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Abstract

Title of Paper: The Lynching of Mary Jackson in Harrison County, Texas: A Case Study of Female Lynching in Texas

The proposed paper concerns the lynching of Mary Jackson alongside George Sanders on approximately February 13, 1912 in Harrison County, Texas. About two weeks before the lynching, a black resident of Harrison County named Tennie Sneed murdered a white man named Paul Strange. Sneed was then arrested and protected by local law enforcement. After failing to locate Sneed, a small mob in Harrison County murdered Jackson and Sanders, friends of Sneed that had not committed any crime. This paper uses this fascinating example in Harrison County as a case study to examine female lynching victims, who are traditionally left out of the lynching narrative. The traditional narrative is understood to be the lynching of a single man in front of a large crowd. While this narrative applies to the bulk of lynchings that occurred in Texas, it unfortunately leaves out the lynchings of women, including Jackson. Jackson's unfortunate death also illuminates several of the unique ways lynchings of women differed from the lynchings of exclusively men. By examine the lynchings of women, such as Jackson, the accepted historiography concerning lynching is both questioned and expanded.

Jackson's story is both fascinating and typical: making it an excellent example for a case study of female lynching in Texas. After closely examining numerous primary sources, including various newspapers and District Court records, some of the conclusions within this paper concern the similarities between all female lynching victims in Texas. These include the fact that women in Texas were mostly lynched by small mobs, always alongside a male counterpart, and due to presumed complicity in crimes they did not commit themselves. Additionally, lynchings involving women often elicited a negative response from newspaper editorials condemning the practice, something that almost never happened following the lynchings of men. All of these conclusions are shown in the case of Mary Jackson, which is what makes her such an excellent subject for a case study. Jackson's death shows that the lynchings of women occurred under very different circumstances than those of men, who currently claim the primary spotlight in the lynching historiography. Even though women constitute a small percentage of lynching victims, they are worthy of study since the circumstances surrounding their death differ from those of men, and therefore help us more fully understand the culture and practice of lynching.