

GUY LANCASTER

## Introduction

“The cedar stump to which Ed Coy was burned  
has been manufactured into cuff buttons.”

—*Arkansas Gazette*, March 11, 1892

“Hell is empty and all the devils are here.”

—William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

**W**hile researching my previous book on racial cleansing in Arkansas, I spent many hours in front of various microfilm readers, scanning years and years of newspaper headlines hoping to catch sight of some reported event that would explain the dramatic loss of black population in the county in question between two census surveys. As weeks of state and local history flitted by my blurry eyes, I hit a number of stretches in the newspaper record wherein it seemed some new racial atrocity, or rumored race riot, was occurring on a near-daily basis. Headlines shouted the impromptu execution of yet another unfortunate individual, and the pursuit of another anticipated sacrifice by a frenzied posse, and more, and yet more. It proved difficult to pass over these many events and stay focused upon the subject at hand—specifically the expulsion of African Americans, a phenomenon that only occasionally overlapped with that of lynching and other mob activities—amid this wider ecosystem of violence. And I am not the only person who has been taken aback by sheer ubiquity of atrocity reported; as the veteran Arkansas journalist Ernie Dumas once recalled, “Some years ago, my friend Bob Lancaster and I started to work on a book that would be a collection of articles from the 172 years of the old *Arkansas Gazette* that would catch the flavor of the Gray Lady and the

state's colorful history. The project ended, for my part, in grief over what the book would have to include: the great newspaper's rich accounts of lynchings, vigilantes and posses that people thought kept them safe from the uncivilized minority. The stories sometimes came almost daily and were written with verve and attention to sickening detail."<sup>1</sup> For example, the matter-of-fact note above regarding the aftermath of the lynching of Ed Coy in Texarkana—that cuff buttons were being manufactured from the cedar stump on which he was burned—made the front page of the *Arkansas Gazette* some twenty days after the event occurred, included in the State News column among such trivialities as “Camden's electric plant will be in operation within the next sixty days” and “Editor W. D. Rice, of the *Prairie Gem*, published at DeValls Bluff, says he will soon change the name of his paper.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, perhaps more disturbing than the big, bold headlines lustily proclaiming death and dismemberment are those occasions on which a lynching is mentioned in passing among other bits of local news. The 1882 lynching of Jim Sanders in Pulaski County, for one, was first reported on page four of the *Gazette*, deep in the column Local Paragraphs.<sup>3</sup> Lynching could be both the dramatic atrocity gleefully explicated under lurid headlines and the everyday occurrence that needed no further elaboration.

Much of the public interest when it comes to lynching centers upon the number of victims. While scholars are also concerned with gender and patriarchy, law and order, memory and forgetting, and much more, quantifiable numbers do help us understand the dynamics that underlie lynching both through time and across geographic regions. If more lynchings occurred in one place than another, or more in one year than another, questions arise that help people to understand the shifting nature of mob violence. In his 1999 doctoral dissertation, “Racial Violence in Arkansas: Lynchings and Mob Rule, 1860–1930,” Richard Buckelew documented 318 victims of lynching in Arkansas, 231 of whom were black.<sup>4</sup> In the years that have passed since his dissertation, more lynchings have been discovered in Arkansas, in part due to the growing availability of resources, especially online databases and scanned newspapers. For example, the Library of Congress maintains the website *Chronicling America* (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>), which offers nearly two thousand completely searchable newspapers from across the United States dating from between 1836 and 1922. This tool has greatly facilitated inquiry into lynching, especially given that many lynching reports circulated nationally, and that the full runs of

numerous local Arkansas newspapers have not survived to the present day. In February 2014, the Equal Justice Initiative of Montgomery, Alabama, released a new report on lynching in the American South that documented lynchings of 3,959 African Americans in the South between 1877 and 1950. Of these, 503 victims were killed in Arkansas. This number, however, is skewed by the inclusion of more than 200 who are alleged to have died during the Elaine Massacre of 1919. Not only does the death count from this event remain debated, but, depending upon the definition employed, many scholars would hesitate to call the Elaine Massacre a lynching per se, given that anecdotal evidence holds that US troops from Camp Pike also participated in the slaying of African Americans; the presence of federal authorities would make this less a vigilante action than something akin to a violent, government-sanctioned massacre, not unlike the Ludlow Massacre that occurred in Colorado five years before and also involved the suppression of organized labor.<sup>5</sup> The 2015 publication of *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence* by Amy Kate Bailey and Stewart E. Tolnay coincided with the release of the online Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology's Lynching Database (<http://lynching.csde.washington.edu/>), which began with data collected over a period of thirty years by Tolnay and E. M. Beck and has since been expanded. The definition of lynching employed by these researchers is that developed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1940, which many scholars use and which requires the following: there is evidence that a person was killed; the killing was illegal; at least three people were involved in killing the victim; and the killing was justified with reference to tradition, justice, or honor. This inventory currently records 317 lynching victims in Arkansas between the years 1877 and 1950—but, as noted, it is being maintained and supplemented as additional information arrives.

Of course, as partially demonstrated by the various figures given for the “body count,” what constitutes a lynching remains quite open to debate, and the definition of lynching has shifted over time, as Christopher Waldrep ably documented in his 2002 book, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America*. The word reportedly had its origin in the impromptu trials and punishment of individuals suspected of treason during the Revolutionary War but soon came to apply, by the early nineteenth century, to the whipping of “miscreants” on the ever-advancing American frontier, typically by people representing the broader community, outside the legal process. The 1835 execution of

five gamblers in Vicksburg, Mississippi, solidified a view of lynching as violence endorsed by society, an expression of popular sovereignty. This connection between community support and extralegal violence often led the Ku Klux Klan, during Reconstruction, to disguise their explicitly political killings “to resemble lynchings, hoping to win community support by making it look like they already had it.”<sup>6</sup> In fact, Republican leaders worked hard not to describe Klan violence as lynching lest they grant it the authority of the community; as Waldrep goes on to explain,

Understanding why racial violence in the Reconstruction era was not called lynching helps explain the difference between Reconstruction and the lynching era. Reconstruction was a revolutionary time, a time when power as expressed in language was genuinely up for grabs. Once the white population seized power and rallied itself into a racial bloc, then, and only then, could they kill confident that they had the support of what they defined as the community. And they understood a community-sanctioned killing to be a lynching.<sup>7</sup>

After Reconstruction, lynching became much more racialized and much more heavily associated with the South. During the early twentieth century, as concern about lynching became an increasingly national phenomenon, journalists and organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Tuskegee Institute all employed varying definitions of lynching in their attempts to study, and advocate against, mob violence; the NAACP eventually moved away from an explicit connection to community support and toward the more abstract definition cited above, in part to acknowledge the increase of secretive “committees” in carrying out racial murders.<sup>8</sup> For Waldrep, “There is no single behavior that can be called ‘lynching.’ Any attempt to impose a definition on such a diverse, subtle, and complex reality will inevitably miss the point.”<sup>9</sup>

In his introduction to his 2014 *Genocide: A Reader*, Jens Meierhenrich called for the equivalent of the sort of “bench research” that is the foundation of the natural sciences, “research undertaken with the sole objective of increasing understanding of fundamental aspects of genocidal dynamics” without any broader policy considerations—a dire need in a field established “on the borderline between moral indignation and academic inquiry,” leading to conditions in which many “advocate for solutions to the problem on the back of partial or incomplete understanding of the

phenomenon.”<sup>10</sup> Regarding racial violence in the United States, we, too, often proceed with a partial understanding of the phenomenon and a readiness to indulge in theoretical speculation on the basis of a handful of cases; the secondary literature on lynching, much of it quite excellent, is rife with attempts to tackle the “meaning” of lynching, as if we can discuss the essence of an act the definition of which is regularly (and rightly) debated, an act that lies on a continuum with other forms of violence, both vigilante and state-driven. Part of the aim of this book is to fulfill the need for such bench research by presenting some studies that might be incorporated into even larger surveys, thus adding to the richness of scholarly research on racial violence, on Arkansas, and on the South as a whole.

However, the major aim of this book is to shift our conception of lynching—away from the heat-of-the-moment passions carried out in the face of weak law enforcement that are so common in popular depictions and toward a better representation of lynching as a political act, intimately connected to state authority. A quick glance at the table of contents will reveal to the reader that the time period named in the subtitle of this book, 1840–1950, is arguably misrepresentative, for the Civil War and Reconstruction go largely unstudied herein. This is by design. As Paul Dumouchel notes at the beginning of *The Barren Sacrifice: An Essay on Political Violence*, there is a scandal that “comes from the contradiction between the official function of the state, namely, protection of its members, and policies that target the extermination of a very large number of those members.”<sup>11</sup> The fact that violence, even of the exterminatory kind, occurs during war or states of emergency, such as military occupation, should not surprise us. We accept that law and order can break down in such circumstances, leaving behind that Hobbesian state of nature, the war of all against all. In such a power vacuum, “the distinction between violence and reason disappears. . . . Recourse to violence then looks to individuals not only like a rational option, but also, very often, eminently reasonable.”<sup>12</sup> That is, in such circumstances, wherein the state’s monopoly of violence has disappeared, individuals may be more easily motivated to act on long-standing grudges against neighbors, business competitors, and others.<sup>13</sup> Developments in Arkansas during the Civil War illustrate this breakdown and the concomitant emergence of armed bandits who took advantage of the chaos in order to rob and plunder. After his defeat at the Battle of Pea Ridge in northwestern Arkansas, Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn was transferred to the Army of Mississippi, and he took troops and

supplies with him, leaving the state well-nigh defenseless. In response, Van Dorn's successor, Gen. Thomas Hindman, issued General Order No. 17, which promoted the raising of independent guerrilla companies. As historian Robert R. Mackey notes, "Hindman hoped that by permitting Arkansans to serve in their own districts and to organize as they saw fit, he could field additional men against the Northern juggernaut. In reality, he and the other Confederate leaders gave Arkansans carte blanche to fight the war without interference from the military or government and encouraged the spread of uncontrolled partisan units who owed loyalty to neither side."<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, racial atrocities were committed within a military context in Arkansas during the war, most notably on April 18, 1864, at the Engagement at Poison Spring in southwestern Arkansas. There, following a Union defeat, Confederate forces relentlessly murdered black Union troops, members of the First Kansas Colored Infantry, after their capture. One letter written by a Confederate soldier shortly after the massacre recounts:

I have said Fed yes of deepest dye negroes. I think there were 10 negroes killed to one white Fed. Just as a had said before, they made the negroes go in front and if they negro was wounded, our men would shoot him dead as they were passed and what negroes that were captured have, from the best information I can obtain, since been shot. I have seen enough myself to know it is correct our men is determine not to take negro prisoners, and if all of the negroes could have seen what occured that day, they would stay at home.<sup>15</sup>

As Gregory J. W. Urwin notes, "The Poison Spring Massacre has gone down in history as the worst war crime ever committed on Arkansas soil."<sup>16</sup> However, though a war crime like this certainly exists along a continuum of racial violence with what we call lynching, to conflate the two—to dub as a lynching those atrocities that occur during a state of war or intense political instability—obscures lynching's close relationship to established political authority.

The conditions of political insecurity persisted after the surrender of Robert E. Lee at Appomattox, largely on account of a poorly planned Union occupation, one in which the jurisdiction of military versus civil authority was not firmly decided, leading to widespread ambiguity about who was in charge. As Daniel Kato writes in *Liberalizing Lynching: Building a New Racialized State*, "The 'headless' nature of the occupation not only

exacerbated the confusion regarding jurisdiction, but it also contributed to the debasement of the rule of law. The initial jurisdictional incoherence and subsequent executive indecision spawned crises of inconsistency, bias, and dysfunction.”<sup>17</sup> Much of the growth of southern extremism, as typified by the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, depended upon the desire to restore some semblance of stability: “The Ku Klux Klan was explicit about couching their actions in ways that addressed the primary concerns of white Southerners, which centered on the weakness of the federal government to administer the law effectively. Southern extremists were able to convince many white Southerners that a limited degree of extralegality was necessary to ensure a wider degree of stability.”<sup>18</sup> As Dumouchel observes, political violence “is violence that legitimizes itself. It is violence with which those other than those who commit it identify.”<sup>19</sup> The Klan and its sympathizers saw the restoration of white supremacy (and, ideally, the restoration of slavery, by nature if not by name) as the precondition for stability, federal Reconstruction having overturned the divine (and profitable) order of things.

Because so much of the southern white population held the same view, the same fears of “Negro rule,” the Klan and other likeminded groups and individuals proved to be a legitimate insurgency in the eyes of many. Much of the violence carried out during Reconstruction would certainly fall under some definitions of lynching. Historian Randy Finley offers a brief selection of some such killings: “Jacksonport freedman James Hanover’s body was discovered in December 1866, riddled with seventeen bullet holes. At about the same time in Paraclifta in southwestern Arkansas, a freedwoman and her three children were found in the woods near their home with their heads split open. In Van Buren, a black man married to a white woman was murdered in February 1868, a symbol of the sentiment many whites held toward interracial marriage.”<sup>20</sup> However, such violence was no doubt linked to the larger political project of turning back the clock on black independence and Northern political authority over the former Confederacy. Finley documents an array of violent events in Arkansas that are part of a larger insurgent campaign: threats to kill landowners who rented to former slaves, an attack on a white citizen who voted for a black congressional candidate, the incitation of a mob to kill country registrars, the beating of a justice of the peace who fined a white man for aggravated assault against a freedman, death threats against those who taught black students, and attacks upon agents of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned

Lands (commonly called the Freedmen's Bureau).<sup>21</sup> Figures such as Cullen Baker illustrate the continuity of violent conditions between the Civil War and Reconstruction. Baker was drafted by the Confederates in 1862 but eventually found himself a guerrilla soldier in Perry County, east of Little Rock, in 1864, where he gathered other Confederate sympathizers before relocating to southwestern Arkansas at war's end; there, he engaged in insurgent violence until his 1868 death: "Enlisting fifteen Rebel true-believers to join him, he robbed, whipped, and killed scores of blacks in both Arkansas and Texas. At Bright Star in Miller County, for example, he told black residents that he would kill any black who voted, a threat which kept many freedpersons away from the polls."<sup>22</sup>

During the period of Reconstruction, there were essentially two poles around which authority coalesced, the federal government and southern extremists, but eventually the federal government backed off and ended its Reconstruction policies. The insurgency won.

Granted, Arkansas differed somewhat from the rest of the South, largely due to the work of Powell Clayton, a Union brigadier general who served in Arkansas and was elected governor in early 1868 on the Republican ticket, following the ratification of a new state constitution that contained provisions necessary for Arkansas to rejoin the Union, such as giving African-American men the right to vote.<sup>23</sup> The Ku Klux Klan emerged in Arkansas that same year and began carrying out a campaign of murder and harassment, including the murder on October 22, 1868, of congressman James Hinds by George A. Clark, secretary of the Democratic Committee of Monroe County.<sup>24</sup> The day after the November 1868 general election, Clayton declared martial law in ten Arkansas counties, expanding this to another four soon thereafter. Some of the fighting that went on across the state rivaled the events of the Civil War. For example, Daniel Phillips Upham, who headed up the northeast military district of the state, faced off against numerous armed Klansmen while fighting for the control of Augusta and was later ambushed by a hundred more such insurgents.<sup>25</sup> According to historian Alan W. Trelease, Powell Clayton "accomplished more than any other Southern governor in suppressing the Ku Klux conspiracy."<sup>26</sup> However, order was not completely restored during Reconstruction in Arkansas. For example, Pope County erupted in violence in 1872 and had to be placed under martial law, an event that seemed to presage the Brooks-Baxter War two years later.<sup>27</sup> In April 1874, Joseph Brooks engaged in a coup d'état, throwing out of the governor's office



Elisha Baxter, the man who had bested him in the 1872 gubernatorial campaign (and who was seen by many Republicans as too conciliatory toward former Confederates). Each man lined up armed supporters, and more than two hundred people were killed in the ensuing weeks until the intervention of Pres. Ulysses S. Grant put an end to the conflict by siding with Baxter.<sup>28</sup> After this, a new state constitutional convention was held, which essentially solidified Democratic power in Arkansas. This new governing document largely localized power, in part by explicitly forbidding the state government from carrying out specific activities.<sup>29</sup> As Carl H. Moneyhon has noted, this newly re-empowered Democratic Party “clearly represented the landed interests of the state” and was, in many ways, “an extension of the power of the antebellum elite.”<sup>30</sup> The insurgency had effectively ended in victory for the rebels, and peace (at least, in a formal, political sense) was achieved.

Though violence resembling lynching can certainly occur in states of violent upheaval, lynching as we understand it—complete with its demands for law and order that often entail attacks upon the very representatives of law and order—only exists alongside some authority that possesses the monopoly on legitimate violence. In his 1982 short story “Burning Chrome,” science fiction writer William Gibson describes a particular criminal activity as “so popular it’s almost legal.”<sup>31</sup> This description could be similarly applied to lynching. After all, the nature of crime is best determined not by the laws a state or nation has on its books but rather by the laws a state or nation, employing its monopoly on legitimate violence, can enforce and actually bothers to enforce. The premeditated murder of a person—not to mention the attacks upon law enforcement personnel or the damage to police and city property that lynching often entailed—could have been prosecuted under existing law, requiring no specific law against lynching, especially given that members of lynch mobs often carried out their deeds undisguised. That perpetrators of lynching were not regularly arrested and brought to trial (unless they were black themselves, as sometimes happened) reveals the real nature of law and law enforcement as practiced in Arkansas and the rest of the South. Only before the Civil War and after Reconstruction was there some semblance of uncontested authority in Arkansas, and lynching, for the most part, existed perfectly well alongside this authority, even as it ostensibly offered a challenge, given that private individuals were taking the law into their own hands. Indeed, lynching only increased as Arkansas slowly became less a frontier and more an integral

part of the national economy, not only with the development of railroads and various extractive industries, but also a rise in manufacturing. As will be discussed, the 1890s was the peak decade of lynching in the state, and this decade, despite the Panic of 1893, ended with Arkansas on its way to becoming a modern state, with nearly 30 percent of its workers earning their primary income from nonagricultural pursuits.<sup>32</sup> However, such violence as occurred during this time period and afterward was rarely viewed in political terms. As Kato observes, “Reconstruction violence was understood to be highly political if only because it seemed to operate in a highly partisan fashion. Post-Reconstruction violence was characterized as apolitical—in part because it seemed to operate independently of any partisan advantage and because its *modus vivendi* changed from being a divisive, partisan act that stifled opposition to a unifying, social act that suppressed insubordination.”<sup>33</sup> Klan murders during Reconstruction *were* political acts, but they were not connected intimately to the authority of the state. After all, a significant number of white Arkansans had opposed secession and even took up arms against the Confederacy during the Civil War; after the war, many of these people were involved in Republican Party politics alongside the newcomers derisively dubbed “carpetbaggers.”<sup>34</sup> Whites in Arkansas did not form a “racial bloc” until after Reconstruction.

Of course, lynching after Reconstruction was not so apolitical: despite its ostensible challenge to authority (as exemplified by mob attacks upon police officers or courthouses), such violence, in fact, backed up the authority of a white supremacist system. As Bruce E. Baker has written,

there is a tendency to assume that “politics” as such disappears [after Reconstruction] and that while violence before that might have been overtly and directly political, violence after that dividing line was somehow less political. If African Americans and the Republican party no longer had a realistic chance of holding power at the state level, then surely things like lynchings could have little political importance, except in the most indirect kind of way. However, the period between the collapse of Reconstruction and the rewriting of state constitutions in the South so as to thoroughly disfranchise African Americans was a period of flux and uncertainty, and if we are to understand the struggles for power, for the ability to shape the circumstances in which one lived, then we need to take a broader view of what politics was and how it was conducted.<sup>35</sup>

In other words, such violence continued to be political—continued to exemplify the exertion of political authority—long after Reconstruction. This relationship between mob violence and authority continued in Arkansas even after the 1936 murder of Willie Kees, the last recorded lynching in the state, as can be seen clearly in the challenges to a culture that had not yet turned its back completely on lynching. For example, the Arkansas branch of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) continued its activities for several years after 1936. A white women's organization, the ASWPL, in advocating against lynching, also took aim at a culture of chivalry that held mob violence as necessary in order to preserve the purity of white womanhood. The persistence of such a culture of chivalry even after the last recorded lynching in the state meant that lynching remained a possibility, something that could recur under the right (or wrong) circumstances. As Congress debated antilynching laws, Arkansas's representatives and senators, who played an outsized role in hindering such legislation, argued that such laws at the federal level would undermine the state's authority to govern its own citizens. As late as 1950, Rep. Boyd Tackett of Arkansas was defending his state's record on lynching before the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives. Lynching thus retained its ties to authority, even if its violence existed only *in potentia*. By broadening the scope of this volume beyond the body count to examine this broader relationship, we hope to illustrate that lynching was not a disease afflicting the nation but rather one of the vital organs within the body politic of white supremacy. To that end, this volume will focus upon lynching violence before the Civil War and after Reconstruction in order to illustrate better its relationship to authority. Lynching did not result from a breakdown of, or a challenge to, to law and order—it was law and order.

Kelly Houston Jones opens this volume with the first-ever study of the lynching of slaves in Arkansas—and one of but a handful of such studies published anywhere. The lynching of slaves has largely escaped the attention of scholars, who have tended to assume such lynchings were rare exceptions to the rule, given the value wrapped up in black bodies and the political power of slave owners, who would be loath to see their possessions murdered at the hands of the mob. However, as Jones makes clear, the lynching of slaves was not unknown in Arkansas. Moreover, slave patrols themselves often exhibited many of the same characteristics as lynch mobs. The fact that the standard policing of slaves occasionally resulted in

the murder of human property calls into question the dividing line between official and vigilante justice, especially after 1854, when the Arkansas Supreme Court affirmed the right of any common person to subdue a suspected slave rebellion.

Next, Nancy Snell Griffith scours reports of mob lynchings in order to cast some light on what is often invisible in the study of such violence—the mob itself. The lynch mob often stalks the pages of newspapers with great anonymity, its size left vague, its members unnamed. By sifting through those newspaper reports that offer some reliable information on the makeup of the mob, Griffith works to show that, while Arkansas followed many of the patterns of other southern states on which there have been written comparative scholarly accounts of lynching (Mississippi, Georgia, Virginia, and South Carolina), there were some notable differences. Griffith also touches upon the subject of black-on-black lynching, a phenomenon deserving of more investigation.

The 1890s, Arkansas's deadliest decade, provides the subject for Randy Finley's chapter. Finley not only surveys the alleged crimes that provided the *casus belli* against the state's African American population, he also immerses himself into the broader culture of spectacle, paying particular attention to the sensationalistic newspaper reporting of the era. He also illuminates one particularly heinous case of mass violence, what has come to be called the Little River Race War of 1899, bringing to light some previously unrevealed documentation on the subject.

Richard Bucklew presents a particular case study rooted in the violence of the 1890s—namely, the lynching on August 9, 1898, of five African Americans in the Delta community of Clarendon. What makes this particular case stand out is, first, the inclusion of women among the victims (indeed, a mother and son were lynched together), and, second, the fact that these five were lynched for colluding with a white woman in the murder of her husband. This case complicates our view of the nature of lynching because, contrary to expectations, underlying it was a woman's violence against a man, a sure defiance of patriarchal authority during this era.

As revealed by Vincent Vinikas, Arkansas is home to what may have been the deadliest lynching in American history, which happened in Saint Charles in 1904. Here, thirteen black men were killed over the space of a few days in a violent frenzy that gripped the town of Saint Charles and the surrounding area. However, this chapter is not only an exposé of this event. Vinikas also uses the event to question how we define a lynching, as well as

how we approach the discipline of history itself, because what happened in Saint Charles is only documented by a handful of newspaper sources. Reprinted from the August 1999 issue of the *Journal of Southern History* under a slightly different title, this chapter features updated references, as well as a postscript by the author on how lynching constituted a de facto denial of Fourteenth Amendment rights to African Americans.

Todd Lewis offers a survey of both lynching activity and antilynching activism efforts in the early twentieth century. By examining the motives given for lynching, the rhetoric employed to defend the practice as a necessary evil deriving from the state of race relations, and the strategies exercised to combat the scourge of mob violence, Lewis subtly explores how lynching served as a nexus for an ongoing debate over the nature of authority in Arkansas and the South as a whole. Equally important, Lewis examines a few cases of what Brent M. S. Campney has termed “lynchings in the making,” which are relatively understudied in the literature despite the fact that, as Campney notes, “they generated a level of fear among blacks commensurate with that experienced during completed lynchings because the final outcomes could never be predicted.”<sup>36</sup> His chapter, greatly expanded and updated from a piece he published in the Summer 1993 issue of the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, also provides a broader context for the subsequent chapters in the book.

My own contribution covers mob violence in Pulaski County prior to the 1927 lynching of John Carter. Because lynching has been so classically viewed as emblematic of a “weak state,” one that lacked the resources needed to combat mob violence, I wanted to highlight the tradition of such vigilante justice within the capital county of Arkansas, where, presumably, authority would be at its strongest. One of these events, in fact, even entailed a direct attack upon the governor of the state. I also wanted to show that the lynching of John Carter, covered in the chapter that follows mine, had plenty of local precedent and did not simply erupt during a temporary season of madness. This chapter is an expanded version of an article first published in the Spring 2016 issue of the *Pulaski County Historical Review*.

Of course, the lynching of John Carter probably ranks as the state’s best known case of what has come to be called “spectacle lynching.” Stephanie Harp offers the most detailed analysis yet produced of this event, sifting through newspaper accounts and legal records, as well as a number of oral history interviews. What emerges is not a singular narrative of the event

but an array of stories as the interpretation of what happened fractures along lines official and unofficial, white and black, male and female. Where the events at Saint Charles threaten to disappear into obscurity due to the paucity of sources, the lynching of John Carter illustrates similar challenges at arriving at some semblance of “truth” even when source material abounds.

The last two chapters of this book go beyond the violence happening in the streets and examine, more specifically than previous chapters, the broader cultural and legal debate regarding lynching. Cherisse Jones-Branch offers the first-ever account of the Arkansas council of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, an organization of white women who challenged the patriarchal norms that lay behind white-on-black mob violence. Although only a handful of lynchings occurred in Arkansas during the state council’s eleven-year existence, these women were remarkably effective in getting law enforcement to use all their powers to prevent vigilante murders, as well as to advance the debate on lynching in the political realm.

Wrapping up the book is an examination of the Arkansas congressional delegation’s role in the fight over antilynching legislation. William H. Pruden III reveals how the state’s senators and representatives continually fought for what they believed to be the interest of their constituents, and against efforts to bring the mob to justice. Even the much-admired Hattie Caraway, the first woman elected to the US Senate and a point of pride for Arkansans, took to the floor of that chamber to denounce antilynching legislation, claiming that “certain groups want to destroy the South not only as a political entity but as a business threat in competition with other sections.” By tracking the continued salience of lynching within state and national political discourse, Pruden demonstrates the undiminished authority of white supremacy even beyond those days when black bodies regularly hung from trees.