 2008.

"The Unwritten Law of the Place"

Cullman's Early Years as a Sundown Community

James Loewen's *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* is the most comprehensive overview of residential racial exclusion in the United States. Loewen defines a sundown town as "any organized jurisdiction that for decades kept African Americans or other groups from living in it and was thus 'all-white' on purpose."[1] Loewen uses the term "all-white" to refer to communities with less than ten African American residents because many sundown towns allowed a token black family to live within their borders. Loewen excludes "nonhousehold blacks"[2] from his calculations because African Americans often stayed in sundown towns as domestic servants, prisoners, and interracial adopted children. A diverse set of underlying social factors as well as immediate "triggers" led to various towns' enactments of sundown policies. This chapter summarizes the three known extant accounts of Cullman's African American expulsion. Then, it details some of the sociological and ideological factors that led to Cullman's sundown policy, beginning in the antebellum period. The final section details evidence of the methods Cullman employed to maintain its racial homogeneity through 1913.

According to three twentieth century sources based on popular legends, white residents expelled the city's African American residents early in Cullman's history. A

1910 *Washington Post* article included a Huntsville, Alabama, resident's account of Cullman's expulsion of African Americans:

> "The town was originally settled by a lot of German immigrants from Europe and Pennsylvania shortly after the civil war, and after about ten years' experience with a large number of negroes who lived in the town and surrounding country, the people decided they would have to get along without the 'brother in black' So they notified all the negroes to get out and stay away for good Those negroes who owned small properties were paid good prices for their places in the town, and from that day to this a negro has not been allowed in the town."[3]

Carl Carmer's *Stars Fell on Alabama* suggested that competition between German and African American workers might have been at the root of Cullman's expulsion of its African American residents. During a brief stop in Cullman, Carmer's friend Henry showed him a "neatly painted sign" that—according to Carmer—read, "Nigger Don't Let the Sun Go Down on You in This Town!" Carmer inquired about the reason for the sign, and Henry explained:

> "There's only one nigger in the whole town… He shines shoes at the hotel. All the German women couldn't stand havin' 'em round 'cause they was so no-count an' careless like. So they run 'em out."[4]

John Clinton Bright wrote the third known account of the removal in his 1937 master's thesis about the history of Cullman County. Drawing from an interview with Cullman resident Philip Hartung, he states that Cullman became the "'Home of the Whites'" in August 1879. Henry Manshardt,[5] the "town rowdy" popularly known as the "Governor" decided—of his own accord—to do "the townspeople a great favor" by removing Cullman's lone African American family:

> After gathering about him a few of his henchmen, all being considerably braced by stimulants, the "Governor," as he was called, marched on the lone Negro hut. On reaching the place, the "Governor"

> and his associates immediately began to hurl stones at the windows and to curse the Negroes at the top of their voices. Only a few minutes elapsed before the Negroes were perfectly aware that they were no longer welcomed in this seemingly peaceful community. The assailants [sic] would probably have perpetrated violence upon them had they reached them but as they were attempting to break down the front door, the Negro family quietly withdrew by way of the back door leaving all they possessed behind. According to the townspeople that was the last Negro family ever to reside in Cullman.[6]

These three accounts offer an incomplete sketch of Cullman's African American expulsion. Only Bright's oral history account, based on a single interview, provides a clear explanation of how white Cullman residents removed African Americans from the town. Bright asserted that an impromptu mob of drunken whites forced out Cullman's lone African American family via physical intimidation. Carmer claimed that German women were responsible for Cullman's sundown policy, but his account is unclear about who was responsible for executing the expulsion as well as the means by which the removal took place. Bright explained that only one African American family lived in Cullman at the time of the expulsion while the *Washington Post* story referenced a "large number of negroes who lived in the town and surrounding country." Carmer did not indicate whether "a large number" or a single family of African Americans had lived in Cullman prior to the expulsion. Room exists for all three stories to express some truth. It is unlikely, given census data and all other sources, that a large African American population ever resided in Cullman, but the initial expulsion certainly could have removed dozens of black residents. Furthermore, Bright's removal might have taken place before or after the larger expulsion.

The three accounts suggest that white Cullman residents did not deny an early racial expulsion. They also associate German immigrants with the removal, but the Cullman area had never had a large African American population. Examination of the area prior to the German settlement indicates that German immigrants were not the only element within the county who wished to keep the black population either low or nonexistent. A survey of the Cullman territory's pre-German period sheds light on forces other than German immigrants that contributed to Cullman's sundown policy.

Historians had largely ignored Cullman's history prior to the German settlement before Gaylon D. Johnson's master's thesis, "Before the German Settlement of 1873: The Land and People That Became Cullman County." This neglect stemmed, in part, from an inclination to think of the 1870s as the beginning of Cullman's history. Technically, Cullman's history did begin with the establishment of the city of Cullman in the 1870s, but white people began living in the Cullman territory—albeit in smaller numbers—much earlier. While the territory's population was sparse prior to the German settlement, these earlier settlers did not disappear upon the arrival of German immigrants. Indeed, these non-German residents and, thus, their histories were key factors in the history of Cullman County proper. The agricultural, economic, political, and ethnic conditions (among others) of the Cullman territory merit consideration.

Johnson's thesis synthesized an extensive array of primary sources into a rich history of the previously-neglected era. He explained that the first permanent white settlers arrived around the turn of the nineteenth century. The American victory in the Creek War resulted in a series of treaties through which the Creeks, Cherokees, and

Chickasaws ceded most of the future area of Alabama to the Mississippi Territory. As a result, the entire Cullman Territory became public domain by 1816. Victory over Native American tribes and a dramatic (if short-lived) increase in the profitability of cotton production all lured settlers to the "newly available land" of which the Cullman Territory was part. Squatters rushed to claim the new land, and shortly after the Mississippi territorial government had carved up the area for sale, wealthier white settlers scrambled to purchase the most fertile bottom land. Many squatters lost their holdings to those who bought the land they had claimed. The fertile areas along rivers and creeks remained the most heavily settled part of the Cullman territory throughout the antebellum era, but as more settlers moved into the territory, the population began to spread out into the less desirable upland sections.

In 1820—the year after Alabama became a state—nearly all of the Cullman territory fell within the borders of Blount County. Only a segment of the southwestern corner and a thin sliver of the northern edge of what would eventually become Cullman County lay outside of Blount. The Cullman portion accounted for roughly half of the area of Blount County. The 1820 census lists only two counties with smaller general populations (Alabama had twenty-seven counties at the time, and large segments of the eastern and western ends of the state remained Indian territory). Thus, settlement in the Cullman territory remained scattered despite the influx of whites following the Creek War.[7]

The 1820 census indicates that a third of Blount County's total population was engaged in agriculture, placing it among the most heavily agricultural counties in the

state.[8] While some frontier districts of the Deep South quickly produced fortunes in the form of bumper crops of cotton for a percentage of enterprising and lucky men, the Cullman territory largely failed to do so. Settlers considered the lands outside of the Mulberry River's valley, which forms the southern border of the territory, unsuitable for cotton production, and therefore, plantations were few. Only 175 enslaved people lived in Blount County in 1820—230 fewer than the total of any other Alabama county for which 1820 data is available.[9] The handful of plantations that did spring up were barely within the reaches of what would become Cullman County. This economy of self-sufficient small farmers, common throughout southern Appalachia, did not lend itself to commercial enterprises, and as a result, Blount County had only one person engaged in commerce.

In 1830, the territory was split roughly down the middle by the line dividing the counties of Blount and Walker. Walker County had the fewest enslaved persons of all Alabama counties, and Blount had the third fewest. These two were the only counties whose enslaved people accounted for less than 9% of the total population. Thus the Cullman territory's status as the epicenter of whiteness continued up to 1830. The trend continued into 1840. Walker and Blount, respectively, accounted for the state's lowest and third-lowest enslaved populations. They were among four counties whose per capita ratio of enslaved persons numbered less than ten percent. The state average was 42.92%.[10]

By 1860, a pattern of slaveholding had solidified. Four counties had enslaved populations over 30,000, and all of them were in the Black Belt. Madison County was the

lone north Alabama county within the group of sixteen counties with 20,000 or more enslaved people. Thus, the Black Belt and Tennessee River regions of Alabama had established themselves as the state's plantation centers, but another, less recognized, pattern had also emerged. In six northern Alabama counties, enslaved populations accounted for twelve percent or less of the total population. Four of them, Marion, Winston, Walker, and Blount, were contiguous counties. A fifth, DeKalb, was separated only by a relatively narrow portion of Marshall County.[11] Thus a well-defined "white belt" had taken root in north Alabama.[12] In 1860, all of the Cullman territory fell within Winston, Walker, and Blount counties. Each of these three had smaller proportions of slaveholders than those of any other county in the state. Winston had the lowest proportion of slaveholders, 0.39% of its total population. Blount County's slaveholders accounted for 1.15%, and Walker County's numbered 1.28%. The eventual location of the city of Cullman was near the geographic center of this whitest tri-county area of Alabama.

The near absence of plantation agriculture in the antebellum Cullman territory was common throughout the upcountry South. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese have promoted a "dual society" interpretation of the antebellum South divided between upcountry yeomen-dominated areas and the low country planting districts. The differences between yeomen of the upcountry and those of the plantation belt—the Genoveses assert—were tremendous. Indeed, the southern plain folk should be conceptualized as "distinct social class[es]." Yeomen of both sub-regions practiced subsistence agriculture, but they differed in that no substantial planter class dominated

the upcountry. In the upcountry regions of the Deep South, yeomen farmers governed, and a "distinct and insular"[13] culture dominated. The upcountry's self-subsistent economy resisted the influx of merchant capital and its capacity to engender social dislocations, specifically class differentiation. Due in part to its opposition to merchant capital, the upcountry defined itself—to an extent—in opposition to the aristocratic plantation belt.

Despite these differences, the upcountry failed to aggressively resist the antebellum planter regime during the antebellum period. The planter regime enjoyed upcountry yeoman acquiescence because it offered the upcountry specific benefits. Mainly, these benefits satisfied the upcountry's desire for autonomy. Cognizant of their renowned pluckiness, planters protected the upcountry from the corrosive influence of the disruptive form of merchant capital poised to infiltrate the upcountry, and they refrained from encroaching upon the relative political autonomy of upcountry communities. By shielding upcountry districts from assimilation to the plantation belt, the planter elite avoided disruption and competition from upcountry yeomen.

Fox-Genovese and Genovese demonstrate that neither set of yeomen felt the impetus to resist the regime because both considered themselves the recipients of valuable advantages from (additionally, black belt yeomen considered themselves potential members of the planter class). They argue that the "Herrenvolk Democracy" explanation alone is inadequate for explaining the region's unity. For example, they assert, "If a social class acts against its own apparent collective interest, then the historian should at least provisionally assume a rational basis for its action…"[14] Furthermore,

upcountry yeomen, like most members of any society, tended to take for granted the values and way of life into which they are born.[15] Generally, white yeomen farmers of the upcountry did not oppose slavery on moral terms expressed by some northern abolitionists. Instead, they resisted the encroachment of the plantation economy and the concomitant dangers of merchant capital upon white belt districts. The Cullman territory's ambivalence toward slavery is evidenced by its role in the Civil War. None of the counties to which the Cullman territory belonged were adamant supporters of secession, and the region was subject to high levels of desertion. Furthermore, Winston County declared its neutrality during the war and threatened to secede from Alabama at a convention held at Looney's Tavern. The convention issued resolutions, which—among other things—discouraged Winston County residents from fighting to protect the property of slaveholders. Indeed, a number of Winston County natives joined the Union army,[16] but the whole of white American society was infected with racism during the nineteenth century. Even those Cullman territory residents who fought for the Union and opposed slavery held white supremacist views. By and large, white upcountry yeomen simply resisted the influx of African Americans—whether slave or free—into their communities.

The white belt remained intact throughout the Reconstruction era, as did the racial demographics of the Cullman territory. In 1870, both Blount and Winston were among the five Alabama counties in which "colored persons" accounted for less than 7% of the general population. Throughout the history of Cullman County, the overwhelming majority of the black population has been concentrated in the county's southwesterly corner near Arkadelphia. This community is Colony, commonly referred to as "The

Colony." Census records and oral tradition suggest that few, if any, black people lived in permanent residences outside of the Colony area during much of the twentieth century. A 1909 *Birmingham Age-Herald* article asserted that "Now the only negroes in the county are confined to the mining section in the southeast."[17] The Stouts Mountain mines near Hanceville employed around 300 men,[18] many of whom were African American. The few African Americans who lived outside of the Colony area were domestic workers who lived on the property of their white employers. Little about Colony's founding is known for certain, but former enslaved people first settled in the area during Reconstruction.[19] Work by local historians and genealogists suggest that former slaveholders helped secure some of this land on their behalf.[20] Kathleen Blee and Dwight B. Billings discuss African American patterns of land ownership in southern Appalachia (Cullman County is on the fringes of southern Appalachia), shedding light on the hardships faced by the Colony community. Blee and Billings confront the misconception that southern Appalachia was a "stable and isolated" region, pointing to evidence that both African American and white mountaineers moved a great deal. They conclude that economic forces were the engine of the continuous decline in African American wealth and in Appalachia's black population. After emancipation, industrial and commercial "pull factors" affected white Appalachian residents more strongly than African Americans, who had fewer opportunities for employment and training. Furthermore, African Americans who managed to amass property demonstrated a low rate of persistence. White property owners, on the other hand, stayed within the county at a higher rate than white non-property owners.

Moreover, they generally translated their holdings into additional assets, growing wealthier. African Americans did not enjoy this opportunity.[21]

Although African Americans were few even before the founding of Cullman, Ku Klux Klan activity was prevalent during the organization's initial appearance in the Reconstruction era:

> At a revival service in Blount County, Alabama, in 1870, the relationship between supernaturalism and Klan activity was particularly evident. During the service the wife of the presiding preacher gave birth to a stillborn, deformed baby, at her home near the campground. A witness before a congressional hearing into anti-black atrocities later declared that the malformed baby "was a perfect representation and facsimile of a disguised Ku Klux": the infant's forehead was square and flat and about "three times the height of an ordinary child"; near the temples two small horns appeared; "around the neck was a scarlet red band; and from the point of the shoulder, extending down each side to about the center of the abdomen, was all scarlet red." Displayed before the fifteen hundred worshippers at the revival, the chimera created a great sensation. It was regarded as a judgment on the preacher, a white who had twice been beaten for failing to join the Klan and for preaching against it. During the congressional hearing the congressmen asked for a description of Klan attire and witnesses described it in terms resembling the child's appearance. Indeed, the violent mummers often claimed supernatural powers for themselves.[22]

Certainly white racism was prevalent in the Cullman territory prior to the arrival of German settlers, and native Southerners contributed to the area's inhospitality toward potential black settlers. Archival sources and oral history indicate that the German presence in Cullman also influenced Cullman's sundown policy, though, and therefore, an examination of the racial ideals of those settlers is necessary.

The settlement of the Cullman territory by German and northern immigrants, led by Colonel Johannes G. Cullmann, began in earnest with the founding of the city of

Cullman in 1873. By 1877, the population had grown enough for the creation of a new county, also called Cullman. In 1880, only Winston County had a lower percentage of African American residents than Cullman. Forty-three "colored persons" lived in Cullman County, making up 0.68% of the total population. No other Alabama county had a black population lower than 5.29% of the total population. While Cullman County nearly tripled in size (from 6,355 residents in 1880 to 17,849 in 1900), its miniscule African American population declined from 43 to 21. The racial statistics of the 1910 federal census register the annexation of the strip of land between the previous southern border of Cullman County and the Mulberry River, the county's black population jumped to 533, but even after this dramatic increase, Winston remained the only Alabama county with a smaller percentage of African American residents. Indeed, the black populations of Cullman and Winston counties continued to be the two lowest totals in the state until at least 1960, with blacks never accounting for as much as 2% of Cullman County residents.[23]

Settlers from the Old Northwest brought their racial ideologies to the epicenter of Alabama whiteness. Northern working class racism was generally oriented toward excluding African American competition for industrial employment. This differed significantly from the racial ideology espoused by most southern communities, which tended to view African Americans as a necessary source of cheap farm labor. It is important to remember that both ideologies were grounded in a commitment to white supremacy. Transplants from the Upper South played a crucial role in settling the free soil Old Northwest in the antebellum period. William Julius Wilson explains that the

white working class was strongest in "…the Old Northwest, particularly the states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois."[24] He sites findings of the research of Berwanger and Voegeli about the Old Northwest's racial policies, summarizing, "…not only did these white laborers successfully resist the extension of slavery into the Old Northwest, but they were also successful in having laws enacted to exclude blacks from entering the area and in imposing discriminatory barriers to eliminate any possible economic competition from blacks already residing in the area."[25] Thus, the enforcement of racial exclusivity had been established in the Old Northwest long before settlers from that region made their way to Cullman.

In addition to these racially exclusionary roots, folklore pins the blame for the sundown policy on German immigrants. As mentioned above, the three known accounts of the expulsion attribute the action to Germans. Carmer quoted his friend Henry as saying, "All the German women couldn't stand havin' 'em [African Americans] round 'cause they was so no-count an' careless like." Because immigrant women competed with African Americans for domestic work in many parts of the country, Cullman's German women might have spoken out against the presence of African Americans in order to enhance their own economic opportunities.[26] Cullman did indeed have a number of German domestic workers; Cullman newspapers included notices for domestic work calling specifically for "German girls." Many of these positions were in distant counties. Finally, the surname (Manshardt) listed by Bright as the instigator of the African American expulsion is German.[27] Thus, economic competition between Germans and African Americans might have generated the removal of African Americans, leading to

the institution of a sundown policy more rigorous than the one in place prior to German settlement. More telling, the black population actually decreased in the years following the establishment of Cullman County, thus indicating that the influx of northern and German immigrants played an important part in shaping the county's racial environment.

The most common explanation for Cullman's sundown status has generally been to label the town and county as exceptionally racist outposts. An overview of the racial outlooks of the upcountry yeoman and of the northern white worker contextualizes the racial outlooks of white Cullman in the era during which the sundown policy began. The ultimate compatibility of these ideologies—both built upon the exclusion of African American property owners—enabled Cullman to maintain its racial homogeneity. Neither Cullman's ethnic Germans nor its native white residents were truly exceptional in their racism. Instead, Cullman's white residents espoused a racial perspective more akin to those of the Appalachian South and the Midwest than those of the traditional South. The means by which Cullman excluded African Americans were similarly non-exceptional compared to the enforcement of sundown policies by other Appalachian and Midwestern communities.

Laying out the ways in which Cullman maintained its racial exclusiveness is a challenge. For one, Cullman's sundown policy seems to have been informal. No "sundown statute" survives in the historical record, and Cullman probably never had a formal law excluding African American settlers. A *Washington Post* story explains that Cullman's sundown policy was an "unwritten law":

> "They are not even allowed to come within the corporate limits to trade at the stores The town passed no law on the subject. It was just

> the unanimous opinion of the residents that they didn't want the blacks in the place, and there has never been any trouble over the matter If a strange negro happens to land in Cullman, without knowing the unwritten law of the place, the town marshal explains it, and escorts him out of town."[28]

This was true of many other sundown towns throughout the nation because official ordinances were not necessary for excluding racial minorities. Cullman certainly had a strong reputation for enforcing its racial exclusiveness. Indeed, Cullman advertised its racially exclusive policy in order to attract settlers, but evidence suggests that the county's leaders might have avoided mentioning the actual enforcement of the policy. A *Montgomery Advertiser* article suggests that denial of the city's unwritten law might have held sway as early as 1908: "The census report of Mayor Beyer does not make any comment on this singular situation [the city had only one African American resident at the time]. It would, of course, not be proper for him to comment on it."[29] Thus while archival materials demonstrate that Cullman did enforce a sundown policy, the lack of an ordinance complicates the task of compiling a comprehensive list of the specific means by which Cullman excluded African American settlers. Newspaper sources from the early twentieth century illustrate a few strategies Cullman residents probably employed toward this end.

Two newspaper articles indicate that, early in the twentieth century, Cullman prevented African Americans from entering the city at all. The aforementioned *Washington Post* article claims that the town marshal forced out African Americans who ventured into the city of Cullman even during the day. A 1902 *Birmingham Age-Herald* article, which also ran in the *Cullman Democrat*, asserted that Cullman employed

extralegal means to rid the city of potential black residents. "They [negroes] are not allowed to stop here," the article explains. Later, it claims, "If a negro gets off the train here, the boys organize immediately and drive him out of town."[30]

Another likely strategy employed by Cullman residents was refusing to sell land to African Americans. A Cullman newspaper advertisement announced,

> For Sale. S. Roman, as Trustee, Offers the Sale, 130,000 Acres of LAND, lying in the Counties of Cullman,[31] Blount, Lawrence, Morgan, and Winston, in State of Alabama. They embrace Agricultural and Timber Lands Coal, Iron and other Minerals. Climate healthy; mild winters and pleasant summers. Good and productive soil, and excellent water. On some of the lands, there is unsurpassed water-power. No Malaria. No Swamps. Blizzards. No Hurricanes and no grass-hoppers. These lands are located in WHITE settlements, and will be sold in tracts of Forty Acres and upwards.[32]

The precise meaning of "WHITE settlements" remains unclear. Were the tracts simply located in white communities? Residential segregation within southern communities was common, and the exclusion of African Americans from exclusively white neighborhoods would not have been exceptional. *Settlements* probably had a broader meaning than *neighborhood*, though. The term *white settlements* probably referenced large sections of counties—if not entire counties—that did not allow African American settlement.

Furthermore, the intended audience of the "white settlement" line may have been whites, African Americans, or both races. Certainly the advertisement's primary aim was to encourage white people to buy land. The *Colonist* had referred to Cullman as a white settlement in order to reassure potential immigrants who associated the South with large African American populations, and the near-absence of African Americans certainly appealed to many whites. The line might have also been directed at African American

readers as a warning against attempts to purchase land within the area. Surely the agency, local government officials, or vigilantes could have prevented black settlement without the racially exclusive language in the ad, but the racial verbiage probably served to further Cullman County's image for racial inhospitality. In this way, it diminished the numbers of African Americans who attempted to settle there. Likely, the wording aimed primarily at encouraging white settlement, but the complementary discouragement of black settlement, both in the short and long terms, was likely an intended effect. Today, Cullman and the other four counties described as white settlements consist of 3,274 square miles. These tracts constituted a little over 6.2% of the five-county region. The total acreage of white lands for sale is a little over a quarter of the size of the average Alabama county. Variations of the ad (all referencing Cullman's whiteness) ran from 1898 [33] to 1902, if not longer. Certainly, the ad discouraged black settlement and furthered Cullman's reputation for racial exclusion. Promotional materials composed by Cullman leaders continued to boast of Cullman's exclusionary residential policies at least until 1913.[34] Thus, it seems that racially discriminatory practices in real estate were another means by which Cullman maintained its racial homogeneity.

Violence and the threat of violence from white Cullman residents also served to deter black settlement. Fatal racial violence began as early as the opening years of the twentieth century. In 1904, a white mob descended on a Christmas Eve service at an African American church on Stout's Mountain near the Colony area, firing shots into the church. The shooting killed at least one African American man.[35] Another instance of fatal mob justice inflicted upon a black man might have taken place in the county during

the early twentieth century. A former Cullman public official recalls seeing an archived newspaper account of what he referred to as "the last lynching" that took place in Cullman. According to his recollection, the article included a picture of the lynching, which took place in downtown Cullman, but he does not recall the decade in which the lynching occurred.[36] Another Cullman resident remembers a story his grandfather told about riding to town as a child to see a lynching in the city.[37] Sundown towns and counties often threatened violent reprisals against African Americans who sought to violate the sundown policy. Opportunities for racial conflict were lower in a county in which a relatively small proportion of residents had daily interactions with African Americans, and seeming indiscriminate racial violence served the purpose of deterring African Americans from trying to move to Cullman.

---

[1] James Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 4.
[2] Ibid., 457.
[3] "Chats of Visitors to the Capital," *Washington Post*, 8 Aug. 1910.
[4] Carl Carmer, *Stars Fell on Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000; reprint, New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934), 58-59.
[5] *Alabama Marriage Collection, 1800-1969*. The thesis spells the surname *Manshard*, but the marriage record collection documents the June 21, 1885 marriage of Henry A. Manshardt to Nancy Fortner in Cullman County. Yet another variation on the spelling of the name appeared in his obituary, "Henry Manshart," *Cullman Democrat*, 2 Feb. 1905, p.1. The obituary explains that he was better known as "Gov. Merlit." None of these variations could be found in census records.
[6] John Clinton Bright, "Some Economic and Social Aspects of the History of Cullman, Alabama" (M.A. thesis, University of Alabama, 1937), 26-27.
[7] Gaylon D. Johnson, "Before the German Settlement of 1873: The Land and People That Became Cullman County" (Cullman: Gregath Co., 1980), 156 pp.
[8] Only male heads of households were counted toward this number; thus, much more than a third of Blount County families were engaged in agriculture.
[9] Not all of the statistics for Alabama are available for the 1820 census. The data for Marion County and Jefferson County, which included the segment of the Cullman

territory beyond the Blount County line, are missing. Additionally, the state's sizeable Indian territories are excluded from the census report.

[10] Blount and Walker counties diverged in regard to "free colored persons." Walker had no free African Americans, and Blount had twenty-one, making its free African American to enslaved African American ratio the second-highest in the state. By 1840, each county had one free African American resident.

[11] University of Virginia Library, Historical Census Browser, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (accessed 19 Feb. 2010).

[12] Allen J. Tower and Walter Wolf, "Ethnic Groups in Cullman County, Alabama," *Geographical Review*, 33:2 (April 1934) : 277.

[13] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 252.

[14] Ibid., 250.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Johnson, 113.

[17] Walter Harper, "About Cullman," *Birmingham Age-Herald*; reprinted in *Cullman Democrat* 9 Sept. 1909.

[18] "Hanceville Beautiful and Progressive Town" *Cullman Democrat*, 29 Jan. 1903.

[19] Margaret Jean Jones, *Combing Cullman County*, (1971; reprint, Cullman, AL: Modernistic Printers, Inc.), 69-70.

[20] Virginia Fields Hill, "Fields Family History," unpublished document.

[21] Kathleen Blee and Dwight B. Billings, "Race and the Roots of Appalachian Poverty: Clay County, Kentucky, 1850-1910" in *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*, ed. John C. Inscoe (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 165-188.

[22] *Joint Select Committee. The Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States. Alabama. House Reports, no, 22, pt.8* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1872) 1:118-19, 2:757-58, quoted in Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford: New York, 2007), 456.

[23] University of Virginia Library, Historical Census Browser, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (accessed 19 Feb. 2010).

[24] William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 48.

[25] Ibid., 49.

[26] Ibid., 65.

[27] *Alabama Marriage Collection, 1800-1969*. The thesis spells the surname *Manshard*, but the marriage record collection documents the June 21, 1885 marriage of Henry A. Manshardt to Nancy Fortner in Cullman County. Yet another variation on the spelling of the name appeared in his obituary, "Henry Manshart," *Cullman Democrat*, 2 Feb. 1905,

p.1. The obituary explains that he was better known as "Gov. Merlit." None of these variations could be found in census records.

[28] "Chats of Visitors to the Capital," *Washington Post*, 8 Aug. 1910.

[29] "Cullman Under Census Contains One Negro," *Montgomery Advertiser*; reprinted in *Cullman Democrat,* 6 April 1908.

[30] Ned Brace, *Birmingham Age-Herald*; reprinted in *Cullman Democrat*, 15 May 1902.

[31] The ad suggests that lots within the city of Cullman were included in the land for sale. Near the end of the advertisement, the city of Cullman receives specific treatment: "Valuable Lots in The City of Cullman where there is good Society, good Public schools and Churches of the various Denominations."

[32] Advertisement, *Cullman Democrat*, 16 Jan. 1902.

[33] Advertisement, *Cullman Tribune-Gazette*, 10 Nov. 1898.

[34] Cullman Commercial Club, "Cullman County, Alabama," L. & N. Promotional Publication, 1913.

[35] Margaret Jean Jones, *Cullman County Across the Years* (Cullman, AL: Modernistic Printers, Inc. 1975), 25.

[36] Anonymous elderly white male Cullman resident, interview by author, Cullman, Alabama, 15 February 2010.

[37] Anonymous middle-aged white male Cullman resident, email correspondence, 2010.

2

"The White County," 1913

A brief summary of Cullman's 1913 racial environment offers a sense of the racism that pervaded Cullman's early history. 1913 was a tense year for race relations in Cullman. By that time, a number of Cullman residents had begun to refer to their home as "the white county."[1] A modest number of African Americans did, however, live within the county's borders. About 200 African American families had arrived in the city in 1909 in order to work on an L. & N. Railroad Company project connecting Cullman to Bremen. A Pulaski, Tennessee newspaper article explained that this was only a temporary exception to the sundown policy:

> Nothing but the scarcity of white labor and the public spirit that has been aroused in favor of the railroad would have permited [sic] the importation of so many negroes. It is understood that the negroes are to leave as soon as they have finished their work.[2]

Those who labored at work sites lived in temporary camps near the railroad. The city of Cullman itself employed at least one African American laborer. The city hired Simon Russell, from Hartselle, as part of its "clean up move."[3] Extenuating circumstances, then, could create exceptions to Cullman's policy, but the general rule against permanent African American settlement remained critically important to the county's leadership.

A 1913 promotional tract composed by the Cullman Commercial Club boldly stressed Cullman's sundown policy. The L. & N. Railroad Company's Immigration and

Industrial Department printed the promotional publication, which consisted of pieces written by the Cullman Commercial Club, letters submitted by Cullman County residents, and extracts from *North and South Magazine*. The publication lauded Cullman as a paradise for potential immigrants, especially those from the North with German backgrounds. To that end, the tract touted the area's agricultural productivity and healthy climate more than any other assets, but Cullman's racial composition also figured prominently.

The tract made no pretense of racial inclusiveness. The third paragraph of the first full page of text includes a warning to potential African American immigrants: "It must be borne in mind that this is strictly a white county; no negro settlers are allowed."[4] The article included no explanation as to how Cullman enforced this policy, but plenty of evidence—including the testimonies of the letters that make up the bulk of the publication—proves that many residents valued the preservation of the community's whiteness. The creators of the tract had issued a call for Cullman residents who had moved there from other states to submit letters "to endorse this county as a desirable place to settle,"[5] and residents answered the call with gusto. Three referenced the county's racial environment. Captain J.H. Berow of Cullman claimed, "We have a first-class white citizenship; no negroes in this county."[6] Ed. B. Miller, the superintendent of the Alabama Odd Fellows' Home in Cullman, wrote, "The citizenship is of the best. No negroes are allowed in this county."[7] Finally, John Rehberg of Vinemont opined, "Cullman County has more thrifty farmers than any county in the State, because it has a

white population and the negro is not known and not allowed to settle here."[8] Both Cullman residents and the Commercial Club were eager to publicize both Cullman's racial homogeneity and the county's policy of actively excluding African Americans.[9] Likely, the publication's emphasis on the exclusion of black settlement reflected the potential tension between the county's German and non-German white populations. Emphasis on the exclusion of African Americans from "The White County" resulted—in part—from an urge to unite divergent and sometimes antagonistic white ethnic groups against a common enemy.

Turbulent race relations characterized 1913 for Cullman County, as fiery rhetoric and racial violence dominated the news. Cullman was not the only county in the region experiencing tumultuous race relations during the early 1910s though. Whitecapping was particularly prevalent in the northern counties of Georgia in the 1910s, peaking in 1912 and 1913. Poor whites employed whitecapping to expel African Americans from a given community in order to avoid economic competition between the races, whether for sharecropping jobs or land ownership.[10]

Newspaper reports suggest that the restriction of economic opportunities for African Americans was a significant source of violence in 1913. Although black men worked on the railroad and some African American women may have worked as domestic servants, whites filled most of the traditionally "black" work throughout Cullman's history. Margaret Jean Jones, a respected local historian, suggested that the

1913 murder of Enoch Claiburne resulted from his refusing to fire an African American tenant farmer. According to Jones:

> The motive for the murder is believed to have stemmed from [George] James' request that [Enoch] Claiburne fire a negro man he had hired to live in his tenant house and help with farm work. Claiburne, who lived near Holly Pond, refused. James slipped up to a window one night in January 1913 and shot Claiburne as he sat reading the Bible. According to several people, another man confessed to the murder on his death bed.[11]

After being convicted of murdering Claiburne, George James became the only victim of legal hanging in the county's history.[12] James did not escape punishment for his alleged crime and the suspected motive for the crime remains uncertain. Still, the intensity of racial rhetoric during this era indicates that at least some whites in the county were willing to make sure it remained overwhelmingly white. Furthermore, January of 1913 was a month in which, according to Donald L. Grant, all white farmers within the vicinity of Marietta, Georgia received mailed instructions to abandon the use of African American tenants.[13] Marietta is approximately 150 miles from Cullman. Given the similar patterns of racial intimidation and violence taking place in northern Georgia and the Cullman area during the 1910s, it is likely that lower class white Cullman residents had mounted a similar campaign.

White Cullman residents may have violently assaulted African American railroad employees, a practice that became prevalent in some parts of Mississippi in the early twentieth century.[14] A 1936 *Ogden Standard-Examiner* (Ogden, Utah) article reported, "Residents of Cullman so dislike negroes that railroads have had to abandon use of negro

firemen on locomotives because they were regularly stoned."[15] This sentence appeared near the end of an account of the alleged escape attempt of Scottsboro defendant Ozzie Powell, which took place as he was being transported through Cullman County on the way from Decatur to Birmingham (Cullman's proximity to Scottsboro also prompts associations with the racial tensions and violence that accompanied railroad travel in the South). Thus far, research in Cullman newspapers has not unearthed any other assertions that Cullman whites stoned African American firemen passing through the county, but some early twentieth century articles do offer strongly suggestive pieces of evidence.

During the early twentieth century, especially in 1913, stories about African American train fatalities flooded Cullman newspapers. The number of African American fatalities that appeared in newspapers is staggering. Many were accidental, according to newspaper reports. Often, these accounts were gory, which seems to have been the case for most newspaper accounts of fatalities—white or black—at the time. Still, the gratuitousness of some of these articles is shocking. An African American brakeman run over by the train on which he was working, "…was ground up, the whole train apparently passing over him and going on its way. Train No.7, following the freight picked up the body and stored the remains in a shoe box."[16] A little more than two months later, two more African American brakemen died in a Cullman County accident. They died en route to St. Vincent's Hospital in Birmingham.[17] In November, the title "Mangled Negro" announced that another African American suffered potentially fatal wounds on a train in

Cullman County. The unnamed victim had boarded a freight train from Holmes Gap bound for Cullman. He had been working on Cullman's new pike roads.[18]

Although the newspapers invariably characterized the fatalities as accidents, the high number of train fatalities in Cullman suggests that some of them were not accidental. A 1902 incident indicates that some Cullman County residents realized the railroad could be an effective way to make a murder look like an accident. After a "Hanceville young man" was found unconscious on the railroad, the *Democrat* reported: "The presumption is that Hanson, who has just returned home and had some money about him, was attacked by robbers, and after being stunned placed on the track to have his body mangled by a passing train, thus to make it look as if he had been run over and killed."[19] In 1910, L. & N. Railroad Company special agents arrested three Cullman youths for attempting to wreck a train.[20] A middle-aged white Cullman resident recalls his grandfather telling him of the adults who paid him and other young boys a nickel to go to the railroad tracks in order to throw rocks at any African American or "hobo" who attempted to get off of a train in Cullman.[21] Finally, Cullman newspapers might have refused to publicize the murders as such (if these deaths were, in fact, murders). Instead, they asserted that they were accidents. Some Cullman County railroad fatalities were accidents, but the above evidence suggests that racial violence was the cause of many African American railroad fatalities.

An inordinately large proportion of 1913's criminal cases involved African Americans. The state prison inspector declared "that not more than six whites and six

blacks be incarcerated at the same time" in the Cullman prison.[22] Thus, Cullman had facilities for the incarceration of African Americans, and in 1913, an inordinate number of African Americans were imprisoned or murdered. The February 13, 1913 edition of The *Cullman Democrat* reported two incidents in which African American men suffered gunshot wounds in the county. "Just a Negro Shot" headlined the first account, in which a pistol shot glanced the head of Will Wall, a worker employed by the Carland Company. The shot apparently did no serious harm. The three-sentence account mentioned nothing about the shooter, and concluded, "No damage done."[23] The second headline read, "Another Negro Shot." Harvey Smith, also African American, allegedly shot Robert Morris, who was still living at the writing of the article but was not expected to survive. Both men worked for the L. & N. as "railroad construction negroes." This article ended with commentary on the construction camp where these workers lived, requesting the attention of the sheriff: "…families residing in the southern part of the city are kept in fear at all times after night, by the hilarious conduct of these negroes. They shoot, yell and cut up generally nearly all night."[24] Over five months later, the *Democrat* complained, "There is a big gang of negores [sic] in the construction cars and they have been very noisy for some time."[25]

At least one instance of a white person shooting an African American person took place in 1913. Homer Harris, who was the foreman in charge of the pike roads construction, shot Geo. Henry at the construction camp. According to the *Democrat*, "…the terrified negro ran three blocks to Richter's Delicatessen and fell, fainting from

the loss of blood," but his doctors expected him to recover. Harris, his assailant, was able to post bond.[26] One of the other few reported conflicts involving both African American and white parties took place in July. A white man reported being robbed of a gold watch and $2.80 by seven African American men in the city of Cullman. He could not identify his alleged assailants, but he said they fled to the railroad's construction cars.[27]

After being released from jail on bond, Geo. Ditto, an African American man, allegedly stabbed another African American man to death and "seriously wounded" another. The article characterized Ditto's stabbing spree that followed his release from jail as going "wild." He was still at large upon the printing of the account.[28] A posse hunted down two African American men accused of robbing another African American man, arresting one and possibly shooting the other, whom they failed to apprehend.[29] The county also punished African Americans for lesser crimes. On June 19, the county court sentenced an African American man to fifty-eight days of hard labor for petit larceny.[30] Ella Davis, an African American, was accused of selling cocaine.[31]

A March 27 *Democrat* editorial outlined a racial manifesto that probably held currency among many Cullman County residents. Entitled "The Criminal Negro," it began by mentioning the recent abundance of circuit court cases involving African American railroad workers who had "infested" Cullman. Furthermore, it asserted that "The White County has been comparatively free [of] murders, thefts and highway robberies…"[32] before the arrival of these workers. According to the editorial, the county's murder rate had reached an all-time high, and most of the capital cases were

"against negroes." For the *Democrat*, this proved a tendency toward criminal activity in the African American race. The second paragraph identified the root of the race problem, emancipation. During slavery, "…the negro was the freest of the [human] race of crime and loathsome diseases." Furthermore, "morally [and] physically, the negro was better off as a slave," and the African American race was responsible for a "large part of the feelings of the Anglo-Saxon." Since emancipation, the African American race had descended into crime and "violations of the moral code." According to the editorial, African Americans had chosen death over slavery. This was clearly a false choice, but at least to the writers of this piece, these were the only real options African Americans had. Still, the *Democrat* claimed not to endorse slavery.

The third and final paragraph emphasized a racial hierarchy with the white man on top. "The white man's burden has always been heavy," the *Democrat* explained. History had proven that Africans and descendants of Africans could "never develop a high degree of civilization [or] usefulness." The highest achievement of would-be civilizers of the race, including the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Rome, was making them slaves or eunuchs. Additionally, the "notable" African Americans were "all mulattoes" whom "white blood has lifted." Native Americans were the "[lowest] of modern men in intelligence." The Indian had been a "pensioner since Columbus set foot on American soil, and the piece ends by asking, "Shall we colonize [the negro], not for the negro's sake, but to protect the[e] white race [from] crime and disease?"

Another editorial expressed solidarity with California on the issue of white supremacy. Speaking for all Southerners, the Democrat declared, "…the white man will die before agreeing to equality with the yellow or black man."[33] Furthermore, if Japan went to war with the United States over California's legislation against Japanese residents, "..the South will send soldiers to the front to fight for white supremacy." The editorial implicated California in the attempt to "fasten negro equality and negro rule on the Southern people," but the bond of whiteness trumped that betrayal. The editorial concluded, "…we are white and will stand by the whites." The *Democrat* most frequently used *negro* or *negroes* to denote African Americans during this era; combing of the 1913 editions of the newspaper turned up no instance of *negress*. Therefore, differentiation between the sexes was left to other means. Two other identifiers for African Americans appeared in the newspaper. These were "Sons of Ham"[34] and "colored."[35]

Cartoons lampooning African Americans ran occasionally in the *Cullman Democrat* throughout 1913. These racist cartoons employed exaggerated physical features such as over-sized lips and ape-like bodies and postures. The African American characters spoke a stereotypical black dialect and often demonstrated their supposed inferior mental capacities by confusing the meanings of words or figures of speech. A cartoon that ran on January 2, 1913, illustrates both of these literary devices:

> "Miss Brown- Pahson, Ah thought yo' said yo' had a crow to pick wif de Widow Johnson?
> The Parson- So Ah did, so Ah did, but when Ah arrived Ah found she had a chicken to pick, so Ah helped her en stayed to dinner."[36]

Another cartoon in this series emphasized the association of African Americans with superstition. A horseshoe hangs in the background of a wedding. The parson asks "Miss Liza" if she takes her husband for better or for worse. She responds, "Well, if Ah got to tell de truth, pahson, Ah'm takin' him 'cause he's de fust man what eveh axed me."[37] The *Democrat* also offered a special package offer for subscriptions that included six months of *Uncle Remus Magazine*, which failed later in the year.[38] Popular media representations of African Americans helped to reinforce white supremacy in the minds of Cullman residents, rationalizing the racial oppression that they visited upon African Americans.

Surrounding areas took notice of the bitter racial climate that characterized 1913 Cullman. Cullman's reputation for racial exclusion and general racism was growing. Charles H. Many's *Birmingham Age-Herald* article demonstrates that Cullman's "white county" publicity campaign had been effective. Many recounts a case argued by Jere C. King, a prominent Birmingham lawyer. King's unnamed African American claimant sued the L. & N. Railroad Company for damages resulting from an on-the-job accident that seriously injured his foot. King was initially excited by the case's potential, but his optimism waned when he learned that the accident had taken place in Cullman. Cognizant of Cullman's reputation for racism, King had little hope that the circuit court in Cullman would award damages to an African American claimant, but he decided not to try for a change of venue. Instead, he argued his case in Cullman, where his claimant was the only African American present. The jury awarded the injured African American $2,000 in damages. According to the article, "If Jere had been subject to heart disease the

chances are that he would have dropped dead when he heard the verdict."[39] Many concludes that this trial demonstrated that—despite its whiteness—Cullman is "ready to treat them [African Americans] fairly and with justice when the occasion demands." This assertion might have been generous, as the town—at least the *Democrat*—also experienced differences with the railroad during that time.[40] Though the verdict might have been as simple as the awarding damages to a deserving claimant, the jury might have also viewed it primarily as a means of evening their score with the railroad instead of restitution for the harm done to an African American.

The hook of Many's article was King's surprising success in arguing on behalf of an African American man in Cullman, and Many devotes much of his article to depicting Cullman County as a place unlikely to give African Americans a fair hearing. He opened the article with a general commentary on the "race problem." He observed that the "thousands of negroes in the south are regarded as an asset by some, by others as a menace." Later, Many asserts "…it is positive fact that negroes are as scarce in Cullman as red hair on a billiard ball." He implied that the county's refusal to allow African Americans to live among them created this scarcity. While Many admits that African Americans did occasionally work on the railroad in Cullman, he maintains that "… if one should quit, he keeps on walking until he has shaken the dust of Cullman from his feet." Many's article is among the first Cullman stories that wonders at a manifestation of racial tolerance by a community alleged to be exceptionally racist.

Many's article might be the first published account of the county's alleged sundown signs. He wrote about the now-notorious signs with considerably less certainty than he wrote about Cullman's general disdain for African Americans. Many admits that hearsay is his only evidence that sundown signs stood in Cullman County, but he indicates that the "legend" of the sign was well-known by many. According to the legend, several signs largely situated next to highways passing through the county warned African Americans not to stay in Cullman. According to Many's hearsay evidence, these signs read, "Nigger, read and run, don't let the sun go down on you in Cullman county." The *Cullman Democrat* reprinted the article on March 27, and no editorial refuting the suggestion of sundown signs appeared in that or the ensuing edition.

The *Democrat* did print a correction for a different 1913 article about the racial makeup of Cullman County. This myth claimed that no African Americans lived there, that Cullman was situated in the Alabama Black Belt, and that its exclusively German citizenry did its own domestic work.[41] It appeared in a number of newspapers throughout the nation, including the *Washington Post*, and it certainly included false characterizations.[42] The failure to point out any false statements in Many's article suggests that either several sundown signs stood in Cullman County in 1913 or that the elites of Cullman took no interest in disproving this legend. Indeed, publicity for the county's exclusionary practices toward blacks enhanced the county's efforts to remain overwhelmingly white. Cullman would not have been unique among southern towns in having a sundown sign in 1913—if in fact, Many's evidence is to be trusted.

Whitecappers in Marietta, Georgia posted sundown signs warning African American residents to leave town in the same year.[43]

Carl Carmer gave Cullman's alleged sundown signs national publicity in 1934 with the publication of *Stars Fell on Alabama*, a collection of travel stories. When passing through Cullman, Carmer's colleague, Henry, stopped in Cullman to show him a "neatly painted sign." According to Carmer, it read, "Nigger Don't Let the Sun Go Down on You in This Town!" Carmer's account continues to garner attention. David Nossiter referenced Carmer's account of the sundown sign in the 2008 *New York Times* article about the election of Rev. James Fields, but as early as 1937, conflicting stories about the sundown signs emerged. John Clinton Bright's master's thesis contended that the sign "probably never existed." Bright's is a striking claim because the thesis was published only three years after *Stars Fell on Alabama*. Clearly, one of the two accounts is wrong. The proximity of the documents' dates of publication raises questions. Any sign that Carmer saw while passing through Cullman would not have had time to pass out of the public memory by 1936, the year in which Bright conducted the two interviews that informed his conclusion. That Bright would have failed to interview residents with extensive knowledge of their county is improbable, and even residents who were less than observant would have been aware of a sign that was as well-known as Carmer described. If Carmer's version is correct, then either intentional suppression or unimaginable ignorance informed Bright's conclusion.

The debate over the existence of one or many sundown signs is further complicated by oral tradition dating back to the early 20th century. A prominent elderly white resident, who wished not to be quoted, related his search for answers about the sign. He pointed out that no picture of the sign exists. In his youth, some older Cullman residents—including his father—told him they had looked for the sign in the early 1910s but failed to find it.[44] Oral tradition from those without an evident vested interest in a non-racist history of Cullman also cast doubt on the sign's existence. Earlene Johnson, an African American whose family has lived in Colony for generations, recalls asking her grandparents, who were born early enough to have known about the sign if it had stood in the early 20th century, and they had never seen it. Other evidence that the sign never existed includes confusion as to what exactly it said as well as when and where it stood.[45] Differing memories of the sign might have resulted from the likelihood that no single sign dominated the Cullman landscape for decades. According to Many's 1913 account, several sundown signs stood in Cullman County. Additionally, no individual sign might have stood for more than a few weeks at a time. The signs that probably stood in 1913 might have been gone a few years later, and a new sign or signs with different verbiage might have existed at an earlier or later date.

The belief that the alleged sign never existed also rests upon the supposed lack of photographic evidence of the sign. At the time of my writing, I know of no photographic evidence of the sign, but this does not disprove the existence of a sundown sign—or the existence of many signs at various points in Cullman's history. A sundown sign could

have been as much a fixture of the landscape as city limits signs, which—it seems—Cullman residents found little reason to photograph. Furthermore, Cullman County residents might have intentionally avoided documenting the sign. Evidence suggests that Cullman has sought to diminish its reputation for blatant racism since the first decade of the twentieth century. Therefore, Cullman residents might not have seen reason to photograph the sign. Most probably considered the sign (if in fact, it did exist) as an unseemly but necessary part of the landscape, and thus, did not want to take pictures of it. Any photographs of the sign that might have existed could have been destroyed or hidden by those wishing to minimize the impact of Cullman's racist image. Certainly the absence of photographic evidence does not prove that a sundown sign never stood within the county's borders. The sign persists in local folklore, and the lack of corroborating visual evidence certainly does not disprove such widespread lore. Certainly, no one can legitimately claim with any degree of certainty that some variation of the sundown sign never existed in Cullman County.

Whether or not one or more sundown signs ever stood is still open to some debate, but the sign is much less important that the sundown policy it represented. The irrefutable reality that Cullman actively discouraged—sometimes with violence—African American settlement is more important than the sign. John Clinton Bright's master's thesis makes this point—despite the fact that Bright probably did not intend the point to be condemnatory. As referenced above, Clinton opined that no sundown sign ever stood in Cullman, but he asserts, "…at any rate the rumor [of the sign] was effective because

Negroes were mortally afraid of the town and the people…"[46] Evidence strongly indicates that the county made little effort to refute the "rumor" of the sign and other manifestations of a sundown policy during the 1910s. Thus, Cullman deliberately allowed the legend to persist, enjoying the deterrent it provided to would-be black settlers.

The preceding overview of one of the county's most turbulent early years provides an idea of the violence, intimidation, and racial ideology that fueled Cullman's sundown policy. Cullman advertised itself as "the white county," and whites within the county made efforts to keep African Americans within tight constraints. White Cullman residents went to extremes to prevent African Americans from settling there, and a considerable amount of evidence suggests that whites also used intimidation and violence to restrict the economic opportunities of the African Americans who lived and worked within the county. Cullman had developed a strong reputation for racial exclusiveness by 1913, which was itself a deterrent for African Americans who might have otherwise moved into the county. The next chapter explores the history of Cullman's reputation for racism.

---

[1] "The Criminal Negro," *Cullman Democrat*, 27 March 1913.
[2] "Negroes in Cullman County," *Pulaski Citizen*, 4 Nov. 1909.
[3] "Clean Up Move," *Cullman Democrat*, 3 July 1913.
[4] *Cullman County Alabama*, (Immigration and Industrial Department of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, 1913), 2.
[5] "Letters Wanted," *The Cullman Democrat*, 24 July 1913.
[6] *Cullman County, Alabama*, 15.
[7] Ibid., 13.
[8] Ibid., 26.

[9] Worth noting is the fact that the publication makes no reference to a sundown sign.
[10] Donald L. Grant, *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia* (Birch Lane Press, 1993), 169.
[11] Margaret Jean Jones, *Cullman County Across the Years*, (1975; reprint, Cullman, AL: Modernistic Printers, Inc.), 38.
[12] Ibid., 38.
[13] Grant, 171
[14] Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (University of Illinois Press, 1990).
[15] "Guards Ready for Violence," *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, 25 Jan. 1936.
[16] "Negro Killed," *Cullman Democrat*, 29 May 1913.
[17] "Killed by Train," *Cullman Democrat*, 31 July 1913.
[18] "A Mangled Negro," *Cullman Democrat*, 20 Nov. 1913.
[19] "On the Railroad Track," *Cullman Democrat*, 18 Sept. 1902.
[20] "Charged with Rocking Train," *Cullman Democrat*, 3 Feb. 1910.
[21] Middle-aged white male Cullman resident, verbal statement.
[22] "Cullman Jail Is Overflowing," *Cullman Democrat*, 10 April 1913.
[23] "Just a Negro Shot," *Cullman Democrat*, 13 Feb. 1913.
[24] "Another Negro Shot," *Cullman Democrat*, 13 Feb. 1913.
[25] "Highway Robbery," *Cullman Democrat*, 31 July 1913.
[26] "Negro Shot," *Cullman Democrat*, 27 Nov. 1913.
[27] "Highway Robbery," *Cullman Democrat*, 31 July 1913.
[28] "Negro Kills One Wounds Another," *Cullman Democrat,* 1 May 1913.
[29] "Highway Robbery," *Cullman Democrat*, 27 Nov. 1913.
[30] "County Court Doings," *Cullman Democrat*, 19 June 1913.
[31] "County Court," *Cullman Democrat*, 21 Aug. 1913.
[32] This and subsequent quotations from: "The Criminal Negro," *Cullman Democrat*, 27 May 1913.
[33] This and subsequent quotations from: Untitled, *Cullman Democrat*, 1 May 1913.
[34] "Highway Robbery," *Cullman Democrat*, 27 Nov. 1913.
[35] "Clean Up Move," *Cullman Democrat*, 3 July 1913.
[36] "Diplomacy," *Cullman Democrat*, 2 Jan. 1913.
[37] "The Real Reason," *Cullman Democrat*, 8 May 1913.
[38] Advertisement, *Cullman Democrat*, 9 Jan. 1913.
[39] This and subsequent quotations from: Charles H. Many, "Nigger, Read and Run," *Cullman Democrat*, 27 March 1913.
[40] "The Lost Fight," *Cullman Democrat*, 18 Dec. 1913. "Cullman county [sic] is robbed, every year, of enough money to build pikes, by the open robbery of the L. & N. railroad. We have no other railroad, we are bottled up by the L. & N. and it will never quit its extortionate practices until a strong man like Comer forces it to desist."

[41] Cullman lies well outside of the Black Belt of Alabama, and domestic servants were not absent from Cullman. Interestingly, most *Democrat* ads seeking domestic workers requested German girls or women, and none specifically called for African Americans. Here are two examples of "help wanted" advertisements from other towns: "Girl Wanted," *Cullman Democrat*, 9 Jan. 1913. "Wanted," *Cullman Democrat*, 6 March 1913. The former advertisement requests ten "German girls" to work in Centreville, Alabama. The latter called for "German girls" to work in Hartselle, Alabama.

[42] "Going the Rounds," *Cullman Democrat*, 8 May 1913.

[43] Grant, 171.

[44] Anonymous elderly white male Cullman resident, interview by author, Cullman, Alabama, 2009.

[45] Earlene Johnson, interview by author, 10 Aug. 2009.

[46] Bright, 27.

3

The "Age-Old Burden"

A History of Cullman's Reputation for Racism

Many Alabamians regard Cullman as an outpost of extreme racism, and the county's reputation for racism encompasses a wide array of myths. Some of them are verified truths. Others are incapable of verification. Others are obvious mischaracterizations. No article or book lists even half of these myths, but most Cullman residents seem to be aware of a core set of myths that make up the county's reputation for racism. Arguing about which legends are true is a common topic of conversation among Cullman residents. In a 2009 interview about the county's racial environment, a white Cullman native made a telling comment. In discussing the accuracy of the community's reputation for racism, he said, "… Cullman had such a reputation for what you're [the author] trying to tease out, to see if it's real..."[1] The respondent's wording suggests two rather obvious but illuminating realities. First, Cullman's reputation for virulent racism is, undeniably, *real*—regardless of whether or not that reputation is an *accurate* representation of Cullman's race relations. The reputation is real because many have encountered and accepted it as truth. This chapter demonstrates that the county's reputation for racism and racial exclusiveness has been a prevalent part of Cullman's image for more than 130 years. Second, because Cullman's reputation has influenced the choices of African Americans, Cullman's reputation itself has functioned to maintain the county's racial homogeneity. Simply publicizing that Cullman did not allow African

American residents was an effective deterrent to black in-migration. For too long, studies of Cullman County have neglected the community's reputation as an important subject. Instead, they have focused entirely on proving or disproving elements of the reputation. While assessing the accuracy of the reputation is certainly an important undertaking, the role of the reputation itself in shaping the county's racial environment also merits study. This chapter divides the history of Cullman's racist reputation into three overlapping eras: the era of self-promotion, the era of outsider representations, and the era of increasing African American input.

During the era of self-promotion, spanning from Cullman's founding through the middle of the twentieth century, the city's promotional materials and media outlets actively publicized Cullman's racial exclusiveness. A survey of a few documents reveals that race has seemingly always been a central component of Cullman's identity. Some of the earliest extent records of Cullman demonstrate the importance of racial concerns in Cullman's success.

Cullman's founder Johann G. Cullmann was a German immigrant who had fled Europe to escape debtor's prison.[2] Cullmann and his son edited and published a newspaper, *Der Nord Alabama Colonist*, which championed their fledgling German immigrant settlements. As part of the effort to attract additional settlers, the Cullmanns wrote the paper in German and distributed it to German immigrants living in other parts of the United States as well as to German-speaking people in Europe. While the newspaper's major function was highlighting—sometimes exaggerating—the area's mild climate and agricultural potential, a surviving edition of the *Colonist*, printed in October

1880, also referenced slavery.[3] In the section entitled "Immigration to North Alabama," the *Colonist* explained:

> Before the war settlers were shut out from the South, and a German with his beliefs of freedom—who did not care to settle in a land where slavery was practiced—now finds it is different. Slavery has been abolished since 1865, and the way for new settlers is opened. Immigration is wanted by the Southerners, and there are 15 million acres of land unused and not farmed.[4]

Historian Robert Davis has noted the varying attitudes toward slavery expressed by Cullman's early settlers.[5] Like the majority of native white Southerners who had failed to support the Confederate cause, white people of the Old Northwest who opposed slavery did so on economic grounds—not necessarily because they believed in racial equality.

The Cullmanns also asserted, "The German Colonies have no black population." The "Mail Box" section of the *Colonist* answered a series of questions posed by a large number of mailings. One question was whether or not Native Americans and African Americans lived in the settlement. To this, the reply was, "You will not find any black people living in Cullman or Garden City, very few in the American settlements, and we have not had any Indians here since 1832."[6] The *Colonist* mentioned the settlement's ethnic makeup yet again in the "climate" section: "Here one does not experience the threat of grasshoppers and bugs. Neither do we have the presence of Indians or Negroes."[7] Cullman also advertised its racial composition to potential residents in Georgia. Another edition of the *Colonist* explained, "They [settlers from Georgia] add that they feel more at home here because there are no negroes."[8] Thus, Cullman's unique ethnic makeup figured prominently in Cullman's early promotional materials, which

circulated widely—in Georgia, Cincinnati, and even in Germany.[9] The founding family of Cullman, then, was a crucial part of creating and publicizing the community's association with racial exclusiveness.

The *Colonist* also suggested that the economic goals of the immigrants differed significantly from those of native yeomen. The Cullmanns looked forward to a heavily-industrialized Cullman:

> Here are some of the great possibilities to look into—cotton, wool, iron or wood, furniture making and match industries, also the making of agricultural machinery. There is not a whole lot of competition here in the South and all doors are open to gain capital, tanneries, broom factories, cigar, paper products, window and door and shoe factories as well as paper mills, iron-fondries[sic], spinning mills, chemical products plants, distilleries, champagne factories, endless opportunities for anyone with a clear head and optimism. One may start with small amounts of money and will show large profits in a short time."[10]

The *Colonist* also championed the cause of the white middle class: "The Garden City Colonization Aid Society was founded in the month of September, 1877. She is a child of the presently hard times, where the worker and the middle class suffers the most under the harsh financial pressures."[11] The German colonies demonstrated a tendency toward cooperative agricultural pursuits, a rejection of the conventional individualistic southern agriculture:

> The advantage of a settlement in a community is most important. Larger amounts of goods and a greater number of people will lead to lesser prices in freight and train tickets. Wagons and farm equipment could be bought and used as a unit and one helping another with the buildings of homes and barns by living close together. Life in a community brings more security and wealth and schools…[12]

Der Nord Alabama Colonist also alluded to the interaction of distinct white populations in the area: "There is a friendliness, generosity and lots of willingness to help the new settlers. Some of the settlers from up North, who served in the army there, tell us that they often exchange war stories with the Southerners—each of them supposedly beat the other one in the war—but all is told in friendship in fun."[13] Despite the cordiality presented in regard to popular recollections of the Civil War, the *Colonist* also drew distinctions between Cullman and the rest of the South, particularly in regard to vigilante justice:

> Many Western states have chaotic statewide conditions in their state government, while here we have an orderly life. Everybody lives under good protection. Law and order prevail in our colony.[14]

The Colonist also mentioned differences between German immigrants and white Southerners in regard to slavery:

> Before the war settlers were shut out from the South, and a German with his beliefs of freedom—who did not care to settle in a land where slavery was practiced—now finds it is different. Slavery has been abolished since 1865, and the way for new settlers is opened.[15]

Still, the *Colonist* sought to reverse the negative perceptions of the South held by many outsiders. The Cullmanns explained: "The southern states are not as well known [as those of the Northwest and West] and people are in the dark about the life and ways of the Southerners, except bad news about the slave trade, which causes great fear for immigrants."[16] Further, the *Colonist* asserts: "There are many judgmental views about the South, and it will be a "calling" for the North Alabama Colonists to enlighten the people and tell our readers the truth."[17]

Cullman took measures to correct outsiders' characterizations of the town's ethnic relations as early as the 1880s. An 1888 publication shaped heavily by Cullman's self-representations claims:

> It is proper to state in this connection that there exists in some quarters an erroneous impression to the effect that Cullman is a German town. While there are a great many Germans in and around the little city, there are a great many others, and all are alike invited and welcome. It is not a town of race, of church, or politics, but is open and free to all good people.[18]

Here, *race* might have referred either to racial exclusion or to the town's pronounced German influence.

Cullman might have taken steps to separate itself from the perception that it was a "German town," but promotional materials continued to advertise primarily to working class white people in the Midwest. An 1899 *Chicago Tribune* ad for "co-operative" fruit farms in Vinemont (a Cullman County community located just north of the city of Cullman) explained, "As a wide distribution of ownership of the five-acre fruit farms will be of considerable advantage to the Company for advertising, as well as for the additional improvements that will be made on many of them, only five tracts of five acres each, will be sold to any one purchaser."[19] Certainly cooperative fruit farms were not standard elements of antebellum or post-bellum upcountry yeoman agriculture. The ways in which these varying systems of agriculture contrasted and conflicted with one another merits additional study.

The ad also referenced the racial demographics of the county in a section entitled: "Location of the Property":

> At Vinemont, in Cullman County, Alabama, the only exclusive white county in the South, populated largely by Northern people, on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, the great North and South transportation line, giving shipping facilities for Northern markets, unsurpassed for quick time and low freight rates, and allowing the investigator or settler to leave Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati and other Northern cities after supper time in the evening and arrive at his destination in time for dinner the day following, only fifteen or eighteen hours of car ride on magnificently appointed trains at little expense—598 miles north of Pensacola, at the "pinnacle," the highest mountain plateau between Cincinnati, Ohio, and the Gulf of Mexico: 900 to 1,1000 feet above the level of the sea, where the waters part, flowing north to the Tennessee and south to the gulf; in the healthiest portion of the healthiest county of the healthiest State of the rich growing, prosperous and climatically blessed southland.

Business interests within Cullman promoted it as the South's "only exclusive white county;" therefore Cullman itself took part in propagating its image as a racially exceptional community. For at least the first forty years of its history, Cullman advertised itself as a white haven to Northerners, primarily those of German ancestry. Cullman thus indicated that its racist environment corresponded with the racial perspectives of many white Northerners. A 1903 L. & N. promotional article explained: "The fact that Cullman allows practically no negroes within its borders is another point which serves to make it attractive as a home for Northern people." The article went on to rationalize the desire to live in an all-white community:

> While the citizens of the North have none but the most kindly feelings for the colored race, it is none the less true that the presence of a preponderance of blacks serves as a militant factor in the minds of many northern bred who contemplate establishing their homes under the softer skies of the South. It is one thing to meet a colored man and brother at odd times; it is quite another to find him in the majority in the community in which one lives. Southern people understand the blacks, and the 'Black Belt' does not appeal to them as it necessarily must to those who have passed their lives where negroes are few. Thus,

> because of the liberal infusion of German blood in the people of Cullman and Cullman county and because there is but 'one' negro voter registered in the entire county…[20]

The extent to which the German and northern elements in Cullman continued to shape its racial environment is debatable. At the very least, the two strains of thought—those of upcountry southern yeomen and northern white workers—had a great deal in common and worked together to enhance and preserve Cullman's whiteness. Neither the upcountry native nor the northern or German transplant wanted plantation agriculture to dominate Cullman County. Tom Vandiver was an Alabama native who owned two Cullman stores in the early twentieth century. In 1911, he wrote of his unsuccessful attempt to sell his holdings in Cullman:

> Will not leave Cullman. I have been unable to sell my real estate in Cullman for cash, so will not go West but remain in Cullman. Have just returned from a trip west and must admit that Cullman county with its thousands of small farms and a No. 1 white citenzenship[sic] looks much better to me than large plantations owned by a few, full up with negro tenants, who are compelled to trade at the Land Lords Commissary in town and have nothing left at the end of the year. I'm contented to stay with the Cullman Boys and help make Cullman the banner town and Cullman county the banner county of Alabama.[21]

Economic concerns seem to have been a driving force in convincing Cullman residents of the desirability of racial exclusiveness. A 1902 *Birmingham Age-Herald* article suggests that Cullman took pride in its all-white workforce: "…there is not scarcity of labor. One finds abundance of thrifty white workingmen and women, and wages, though higher than in sections where negroes are employed, are as a matter of fact, lower, because the

Cullman white laborer will do nearly twice as much work in one day as the negro laborers in other sections."[22]

The dearth of African Americans meant Cullman differed from the conventional model of the southern racial environment, and Cullman residents who had migrated there from parts of the traditional South sometimes remarked upon Cullman's peculiarity. E.W. Harper wrote: "All this [crime] is being done where there are no negroes—but in a land where there are Bibles and churches and schools and good laws, but not executed. I have lived among negroes, but have never known of as much stealing in no section as is being done here."[23] Harper seems to have been arguing against an assumption on the part of Cullman's white population that an all-white town would necessarily have significantly less criminal activity than biracial communities.

Situated as it was in the Deep South, Cullman came to be a sort of curiosity to outsiders, some of whom characterized the county as distinctly non-southern. A 1902 *Birmingham Age-Herald* article about Cullman begins:

> This[Cullman] is a town, sort of a northwestern town situated in the center of the south. There is nothing southern about it. There is not a negro in the town and but few in the county.[24]

Attempts at explaining Cullman's allegedly exceptional racial composition also arose during the era of self-promotion. Largely, newspaper articles attributed Cullman's racial policies to its German citizenry. A 1908 *Montgomery Advertiser* article characterized the German population and its racial attitudes: "The fact is and always has been, that the citizens of Cullman composed mostly of the Teutonio[sic] race, in their rugged ideas of work unceasing and unflagging, are reported to have sworn that they would not brook the

appearance of any negroes whatever in their midst."[25] Thus, commentators surmised that Cullman's racial composition resulted from its German heritage, particularly the work ethic of German settlers.

Cullman's racially exclusive rhetoric peaked in the early 1910s. The 1913 L. & N. Railraod Company publication explicitly stated that Cullman would not tolerate African American settlers. Many's 1913 *Birmingham Age-Herald* article refers to Cullman's inhospitality toward African Americans as a widely-known fact. Cullman published fewer representations of itself as a sundown town in the following years, but its reputation for racism continued to grow. A *Washington Post* article praises the peculiar racial composition of both the city of Cullman and the county as a whole:

> When I first saw Cullman, in 1896, I was impressed with the fact that there were no negroes in the town, an unusual thing in a Southern town of 1,000 inhabitants. If you read census statistics you will find that this farseeing colonist [Col. John Cullmann] made provision only for hard-working white people. Out of a population of 45,000 now there are hardly 500 negroes.[26]

The 1931 "Historical-Industrial Edition" of the *Cullman Democrat* included the *Post* article. By running the article in a promotional edition, the Democrat seems to have welcomed characterizations of Cullman as a sundown community.

Carl Carmer gave Cullman's reputation for racism a national platform in 1934. His *Stars Fell on Alabama* consists of a multitude of brief accounts of Carmer's travels throughout the state during his tenure at the University of Alabama. He noted a sundown sign while passing through Cullman, and he also commented on the town's sundown policy. Cullman made national news in 1936 when Morgan County law enforcement shot

Ozzie Powell, one of the "Scottsboro Boys," during an alleged escape attempt. The violence took place in Cullman County while police transported the Scottsboro defendants to Birmingham. The *Ogden Standard Examiner* of Ogden, Utah ran an article about the incident. The article characterized Cullman as a town so racist that its hospital refused to treat Ozzie Powell:

> Because of a hatred for negroes in Cullman, which has signs at the edge of town: "Nigger, don't let the sun set on you here," Powell was taken the 70 miles to Birmingham for medical treatment.[27]

The article went on to explain that white Cullman residents were known for throwing rocks at African Americans passing through the county on trains.

By the late 1930s, denials of popular characterizations of Cullman racism seem to have grown louder. Bright explains that accounts of the expulsion of Cullman's African American population were "true," but he claims, "… others [other stories] have been denied by the old settlers." Later, he argued,

> The people of Cullman have never been as hostile to Negroes as is generally believed. They just never had a place for them. The colony was made up of energetic, industrious, and thrifty people who had no desire to have servants; and as independent and free-lance laborers or farmers, Negroes would never be able to compete with the resource [possibly resourceful] German people. Those conditions have continued and Cullman has successfully lived up to her name "The Home of the Whites."[28]

Bright thus accepted the explanation that Cullman's German roots produced its racial exclusiveness, but he seems to prize the German work ethic over the German hostility toward African Americans emphasized by earlier characterizations. The county's German

immigrants, according to Bright, were simply too hardworking and talented to have any use for African Americans. Still, he admitted:

> Oral tradition asserts that African American hoboes disembark from their train before they reached Cullman, skirt the edge of town on foot, and board another train on the other end of town. They were said to do this because "Negroes were mortally afraid of the town and the people who lived in it."[29]

The 1939 "March of Progress of Cullman County" issue of the *Cullman Tribune* advertises the county's racial composition. The article entitled "Steady Growth and Annexation" carried the subtitle: "Almost Wholly White Population Is Contributing Factor in Keeping All Neighborhoods Desirable for Living." The article asserted:

> When one considers that an overwhelming majority of the citizens of Cullman are white, this city can be classified along with those of several thousand more people. There are less than a hundred negroes in the city; none of them are residents.[30]

The special edition championed the benefits of Cullman's racial makeup in a section entitled "No Racial Problem:" "With only a few Negroes it is natural that the common racial problem found in nearly all Southern cities and towns does not exist here." The 1939 "March of Progress" also adhered to the "hard-working German" explanation of Cullman's racial homogeneity:

> With little plantation life having existed in the county in former years, and due to the German settlers being of the mind to carry on their livelihood without the aid of Negro servants, Cullman at this time has less than 100 Negroes within its corporate limits.

The 1939 "March of Progress" signaled a shift from the explicit rhetoric of exclusion to a self-representation of a more passive Cullman. Instead of overtly affirming Cullman's racially exclusive policy, the 1939 article attributed the racial composition only to the

independent streak of hardworking German immigrants instead of intentional exclusion of African American residents. Seemingly, Cullman aimed to downplay the racial strife that did exist within the county while continuing to advertise its racial homogeneity. In other words, Cullman sought to highlight its racial composition while hiding the unpleasant business of maintaining it.

Newspaper sources confirm that Cullman advertised its whiteness in order to attract settlers and industries as early as 1880. By the twentieth century, prominent Alabama newspapers printed stories about Cullman's racial exclusivity, and Cullman's racist reputation gained some national notoriety as early as 1910. Cullman helped to mold and publicize its reputation for racial exclusiveness through the mid-twentieth century, but members of outside media outlets moved to the forefront of molding and promoting racial representations of Cullman during the era of outsider representations. Cullman's reputation seemingly took on a life of its own during the middle of the twentieth century. Its leaders and newspapers had crafted a racially exclusive image for the town that discouraged many African Americans from even trying to move to Cullman or to do business there.

A United States Department of Agriculture report by Walter M. Kollmorgen provides a snapshot of the nature and extent of the lore surrounding Cullman County in the years leading up to 1941. Kollmorgen attributed the county's racially exclusive policy to its location in the Cumberland Plateau and its economy, which was dominated by small farmers. He argued that most southern counties possessed of these characteristics maintain a "'no trespassing' attitude toward the Negroes."[31] Therefore, he dismissed the

folk wisdom that attributed Cullman's racial exclusiveness to its German heritage. He did not, however, deny that such beliefs held sway among many outsiders:

> The impression prevails that the Germans are responsible for the fact that Cullman County is the "home of the whites." Negro informants in Birmingham and Montgomery said as recently as 1939 that "Germans don't like colored folks." Several said they had heard that the Germans still had a sign near the railroad station in Cullman which read: "Negro, Don't Let the Sun Set on You in This Town." All of them said they would be afraid to pass through the town.[32]

Later, he added:

> Negroes have varied explanations as to why the Germans "dislike" them. Several said, "They think we can't cook and don't know how to work." This they cannot understand, as domestic and manual labor in general is their domain. When asked why they do no not employ Negroes, the Germans are likely to point out rather vigorously, "Die Deutsche due Ihr' eiche Arbeit!" ("The Germans do their own work!"). The German definitely feels a responsibility to do as much of his own work as he can. This holds for all forms of physical tasks, including those definitely avoided by white people who live in sections where colored people are common. Nor does the German have a high regard for the competence of the Negroes. He says, for instance, that they can't cook, can't clean house, and can't tend strawberries or sweetpotatoes [sic] properly, except perhaps under constant supervisions, so he would rather do the work himself. He does admit that they can pick cotton but considers this form of competence definitely exceptional.[33]

Kollmorgen attributed the German's racial attitude to be a result of "dissimilar eating and working habits." He attributed the non-German whites' exclusion of black workers to white supremacy:

> Their [non-German white people] working and eating habits are not nearly so dissimilar—they do not say that Negroes can't work or can't cook. They are quick to point out, however, that land and jobs and money are limited, and, this being so, "Who do you think ought to have them?" The answer is perfectly clear to them.[34]

In a footnote, Kollmorgen further explained:

> Several legends have grown up to the effect that such a sign existed before 1900. No informant had seen the sign, and all agreed that if such a sign ever existed it represented the work of pranksters and not the work of any responsible group of citizens.[35]

This is not to say that Cullman did not continue to actively enforce its informal sundown policy until late in the twentieth century. J. Allen Tower and Walter Wolf's 1943 article in the *Geographic Review* indicated another way in which Cullman residents employed threats of physical violence to exclude African Americans. Tower and Wolf asserted, "At one time it was the 'sport' of youths in the city of Cullman to band together periodically to chase the few Negroes there out of the city." They went on to add that this "sport" had ceased, though the "few Negroes in the city are primarily house servants."[36] In spite of Tower and Wolf's claims to the contrary, chasing African Americans out of town continued to be a sport of Cullman youths in the early 1960s—at least in isolated numbers. The "sport" continued—at least in limited number—until the 1980s and, possibly, later.

In a 2010 interview, a white male Cullman resident confessed—hesitantly— to having taken part in the sport of chasing African Americans out of town around 1960. Too young to drive, he was a passenger in a car full of his friends who chased a group of African American teenagers until a red light gave the African Americans time to separate themselves from their pursuers. *Sport* seems to have been an appropriate term for the attitude these teenagers had about their intimidation of African Americans. The informant involved in the incident described his group's motivations as twofold. One was to have

something "crazy" to do, and the other was due to the fact that, "Honestly, we just didn't want them [African Americans] to be here." He said that there was "never an intention to harm" the African American teens. At least in his estimation, he lacked the courage to do anything serious enough to risk being arrested. That these particular youths viewed this incident as sport is supported by their failure to give up on the chase so easily; they stopped at a red light, allowing the African Americans to get away. Furthermore, the informant and his friends—after last seeing the car with Birmingham plates heading south on Highway 31—retired to a nearby hangout, had a drink, and forgot about the incident.[37]

For Barry Nall, an African American from the Colony area who played sports at Hanceville High School, going to Cullman to hang out with his white and African American friends was problematic. Cruising up and down the main strip through town, Highway 31, and hanging out at the skating rink were popular pastimes for teenagers then, but Nall and his African American friends faced intimidation from white teenagers and adults alike when they took part in these activities. Racial slurs were abundant. Once, whites who had "had words" with Nall's group of friends at the skating rink and proceeded to run them out of town. Nall recalls, "…they actually chased us, truckload of them, down through town."[38] Therefore, one can reasonably assume that the practice of chasing African Americans out of town or out of the county was a crucial component of maintaining Cullman's whiteness throughout much of the twentieth century.

Instances of intimidation and violence aimed at keeping African Americans out of Cullman were probably numerous, but Cullman did little to publicize these practices

beyond the 1910s. By 1961, Cullman publications had completed the transition to explicitly denying that its racial composition was the result of racially exclusionary practices. The city directory argued that the county's African Americans chose to live in the Colony community—as opposed to being excluded from the remainder of the county. The final paragraph of the history portion of the city directory commented on the city's racial environment, possibly echoing previous decades' advertisements of Cullman's racial homogeneity:

> The thing that surprises most people coming South is that there are less than 20 negroes in the City of Cullman and less than 550 in the entire county. BY CHOICE they live in their own little "Colony" in the southwest corner of the county where they have their own churches, stores, schools, etc.[39]

The effect of this passage was to emphasize Cullman's racial composition without acknowledging the means by which Cullman had maintained its racial exclusiveness. The exact phrasing of this paragraph showed up in Cullman's city directories through the 1965 edition, but in 1966, the history section excluded this sketch of the racial environment of the county. This shift reflects the movement of Cullman away from addressing its race problem at all.

Despite the fact that Hanceville High School and Hanceville Elementary School integrated without major disruptions, the integration received little media attention. On the other hand, an African American student integrated Cullman High School in the early 1960s but reportedly transferred after one year due to persistent harassment by classmates.[40] While 1960s race relations were relatively non-eventful as far as media attention to Cullman County, the county's reputation for racism reached new extremes in

the late 1970s and 1980s. The trial of Tommy Lee Hines is perhaps the most infamous event in Cullman's racial past, drawing extensive coverage by national media outlets. Hines, a mentally challenged African American man, faced accusations of raping three white women in Morgan County. Months earlier, Hines's trial in Decatur had provoked demonstrations by the Ku Klux Klan and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which eventually led to violence. For this reason, a Morgan County judge had the trial moved to Cullman.[41] The Cullman trial made national headlines. A *Time* article entitled "Scottsboro Revisited?" summarized:

> Defense Attorney Henry Sanders Mimms asked that the trial be moved to a less hostile place [than Decatur]. The alternative, Cullman, 30 miles away, was not much of an improvement. Only about 1% of its 14,200 people are black, so it was no surprise that the nine men and three women selected for the jury were all white. On the eve of the trial, Hines supporters began a protest march from Decatur to Cullman. They were stopped at the Cullman town line by police and jeering Klansmen. Twenty-three blacks were arrested.[42]

Rumors of pending conflict came with the trial. Tales of impending Black Panther attacks circulated. One rumor was particularly outlandish:

> If Hines were convicted, they [white men talking outside of the Cullman County Courthouse], they said, the Black groups had vowed to burn Cullman to the ground. "The first one that strikes a match, his head comes off," said one Cullmanite. "This is not Detroit. This is Cullman, Alabama."[43]

In December 1978, the *New York Times* ran a report on the beating of an African American preacher in Cullman County by a Klan leader:

> Klansmen in Cullman, Ala., in December claimed credit for the beating of a black minister who was pulled from his car after being stopped on a highway and dragged into the woods. "Maybe he'll think

> twice before he returns to Cullman," Klansman Bill McGlocklin said.[44]

While this incident stemmed from the trial of Tommy Lee Hines, the racist incident also had roots in Cullman's history of enforcing racial exclusion through roadway chases and intimidation, and certainly incidents like this sent a pointed message to any person of color who thought about coming to Cullman.[45]

In 1980, the *New York Times* ran stories about Bill Wilkinson of Denham Springs, Louisiana, the leader of the Ku Klux Klan's demonstrations in Cullman. Wilkinson was "Imperial Wizard of the Invisible Empire, the fastest-growing of the major national Klans." In highlighting the recent growth of the Klan, a December feature mentions Wilkinson's "$10,000 four place Piper Cherokee" plane, which was a "gift from a well-to-do scrap dealer in Cullman, Ala., where Bill Wilkinson is something of a hero."[46] A November article claimed, "Mr. Wilkinson's Invisible Empire has set up a commando training camp near Cullman, Ala., where followers carry guns, wear army fatigues and say they are preparing for a race war."[47] Thus, Cullman Ku Klux Klan activity seems to have been especially prevalent in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Certainly, regional and national media coverage during this era enhanced Cullman's reputation for Ku Klux Klan activity.

Another element of the racist reputation's recent history is the prominence of Ku Klux Klan activity directed toward the county's growing Latino population. A 1998 "immigration protest meeting" in Cullman garnered statewide attention. Discussion of the

demonstration also appeared in *Other Souths: Diversity and Difference in the U.S. South, Reconstruction to Present*, a collection of essays on southern social history:

> In January 1998, after an immigration protest meeting, three men were arrested for burning the Mexican flag, as well as flags of the United Nations and the Communist party. Many of those attending the really were KKK leaders and right-wing militia members, some from Georgia and a few from as far away as California and Canada. James Floyd, the local leader of the "Stand Up for Cullman" protest, vociferously argued for a permanent halt to Hispanic immigration, which, he believed, would ultimately challenge Cullman's white majority population. "I like my own people more than others," Floyd later asserted, "and I'm not ready for a world without borders." Apparently, he was not alone; at least one hundred people who sympathized with that view attended the Cullman protest. So much for globalization in that part of Alabama.[48]

In 2006, Cullman gained more statewide attention for extremist groups when Terri Willingham Thomas, a Cullman candidate for the Alabama Court of Appeals, faced questions about her family's possible involvement with the Ku Klux Klan and the Council of Conservative Citizens.[49] The Ku Klux Klan planned to protest illegal immigration in 2007. The Southern Poverty Law Center website included the following description of the complications surrounded the plans:

> Anti-racist demonstrators are about as common at Ku Klux Klan rallies as white pointy hoods. So it came as no surprise when, shortly after the National Knights of the Ku Klux Klan revealed plans to hold a rally in Cullman, Ala., a counter-protest spokesperson piped up to announce that his group would likewise make a showing in Cullman to oppose the "racial slurs," the "ignorance and stupidity," the "hatred" and the "threats" voiced by the Indiana-based National Knights. The identity of this "anti-hate" group, however, was a bit of a shock: The Alabama Ku Klux Klan.[50]

While the fraction of Cullman residents who attend such rallies is minute, the statewide publicity generated by Ku Klux Klan rallies serves to reinforce the association of Cullman with extreme racism.

Cullman's reputation for racism gained momentum from the media coverage of Ku Klux Klan activity within the county, particularly during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Furthermore, Cullman remained relatively quiet in media representations of the county's racial environment during the closing decades of the era of outside representations while outside media outlets generally characterized the county as ultra racist. Thus, Cullman's reputation for racism persisted relatively unchecked throughout most the twentieth century. Furthermore, neither Cullman media outlets nor outside media outlets incorporated the perspectives of Cullman County's African Americans in their representations, and as a result, many white Cullman residents came to insist that the county's racist reputation was a result of exaggerations or outright lies propagated by outsiders in search of a good story. For many, that meant asserting that the legends surrounding Cullman's racial environment were either greatly exaggerated or wholly unfounded, but because this non-racist Cullman myth did not enter the broader discourse on Cullman, the two versions of Cullman's reputation had little interaction. As a result, much of the white Cullman population was able to believe that their community's reputation for racism was unfounded well into the first decade of the twenty-first century.

While the non-racist Cullman myth held way for many white Cullman residents throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century, some of the county's African Americans—educators, community leaders, and local historians—began working toward

While the fraction of Cullman residents who attend such rallies is minute, the statewide publicity generated by Ku Klux Klan rallies serves to reinforce the association of Cullman with extreme racism.

Cullman's reputation for racism gained momentum from the media coverage of Ku Klux Klan activity within the county, particularly during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Furthermore, Cullman remained relatively quiet in media representations of the county's racial environment during the closing decades of the era of outside representations while outside media outlets generally characterized the county as ultra racist. Thus, Cullman's reputation for racism persisted relatively unchecked throughout most the twentieth century. Furthermore, neither Cullman media outlets nor outside media outlets incorporated the perspectives of Cullman County's African Americans in their representations, and as a result, many white Cullman residents came to insist that the county's racist reputation was a result of exaggerations or outright lies propagated by outsiders in search of a good story. For many, that meant asserting that the legends surrounding Cullman's racial environment were either greatly exaggerated or wholly unfounded, but because this non-racist Cullman myth did not enter the broader discourse on Cullman, the two versions of Cullman's reputation had little interaction. As a result, much of the white Cullman population was able to believe that their community's reputation for racism was unfounded well into the first decade of the twenty-first century.

While the non-racist Cullman myth held way for many white Cullman residents throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century, some of the county's African Americans—educators, community leaders, and local historians—began working toward

fully incorporating African American voices into the racial narrative of Cullman. The shift to a third era of representations of race in Cullman, the era of increasing African American input, began taking place in the 1970s. In 1972, Earlene Johnson, an African American Colony native, wrote a brief history of Colony entitled "Bits and Pieces About: The Colony Community." Johnson used oral history, cemetery records, and school records to sketch an outline of Colony's history, including its school and churches. Margaret Jean Jones, a white local historian, printed Johnson's history of Colony in *Combing Cullman County*. Johnson did not mention Cullman County's history of racial exclusion in her chronicle of chronicle of Colony. In 1978, Dwain White wrote "A Review of Cullman County's Black History" for a college history course. White acknowledged Cullman's racist reputation but opines that the reputation was more hype than reality: "Much of this anti-Black publicity was much more publicized than any concrete demonstration of its threat."[51] He also attributed Cullman's racial exclusiveness to early German immigrants. He explained:

> From the areas examined thus far, one would assume that the Black-White relationship was congenial after emancipation. It can be said that during and after the desegregation period there was practically no trouble at all. Historically, however, I think it necessary to say that there was an attitude of "White Supremacy" on the part of many Whites in the Cullman Area. The Whites that lived in the Colony area seemed to get along well with the Black population. The first generation Germans of Cullman, however, would get after Blacks when they came to the town. The businesses liked the Black trade but it is said that the sheriff watched the German conduct carefully when Blacks were in Cullman to keep peace. "Nigger don't let the sundown catch you in Cullman" The Blacks came to an area just outside Cullman and camped until daylight. Then they would ride into Cullman to trade. Most of their trading centered around mules.[52]

He suggested that racial strife and racial exclusiveness were parts of the county's distant past by 1978. He opined: "Since shortly after the turn of the century the general Black-White relations have been much better. Today, I feel, they are among the best not only in the state of Alabama, but in the United States."[53] White related the Stout's Mountain lynching and briefly mentioned "other stories about abuses of blacks." He explained:

> One is that of a Black hanged in a peach orchard. Another is the alleged practice of cutting a finger of any Black that were found in the town of Cullman. These atrocities occurred during the late 1800's and early 1900's while Cullman's saloons flourished and it was reportedly unsafe for Blacks or Whites to walk the streets of Cullman at night. Those telling these stories, however, are reluctant to have themselves footnoted.[54]

"Promised Land: The Communities of Mon Louis and Colony," part of an Alabama Public Television documentary series, included a segment on Colony. The documentary briefly summarized the history of Colony, including intimidation by white people who sought to wrest fertile tracts of land from African Americans.[55] The documentary's interviews with Colony residents was another step in the direction of incorporating African American voices in the history of Cullman County race relations.

Since 1970, Cullman has continued to draw state and national media attention for its negative racial reputation while remaining relatively silent about its racial environment. Beginning in earnest with Earlene Johnson's history of Colony, Cullman County's African American history as related by the documents, memories, and research of African Americans has gained more and more attention in both media representations and in local histories. After more than a century of primarily negative publicity in regard to race,[56] Cullman made national headlines for racial progressivism in 2008. The

overwhelmingly white Twelfth District, lying wholly within Cullman County, elected Rev. James Fields as its representative in the Alabama House. The election made the *New York Times* in February 2008, and the *New York Times Magazine* ran an extended follow-up on the election in 2010. Two French news channels ran extended segments chronicling Fields's electoral success. Cullman had finally won national (and some international) acclaim for racial progress, but the national and international media representations of Cullman also drew attention to Cullman's reputation for racism and its history of racial exclusiveness and Ku Klux Klan activity.

The first prominent national coverage of Field's election was a February 2008 *New York Times* article by Adam Nossiter, entitled "Race Matters Less in Politics of South," assesses James Fields's success in light of race in southern politics. The article began,

> The racial breakthroughs have come gingerly in Alabama over the years: a black mayor there, an old Klansman put on trial here, a civil rights memorial there.
>
> And a few weeks ago, voters in a county that is more than 96 percent white chose a genial black man, James Fields, to represent them in the State House of Representatives.[57]

Nossiter thus characterized Fields's election as a "racial breakthrough," emphasizing the willingness of white Cullman County residents to vote for an African American candidate. He also noted some uncomfortable situations that accompanied the racial milestone: "It is a historic first, but the moment is full of awkwardness." Nossiter quoted two Cullman residents who asserted that they do not see Fields's race when they interact with him.

Next, Nossiter contextualized the election by relating the success of Eric Powell, an African American state legislator in an overwhelmingly white Mississippi county, and by comparing the success of Powell and Fields to the prospects of then-presidential candidate Barack Obama. Nossiter pointed out that Hillary Clinton had beaten Obama by a four-to-one margin in Cullman County's Democratic Primary earlier in February, and he seems to conclude that the factors which gave rise to the electoral success of Fields and Powell are dependent on the African American candidate's being "enmeshed" in the particular white-majority district in which he or she is running. In other words, Nossiter seems to argue that voters from overwhelmingly white districts in the South must have enough interaction with an African American candidate to ensure that they, in a sense, forget he or she is black.

Near the middle of the article, Nossiter transitioned to a treatment of Cullman's reputation for racism:

> For unsavory historical reasons, it could easily have turned out differently in a county that is almost entirely white. Mr. Fields inherited a bitter racial legacy, one he is conscious of though unsoured by.

Nossiter also referenced the infamous sundown sign. Whether by accident or on purpose, he rather smoothly sidestepped the question of whether or not Carmer's account was accurate. Instead, he wrote:

> If you drove into Cullman 70-odd years ago, you might have happened on "a neatly-painted sign" by the roadside, as the New York writer Carl Carmer described it in his book, "Stars Fell on Alabama," one bearing a chilling and crude inscription telling blacks: "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on You in this Town."

By writing "… you might have happened on a 'neatly painted sign,'" Nossiter suggested that the sundown sign was real without definitively saying so and without acknowledging the fact that many Cullman County residents argue that no sundown sign ever stood in Cullman County (this claim dates back, at least, to 1936, only two years after the publication of *Stars Fell on Alabama*).

Nossiter also commented on the causes of Cullman's racial composition:

> It had always been a place of few blacks because there were few plantations, and the whites wanted to keep it that way. The sign has long since passed into half-remembered folk memory. But the sentiment behind it lingered; the Ku Klux Klan and Citizens Councils were strong in these hills, and blacks in Cullman were effectively confined to a forlorn hillside hamlet known as The Colony, which is where Mr. Fields grew up.

Nossiter did not portray Cullman's racial past as wholly racist, though. He noted that Cullman had demonstrated a streak of racial progressivism in politics in the 1940s and 1950s, serving as the home base of James "Big Jim" Folsom. Nossiter ended the article by highlighting the upward trajectory of southern race relations brought about by the integration of public schools. Fields's childhood was "hemmed in at every turn by racism, at least until high school years." Nossiter explained that Fields was not able to try on clothes in Cullman clothing stores. Nossiter also wrote: "And 'beyond a shadow of a doubt,' he [Fields] said, blacks knew they were unwelcome in the white, white town of Cullman." Thus, Fields acknowledged Cullman's racially exclusive past in the national media. Nossiter explained that Fields's athletic success in high school "… earned him friendship among white peers; when rival football teams yelled racial epithets at him, his own classmates protectively retaliated." Nossiter concluded,

> People in Cullman talk about Mr. Fields's excellent connections in the state capital, Montgomery—he once served as assistant director of the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations—but they also speak, hesitantly, about sloughing off an age-old burden.
> As Rob Werner, the owner of an outdoor-goods store here, put it: "People said, 'Of Course, James is black. This is great, this will get this off our back.'"

Thus, the 2008 *New York Times* article ended by referencing the desire of many white residents to finally separate Cullman from its reputation for racism.

James Fields's election garnered a great deal of press coverage beyond the *New York Times* piece. For the most part, these news stories followed the pattern of Nossiter's article, contextualizing Fields's election with the campaign of Barack Obama and within the history of Cullman County's peculiar racial environment. In 2010, a second *New York Times* article—this one by Nicholas Dawidoff, followed up on Fields and Cullman. Entitled "Race in the South in the Age of Obama," Dawidoff's article discussed race and Fields in light of both the Obama presidency and African American gubernatorial hopeful Artur Davis.

Dawidoff references the counter-legend in Cullman that argues the sundown sign never existed. He wrote of Fields's reaction to the counter-legend:

> He's similarly inscrutable when he hears claims that what is known in Cullman as "the sign" never existed. Even though Fields says, "It was there and folks know it," he doesn't push back: "You just let it go. Sometimes things like that need to stay buried. That was in the past. Let us move forward."

Dawidoff asserted that a sundown sign or multiple signs have, in fact, stood in Cullman County:

> Versions of Cullman's old sundown sign hung beside county roads well into the 1970s, and all of them repeated the message that the travel writer Carl Carmer saw when he visited Cullman in the late 1920s: "Nigger Don't Let the Sun Go Down on You in This Town."

Dawidoff thus seems to indicate that in the early twentieth century, one sundown sign stood in Cullman while "versions" of the sign later stood on roadsides in the county. He also explained that the infamous sign and "Cullman's powerful Ku Klux Klan" combined to form "a racial deterrent so effective that even today, Cullman's are exits off the Interstate that most African-Americans avoid." Dawidoff also referenced the importance of Cullman's reputation for racism in shaping the community's identity. He quoted a former Cullman resident as saying, "'there's almost to some degree pride about being a little bit notorious.'"[58]

Dawidoff also referenced the stigma of alleged Ku Klux Klan activity attached to the Willingham family. He explained:

> The candidate who ran against Fields in the special election was Wayne Willingham. The difference between Fields's devoted life of public service and his opponent's sparser record was stark. Further, a Cullman relative of Wayne's, Joe Willingham, is a reputed Klan leader.

Dawidoff drew a distinction between the racial environments of the city of Cullman and outlying communities, stressing the city of Cullman's economic need to distance itself from its reputation for racism:

> But for all the Confederate flags flying out in the county, the city of Cullman today has an increasingly cosmopolitan middle class that is trying to balance chickens and sweet potatoes with a growing manufacturing presence. If you aspire to step more visibly into the world by attracting industrial investment, it doesn't help to have somebody in a passing pickup truck yelling, "hey, tar baby," at your

> prospective foreign client. When that happened outside a Cullman restaurant to a staunchly conservative white Cullman businessman named Barry McGriff, he saw other people's passions threatening his interests. "We don't want that old reputation," McGriff says. "It's a huge business hindrance for us. We want to be diversified." So it was one evening that Fields was visited by McGriff's father, Bert, who told Fields, "We want to help you," and handed him a campaign donation. "To me," says Barry McGriff, "tearing the sign down was James going into office."

Dawidoff also commented on persisting racial inequalities evident in the city, particularly Fields's perspective on them:

> It bothers Fields that there are no black employees in the Cullman court, schools, on the police force or in any of the city's banks, that the Cullman custom of hanging a photograph of the president in the county commission's office at the courthouse ended the day Obama took office. Fields hasn't complained because he says he can't think of a way to persuade people that he would be doing so for the greater good.

Dawidoff concluded on an optimistic note, citing the hope Fields has offered to one of the few African American residents of the city of Cullman. Thus, Dawidoff presents Cullman as a work in progress motivated, in part, by economic necessity to distance itself from its racist reputation. His representation of Cullman, a widely-read 8,000-word *New York Times Magazine* article, presented a reasonably objective survey of Cullman's complex racial environment, including its past and its reputation for racism.

Dawidoff's article is part of a trend toward the inclusion of African American perspectives in representations of Cullman County's racial environment, and many white Cullman residents had to confront the article's documentation of heartbreaking racial injustices that have taken place within the county. Some white Cullman residents reacted with skepticism, arguing that Cullman has never differed from the average Alabama

county in terms of racism and asserting that media coverage exaggerated Cullman's history of racial discrimination. Others simply bemoaned the fact that race continues to be a prominent topic of conversation—for Cullman and for society as a whole, arguing that racism is primarily an artifact of the past to be forgotten and not discussed.

Considering the increasing disconnect between outside representations of Cullman and the silence and denial of a significant number of white Cullman residents, however, reconciliation between the representations of Cullman's racial environment seemed more necessary than ever before. In addition to further exploring some sociological issues, the next chapter details and interprets the causes and effects of these competing representations.

---

[1] Middle-aged white male Cullman resident, interview with author, 2009.
[2] Robert S. Davis, "Different Children of the New South: The Creation and Evolution of the Communities of Cullman County," (Copyright draft of 2 Feb. 2009), 5.
[3] The quotations from this newspaper are drawn from an English translation by Margot Tanner published by the Cullman County Historical Society in 1997, and the page numbers noted correspond to this translation: John G. Cullman and Son, eds., *Der Nord Alabama Colonist*, Vol. 1 No. 2, Oct. 1880; reprint, trans. Margot Tanner (Cullman, AL: Cullman Historical Society, 1997).
[4] Ibid., 31.
[5] Davis, 25.
[6] John G. Cullman and Son, eds., 14.
[7] Ibid., 32.
[8] Reprinted in 1939 "March of Progress" special edition of the *Cullman Tribune*.
[9] Davis, 6.
[10] John G. Cullman and Son, eds., 7-9.
[11] Ibid., 33.
[12] Ibid., 9.
[13] Ibid., 14.
[14] Ibid., 10.
[15] Ibid., 31.
[16] Ibid., 11
[17] Ibid., 32.

[18] *Northern Alabama: Historical and Biographical Illustrated* (Birmingham, AL: Smith and De Land, 1888), 384. (Accessed via Ancestry.com 6/14/10).
[19] "A Home: An Income for Life," *Chicago Tribune*, 26 Feb. 1899.
[20] E.L. Parker, "Complete Story of Thriving German Town and County of Alabama," *Cullman Democrat*, 29 Jan. 1903.
[21] Tom Vandiver, "Tom Vandiver's New Year Announcement," *Cullman Democrat*, 12 Jan. 1911.
[22] Ned Brace, "City of Cullman Visited: By the Age-Herald Editor and Sketch Artist," *Cullman Democrat*, 15 May 1902; reprint, "Cullman's Prosperity Due To Diversified Farming," *Birmingham Age-Herald.*
[23] E.W. Harper, "Walter News," *Cullman Democrat*, 25 May 1911.
[24] Ned Brace.
[25] "Cullman Under Census Contains One Negro," *Cullman Democrat*, originally in *Montgomery Advertiser*, 6 April 1908.
[26] "Col. John Cullman, Founder of the City," *Cullman Democrat*, 12 March 1931.
[27] "Guards Ready for Violence," *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, 25 Jan. 1936.
[28] Bright, 27.
[29] Ibid.
[30] This and subsequent quotations: "March of Progress in Cullman County," *Culllman Tribune*, 1931.
[31] Walter M. Kollmorgen, "The German Settlement in Cullman County, Alabama: An Agricultural Island in the Cotton Belt," United States Department of Agriculture Bureau of Agricultural Economics (1941) : 14.
[32] Ibid., 14.
[33] Ibid., 15-16.
[34] Ibid., 16.
[35] Ibid., 14
[36] J. Allen Tower and Walter Wolf, "Ethnic Groups in Cullman County, Alabama," *Geographical Review*, 33 No. 2 (April 1934) : 284.
[37] White male Cullman resident, interview by author, 2009.
[38] Barry Nall, interview by author, 24 July 2009.
[39] *Polk's Cullman City Directory 1961* (R.L. Polk and Co., Publishers: Richmond, 1960), 13.
[40] Earlene Johnson, interview by author, 22 Feb. 2010.
[41] Bob Dart, "Tommy Lee Hines and the Cullman Saga," *Southern Changes* 1:3 (1978) : 12-15.
[42] "Scottsboro Revisited?" *Time*, 16. Oct. 1978. www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,916421,00.html. Accessed 30 June 2009.
[43] Dart, 15.
[44] Ronald Harris and D. Michael Cheers, "Robed Racists," *Ebony* Oct. 1979: 166.
[45] "Klan Leader Admits Attack on Minister," *New York Times*, 21 Dec. 1978.
[46] Wayne King, "The Violent Rebirth of the Klan," *New York Times*, 7 Dec. 1980.

[47] UPI, "U.S. Study Urges Agencies to Cooperate Against Klan," *New York Times*, 24 Nov. 1980.
[48] Raymond A. Mohl, "Globalization, Latinization, and the *Nuevo* New South," in Other Souths: Diversity and Difference in the U.S. South, Reconstruction to Present, ed. Pippa Holloway (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 427-8.
[49] "SPLC Exposes Judicial Candidate's Visit to White Supremacist Group," Southern Poverty Law Center web site, posted 7 Sept. 2006, http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/news/splc-exposes-judicial-candidates-visit-to-white-supremacist-group (accessed 14 July 2010).
[50] "Alabama KKK Denounces Hatred (No, Really)," Southern Poverty Law Center web site, posted 7 Nov. 2007, http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2007/11/07/alabama-kkk-denounces-hatred-no-really (accessed 14 July 2010).
[51] Dwain White, "A Review of Cullman County's Black History,"(HY 271 Special Projects in History essay, 1978), 13.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 15.
[54] Ibid., 14.
[55] "Promised Land: The Communities of Mon Louis and Colony," ("The Alabama Experience," produced by the University of Alabama Center for Public Television and Radio, 2000).
[56] Cullman did make gain attention for some instances of racial progressivism in the twentieth century, most of which centered around the city's status as home base for the racially moderate James "Big Jim" Folsom.
[57] This and subsequent quotations from: Adam Nossiter, "Race Matters Less in Politics of South," *New York Times*, 21 Feb. 2008.
[58] This and subsequent quotations from: Nicholas Dawidoff, "Race in the South in the Age of Obama," *New York Times*, 25 Feb. 2010.

4

Race and Ethnicity in Cullman County, Alabama

Since Cullman's founding, outside commentators and residents alike have remarked upon its divergence from the southern norm in terms of race and ethnicity. In numerous publications, Cullman noted its racial demographics and exaggerated its peculiarity among southern towns. For instance, the 1899 ad proclaiming Cullman's racial exceptionalism inaccurately claimed that it was "the only exclusive white county in the South."[1] In reality, Cullman was not even the whitest county in north Alabama. Cullman's African American population (twenty-one) was actually three times higher than that of neighboring Winston County (seven) in 1900.[2] Despite overstating the case somewhat, the *Chicago Tribune* ad does point to an important point. Sundown communities were less common in the Deep South than any other region of the United States. Mississippi, for instance, has had no more than six sundown towns over the course of its history, and Alabama has not had many more.[3] Furthermore, the county's German heritage is certainly atypical of the Deep South, and the recent growth of Cullman's Latino population—now twice the size of its African American population—certainly differs dramatically from much of the Deep South. Often, moral judgments have clouded comments about Cullman's unusual racial environment. Some commentators have championed Cullman as a community largely untainted by the stain of racism associated with most southern towns. Others have declared Cullman to be more racist than the

average southern community. In many ways, Cullman has reinforced the latter conclusion, but in some respects, Cullman County has displayed a tendency toward racial progressivism, especially in electoral politics. For example, Cullman County served as the home base for legendary racially progressive governor James "Big Jim" Folsom in the 1940s and 1950s. The election of James Fields is another obvious example of this tendency. The ultra racist representation of Cullman does little to make sense of these developments.

This chapter is an attempt to better understand Cullman's tendency toward atypical race relations. Recent scholarship, especially critical race theory,[4] has pointed the way toward nuanced interpretations of race relations—interpretations that transcend value judgments and, instead, recognize the dynamism of race. Critical race theory views race as a social construction—as opposed to immutable reality. While phenotypic, physical traits vary across populations, modern science has largely discredited the assumption that socially important characteristics are associated in any way to race. According to critical race theory, the concept of race has existed for only five centuries or so, and throughout its relatively brief history as a concept, definitions, hierarchies, and understandings of race have continuously changed. As ideological, material, cultural, and other factors have changed throughout the globe, so has the concept of race. Furthermore, various geographical areas have evolved peculiar racial orders. For instance, race relations in the antebellum South differed significantly from those of the antebellum North. Race is constructed and reproduced at many levels. It occurs at the national level,

via representations of race in the national media and federal laws that shape race relations, for example. Race is also constructed at the personal level. For example, daily interactions with racial "others" and exposure to representations of racial others play an important part in shaping the racial worldview for an individual. Due to the role of firsthand experiences in shaping racial worldviews, communities with dissimilar racial demographics have the potential to develop varying constructions of race, both at the community and individual levels.

Cullman's racial culture has largely been defined by the exclusion of African Americans from most of the county. In 1900, Cullman and Winston counties both had fewer African American residents than any of the other Alabama counties. Cullman's African American population constituted less than 0.12% of the general population, and Winston County's African American population made up less than 0.08% of the total population. Strikingly, the county with the next-smallest proportion of black residents, De Kalb, had an African American population of 3.80%.[5] Cullman and Winston have long been whiter environments than other Appalachian counties in Alabama, including more mountainous areas located closer to the heart of Appalachia. Thus while most Colony African Americans have necessarily had frequent interactions with white people, the opposite is true of the majority of white people in Cullman County. Sociologist Joe Feagin argues that most white interactions with African Americans tend to be with black people of lower social status.[6] Over the course of Cullman's history, a large proportion of white people have had no daily contact with African Americans whatsoever. For many

Cullman residents, even those born as late as the 1960, the only scenario in which they regularly encountered African Americans within the county was when they saw black prisoners working along the roadside. A prison camp in the northeastern part of the county housed African American inmates who worked on Cullman roads. For this and other reasons, whiteness in Cullman has differed from the conventional southern pattern. Inter-ethnic interactions have been more prevalent than interracial interactions throughout much of Cullman's history. This pattern began with the settlement of the city of Cullman by German immigrants. German ethnicity had thinned to the point of symbolic identity by the 1970s (probably by the 1950s), but the Latino population of Cullman County is twice as large as the African American population. Thus, ethnic divisions continue to be more prevalent than racial divisions in the daily interactions of white Cullman residents. Additionally, the dearth of white-black interaction diminished the need for racial solidarity in daily business and social interactions.

This is not to imply that ethnic differences among whites were ever as malignant as the black-white racial divide, but Cullman County's white population has demonstrated considerable disparities. This threatened to put Cullman at odds with the traditional South, within which, Audrey Smedley asserts, white supremacy functioned to shore up all whites in the South.[7] First, intra-white ethnic differences were a source of tension within Cullman County. Cullman's German settlers demonstrated a thick[8] German ethnicity. Johannes Cullmann and other Cullman residents advertised the community's German composition. His newspaper emphasized the distinctiveness of

German culture: the thriftiness and intensive farming methods of Cullmann and his fellow Germans would soon turn the area into a prospering city. Anglo-American Southerners constituted a contrast to the culture of German immigrants but not opposition. Cullmann asserted that the state of Alabama welcomed the immigration of industrious Germans. The German bank, welfare society, and other institutions proved unnecessary as the German element consolidated with non-German residents. Furthermore, the world wars cemented this acculturation within Cullman, as anti-German paranoia swept the area. Non-Germans worried that an alleged secret German plot somehow related to the city's Catholic church would target non-Germans. As a result of this and other war-generated tensions, German language courses were dropped (for a while anyway) from the county high school curriculum, and vestiges of the city's German heritage were suppressed.

Still, observable ethnic differences persisted among Cullman's white population. In Cullman, the dearth of African American labor meant that whites worked jobs relegated to African Americans in the traditional South. Walter Kollmorgen noted that roughly half all non-German farmers in Cullman were tenant farmers, but about ninety percent of German farmers owned their farms.[9] Thus, a profound divide existed within the economic condition of non-German whites and German whites in Cullman County agriculture in the years leading up to World War II, and some white Cullman residents probably emphasized the county's racial exclusion in order to minimize intra-white dissension.

Second, the discrepancy between white and black financial conditions—a hallmark of the Jim Crow South—was not imminently observable within the county. This was due in part to the low population of African Americans. Colony families owned their own farms, and the rate of white sharecropping was high. Thus Colony's black population did not confirm traditional southern expectations of African Americans. Third, the need to firmly enforce racial distinctions in the justice system was diminished. A 1903 *Cullman Democrat* article made this argument:

> As in this city [Cullman], Hanceville has no negroes. There is no fear of race riot or interference between the races in the whole section. If ever there is a lynching in the South it will not be in this section, unless it be a white man; and the Caucasian would probably be lynched as quickly as the black brute for similar crime committed.[10]

Fourth, the pattern of firsthand experiences of mastery over African Americans, familiar to most white Southerners in one form or another, was not available to most Cullman residents. Fifth, controlling the black vote within Cullman County was not an important concern.[11] For this reason, Cullman County had a strong Republican party for most of the twentieth century and was home to a vigorous two-party political climate when much of the South was dominated by the Democratic Party.

As a result of the near absence of observable real racial distinctions and the conspicuous presence of intra-white (ethnic and otherwise) tensions, Cullman whites compensated by making race a stronger ideological force, a more prevalent topic of conversation. The maintenance of Cullman's whiteness became a central part of white identity of individual Cullman residents and, thus, of the city and county in general. It

gave all whites something to which they could cling. This helps to explain why race has long been an important part of Cullman's reputation and self-image. It also helps to explain the prevalence of talk about Cullman's sundown policy, especially of white males reminiscing about chasing African Americans out of town. The stoning or chasing of African Americans served both a practical and ritualistic purpose. This sort of mastery over black bodies fostered a direct encounter with white supremacy that was lacking from the routine experience of poor whites.

A 1935 advertisement for community baseball games highlights the extent to which African American bodies seemed alien to Cullman County residents. The advertisement listed four games, three of which featured white teams, but the title reads, "Negro Ballgame at Logan." The notice begins, "Yes, there [or possibly *these*] are honest-to-goodness darkies from Warrior and the Colony." The "Negro game" was the second on the four-game Saturday docket. [12] The "honest-to-goodness" line suggests the sense of unreality associated with blackness in Cullman County. The prominent display of the game among African American teams, while the white Cullman County teams served as the undercard, suggests the intrigue the event generated. More than thirty years later, the appeal of watching African American baseball players remained strong. In 1968, another game among amateur community baseball teams featured a racial intrigue, but this time, the game was between a white Cullman team and an African American Colony team. The *Cullman Times* preview of the game begins, "For several weeks, many local baseball fans have been asking the question: 'When will the Cullman Red Sox play

the Colony again this season?'" Later, the article recounts Colony's victory in the previous match-up: "The last time the Red Sox played Colony (back on July 20) there were some 1,500 fans on hand as the Colony took a 5-1 decision." [13] While much of the game's appeal surely came from the competitiveness of the series, subsequent articles also suggest the role of racial otherness in generating interest in the game. Locally evered sportswriter Bill Shelton wrote,

> Get set for fun and action, folks!
>
> The Colony baseball team, with all its splendor and fun-loving ways, is headed this way Saturday for another session with the Cullman Red Sox.

Shelton added, "Besides the game itself, there'll be some entertainment after the fifth inning furnished by a group of young Colony dancers…" Shelton described some of Colony's prominent players. The first baseman was "slickfielding." The shortstop was "flashy." The catcher was "talkative."[14]

Although Cullman and Colony belonged to separate leagues, they had also played in 1967. Later in 1968, Cullman High School made national news for playing the "first football game in Alabama between teams representing all-white and all-Negro high schools."[15] Cullman had voluntarily scheduled the contest with Carver High of Gadsden during the summer. While interracial athletic contests were intriguing for much of the country, Cullman seems to have demonstrated a particularly strong urge to attend and participate in games between white and black athletes. Surely, the dearth of interracial interaction in daily lives made blackness seem more exotic and intriguing. The low level

of interaction might have also diminished concerns about the behavior of African Americans.

Expressions of wonder at dark skin might have been particularly prevalent in Cullman. Earlene Johnson, an African American retired librarian and teacher, recalls a white child who seemingly tried to gently rub the blackness off of her skin.[16] A middle-aged white Cullman County woman explains her experience as the darkest-skinned student at her elementary school:

> First off let me give you a physical description of myself. I have olive skin, dark brown hair, and my eyes are so dark they look black (like an African- American's). I have come up with several different memories & hope you can pull something from part of this. In the 1960's… as a very young child I was playing on my Granny's porch in Fairview. The boys who lived next door went home & told their mom that there was a black kid next door. (Like that would have been a bad thing.) In the 1970's I started attending Welti School. I was the darkest student there. The other girls would try to "wash off" the make-up from my skin that was causing me to be so much darker than the other kids. Also when we would have the annual Christmas play at school guess which kid got told they had the part which required a "darker skin" person (example-kid form [sic] Mexico & etc).....me.[17]

While there is no statistical proof to substantiate this point, it seems that white Cullman residents tend to possess a stronger than average (compared to the rest of the South) sense that blackness is unnatural.

With the strong emphasis on Cullman's divergence from the southern norm, it is easy to discount the extent to which Cullman has participated in mainstream representations of race. Feagin writes, "For centuries newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and other media have played an important part not only in generating a

broad white-racist ideology but also specific negative images that are daily product of that ideology."[18] While Cullman County might have had a somewhat peculiar racial environment, it existed within the context of the rest of Alabama, the Deep South, and the United States as a whole. In other words, Cullman's racial attitudes, ideologies, and practices did not evolve or exist within a vacuum. Cullman had access to the outside world, and race scholars have emphasized the media's role in perpetuating racial stereotypes. One of the most significant components of media representations of blackness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the minstrel show. A 1908 *Montgomery Advertiser* suggested that Cullman County was so racist that it would not allow minstrel shows to perform within the county:

> Whether it is a legend or not, there was a rumor that once upon a time that the inimitable and good natured Al Field when he thought of including Cullman in his bookings, was informed that he was perfectly welcome but that he would have to use some other color scheme than black. So Al Field went not to Cullman. Others aver that the reason Mr. Field and his minstrels did not go was that they did not want to go.[19]

It is uncertain whether or not this story was legitimate, but archived newspapers prove that minstrel shows were frequently held in Cullman County. From 1931 to 1937, at least eleven minstrel shows took place there. Additionally, a weekly syndicated radio minstrel show played on Cullman airwaves from at least 1933 to 1936. This indicates that Cullman enjoyed some of the same racial entertainment enjoyed by the rest of the white South. Blackface minstrelsy simultaneously satisfied and reinforced white supremacy and white southern fascination with African Americans. A 1946 Cullman newspaper article

advertised "The Haunted Chair," a play put on by Hanceville High School's senior class. Of the play, the paper asserts, "…when you feel you are about frightened out of your wits in pops Lizzie and Lazy Lee, two of the funiset[sic] darky parts ever conceived to relieve[sic] a tense, dramatic moment."[20] The blackface characters were "darky servants, who manage to pop in and out of trouble with clockwork regularity."[21]

As previously mentioned, Cullman seems to produce a citizenry that is obsessed with race, whether for good or for bad. Despite the obvious absence of a significant African American population, conversations about race abound in Cullman. Most residents, it seems, have something to say about race in Cullman—even those who insist that racism is a non-factor within the county. Cullman has produced a number of racially-conscious individuals, from Klansmen to racial progressives. The county's political legacy is the strongest example of its racially progressive tendency. Racially-charged issues also figured prominently in the careers of two subsequent Alabama governors from Cullman County, Guy Hunt and James Folsom Jr. (James "Big Jim" Folsom's son). In 1993, James Folsom Jr. decided not to replace the Confederate flag, which had been taken down during renovations, on the capitol dome.[22]

Author Daniel Wallace, whose *Big Fish: A Novel of Epic Proportions* was made famous by Tim Burton's film adaptation, spent time in Cullman as a child and has written a novel that seems to reflect the prevalence of race as an issue in Cullman. In *The Watermelon King*, Ashland, Alabama has a reputation as a racist town. The *Cullman Times* quoted Wallace on his "fictional" town of Ashland:

> "Cullman had a big part in my work," said Wallace, 48, whose grandparents once owned the All-Steak Restaurant [a Cullman establishment]. "It's kind of the place I think about when I'm setting my characters down in a place."[23]

Race also figures prominently in another of Wallace's novels, *Mr. Sebastian and the Magic Negro*. Cullman's racial environment has produced incidents of racial progress as well as racism and racially progressive individuals in addition to racist ones.

Wallace writes skillfully about the prevalence of denial in the white psyche. In *The Watermelon King*, an Ashland resident explains, "As with many things in our town, what is known is often forgotten, or stored in the part of the brain that resists remembering."[24] In another passage, another character explains

> Thinking back to what happened, it's just—one ends up avoiding the painful moments, in memory. There's even a desire to change the way it really was, in our minds, to make it easier, less painful to remember.[25]

While Wallace's characters are not speaking directly about race in these passages, the blend of denial and myth in Ashland are reminiscent of racial myths in Cullman. Denial is also a crucial part of scholarship on contemporary racism. In recent years, sociologists have focused considerable attention on the prevalence and malignancy of white denial of racism.[26] Though Ashland, Wallace's fictional version of Cullman, is not a sundown town, it is does enforce a strict residential segregation akin to Cullman's sundown policy. The enforcement includes a sundown sign, whose origin Wallace explores:

> Hargraves was equally unkind to everybody, but he held a special hatred in his heart for the Negroes. He was not alone, of course. Many of us hated and feared them. But his voice could be heard above the

> rest. He posted a sign one day that read NIGGER DON'T LET THE ASHLAND SUN SET ON YOUR BACK. And no one took it down.

Wallace thus alludes to the role of conspicuous silence in enforcing a community's racial policies. One man had installed the sundown sign, but every Ashland resident was complicit because "no one took it down." Indeed, many Ashland residents harbored racist attitudes, and "…no one took it down."[27]

No sundown sign stands in Cullman today, but lore about the sign persists. More importantly, Cullman continues to have a reputation for virulent racism and enforced racial exclusiveness. This reputation is a powerful force, affecting African American decision-making about moving to and stopping in Cullman. By failing to offer convincing counterevidence of the hyper-racist myth, Cullman has—whether intentionally or not—prolonged its whiteness to the present day. No doubt, some recent breakthroughs have offered some counterevidence, but the prevalence of denial of racism among Cullman residents has prevented an objective accounting of the county's racial past. By avoiding the negative parts of its history, the county has (probably unintentionally) made for itself an image of a community with something to hide. Denial also keeps persisting historical problems invisible, maintaining long-standing injustices. Thus, by largely failing to admit to its racially exclusive past, Cullman has, metaphorically, failed to take the sign down.

Discussions of Cullman's racial past center on the sundown sign. Whether intentional or not, focus on the sign has obfuscated the more important issue of Cullman's sundown policy. By assertively claiming that the sign never stood (a claim

that, by definition, cannot be proven), Cullman residents sidestep the larger issue. Channeling the discussion of race in Cullman down the path of the sundown sign is also a form of denial. Other prominent ways of dodging the real issue of racial exclusion include blaming German immigrants for all of Cullman's racism, blaming one Cullman family for all of the county's racial discrimination, and defining racism narrowly as Klan activity and racial violence.

Many Cullman residents have no problem remembering that the sign was never there, but many of them also have difficulty remembering or even imagining Cullman's racial policies during the segregation era. One Cullman resident asserted that the county did not adhere to Jim Crow laws. In my usual rambling manner, I asked, "If black—a black person did come into town, if, say, they wanted to shop at a certain store, or just stop and get gas somewhere—Have you ever heard what would be the protocol for that? Or have you ever—." At this point he interrupted, "No, I don't have any facts there,[28] but my opinion is that it would probably have been just like any southern town before the 60s." I explained my question further, mentioning that Cullman probably did not have many public spaces with separate facilities for African Americans. He and his wife had previously asserted as much. He responded, "That's an interesting thought pattern though. What would happen if one [a black person] wanted to come here? And that makes me think, well, 'Was there work here?'" He went on to reference the prevalence of white German domestic workers in Cullman before circling back to my question. "As far as the stores go, I don't know. 'Where people in the Colony went to buy their stuff.' That's an

interesting thought."[29] Indeed, many Cullman residents idealize the county as a community free of the harmful impact of racial strife. C. Eugene Scruggs, a white Cullman County native, asserts that the entertainment industry's emphasis on whiteness during his childhood years enabled a generation of white Cullman residents to grow up oblivious to race.[30]

The need to demonstrate that sundown policies are unconstitutional and ethically wrong is immense, but the impulse to do so can lead to oversimplification. Many sociological treatments of race assume that racially homogenous communities generate high numbers of racist individuals. While this might be true—and this limited case study cannot disprove this thesis, nor do I desire it to—the fact remains that two human beings can react differently to the same stimulus. Daniel Wallace illustrates this point with more eloquence. To introduce the Hargraves family to the plot of *The Watermelon King*, an old man tells the story of Justin Hargraves, who "held a special hatred in his heart for the Negroes."[31]:

> Hargraves ran a fertilizer business. Sometimes the Negroes would complain, quietly, that the bags they bought from him contained mostly sand. No one doubted this was true, because Hargraves was so happy to sell to them. Years and years went by, and nothing changed.
>
> But during these years Hargraves's son grew into a man, and as he did the town looked on in wonder, because soon it became clear that some cosmic mistake had been made. This boy was not his father's son. He was smart, good-hearted, and his every thought and deed seemed designed to benefit another. When he was sixteen he began to work with his father at the fertilizer company and soon thereafter the Negroes began to notice the absence of sand in their bags. Complicit in his goodness, they said nothing.[32]

While Wallace has his narrator refer to it as a "cosmic mistake," the real-world causation of an apparent oddity like the fictional Hargraves family unlikeness is evident. Just as well-intentioned plans can have adverse effects, evil institutions and policies have the potential to foster some positive outcomes. Despite the fact that, overall, Cullman's sundown policy was wrong and immensely harmful, the county's unusual racial environment has demonstrated some racially progressive tendencies. Cullman has also produced a number of racially progressive individuals. In Cullman, the abstract representational white supremacy did not find application in everyday life in the same way that it probably did in Madison or Wilcox counties. The black stereotypes in popular representations were not complemented by lived experiences in the same way that they did in most of the Deep South. For this reason, the disconnect between African Americans as representations and as actual human beings was profound for most white Cullman residents. Perhaps white Cullman's sense of unnaturalness in terms of African American residents played a part in its willingness to vote for an African American candidate.

Armed with the interpretation offered by this essay, *New York Times* journalist Adam Nossiter might have better understood the disparity he referenced between the county's support for James Fields and its overwhelming rejection of Barack Obama in the Democratic presidential primary election. He would have been better able to articulate the disconnect between the white Cullman perception of individual African Americans compared to the perception of African Americans in general. In 2008, he wrote:

> …the moment is full of awkwardness.
> "Really, I never realize he's black," said a white woman in a restaurant, smiling.
> "He's black?" asked Lou Bradford, a white police officer, jokingly.
> "You know, I don't even see him as black," said another of Mr. Field's new white constituents, Perry Ray, the mayor of one of the county's villages.
> A woman congratulates Mr. Fields as he stops in traffic, and afterward, he shakes his head ruefully: "Sometimes, I have to pinch myself: 'Am I really black?' "[33]

White Cullman's seeming inability to see Fields as an African American is, in part, the result of the disparity between Cullman residents' concept of blackness—which has been defined more by media representations and stereotypes than by firsthand interactions with African Americans.

Most of the roots of Cullman's anomalies can be found either in the county's German heritage or in its sundown policy. Ethnic divisions among whites were relatively rare in most southern communities, but in Cullman, German and non-German whites experienced a degree of ethnic conflict. Moreover, the near absence of African American others (against which whiteness was constructed at the individual level) threatened to diminish the efficacy of white supremacy in fostering white racial solidarity. With fewer firsthand experiences with subjugating racial others, many Cullman residents have instead emphasized the racial exclusiveness of their community. This might explain the prevalence of Ku Klux Klan activity within the county. While Cullman whites have historically had a typical level exposure to national and southern racist ideologies and stereotypes (whether through minstrel shows, racist newspaper cartoons, or racist emails), they have generally had little direct interaction with African Americans. Certainly this,

too, has influenced the racial mindsets of Cullman residents. Cullman whites seem to have an enhanced sense that blackness is unnatural. On the other hand, negative racial stereotypes might be less effective in determining the white Cullman resident's perception of actual African American individuals. These characteristics make Cullman an unusual—if not truly exceptional—racial and ethnic environment.

---

[1] "A Home: An Income for Life," *Chicago Tribune*, 26 Feb. 1899.
[2] University of Virginia Library, Historical Census Browser, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (Accessed April 20, 2010).
[3] James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 5.
[4] An overview of racial construction theories included in: Stephen E. Cornell and Douglass Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (Pine Forge Press, 2007).
[5] University of Virginia Library, Historical Census Browser, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html (Accessed April 20, 2010).
[6] Joe Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 132.
[7] Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Westview Press, 1999), 219.
[8] Cornell and Hartmann, 125-136.
[9] Walter M. Kollmorgen, "The German Settlement in Cullman County, Alabama: An Agricultural Island in the Cotton Belt," United States Department of Agriculture Bureau of Agricultural Economics (Washington, D. C., June 1941), 26.
[10] "Hanceville Beautiful and Progressive Town" *Cullman Democrat*, 29 Jan. 1903.
[11] William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 54-55.
[12] "Tribune Files of Yesteryear," *Cullman Tribune*, 6 Nov. 2008, p. 3; reprint, "Negro Ballgame at Logan," 1935.
[13] "Red Sox vs. Colony Saturday," *Cullman Times*, 20 Aug. 1968.
[14] Bill Shelton, "To Battle Red Sox—Colony Team Returns to Cullman Saturday," *Cullman Times*, 23 Aug. 1968.
[15] "Ala. All-White, All-Black Teams Play 1st Time," *Jet*, 26 Sept. 1968, p. 55.
[16] Earlene Johnson, interview with author, 2010.
[17] Middle-aged white female Cullman County native, Email correspondence, 2010.

[18] Feagin, 130.
[19] "Cullman Under Census Contains One Negro," *Cullman Democrat*, originally in *Montgomery Advertiser*, 6 April 1908.
[20] *Cullman Democrat*, 11 April 1946.
[21] *Cullman Democrat*, 4 April 1946.
[22] Samuel L. Webb and Margaret E. Armbrester, eds., *Alabama Governors: A Political History of the State* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 255.
[23] David Lazenby, "Big Fish Author to Speak at Larkwood Club," *Cullman Times* website, 12 Oct. 2007.
[24] Daniel Wallace, *The Watermelon King* (United States: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 59.
[25] Ibid., 40.
[26] Feagin, 93-125.
[27] Wallace, 21.
[28] This quotation represents the best attempt at transcribing the interviewee's statement, which was difficult to understand.
[29] Middle-aged white male Cullman native, interview with author, 2009.
[30] C. Eugene Scruggs, *The View from Brindley Mountain: A Memoir of the Rural South* (2009), 101.
[31] Wallace, 21.
[32] Ibid., 22.
[33] Adam Nossiter, "Race Matters Less in Politics of South, *New York Times*, 21 Feb. 2008.

The election of James Fields did not usher in a post-racial era for Cullman. Lamar Jones, an African American, and his wife came to Cullman County from South Dakota in 2006. In April of 2008, just two months after moving into a home north of Hanceville, Jones discovered graffiti on his front door: a swastika accompanied by the phrase, "Black is Death." Additionally, his mailbox, along with those of two neighboring families, had been damaged. The FBI and the Cullman County Sherriff's Department investigated the hate graffiti. Lamar Jones concluded, "They aren't going to run me out."[1]

Beginning December 8, 2008, several Cullman city residents reported finding flyers from the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan on their doorsteps. Police Chief Kenny Culpepper said the flyers had been "sprinkled over town in different areas." The flyer claimed, "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan are in your midst," and threatened "all violators of any race or creed," "all criminals," and "those residing in the country illegally." Cullman resident Juanita Childers voiced surprise that the Klan was still active, and Chief Culpepper expressed his desire to discover those who distributed the flyers, since this act of nighttime solicitation was illegal. He said, "We want to talk to them very badly. I'd like to have a heart-to-heart talk with them."[2] In 2009, the Southern Poverty Law Center listed two active hate groups in Cullman County: chapters of the Council of Conservative Citizens and the United Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.[3] While Cullman County accounts for about 1.73% of the state population, it supports over 5% of the state's hate groups.[4] In the lead-up to the town of Hanceville's alcohol sales referendum,

a racially-charged memo signed "Johnny Apple Seed" turned up in many Hanceville residents' mailboxes.[5] Certainly, these manifestations of racial intimidation serve to discourage African Americans from living in Cullman County.

While it is important to repudiate Ku Klux Klan activity (as most Cullman residents do), the community's long history of Klan activity has prevented the development of more nuanced dialogues about race. Rightly or wrongly, many white Cullman residents believe they have a ready example of individuals who are much more racist than themselves, thus diminishing the impetus to overcome their own, less pronounced, racial prejudices. Furthermore, the racist / non-racist binary (both in regard to Cullman and to race relations in general) prohibits nuanced understandings of racial realities. The reality is that racism is a dynamic and largely immeasurable phenomenon. Declaring one town as more or less racist than average with any degree of objectivity is impossible. Indeed, ordering communities on a continuum of racism—if that were possible—would be less productive than identifying and combating the particular racial injustices that persist in every American community. Instead of building arguments to prove that Cullman is less racist than other counties, white Cullman residents would better invest their time in working to resolve the racial issues that continue to plague Cullman.

Only a fraction of white Cullman residents are aggressive racists bent on keeping Cullman white. Most people in Cullman will tell you they have no problem with black people. Many of them will name a black friend they admire. The sign, they say, is a myth, and no sundown sign ever stood in Cullman County. Largely, they present themselves as

racial progressives and insist that Cullman is not a racist place. The average white Cullman resident is not intentionally lying when he or she asserts that Cullman was never a sundown town or county. Most white Cullman residents have probably never witnessed the overt means by which African Americans have been excluded from Cullman. This thesis has put forth proof that Cullman was, in fact, a sundown town. Like so many communities throughout the nation, Cullman's history is stained by racial strife, but Cullman has the potential to rise above its past. In recent years, the county has made strides toward atoning for some of its past injustices. Most promising, the African American populations of both the county as a whole and the city have increased.

But Cullman continues to have a reputation for virulent racism and enforced racial exclusiveness. This reputation is a powerful force, affecting African American decision-making about moving to and stopping in Cullman. By continuing to ignore the racism of Cullman's past, both the people and leadership of the community unintentionally fuel the persuasive impression that Cullman is inhospitable toward African Americans. In ignoring the negative parts of its history, the county has (probably unintentionally) made for itself an image of a community with something to hide. Denial also keeps persistent historical problems invisible, maintaining long-standing injustices. Thus, by largely failing to admit to its racially exclusive past, Cullman has, metaphorically, failed to take down the sign. As long as Cullman fails to provide an honest accounting of past racial injustices, its claims to current-day racial openness will remain dubious. Certainly, confronting the racial problems of the past is difficult. Many whites in Cullman would have to come to terms with the fact that they live in a town built—in part—upon the

exclusion of African Americans, but the discomfort that accompanies admitting the flaws of one's hometown cannot compare to the pain suffered by African Americans throughout the county's history. Acknowledging one's flaws creates the potential for improvement. Cullman can learn from its past and use it as motivation not to make similar mistakes in the future. Cullman still has room for progress in integrating African Americans and acknowledging its history of racial exclusion. In so doing, "the sign" would cease to be such a controversial subject. Instead, it would become a symbol of how much the county has overcome. Cullman also has the opportunity to fully embrace its growing Latino population, which is twice the size of the African American population. Before giving into ethnocentric diatribes against illegal immigrants and Latino culture, we should remember that previous generations of Cullman residents felt justified in their racist behaviors. With introspection, humility, tolerance, and compassion, Cullman can develop a reputation as a community that has reckoned with its past and continues to work toward becoming more inclusive and diverse.

---

[1] Kent Faulk, "FBI and Cullman Sheriff's Office Investigating Hate Graffiti," *Birmingham News*, 28 June 2008.
[2] Patrick McCreless, "Ku Klux Klan Flyers Distributed in Cullman," *Cullman Times*, 10 Dec. 2008.
[3] Southern Poverty Law Center, "Hate Groups Map," http://www.splcenter.org/intel/map/hate.jsp (accessed 22 July 2009).
[4] US Census Bureau, "Population Finder," http://factfinder.census.gov (accessed 2 March 2010).
[5] Johnny Apple Seed, "Happenings Around the Town and Around the County," Unpublished document.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliography

Books and Academic Journal Articles

Carmer, Carl. *Stars Fell on Alabama*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000; reprint, New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934.

Cornell, Stephen E. and Douglass Hartmann. *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*. Pine Forge Press, 2007.

Feagin, Joe. *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth and Eugene D. Genovese. *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Grant, Donald L. *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia*. Birch Lane Press, 1993.

Inscoe, John C., ed. *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005.

Kollmorgen, Walter M. "The German Settlement in Cullman County, Alabama: An Agricultural Island in the Cotton Belt." United States Department of Agriculture Bureau of Agricultural Economics: 1941.

Loewen, James. *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*. New York: The New Press, 2005.

McMillen, Neil R. *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow*. University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Mohl, Raymond A. "Globalization, Latinization, and the Nuevo New South." In *Other Souths: Diversity and Difference in the U.S. South, Reconstruction to Present*, edited by Pippa Holloway. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008.

Smedley, Audrey. *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*. Westview Press, 1999.

Tower, Allen J. and Walter Wolf. "Ethnic Groups in Cullman County, Alabama," *Geographical Review*, 33:2.

Wallace, Daniel. *The Watermelon King*. United States: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

Webb, Samuel L. and Margaret E. Armbrester, eds., *Alabama Governors: A Political History of the State*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001.

Wilson, William Julius. *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*. Oxford: New York, 2007.

Theses and Local Histories

Bright, John Clinton. "Some Economic and Social Aspects of the History of Cullman, Alabama." M.A. thesis, University of Alabama, 1937.

Davis, Robert S. "Different Children of the New South: The Creation and Evolution of the Communities of Cullman County." Copyright draft of 2 Feb. 2009.

Hill, Virginia Fields. "Fields Family History." Unpublished document.

Johnson, Gaylon D. "Before the German Settlement of 1873: The Land and People That Became Cullman County." Cullman: Gregath Co., 1980. (available in the Cullman County Public Library)

Jones, Margaret Jean. *Combing Cullman County*. 1971. Reprint, Cullman, AL: Modernistic Printers, Inc.

_ _ _. *Cullman County Across the Years*. 1975. Reprint, Cullman, AL: Modernistic Printers, Inc.

Northern Alabama: Historical and Biographical Illustrated. Birmingham, AL: Smith and De Land, 1888.

Scruggs, C. Eugene. *The View from Brindley Mountain: A Memoir of the Rural South*. 2009.

White, Dwain. "A Review of Cullman County's Black History." Special Projects in History essay, 1978. (available in the Cullman County Public Library)

Internet Resources

Alabama Marriage Collection, 1800-1969. Accessed via Ancestry.com.

University of Virginia Library, Historical Census Browser, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html.

US Census Bureau, "Population Finder," http://factfinder.census.gov.

Southern Poverty Law Center web site. splcenter.org.

Interviews

Anonymous elderly white male Cullman resident. Unrecorded interview transcript by author, in author's possession. Cullman, Alabama. 2009.

Anonymous middle-aged white female Cullman County native. Email correspondence, 2010.

Anonymous middle-aged white male Cullman resident. Email correspondence. 2010.

Anonymous middle-aged white male Cullman resident. Verbal statement. 2010.

Anonymous white male Cullman resident. Unrecorded interview transcript by author, in author's possession. Cullman, Alabama. 2009.

Johnson, Earlene. Interview by author, in author's possession. Colony, Alabama. Summer 2009.

Johnson, Earlene. Interview by author, in author's possession. Colony, Alabama. 10 Aug. 2009.

Johnson, Earlene. Interview by author, in author's possession. Colony, Alabama. 22 Feb. 2010.

Nall, Barry. Interview by author, in author's possession. Colony, Alabama. 24 July 2009.

Magazine Articles

Dart, Bob. "Tommy Lee Hines and the Cullman Saga." *Southern Changes* 1:3 (1978).

"Scottsboro Revisited?" *Time*. 16 Oct. 1978. www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,916421,00.html.

Harris, Ronald and D. Michael Cheers. "Robed Racists." *Ebony*. Oct. 1979. http://books.google.com/books?id=Yn2aYTGaVQsC&lpg=PA164&ots=9t51xSxEBk&dq=ebony%20robed%20racists&pg=PA164#v=onepage&q=ebony%20robed%20racists&f=false

Promotional Materials

Cullman County Alabama. Immigration and Industrial Department of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. 1913. (available in the Cullman County Public Library)

Polk's Cullman City Directory 1961. R.L. Polk and Co., Publishers: Richmond, 1960. (available in the Cullman County Public Library)

Newspapers

Cullman Banner

Cullman Democrat

Cullman Times

Cullman Tribune

Der Nord Alabama Colonist

Southern Immigrant

New York Times

Pulaski Citizen

Washington Post

Birmingham Age-Herald

Ogden Standard-Examiner

Other Sources

Johnny Apple Seed, "Happenings Around the Town and Around the County," Unpublished document.

"Promised Land: The Communities of Mon Louis and Colony." "The Alabama Experience." produced by the University of Alabama Center for Public Television and Radio, 2000.

VITA

Miles Laseter was born in Cullman, Alabama on November 17, 1985. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and History from Jacksonville State University on May 2, 2008.