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Reconstruction in Kemper County, Mississippi

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RECONSTRUCTION IN KEMPER COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

by

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B.A. June 1961, University of Minnesota

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
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MASTER OF ARTS

HISTORY

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Approved by:

Harold S. Wilson (Director)

ABSTRACT

RECONSTRUCTION IN KEMPER COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

Michael Brian Connolly
Old Dominion University, 1989
Director: Dr. Harold S. Wilson

Blacks were the passive victims in Kemper County, Mississippi, the scene of violence and murder in Reconstruction. The Ku Klux Klan, the Order of '76, and a continuing animosity between scalawag Radical Republicans and white-line Democrats were instrumental in perpetuating a frontier atmosphere wherein the pistol and Bowie knife were commonplace. Shooting or killing was an acceptable method of settling ones differences with another. Freedom and new rights for the majority black population of the county and seven years of Radical rule in the county provoked night-riding violence, murder and finally, the Mississippi Plan, successful revolution at the ballot box in 1875. The revenge of the Democrats was not complete until April, 1877, when a mob stormed the county jail and murdered the former Radical Republican sheriff and two of his children.

There is yet another tribunal of which you should not be unmindful. That tribunal is posterity, --the men who will succeed you. When the mists of prejudice which pervert the judgement of the actors in the scenes passing before us shall vanish; when these scenes shall be divested of the adventitious importance imparted to them by transient excitement, and be viewed in their true character; when you who are now required to sit in judgement upon the acts of others, and they whose acts are to become the subject of your inquiries, shall alike repose in the silence of the grave--then will come the faithful historian, who will record the proceedings of this day; they will come a just posterity who will review your decision.

Extract from Charge Delivered
by Hon. J. S. Hamm, Seventh
Judicial District, Mississippi,
to the Grand Jury of Kemper
County, September Term, 1877.

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FRONTIER KEMPER COUNTY

CHAPTER I

A large crowd gathered in DeKalb, Mississippi on Saturday, April 29, 1877 to attend the funeral of John Gully. Gully, a member of a prominent Democratic family, had been sheriff of the county during the Civil War and immediately thereafter. On Sunday, his arch-enemy, Republican William Wallace Chisolm, was jailed, accused of complicity in his murder. Mississippi was "redeemed" in 1875, but the crowd had not forgotten the years of Reconstruction when Chisolm was the sheriff. Late on Sunday, the crowd stormed the jail demanding that Chisolm come out. When he did not, they rushed into the jail and in the ensuing melee, Chisolm and his nineteen-year-old daughter were shot and his thirteen-year-old son was killed. Both Chisolm and his daughter subsequently died of their wounds. This was the real end of Reconstruction in Kemper County, Mississippi, and its sanguine conclusion was predictable.

Ante-bellum Kemper County was a frontier county where a single political party controlled the shrievalty and other county offices. During the war, the remoteness of the

county and the lack of industry and population spared it from the ravages of the Federal invaders. In Reconstruction, two political entities vied for power in a county whose return to its frontier nature and habits caused a volatile atmosphere with numerous bloody confrontations. During self-Reconstruction, incumbent Democrats maintained their hold on the powerful sheriff's office until they were ousted through disenfranchisement for Confederate service. Gubernatorial appointment of a scalawag Republican in 1868 began a seven-year period during which the Republican sheriff and his associates held sway over a tumultuous political environment until the entire state was redeemed in 1875. During that time, new black citizens in the county experienced little change in their lifestyle. Sheriff William W. Chisolm and his cronies courted support of the freedmen, gave lip service to the programs of Reconstruction, and used political power for substantial personal gain. In death, Sheriff Chisolm and the two of his children killed with him were remembered as "the martyrs of Mississippi"¹ by some, while others maintained that he "paid

¹Address of Bishop Haven at Metropolitan Church, Washington, D.C., May 19, 1878 quoted in James M. Wells, The Chisolm Massacre: A Picture of "Home Rule" in Mississippi (Chicago: Agency of Chisolm Monumental Fund, 1877; reprint, New York: Haskell House, 1969), 320 (page references are to reprint edition). James M. Wells was a carpetbagger who worked for the United States Internal Revenue Service in Meridian, Mississippi during Reconstruction. He had gravitated to the South after extensive Civil War service with the Michigan Eighth Cavalry in Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia. He was a Radical Republican and claimed to have

the price of being a scalawag and got off cheap enough."²

The bulk of Kemper County was part of the Mississippi hill country and the eastern margin which bordered on Alabama was locally called "the delta" for its low flat terrain with drainage into the nearby Tombigbee River. The county was formed in 1833 from lands of the Choctaw Cession under the provisions of the Dancing Rabbit Creek Treaty. The breadth of the county, from the prairies of the eastern

edited three newspapers in Mississippi. Wells was a friend of the Chisolm family and was called to DeKalb by Mrs. Chisolm immediately after the shootings. The Wells book was published in 1877 and cast considerable disparagement on the Democrats of Kemper County. In the same year, Kemper County Democrats hired Democrat James D. Lynch of West Point, Mississippi to rebut the allegations of Wells. Lynch was a member of the bar and a former teacher of Latin and Greek. His increasing deafness from a Civil War injury forced him into retirement. Lynch spent four months in the county collecting materials for Kemper County Vindicated; or a Peep at Radical Rule in Mississippi which was eventually published by E. J. Hale & Son of New York in 1879. Although this would be his most popular work, Lynch is more famous for his poem, "Columbia Saluting the Nations," selected as the national salutation by the World's Columbian Commission in 1893. By the time he had been granted the title, "Poet Laureate of the Columbian Exposition" by the Mississippi Historical Society, Lynch had also assumed the title of "Colonel," although his Civil War service shows that his highest rank held was Captain. Chisolm Massacre and Kemper County Vindicated are often in disagreement, but provide, when read together, an excellent picture of Reconstruction in a small rural county of Mississippi. Reconstruction in the state is well-documented by James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1968), William C. Harris, Presidential Reconstruction in Mississippi (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1967) and Vernon Lane Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi from 1865-1890 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947).

²Mrs. Henry Woods, "A History of Kemper County," WPA File, RG 60, vol. 318, Item 623, Mississippi Department of History and Archives (MDAH), Jackson.

sector to the sand clay hills of the west, was rich in hardwood timber.

Early settlers came to Kemper County from or via Alabama, establishing an east-west traffic pattern that persisted for many years. Following Choctaw Indian trails, the earliest roads connected DeKalb, in the center of the county with Gainesville in Alabama and eventually with Jackson to the west. Another road from Gainesville to Macon, Mississippi crossed the northeastern portion of Kemper County near Walahak.³

In 1850, the Kemper Plank Road Company was chartered by the state of Mississippi to build a "plank road" through the marshy areas of the Gainesville to DeKalb road to enable Kemper Countians facility in hauling cotton to the river port at Gainesville for transshipment to the Gulf of Mexico.⁴ Reliance on the convenience of this river transportation continued even after the completion of the Mobile and Ohio railroad in 1858. This rail line connected a major deep water port on the Gulf of Mexico with Columbus, Kentucky on the Ohio River and crossed the easternmost sector of Kemper County in a north-south direction. Operations of the railroad in the county were first begun by

³Anel Davell Bassett, "A Social and Economic History of Kemper County, Mississippi, in the Ante Bellum Period" (M.A. Thesis, University of Alabama, 1947), 8-11.

⁴Laws of the State of Mississippi, 31st sess. (1850), 347.

establishment of Tamola Station on April 29, 1858.⁵ Figure 1 is a map of Kemper County in 1865.

Schedule One of the 1860 Census enumerated 5936 whites in Kemper County while Schedule Two delineated 5641 slaves. Five free blacks were also counted in 1860.⁶ Of 768 farms assessed for taxes in 1860, 552 or 72 percent were worked by slaves. The state tax rolls revealed that 231 farms had 5 or less slaves while 107 farms utilized over fifteen slaves.⁷ The 216 non-slaveholding farm families constituted a sizeable yeoman farmer population in ante-bellum Kemper County. This was further demonstrated by evaluations of farms for tax purposes that year: 257 or 33 percent of the farms in the county were valued at under one thousand dollars and 273 were less than fifty acres.⁸ The addition of numerous "laborers" and miscellaneous census oddities ("whiskey drinkers," "gambler," and "larceny") formed a large group of poor or non-aristocratic whites which was subject to manipulation by the antagonists in the post-war reconstruction.⁹

⁵Louis Parmer, Southeast Kemper, Its People and Communities (Livingston, Ala: Sumter Graphics, 1982), 39.

⁶Bassett, "A Social and Economic History of Kemper County," 57.

⁷Ibid., 19-21.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Elia Griffin Daws, Census of 1860 Extract for Kemper County (Centreville, Ala.: n.p., n.d.).

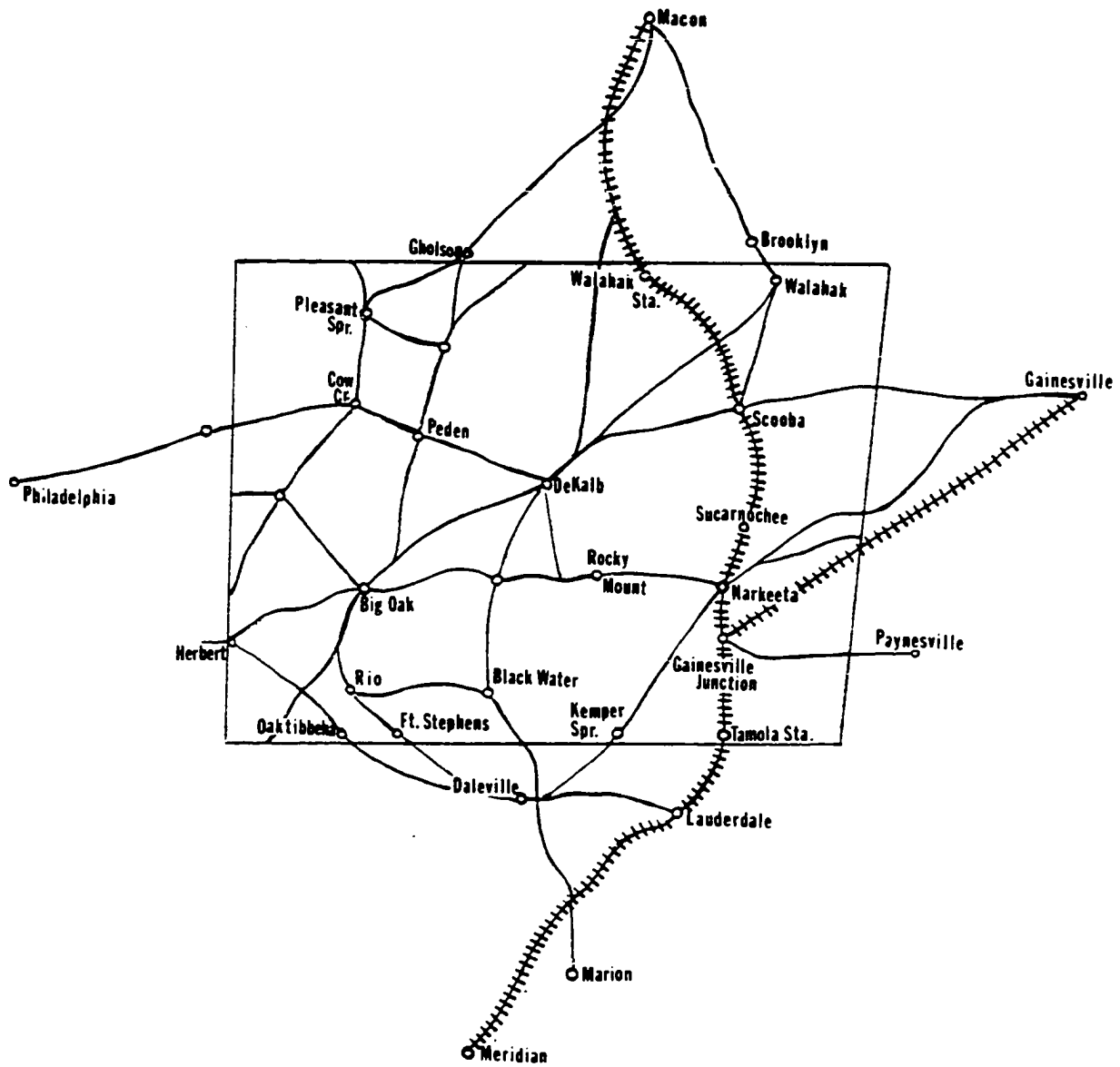


Figure 1. Map of Kemper County, 1865

As could be expected, ninety-three percent of the Kemper County respondents to the 1860 census indicated agricultural vocations or trades. Improved acreage in Kemper County that year totalled 88,897 acres while 174,168 acres remained unimproved. The average value per acre in the county was \$10.04 as compared with a statewide average of \$12.59.¹⁰ Kemper County produced over fifteen thousand bales of cotton and nearly five hundred thousand bushels of corn in 1860.¹¹ Oats, wheat, rice and potatoes were also marketed in substantial quantity.

Politically, ante-bellum Kemper County was not unique in Mississippi. In the five presidential elections preceding the Civil War, Kemper Countians voted proportionally as the state of Mississippi did. Democrats carried Kemper County in the elections of 1844, 1848, 1852 and 1856. In each of these elections, the percentage by which the victor carried Kemper County and the state of Mississippi did not vary by more than a few percentage points.¹² In an early showdown of unionist and states' rights factions in the Mississippi House of

¹⁰Census of 1860, Joseph G. Kennedy compiler, cited by Bassett, "A Social and Economic History of Kemper County," 27.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Horace Greeley, A Political Textbook for 1860 Comprising a Brief View of Presidential Nominations and Elections (New York: New York Tribune Assoc., 1860), 229-230.

Representatives, the Kemper County delegation was tied.¹³ As early as 1851, Kemper County selected a unionist delegate to the state Democratic convention.¹⁴ In 1860, John C. Breckinridge received 55 percent of the vote in the county and 59 percent of the Mississippi vote. John Bell received 40 percent and 36 percent respectively. Stephen Douglas got only sixty-nine votes in Kemper County and Lincoln, none.¹⁵

Kemper County's political distinction in 1860 was that a native son occupied the Gubernatorial mansion in Jackson, having been elected in November of 1859. Governor John J. Pettus had represented Kemper County in both houses of the legislature for many years. Pettus was outspoken and had called for independence for Mississippi even before the Lincoln victory. Decidedly pro-secession, he was described by one Mississippi historian as "a disunion man of the most unmitigated order."¹⁶

Secession declared, both Mississippi and Kemper County jumped enthusiastically into preparation for war. In

¹³James Byrne Ranck, Albert Galatin Brown, Radical Southern Nationalist (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1937), 81.

¹⁴Ibid., 87.

¹⁵W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots 1836-1892 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), 558-559.

¹⁶Dunbar Rowland, History of Mississippi: The Heart of the South, vol. I (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1925), 436.

January of 1861, a bluff at Vicksburg was armed to express Mississippi's sovereignty and control of the Mississippi River. In response to statewide calls to arms, the "Kemper Legion" was mustered at DeKalb in April of 1861 and the "Kemper Rebels" (Co. I) were organized in June of that year. Other musters occurred at Oak Grove and Rocky Mount.¹⁷ Later, the county would claim to have sent more men per capita to the war effort than any county south of the Ohio River.¹⁸ Large numbers of men served with the 24th Mississippi Regiment and the 13th Mississippi Regiment. Service of over four hundred men from Kemper County has been documented and a monument stands in the courthouse square at DeKalb in honor of fifty-six who supposedly gave their lives.¹⁹ The obelisk monument is inscribed "The men were right who wore the grey and right can never die."

DeKalb was located on a major east-west stage line and Scooba was on the Mobile and Ohio rail line, hence news of the war reached the county. From a diary kept by Sallie B. McRae of Scooba, it was apparent that there was great interest in the war but that news received was not always accurate. The diary told of great Confederate victories at

¹⁷Farmer, Southeast Kemper, Its People and Communities, 39.

¹⁸Memphis Commercial Appeal, February 2, 1928.

¹⁹John H. Mallon, Jr., "List of Confederate Soldiers and Sailors, Kemper County Mississippi," Historical File, at Kemper-Newton Regional Library, DeKalb, Mississippi.

Norfolk and Roanoke. In a March 1, 1862 entry, Miss McRae related "glorious news"--that the Kemper Guards had been released on parole and were on their way home.²⁰

The war years in Kemper County were remembered as days of extreme hardship. The Union blockade in the gulf dried up supplies normally brought by the Tombigbee River and the north-south rail line. The exodus of able-bodied men to the war left the county without "providers" and without "protectors." The result was reversion to pioneer times and subsistence living. Coffee was brewed from burnt cornbread or okra seeds and women and slaves worked to provide for those left behind. Blacks shared in the work and privations.²¹ The lack of outside influence and a loyalty to the families they served caused most of the slaves to remain on the plantations and farms during the war. Some ran off. When Andrew left the McRae family in 1862, the family concluded that he had "gone to the Yankees."²² Those that remained shared the anxiety for family members at war asking when the master was coming home, but they had little

²⁰Sallie B. McRae, "Diary," Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi (MSU).

²¹Mary J. Welsh, "Makeshifts of the War Between the States," Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, 7 (1903), 101-104.

²²McRae Diary, Mississippi State University (MSU), entry of June 3, 1862.

concept of the war or its nature.²³ In 1936, a former slave, Sam Broach of Mt. Nebo, said he had heard something of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis and knew him "jest to call his name."²⁴ Kemper County was "exceptionally blessed" according to one chronicler in that "a federal soldier was not seen" in the area until after the war.²⁵ Other reports indicated "yankee outrages" throughout the county.²⁶ Living adjacent to Lauderdale County, Kemper Countians were well advised of the ravage of Sherman's campaign to destroy the railhead at Meridian. Sherman's activity in Meridian and neighboring areas brushed the borders of Kemper County and his troops crossed the extreme southwest corner of the county.²⁷ Empathy with nearby counties that did experience widespread destruction and pillage provoked faulty memories of like devastation in DeKalb and all of Kemper County. Recollections of returning soldiers finding their homes

²³Welsh, "Makeshifts," 113.

²⁴Statement of Sam Broach, October 1937. Mississippi Work Progress Administration (WPA) Files, RG 60 vol. 101, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

²⁵Welsh, "Makeshifts," 111.

²⁶Interview of O. B. Davis, August 8, 1936 and G. T. Pruitt, August 14, 1936. Boyd Papers, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

²⁷Margie Riddle Bearss, Sherman's Forgotten Campaign, The Meridian Expedition (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1987), 184-86.

destroyed²⁸ and numerous dwellings and barns burned²⁹ were exaggerations of isolated incidents in the county or, more likely, accounts of incidents in nearby Lauderdale or Neshoba County. The tales of Yankees invading the county, destroying everything in sight, "killing or carrying off livestock" and burning provisions which they couldn't carry³⁰ did not concur with the records of movement of Federal forces.

In February of 1864, Major General William Tecumseh Sherman reported that ten thousand men had worked hard for five days to destroy the "depots, store-houses, arsenal, hospitals, offices, hotels and cantonments" of Meridan, Mississippi.³¹ The railroad complex, the junction of the north-south Mobile and Ohio, and the east-west Southern Railroad, was Sherman's principle concern. Sherman reported that the railroad was destroyed northward to and including a bridge at Lauderdale Springs, a few miles south of Kemper County.³² The Commander of the Sixteenth Army Corps

²⁸James F. Boydston, "Heroes of the Peace," Kemper County Messenger, December 30, 1936.

²⁹Interview of G. T. Pruitt, Boyd Papers, MSU.

³⁰Interview of O. B. Davis, Boyd Papers, MSU.

³¹Major General William T. Sherman to Brigadier General John A. Rawlins, March 7, 1864, War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), ser. 1, 32, pt. 1: 176. Hereafter cited as OR.

³²Ibid.

reported that the railroads and public property of the Confederates had been destroyed "north some 20 miles."³³ On February 19, 1864, a Federal cavalry expedition under Colonel E. F. Winslow camped three miles north of Lauderdale and reported that local sources had informed him that all Confederate cavalry forces were concentrated in Macon, in Noxubee County, north of Kemper County.³⁴ Confederate Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk received a report on February 21, that the enemy was moving on DeKalb and Kemper County in its direct assault on Columbus.³⁵ On February 23, President Jefferson Davis received a report from scouts in Daleville on the southern border of Kemper County, that all of the enemy had left the Mobile and Ohio Railroad and a column of Federal troops from Marion had marched three miles west of Dalesville in a northwesterly direction enroute to Moscow.³⁶ The scouts also added that they thought that a small force had been detached to proceed to Dekalb to "burn government corn at that place."³⁷ Other than the column of

³³Report of Maj. Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut, U.S.A., February 19, 1864, OR, ser. I, 32, pt. 1: 195.

³⁴Col. E. F. Winslow to Brig. Gen. A. J. Smith, February 19, 1864, OR, ser. I, 32, pt. 2: 430.

³⁵Maj. Gen. W. W. Loring to Lt. Gen. Polk, February 12, 1864, OR, ser. I, 32, pt. 2: 725.

³⁶R. O. Perrin to President Jefferson Davis, February 23, 1864, OR, ser. I, 32, pt. 1: 340.

³⁷Ibid.

Federal troops that marched from Dalesville to Macon, encroachment into Kemper County by northern troops under the command of Sherman did not occur.

General Benjamin H. Grierson led Federal troops in two state-wide assaults on Mississippi, one in the spring of 1863 and another in late 1864.³⁸ The first of these, referred to as "Grierson's raid," skirted very close to Kemper County but did not trespass it. The column of troops passed to the west of Kemper County having proceeded southerly from Bankston to Louisville and Philadelphia. One company was sent thirty miles to the east to strike the Mobile and Ohio Railroad at Macon on May 5, 1863, but no mention is made of troop dispatch into Kemper County. At Philadelphia, Grierson reported token resistance.³⁹ Among the arrests was a county judge who claimed their resistance was based on a fear for property and life. Grierson assured the citizens that his only quarry was "soldiers and the property of the rebel government."⁴⁰ Something in Philadelphia must have moved the general, because only a few days before, his troops had destroyed a factory and a

³⁸William H. and Shirley A. Leckie, Unlikely Warriors. General Benjamin H. Grierson and His Family (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), contains excellent and detailed information of Grierson's forays into Mississippi.

³⁹Leckie, Unlikely Warriors, 90.

⁴⁰Ibid., 91

tannery near Bankston.⁴¹ Grierson's troops moved on toward Decatur without destroying any property in Philadelphia.⁴²

During Grierson's second foray into Mississippi in December of 1864, the northern sections of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad were destroyed, effectively cutting off Kemper County from rail service since the rails south of the county had been destroyed by Sherman's forces earlier in the year. Grierson reported that in his second raid spanning four hundred fifty miles of eastern and central Mississippi, his forces destroyed one hundred miles of railroad, twenty thousand feet of bridges, twenty miles of telegraph line, five hundred bales of cotton and thirty-two warehouses. In addition, he reported taking six hundred prisoners and "freeing" one thousand blacks.⁴³

Despite the memories and myths of extensive federal incursion, Mary J. Welsh recalled that "a federal soldier was not seen in that section (northwest Kemper County) until after the war."⁴⁴ J. R. Dunlap remembered that his grandfather, J. R. Nicholson, was too old to leave the county to fight the Yankees. He so badly wanted to kill some that when rumors began that Federal soldiers were

⁴¹Col. B. H. Grierson to Lt. Col. John A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, OR, ser. 1, 33, pt. 1: 523.

⁴²Leckie, Unlikely Warriors, 91.

⁴³Ibid., 125.

⁴⁴Welsh, "Makeshifts," 111-12.

raiding Kemper County, he hoisted a Confederate flag sixty-five feet in the air in his yard, loaded his gun and waited. Much to his disappointment, none came.⁴⁵

During the latter years of the war, deserters and "jayhawkers" were a problem in central Mississippi. Ebb Felton joined Company D of the 3rd Mississippi Cavalry at DeKalb in 1864 and chased deserters in the county until the war was over.⁴⁶ Jayhawkers posed a serious threat to the deteriorating social order in Mississippi. Jayhawkers were bands of deserters from both the Union and Confederate armies who had, during active service, resorted to theft for subsistence and "continued [those] practices countenanced by the customs of the war."⁴⁷ As early as the spring of 1864, Jefferson Davis received reports of deterioration of morale in central Mississippi. One report claimed that the state was "under the tacit rule of deserters, thieves, and disloyal men and women" and that "midnight robbery" was practiced by "deserters, pretended soldiers and soldiers with their commands."⁴⁸ Governor Charles Clark received a

⁴⁵Interview J. R. Dunlap, March 15, 1936, Boyd papers, MSU.

⁴⁶Interview Ebb Felton, May 15, 1936, Boyd Papers, MSU.

⁴⁷Nimrod Porter Diary, SHC, February 2, 1865 quoted in Dan T. Carter, When the War Was Over, The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South 1865-1867 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 15.

⁴⁸Robert S. Hudson to Jefferson Davis, March 4, 1864, OR, ser. 1, 32, pt. 3: 625-27.

plea to direct local sheriffs to "arrest and send to the army all deserters and evading conscripts," citing the outrage of "persons and property of good citizens."⁴⁹ A sheriff was told that "hundreds of . . . abolitionist[s], spies, deserters, liars, thieves, murderers and everything foul and damnable" had "settled in the hills and swamp" of central Mississippi.⁵⁰ The jayhawkers roamed freely in the sparsely populated regions of central and northern Mississippi. They were nothing more than outlaws that terrorized the rural areas of the state and their suppression by both Confederate and Union forces was attempted in tacit cooperation.⁵¹ Even as the Federal forces expanded their control in Mississippi and all news from Richmond was of retreat, some maintained hope that the South could still win the war. A more realistic Mississippian said those holding out such hope were "as crazy as crickets smoked out of a rotten log in the fire place and ready to run into the fire for safety."⁵²

⁴⁹Robert S. Hudson to Governor Charles Clark, May 2, 1864, Governor's Records, Record Group E 65, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

⁵⁰Robert S. Hudson to William H. Mangum, Governor's Records, E 65, MDAH, Jackson.

⁵¹Carter, When the War Was Over, 15.

⁵²Hiram Cassedy to Oscar J. E. Stuart, April 29, 1865, Stuart Papers, MDAH, Jackson.

The effect of the end of the war was not told more vividly than by the account of Mary Welsh.

But there is no experience like the death of one's country. When the news came suddenly that our country was dead, a deep hush fell into our lives, a wordless grief settled on our hearts, a dark foreboding clouded the future. . . .⁵³

In Kemper County and in Mississippi, frontier conditions existed in 1865; felonies were common. Statewide, shootings and knifings were recurrent and one observer said he'd seen more violence in a few days in Mississippi than he'd seen in six years in New York.⁵⁴ Guy Jack, a twelve-year old orphan, was taken by his guardian to DeKalb in 1865. Jack said the town was "noted as being the worst in the State of Mississippi for immorality, drunkenness and crime."⁵⁵ Mississippians insisted that journalists from the North exaggerated the violence in the South but it was still acceptable conduct to settle an argument with a pistol.⁵⁶ Whitelaw Reid, on a boat trip on the nearby Tombigbee River,

⁵³Welsh, "Makeshifts," 112.

⁵⁴New York Times, February 4, 1866.

⁵⁵Guy Jack, Captain Guy Jack's Iconoclast being an Exposure of Hypocritical Christians and Corrupt Jews of Murder, Arson, Robbery, Perjury, Forgery, and Bribery of Officials and Private Citizens in Kemper and Adjacent Counties in Mississippi, Whose Efforts have been to Defeat Justice-All Graphically Disclosed by the Author who Figured Personally in the Furious Fires of Human Greed for Filthy Lucre, and Felt the Scathing Flames of Hellish Persecution Dealt Out by Men Claiming to be his Friends and Fellow Sympathizers, (New Orleans: n.p., 1919), 8.

⁵⁶Carter, When the War was Over, 18.

observed that most passengers carried pistols and bowie knives and that in dinner conversation "one had a comparison of views as to the proper mode of using these weapons to the best advantage."⁵⁷ The stage was set for a showdown between political forces using the new black citizens as pawns in their high-stakes power struggle.

⁵⁷Whitelaw Reid, After the War, A Tour of the Southern States, 1865-1866 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 398.

CHAPTER II

FREEDMEN

Kemper County was remote from urban and coastal Mississippi. Isolated during the Civil War and virtually ignored after the war, the new black citizens obtained only those vestiges of freedom that the whites allowed them. During Reconstruction in the county, the black population grew and a predominantly share-cropping agricultural economy developed. Black voter alliance with Republicans in the county gave the black community some political power, but very few black officials were elected or appointed. Reconstruction brought formal education to blacks in Kemper County for the first time and even land ownership came to a few. The rewards of political power reaped by the Kemper County black community in Reconstruction were small indeed when measured against the monetary gains of the white Republican leadership.

Kemper was one of the "black counties;" one writer called it the "blackest."¹ The census results did not justify such a distinction. In 1860, whites numbered 5936

¹James Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 19.

and blacks 5646, of whom only five were free blacks.² By 1870, the black-white ratio shifted to a black majority with 7214 blacks and 5706 whites.³ The increase in black population for the ten year period suggests that great numbers of slaves did not "go over" to the Yankees during the occupation of parts of Mississippi. It also discredits the belief that large numbers of rural blacks were attracted to the urban centers after the war ended. The increase of blacks may also show the beginning of the influx of blacks from neighboring Alabama which was "redeemed" in 1870. Work was available by contract with the railroads in Meridian, only twenty-six miles from DeKalb, but large numbers of Kemper County blacks did not leave the county. The 1870 Census demonstrated that some black families had gravitated toward District Five, the central district in which DeKalb is located and to the community of Scooba in the eastern part of the county on the Mobile and Ohio railroad line.⁴ Large numbers of blacks, however, remained on the very land wherein they had served as slaves.

When the war ended, the disrepair and ruin of the farms and plantations of Kemper County was due more to inattention than to Federal atrocity. The men of the county

²U. S. Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule II.

³U.S. Ninth Census, 1870, Schedule I.

⁴Ibid.

left to fight in the lost cause and in some cases took their slaves with them. Sam Broach, a former slave, recounted that he accompanied two young masters of the Broach family and slept across their feet to keep them warm. By morning, he usually awakened snuggled between the two of them.⁵ When freedom came to Sam and to the some six thousand other black people in Kemper County, it did not set black against white. Quite to the contrary, the black turned for support to the only pillar of strength in his life, his former owner. There was substantial evidence that this trust in their former masters was, in most cases, well-placed. Of the fifteen major planters and slaveholders in Kemper County during the Civil War, none figured in either Democratic or Republican violence during Reconstruction.⁶ Additionally, none of these owners of the largest plantations in the county were subjects of complaints registered with the Freedman's Bureau representative in DeKalb in 1867-1868.⁷

In 1865, the new black citizen in Kemper County was overwhelmed by the notion of freedom. In Mississippi, the majority of the freedmen did not leave the plantation, but

⁵Interview with Sam Broach, October 1937, Ex-Slave Biographies, WPA, RG 60, MDAH, Jackson.

⁶Bassett, "A Social and Economic History of Kemper County," 18-22.

⁷Book of Record of Complaints Made and Cases Tried, Subdistrict DeKalb, Mississippi, Agent J. L. Roberts, Bureau of Refugees, Freedman and Abandoned Lands (BRFAL), RG 105, Vol. 125, National Archives (NA).

remained there. Many returned "after one disillusioning trip to town."⁸ For Kemper County, the closest town of any size was Meridian, twenty-five miles south of DeKalb, which lay in ruin from Sherman's assault. Whitelaw Reid described Meridian in November of 1865 as:

A frame one-story shanty, labeled, "Liquors for sale;" two straight railway tracks in the midst of a wide expanse of mud; a crowd of yelling negro porters; half-a-dozen houses that may have been used for storing cotton and whisky; . . . (numerous hotels aforesaid); some disconsolate looking negro huts; and a few shabby residences. . . .

Jackson, the state capital, was nearly one hundred miles west and was not, itself, a very large city. Leaving Kemper County for greener pastures in 1865 was a risky and difficult endeavor; risky because a sort of anarchy prevailed in the rural areas of Mississippi where "jayhawkers" still persisted and difficult because major population centers were many days travel from the county. That large numbers of blacks did not evacuate Kemper County did not imply that they were satisfied with their lot, but rather, that it was just easier to stay.

The freedman who remained on the plantation or farm was subject to a new labor arrangement. The owner of the land gave the worker clothing and provisions and paid a salary at Christmas or when the crops were sold. In some

⁸Harris, Presidential Reconstruction, 81.

⁹Reid, After the War, 390.

instances, a portion of the crop was promised in payment for work done. Intransigence of freedmen in Kemper County was reported by R. S. Adams of Scooba in a letter of September 27, 1865. He wrote the "Chief of the Freedmen's Bureau" that "the colored people formerly our servants some time ago refused to enter into any contract." Adams first referred this to a Lieutenant Cassidy in Scooba in hopes he would "make them work and attend to business properly and be respectful to [Adams]." Cassidy apparently failed to motivate any work or respect since Adams continued that "for the most part, they [freedmen] have done just as they please in nearly every respect." Consequently, no work was being done. Adams reported that a sixty-six-year-old white man was "thrown down and beaten badly" in a racial confrontation and Lieutenant Cassidy did not arrest the black man involved. Adams understood that he was "under no obligation to keep them [freedmen]," but preferred to be "consistent" in treating his "servants humanely" as he always had.¹⁰

The Freedmen's Bureau did not solve the problems of idleness amongst freedmen. In January of 1866, the Bureau Chief in Mississippi issued Circular Number Two which told freedmen that they had to contract work and it was not possible to live without working. They were told that the "houses and lands belong to the white people" and that they

¹⁰R. S. Adams to Chief of Freedman's Bureau, September 27, 1865. BRFAL, RG 105, Vol. 171, Item 2223, NA.

could not "expect that they will allow you to live on them in idleness."¹¹

Hope for land redistribution further curtailed black interest in labor contracts and even employment. The continued idleness of the freedmen led to inclusion of the requirement of possession of a regular job for all adult black males in the "black codes" of Mississippi.¹²

Fortunately, the bond between slave and master in Kemper County was sufficiently strong to carry many of the blacks through the difficult period of adjustment to freedom. The rise of sharecropping was the solution for the dependent black and the white farmer who needed labor to make his land productive. So necessary and so prevalent was this "arrangement," that most of the complaints heard by the Freedman's Bureau Agent in Kemper County were of farmers having "run off" a former slave or having failed to pay them as per their contract.¹³

John Roy Lynch, a prominent black Mississippi politician, explained that the black man's attraction to the

¹¹Chief, Freedmen's Bureau of Mississippi Circular Number Two quoted in John Eaton, Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen (New York: Longman, Green and Company, 1907), 242-43.

¹²James T. Currie, Enclave: Vicksburg and Her Plantations, 1863-1870 (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1980), 146.

¹³Book of Record, Agent J. L. Roberts, BRFAL, RG 105, NA.

"aristocrat of the past" was a natural one since their relationship had for the most part been amicable. There was no such friendliness between blacks and white laborers. Whites at the bottom of the economic scale envied the cordiality between blacks and former masters and both blacks and poor whites knew they were competitors in the labor market.¹⁴

The black community in Kemper County gained electoral superiority over the whites due to the large number of whites who lost suffrage for government service in the Confederacy. While Union Leagues were instrumental in organizing the black voters in northern and central Mississippi, there is no record of a league in Kemper County. There were political meetings. Charles, Abraham and Jerry (no last names given) were driven off the farm of the widow Susan Campbell near Scooba for attending a political meeting in October 1867.¹⁵ The Freedman's Bureau directed Mrs. Campbell to take them back and not to interfere with their meetings in the future.¹⁶ Miles Hampton was dragged out of a meeting of blacks on the Hampton plantation and murdered by "Koo Kluxes." The men

¹⁴John Roy Lynch, Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, ed. John Hope Franklin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 141.

¹⁵Book of Record, Agent J. L. Roberts, BRFal, RG 105, NA. Entry of October 16, 1867.

¹⁶Ibid.

who took Miles out had "some kind of scare-face on 'em an' all wropped up disguised, horses were kivered up too."¹⁷ At regular meetings thereafter, blacks armed themselves to protect against incursion but no further interruptions of that group occurred.¹⁸ There were numerous black churches active in the community although only one black preacher is enumerated in the Census of 1870. Another black "minister of the Gospel" appears in the next Census but he is listed as not being able to read or write.¹⁹ Black churches were not only centers of worship, but served the very popular Sabbath schools and probably, political "speech making."

Despite their majority at the polls, blacks did not elect black public officials in Kemper County. Only one County Board member was black and he served only one term. The statewide political situation was assessed as taken over by "big headed Negro politicians" by the Democratic press,²⁰ but a review of black elected officials in Mississippi during Reconstruction deflates the Democratic panic. Prior to 1874, the thirty-five member State Senate had no more than seven blacks in any session. In the one-hundred-

¹⁷Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 58.; Statement of Sam McAllum, September 13, 1937, Ex-Slave Biographies, Lauderdale County, WPA, RG 60, Container 101, MDAH, Jackson.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹U.S. Tenth Census, 1880, Schedule I.

²⁰Mississippi Weekly Pilot, January 30, 1875 quoted in Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 108.

fifteen member lower house, black representation never totalled more than forty.²¹ Each county in Mississippi had approximately twenty-eight elected officials and statewide, only five percent were black.²² This does not, however, indicate that blacks did not exercise political power in Mississippi or Kemper County. Black voters allied with white Republicans and elected Republicans to office in Kemper County in 1869, 1871, and 1872. The earliest county officials during Reconstruction were Democrats. The election of 1869 began a six-year reign for the Republican party of Kemper County. The Sheriff and some other county officials were appointed by the Governor from 1867 to 1869 and thereafter, Republican candidates were successful in their bid to hold onto these officer. Republicans garnered 150 to 200 white votes in most of the elections of the early 1870s and these votes were the balance of power. Black and white voting strengths were about equal at fifteen hundred,²³ so the white Republican vote was necessary to remain in power. The black vote was openly courted by the Republican party. One Mississippi editor claimed that as

²¹John Roy Lynch, Reminiscences, 132.

²²Ibid.

²³Testimony of W. W. Chisolm, U.S. Congress Senate. Report of the Select Committee to inquire into the Mississippi Election of 1875 with Documentary Evidence. 44th Cong. 1st sess. 1875 Report 527 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1876), 764-65. Afterward herein referred to as Boutwell.

political partisans, the blacks were "the most consistent voting machine ever invested with the right of suffrage." They willingly espoused the cause of "any man who appeals to them for their votes on the sole ground of opposition to the . . . [Democratic] party."²⁴ This was due in large measure to continued assault by the Democrats in Mississippi on any of the Reconstruction programs which sought to upgrade the status of the freedman. A party for which many spokesmen referred to all freedmen as "damned niggers" could hardly expect to obtain the support of the black community, and in Kemper County, they did not. Of some fifteen hundred voting blacks in the election of 1873, less than fifty voted for the Democratic candidates.²⁵ Republicans could count on sufficient white votes to assure victory in the county. Only when the black vote could be stifled or converted to the Democracy, would Democratic candidates be successful in Kemper County.

Ante-bellum Kemper County had not excelled in education or educational facilities. In 1860, there were twenty-five teachers in the county. Of 2491 school-aged white children, only 476 or nineteen percent attended

²⁴Aberdeen (Miss.) Examiner, March 8, 1883.

²⁵Testimony of W. W. Chisolm, U.S. Congress. Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States. Mississippi vol. 11 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1872), 253. Afterward herein referred to as KKK.

school.²⁶ Most of the schools were private academies although thirteen township schools had been chartered. The Mississippi Constitution of 1832 forbade the education of blacks, probably in reaction to the 1831 Nat Turner rebellion in Virginia.²⁷ A slave of the Stephenson plantation in Kemper County remembered that he got his first "whuppin" from the mistress when he was caught "spelling" with the young white master. She chided him saying that all he needed to learn was to count so that he wouldn't "colic" the mules when he fed them.²⁸ In 1860, with very few scattered exceptions, the Mississippi black population was illiterate and uneducated.²⁹ Kemper County was not an exception. Even the claim that blacks in Mississippi were taught technical and mechanical skills does not bear up under a close scrutiny of the post-war occupations of Kemper County blacks. The vast majority in 1870 and 1880 were laborers, farm laborers, or domestic servants and could not read or write.³⁰

²⁶U.S. Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule I.

²⁷Mississippi Constitution of 1832, MDAH, Jackson, 21.

²⁸Sam McAllum, WPA, RG 60, MDAH, 2.

²⁹Dorothy Vick Smith, "Black Reconstruction in Mississippi, 1862-1870." (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1985), 204.

³⁰U.S. Ninth Census, 1870; U.S. Tenth Census. 1880.

The continuing illiteracy of large numbers of Kemper County blacks was not due to disinterest on their part but rather to the limited facilities available and the requirement of all able-bodied family members to work for subsistence. The need was exacerbated by the post-war depression and crop failures of 1871 and 1874.³¹ The very fact that education was forbidden under the slave codes made it desirable in emancipation. A new self-respect and an intense desire to upgrade their status brought many blacks to seek education immediately after the war. In Mississippi, the earliest "negro schools" were conducted by Federal chaplains on or near the Army posts. Chaplain Warren from Vicksburg summed up the early reconstruction black spirit when he stated that he could see "the wants, desires, and hopes of civilized life struggling within them."³² In 1866, the first of several schools was chartered for black students in Kemper County. The school was in DeKalb and listed no patron or society affiliation.³³

In many respects, black education in Kemper County from 1867 to 1875 did not follow the pattern of the

³¹William C. Harris, The Day of the Carpetbagger, Republican Reconstruction in Mississippi (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1979), 375.

³²Eaton, Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen, 211-12.

³³Teachers' Monthly School Report, March 1867, Lauderdale District, State of Mississippi, BRFAL, RG 105, Item 2252, NA.

remainder of Mississippi or the other southern states. Northern benevolent societies sent teachers into the South in great numbers. Mississippi was less fortunate than other states in securing assistance as most northern aid was directed to the less distant states of Virginia and North Carolina or to those states which had been occupied early in the war, namely South Carolina and Louisiana.³⁴ The only societies which were active in great measure in Mississippi were the American Missionary Association and the Quakers. Neither sent anybody to Kemper County. The only school sanctioned by the Freedman's Bureau in the county was opened in DeKalb on February 19, 1866 by Miss Hattie Oppelt, a spinster member of a pioneer family of the county.³⁵ The school operated until at least November 1867 when the last report was filed with the Bureau's representative in Lauderdale. The average daily attendance at the school was twenty-five of whom the great majority were females. The monthly reports to the Lauderdale District of the Freedmen's Bureau also indicated that as many as seventy students regularly attended Sabbath school in DeKalb which was occasionally taught by Mr. J. L. Roberts, the Bureau

³⁴Dorothy Vick Smith, "Black Reconstruction," 204.

³⁵U.S. Ninth Census; Louis Parmer, Kemper County, The Pioneer Days (Livingston, Ala: Sumter Graphics, 1983), 39; Teachers' Monthly School Report, RG 105, NA.

representative in DeKalb.³⁶ Mr. Roberts visited Miss Oppelt's school at least once monthly and noted in his record book on October 28, 1867 that "there should be an effort made to start schools throughout the county."³⁷

Whether due to the efforts of Roberts or, more likely, to the benevolent character of some of the plantation owners, several "negro schools" were established in Kemper County and were taught in large part by white teachers. These teachers were not northern carpetbaggers, but rather Kemper Countians who perhaps saw the aggregate benefit of an educated black citizenry. Just as some far-sighted whites in Mississippi saw black property ownership as a method of bringing blacks into the tax-paying community, so also many whites saw the education of blacks as a manner of both raising the intellect of the electorate and the economic potential of the state. For whatever reason, the Giles Negro School, a twenty-by-twenty-foot log building, was opened on the Giles plantation near Sucarnochee in east central Kemper County in 1868, under the tutelage of William Macatanes, a white. During the same year, two teachers, one white, one black, opened the Dawson Springs Negro School. A graduate of this school, John Steward would later become a Deputy Sheriff of the county. The Scooba Negro school,

³⁶Ibid.; Book of Record, Agent J. L. Roberts, BRFAL, RG 105, NA.

³⁷Ibid., entry of October 28, 1867.

opened the same year, was chaired by William Ezell, a white Republican who concurrently served on the County Board of Supervisors.³⁸ In 1870, the Minniece Negro School opened on the Minniece plantation northeast of Scooba.³⁹ These plantation schools indicated a charitable side of plantation owners which is not often depicted in Reconstruction literature.⁴⁰ In testimony before the Ku Klux Committee, the Republican sheriff of the county told of the burning of two black schools and two black churches but hastened to add that all four were quickly rebuilt or given other quarters by white, Democratic plantation owners.⁴¹

Throughout Mississippi, black schools were established in great numbers in 1867 and 1868, many of which lasted only until an election for which black votes were being solicited. Public education remained the responsibility of the counties. By 1870, there were only seventy-two registered schools for blacks in the entire state. These schools employed ninety teachers, sixty-one of whom were white. These teachers taught a total enrollment of 3,475

³⁸"History of Kemper County Schools," WPA, RG 60, Vol. 319, MDAH, Jackson.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰As late as 1936, of sixty-seven "negro" schools in Kemper County, three-quarters were of the one-teacher variety and located on plantations.

⁴¹U.S. Congress, KKK, 11:260-61, 264.

students with an average attendance of 2,586.⁴² Five years of freedom had secured education for a very small number of the one-half million freedmen. A report of the scholastic population of Kemper County in 1872 enumerated 1879 white youths and 1948 black youths between the ages of five and twenty-one.⁴³ Several small black schools in Kemper County, probably not "registered," remained open beyond the turn of the century.⁴⁴ In 1870, there were only two black school teachers in Kemper County and in 1880, only seven, one of whom declared himself to be a "teacher or preacher."⁴⁵

During the fall and winter of 1870 and the spring of 1871, counties adjacent to Kemper experienced a reign of terror in which black schools and black churches being used for schools were burned and teachers tortured or murdered.⁴⁶ In testimony before the Ku Klux Committee, John R. Taliaferro from neighboring Noxubee County told of numerous attacks on black preachers and blacks who had assumed leadership positions in their community. Taliaferro told of

⁴²Report of the State Superintendent of Education, H. R. Pease, Files of the Secretary of State, RG 28, Vol. 62, File 3, MDAH, Jackson.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴"History of Kemper County Schools," WPA, RG 60, MDAH.

⁴⁵U.S. Ninth Census; U.S. Tenth Census.

⁴⁶Allen W. Trelease, White Terror, The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 275-77.

a black minister and a black politician who had been murdered in the county. He stated that a similar state occurred in Kemper, Lowndes and Winston Counties.⁴⁷

Testimony from the Republican leader and Sheriff of Kemper County described only slight interference with black educational facilities. He testified that he felt the great majority of white people in Kemper County wanted to see the black population educated. When questioned if the whites built most of the schools for the negroes, the Sheriff replied that he thought not; that blacks had built most of them for themselves.⁴⁸ The Sheriff also mentioned a "northern lady" as teaching in one of the few buildings that the Freedman's Bureau bought while they were "in operation."⁴⁹

In Kemper County, violence against the freedmen began in the summer of 1865, when a whipping incident was reported to the military authorities in Meridian. Freedman Orange and his wife Emily charged that they were beaten on the night of July 20 by several men including Jack Ball, James Gully, Phil Gully, Slocum Gully and George Alexander. Orange said that he was called out of his house late that night. Orange's neighbor, S. V. Winston, heard a commotion

⁴⁷U.S. Congress, KKK, 11:223-24.

⁴⁸Ibid., 260, 264.

⁴⁹Ibid.

and went to his door and saw several men tying Orange's hands and taking him away. Winston asked "what's wrong?" One of the men replied, "Orange has been stealing." As the men led Orange off into the darkness, one man struck Orange and somebody shouted "shoot him," after which one of the men cocked his pistol. Orange was taken about one-and-one-half miles from the house, blindfolded and "whipped with leather." Orange managed to remove his blindfold as the men were leaving and recognized Alexander by his "crippled hand" and James Gully, the "low, chunky man." Orange recognized the voice of Jack Ball whom he said "tried to talk like an Irishman then like a Dutchman."⁵⁰

Orange's wife, Emily, was staying at the home of Thomas Tolbert on the night of July 20. Sometime after eleven o'clock that evening, somebody came to the gate and "hollered for Orange." He then called for Emily, claiming that he wanted to hire them. When Emily came onto the porch, a white man unknown to Emily or Tolbert laid his gun over the bannister and told her to "come around here." The man shouted into the darkness, "Johnson, here she is." Two men came out of the darkness and "gathered her by the arm" and took her away. Emily said that they accused her of stealing. She said they "didn't talk naturally" and talked

⁵⁰Statements of Orange, Emily and S. V. Winston, July 31, 1865, Orange vs Sundry Others, BRFal, RG 105, Vol. 172, Item 2223, NA.

like "Yankees." She was blindfolded and beaten but deposed that her attackers were John Ball, Slocum Gully, George Alexander, Jim Gully and Phil Gully.⁵¹

When Emily and Orange filed a report with the Provost Marshall of the military detachment at Lauderdale, Mississippi, only Winston, Tolbert and J. S. Posey came forward to make statements to substantiate the claims of Orange and his wife. Posey was at home on the morning of July 20, when George Alexander came by and asked where he could find Orange and his wife indicating that he wanted to hire them. At about ten or eleven o'clock that evening, two men stopped at Posey's house and asked directions to the Tolbert house. They were joined by two other men. Posey gave them directions and they rode off. About an hour later, two of them returned saying they had lost their way. Posey gave them a light and "set them aright." At about midnight, four men came by Posey's house "leading their horses." Another hour passed and Emily came to Posey's house and told him she was beaten by Ball, Slocum Gully, George Alexander and one other man whose name Posey did not remember. Posey did not recognize any of them.⁵²

White citizens of Kemper County rallied to support the white men accused of beating Emily and Orange. Eleazor

⁵¹Ibid.; Statements of Thomas Tolbert and J. S. Posey, July 31, 1865, Orange vs Sundry Others, RG 105, NA.

⁵²Ibid.

Houston, Peter and W. A. McMahan, J. W. Jones and B. L. Smith signed a deposition that they were well-acquainted with Orange and that "his character [had] been bad for the last ten years" and they "would not believe anything he would state upon Oath." Eleazor Houston also stated, in a separate sworn deposition, that E. S. (Slocum) Gully stayed at Houston's house on the night of July 20. James J. Griffin swore that he knew Orange "for several years past" and that he was a "contentious, quarrelsome man" and he "repeatedly whipt his wife unmercifully." He described Orange's character as "desperate bad." Samuel Alexander testified that George Alexander and Joshua Ball stayed with him on the night in question. Fourteen white men signed a deposition on August 7, 1865, which impugned the character of Orange and recommended that Orange not be believed. The signers were prominent men of the county and included one man to whom every black in the county would, one day, turn for leadership; Judge William Wallace Chisolm. His was the first signature on the document.⁵³ Blacks in Kemper County were susceptible to and victimized by white intimidation, particularly by the Ku Klux Klan. In addition to the burning of two schools and two churches, Klansmen terrorized

⁵³Deposition of Eleazor Houston and four others, August 5, 1865; Deposition of Eleazor Houston, August 5, 1865; Deposition of James J. Griffin, August 5, 1865; Deposition of Samuel Alexander, August 8, 1865; Deposition of W. W. Chisolm and thirteen others, August 7, 1865. Orange vs Sundry Others, RG 105.

some groups of blacks in the county and at least six blacks were murdered during the height of Klan activity in Mississippi.⁵⁴ One black remembered some sixty years later that the Klan was a "spirit" and still believed in its invincibility.⁵⁵ The intimidation of the black population is most vividly demonstrated by the undisguised electioneering of the "seventy-sixers," a group of Democrats bent on redemption of the county in the election of 1875. They staged a demonstration on the day prior and throughout the night preceding the election to discourage black voting. Large groups of mounted men, reminiscent of the Klan, prowled the county by day and night discharging firearms and even a cannon which accompanied them.⁵⁶ Large groups of armed Democrats known to be opposed to black suffrage were stationed at each polling place when the polls opened. Frightened blacks chose not to cast their ballots or take issue with the whites.⁵⁷ As a result of this intimidation, the Democrats wrested political control of the county from the Republican-black alliance.

⁵⁴U.S. Congress, KKK, 257.

⁵⁵Sam McAllum, WPA, RG 60, MDAH, 5.

⁵⁶Interview of Ebb Felton, May 15, 1936, Boyd Papers, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State; U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 756-79.

⁵⁷Ibid.

Kemper County blacks had a brief period of exposure to the Freedman's Bureau. On September 13, 1867, J. L. Roberts opened his office in DeKalb as the subdistrict agent for the bureau. As a representative of the agency of the Lauderdale District, he adjudicated those cases which he could and referred others to the civil courts. Of note is that during his brief tenure in DeKalb, most of the complaints directed to him were not of heinous or outrageous conduct. Most involved contract or pay disputes.⁵⁸

The first case which Roberts investigated was a complaint by freedmen Jack McDonald and his sister Harriet Clark who alleged that farmer George T. Mitchell and his mother, Polly, had released them without pay from a contract. The January-to-Christmas contract had been terminated by the Mitchells on the fourth of July. The plaintiffs sought the payment due by contract of one bale of cotton, one pair of shoes and one dress. There was no notation as to how the matter was resolved.⁵⁹

Agent Roberts heard a variety of complaints, most involving labor or salary disputes. On September 19, 1867, Reverend Boyd complained that freedman Henry, no last name, was not working according to his contract. Roberts explained the Reverend's complaint to Henry and sent him

⁵⁸Book of Record, Agent J. L. Roberts, BRFAL, RG 105, NA.

⁵⁹Ibid., entry of September 18, 1867.

back to work. On the same day, freedman Thomas Bell accused Daniel Momson of not providing rations to him. An investigation by the agent did not sustain Bell's complaint. On the following day, a freedman, George Jackson, appealed for help claiming that he had no family and was destitute. Agent Roberts noted in his log that Jackson was an "imbecil," and ordered him committed to the hospital at Lauderdale. The "Colonel man" who brought George to the agent was "directed to take him there [hospital] without charge."⁶⁰

On September 23, Agent Roberts solved a dispute between two freedmen. Henry Rainfield asserted that Robert Overstreet owed him \$4.50 for a pair of pants purchased the previous Christmas. The Agent recorded that "Robert is honest and Henry does not return to prosecute the case." In a custody or "binding" case, a freedman, Colen, sought custody of two daughters held by Dr. Chamberlain. The doctor maintained that Colen was "no good." Probate Judge John McRae (McRea) agreed and gave custody of the two girls to an uncle. Freedman Isaac Love and his employer, H. P. Britain, worked out a mutually satisfactory arrangement for division of the crop on the same day with Agent Roberts arbitrating.⁶¹

⁶⁰Ibid., entry of September 20, 1867.

⁶¹Ibid., entries of November, 1867.

Numerous cases of breach of contract were investigated during Roberts' brief stay in DeKalb. Freedmen John Overstreet and Jack Hull claimed defraud of wages under a contract of January 1, 1866, by John Gewin and his mother. They claimed that they were driven away after eight months of working the crop and that Gewin threatened to shoot them. This complaint was settled by arbitration two months later. On October 1, James Britain complained at the Bureau office that freedman Milo Hampton took more than his wages, refused to work and left. After talking with Roberts, Hampton agreed to pay \$30.80 in labor.⁶² Less than a week later, an unnamed freedman registered a complaint against a Mr. Edwards about the division of crops in 1866, the previous year. An investigation found Edwards owed the freedman \$38.58 payable on January 1, 1868. Mingo Alice, freedman, settled a crop division dispute with William Alice on October 12, 1867. When freedman John Roberts claimed that Judge Bohannon had driven him away after the crops were "partly made," Agent Roberts' investigation determined that "John was a trifling man" and the Judge didn't owe him anything. Roson Sims, freedman, claimed that B. A. Calhoun had driven him from his plantation without provocation. Agent Roberts decided that Sims had "brought it on" and that

⁶²Ibid., entries of September 24 and October 1, 1867; Milo Hampton may be the Miles or Miler Hampton who was reported killed by the Ku Klux Klan in testimony before the congressional committee.

Sims should "return, gather crop and complete contract."⁶³

In November of 1867, Roberts settled crop division and labor disputes between freedman Ben McCaleb and Mrs. Gewin, freedman H. Watson and A. Hardin and an unnamed freedman and Dr. Haughey of Scooba. Naiman Jack, freedman, sought the Bureau's help in recovering two months pay (\$25.00) from William W. Mitchel and planter Warren Goodwin sought the return of \$60.00 advanced to freedman Benjamin Loyd. Benjamin left Goodwin's farm when Goodwin complained that Ben's wife's "dancing parties" at night were disruptive. Ben was gone for three months and failed to complete his labor contract. The freedmen in the employ of Captain George W. Oden complained that the Captain refused to give them any pay or provisions after the October crop division did not "cover" the freedmen's indebtedness to Oden. When questioned by Agent Roberts, Oden did not relent and Roberts ruled that the freedmen were released from their contract. Oden was charged again in December by freedman Thomas Matthew for failure to provide rations or proper share of crop. Matthew was advised to wait until Christmas as this was the provision of the labor contract.⁶⁴

On November 19, 1867, Agent J. L. Roberts convened a committee to hear a case involving a charge of assault and

⁶³Ibid., entries of October 5, 12 and 28, 1867.

⁶⁴Ibid., entries of November, 1867.

defraud of wages. Freedmen Sampson Money and Henry Steel charged that Levi Johnson had defrauded Money of money due under contract and in an argument concerning this, Johnson assaulted both Money and Steel. The committee that adjudicated the matter was composed of Thomas N. Bethany, representing the complainants, A. Overstreet, "Esq." for the defense and J. D. Wall. Bethany, representing the freedmen, subsequently declared himself Republican and served on the County Board of Supervisors and was President of the Police Board in 1869. Three members of the Overstreet family were part of the mob that stormed the jail in 1877 and mortally wounded the Republican ex-sheriff, W. W. Chisolm. The committee, upon examining all of the evidence, allowed that examining all of the evidence, allowed that freedman Money owed his employer, Johnsonm \$177.10 for provisions during the period of the contract. Half of the 1867 crop due to Money by contract was worth only \$162.50. Because Johnson assaulted Money, the difference of \$14.60 was awarded to Money as damages. Henry Steel was awarded one dollar.⁶⁵

Absolene Hardin faced charges from three freedmen in an appearance on November 25, 1867. Hardin discharged Watson Hardin, freedman, because he was "in the habit of going to hear speaking very frequently" and without permission. Agent Roberts settled the contract account and

⁶⁵Ibid., entries of November 19, 1867.

directing him to pay employer Hardin \$58.00 for provisions and advances. The net sum of \$12.80 was paid by the employer to the employee and the contract was terminated. examining all of the evidence, allowed that freedman Money owed his employer, Johnson, \$177.10 for provisions during the period of the contract. Half of the 1867 crop due to Money by contract was worth only \$162.50. Because Johnson assaulted Money, the difference of \$14.60 was awarded to Money as damages. Henry Steel was awarded one dollar.⁶⁵

Absolene Hardin faced charges from three freedmen in an appearance on November 25, 1867. Hardin discharged Watson Hardin, freedman, because he was "in the habit of going to hear speaking very frequently" and without permission. Agent Roberts settled the contract account allowing employee Hardin \$70.80 for his share of the crops and directing him to pay employer Hardin \$58.00 for provisions and advances. The net sum of \$12.80 was paid by the employer to the employee and the contract was terminated. Absolene Whitsell, freedman, reported that planter Hardin had not fulfilled his labor contract of 1866. Roberts referred his complaint to civil authorities. Diley, a freedman, claimed he(he) was discharged without pay for his(her) 1867 contract.

⁶⁵Ibid., entries of November 19, 1867.

Diley's complaint was not sustained.⁶⁶

One of the most blatant cases of failure to live up to the provisions of a labor contract was heard by the agent on December 8, 1867. Francis Houston, a black female, was allegedly "driven away without settlement" from the farm of Daniel McNeal. Her contract for 1867 which ended on Christmas guaranteed wages of thirty dollars a year, "one pair of shoes, cotton to spin and two suits. . . ." She was driven off on November 20, with little more than a month remaining on the contract. Agent Roberts sent a letter to McNeal directing him to settle the matter. In the absence of any further complaint, he presumed that the matter was settled.⁶⁷

As the local representative of the Freedman's Bureau, Roberts adjudicated cases of child custody, desertion, destitution, theft, refusal to pay just debts, fraud and assault as well as labor contract disputes. Not all of the cases were black and white confrontations. Reso Brown, a freedman claimed that his father-in-law, Aden Brown cheated him on a crop share in 1867. John Welsh, a white, complained that John Adams and his mother, also white, cheated him on a crop division in the same year. Roberts noted that such haggling amongst white

⁶⁶Ibid., entries of November 25, 1867.

⁶⁷Ibid., entry of December 8, 1867.

"parties" was due to "these times of impoverished condition of the county."⁶⁸

In what must have set a precedent, Agent Roberts decided that freedman Thomas Gill was entitled to one-half of a cow slaughtered by farmer Judge Gill in November of 1867 because Thomas had helped raise the cow while a slave on the Gill plantation.⁶⁹

Agent Roberts did not always accept cases, in fact in many instances, he dismissed or "refused" them. Many of his decisions were inconsequential in nature and small in remuneration such as a one dollar award for injury to the wrist of a freedman by his work supervisor. His decisions certainly could not have contributed to strong feelings or tension in either community.

The single incident which Roberts recorded that gives substantial insight into Kemper County and particularly the status of the black is the complaint of Mrs. Willie Steverson filed on October 21, 1867. Her son, Peter, age sixteen, was "frightened away" by Mr. Steverson, their former master and current employer. Peter departed taking another freedman's coat. Steverson himself pursued Peter with a warrant, arrested him and brought him back to DeKalb and delivered him to Sheriff

⁶⁸Ibid., entries of December 14 and 20, 1867.

⁶⁹Ibid., entry of November 14, 1867.

John W. Gully. He was committed to the jail where he was chained by both ankles to the floor despite the "remonstrances" of Dr. McLanahan and others. Peter was kept chained in this manner until he "became badly frozen." Steverson went to the jail and "claimed him" after receiving the boy's assurances that he wanted out and would agree to be "bound to Mr. Steverson" for a period of four years. Peter's feet were so badly "frosted" that both feet were amputated above the ankles. Steverson presented a bill for \$160 for "board and attention" to the county. The Board of Police paid it out of the "one dollar tax" which Democratic Sheriff Gully had collected. Peter's mother was sick and poor and no longer in the employ of Mr. Steverson. She wanted Peter released from service and returned home to her. Peter did not go home. He remained with Steverson doing what work he could do "without charge to the county or friends."⁷⁰

Despite this wanton abuse of a freedman, Agent Roberts wrote at the end of the month that "freedmen [were] generally doing well."⁷¹ Each month during his tenure in DeKalb, Roberts visited plantations, the "negro school" and, on occasion, taught the Sabbath school. His comments were positive concerning the status of the

⁷⁰Ibid., entry of October 21, 1867.

⁷¹Ibid., entry of October 28, 1867.

freedman. He allowed that he had solved many "little differences" which he "did not regard as necessary to record."⁷²

No copies of local labor contracts survive in the Archives of Mississippi or the Bureau of Freedmen's files. Nearly every county in Mississippi shows evidence of formal written contracts except Kemper County. Whether written or oral, contracts for labor were in effect in the county as witnessed by Agent Roberts' log.

After the Freedmen's Bureau agent departed DeKalb, complaints were referred to the United States Army Detachment at Lauderdale, Mississippi, twenty miles south of DeKalb. In the spring of 1869, so many complaints of outrages against freedmen were received that Captain James Kelly, Sixteenth U.S. Infantry, went to DeKalb and spoke with the Sheriff and the District Attorney. In addition to several indictments of Ku Klux participants, charges were filed against a member of one of the county's leading Democratic families. Philomen H. Gully, brother of former Sheriff John Gully, was charged with seven different instances of abuse of freedmen. The numerous affidavits presented a picture of a frustrated and mean former slaveowner who vented his fury about Reconstruction on the

⁷²Ibid.

blacks in his employ.⁷³

On May 4, 1869, Phil Gully went to the McCrory house and told Mrs. Manda McCrory to "tote wastes to put on the cole klin." Manda, "big with child for six months," said she did not feel like it. Gully told Manda and her husband, Wiley, that he was not having any freedmen on his place that did not do what they were told. A heated argument ensued and culminated when Gully struck Manda on the side of the head with his hickory stick. She ran toward the door of the house. Gully followed, striking her three more times and then choked her.⁷⁴

Phil Gully accosted freedman Tom Hall in May of 1869. Hall was working in the field on Gully's farm. Gully rode up and asked Hall why he "didn't to haul oats." Hall replied that Gully should do it. Gully called him a "yellow son of a bitch" and declared he would make him "go after them." He jumped off his horse and threw a large hickory stick, striking Hall on the shoulder. Hall continued to hoe and Gully threw the stick several times. Gully drew his pistol and announced that Hall was his prisoner and that he was taking him to jail. Hall walked

⁷³Capt. James Kelly to Lt. W. Atwood, July 26, 1869. Consolidated Report of Charges and Evidence Against Civilians in Confinement at Post, Letters Sent, Lauderdale, Mississippi, RG 393, part V, entry 2, vol. 1, NA.

⁷⁴Ibid., statements of Amanda and Wiley McCrory, May 28, 1869.

in front of Gully's horse for about fifty yards. Gully rode up behind him and hit Hall over the head with the stick. Hall was unconscious for a few minutes and when he awoke, Gully was gone.⁷⁵

In the spring of 1869, Alex Steel, a freedman, was eating breakfast near the Gully stable. Phil Gully approached and asked why he wasn't going to the field. Steel replied that he was going as soon as he had eaten his breakfast. Enraged, Gully struck Steel on the head three times. Steel ran off and did not return until nightfall. When he returned, he stopped at the house of another freedman and had only been there for about fifteen minutes when Gully barged in, grabbed him by the collar, dragged him outside and threatened him with a pistol. Gully told him that if he had not returned "he had got a crowd of men and was going to hunt for [him] that night." Later that night, when Steel was in bed at home, two white men came by and inquired if he had returned. On June 21, Gully tried to take Steel's pistol from him. When Steel refused to give it up, Gully struck him twice with a cane. Gully left when Steel's brother came to his aid.⁷⁶ On January 30, 1869, freedman William Clark was shucking corn near his house. Phil Gully came up to him and asked what

⁷⁵Ibid., statement of Tom Hall, June 26, 1869.

⁷⁶Ibid., statement of Alex Steel, June 27, 1869.

"the fuss was the night before," and said that "he came to give [him] a flogging about it." William and his wife, Alice, had a boisterous quarrel on the previous night and Alice cursed William loudly. Gully asked William why he had not come to tell him about it that morning. William did not respond. William had a knife in his hand that he was using to trim a fingernail broken during shucking. Gully said, "hand that knife here." William said no, that it was his knife. Gully lashed out at William with a hickory stick, striking him twice on the head and once on the thigh. Gully ordered Tom Steel to get a rope. Gully tied William's hands and took him to the Gully house and kept him a "while," releasing him only after he was assured that William would "do better."⁷⁷

On July 10, 1869, Eliza Clark delivered a note to Gully from "the federals at Meridan" that her husband, William, had been given to deliver. As she attempted to give it to him, he pulled out a pistol and said that he would shoot her if she handed him the note.⁷⁸

On June 1, freedman Tom Hall went to DeKalb "to attend public speaking." When he got home, Phil Gully came to his house and asked why he had attended "the speaking without his permission." Hall replied "because

⁷⁷Ibid., statement of William Clark, June 27, 1869.

⁷⁸Ibid., statement of Eliza Clark, June 26, 1869.

[he] wanted to." Gully yelled "you son of a bitch," jumped him and struck him over the head with a pistol twice.⁷⁹

When slavery ended in Mississippi, one of the first concerns of the newly freed slaves was land reform or distribution. During the last desperate years of the war, whites frantically rallied last ditch support of other whites with the threat that the "yankees" would divide up the plantations amongst the blacks and turn the owners out with nothing. The early cries of reformers in the South called for forty acres and a mule for every freedman, no doubt as a result of Sherman's experiment with land distribution in South Carolina and his Special Field Order No. 15. So pervasive was this belief that on the McAllum plantation in Kemper County, the freedmen had already staked their claim on the plantation's livestock.⁸⁰

Mississippi and Kemper County had land available for distribution. The Freedmen's Bureau had only about 80,000 acres and 142 city lots in the entire state available under the provisions of the Confiscation Act of 1863.⁸¹ This was a pittance to dole out to over 400,000 landless blacks. Even this small amount of land dwindled to 35,000

⁷⁹Ibid., statement of Tom Hall, June 26, 1869.

⁸⁰Sam McAllum, WPA, RG 60, 3.

⁸¹Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 58-59.

acres by late 1866 due to restoration by Presidential pardon and signed amnesty oaths. By November of 1867, the Bureau had no acreage left and none had been distributed to freedmen.⁸²

Prohibition of the sale of farm land to blacks was written into law by the first state legislature after the war. The law was never placed in effect, but it is indicative of the prevailing feeling amongst white land owners.⁸³

In Kemper County, the 1860 Census showed some 174,000 acres as "unimproved."⁸⁴ Much of this land may have been part of the three million acres of public land extant in Mississippi in 1866.⁸⁵ Public lands in Mississippi were opened to settlement by blacks and whites on June 21, 1866 but no maps of their location were available and no effort was made to encourage black settlement.⁸⁶ The public land was mostly in the sandy, pine-leaf regions of the state and for the most part not suitable for agriculture. In 1874, the state attempted to attract immigrants and settlers by offering this land at

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Whitelaw Reid, After the War, 564.

⁸⁴U.S. Eighth Census, 1860.

⁸⁵Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 60.

⁸⁶Ibid.

five cents an acre and got very few takers.⁸⁷ Land in itself was not the solution to the freedman's problem. Without money or credit to purchase equipment and stock, these blacks, many of whom were agriculturally skilled, could not even begin this avenue toward independence. Any claim that land was easily available to freedmen can be countered with the number of black property owners during Reconstruction. Land ownership was only available to blacks in Kemper County who could arrange a long term payback to the plantation owner or who were subjects of the owner's charity. By 1870, only thirty-three black heads of family had been so fortunate as to obtain real property in Kemper County.⁸⁸ The property ranged in value from \$90 to \$1200. Although there were five black property owners in their twenties, more than half were over fifty years old and, surprisingly, only two were born in Mississippi.⁸⁹ Thirty-three black property owners out of over fourteen hundred registered black voters and over seven thousand blacks is hardly progress in land reform.

The growing black population of Kemper County during Reconstruction turned at first to the white "aristocracy" and received rudimentary support which generated the

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸U.S. Ninth Census, 1870.

⁸⁹Ibid.

economic "slavery" of seasonal labor contracts and sharecropping. Some white assistance was given to black education but much of the gain was due to federal and local black initiative. Near total illiteracy and isolation can be blamed for the low level of aspiration in the black community and even these aspirations were not realized. Land ownership was rare as was upward social mobility into skilled labor trades. For a few brief years, the black in Kemper County revelled in the pride of political power. Whether the blacks' confidence in their Republican allies was justified is almost a moot question because any gains for blacks in Kemper County during Reconstruction were eradicated when the Democracy "redeemed" the county in 1875.

CHAPTER III

SCALAWAG REPUBLICANS, WHITE-LINE AND THE KU KLUX KLAN

Immediately following the Civil War, Democrats retained their offices in Kemper County. Republicans first gained control of the elective offices in the county by gubernatorial appointment in 1869 and subsequently through the elective process in 1870. Republicans remained dominant until the so-called redemption election of 1875. Only a few Republicans gained prominence in the county and at least three of them met violent deaths as a result of their politics. The Republicans in Kemper County gained personal profit from their offices but were credited for minimizing Ku Klux Klan violence in the county. The Democrats bided their time, clandestinely undermining the Republican-black alliance and snatched all of the county offices in the election of 1875.

The first Republican convention in Mississippi was held on September 10, 1867. About one-third of the delegates were freedmen and the remainder were Federal agents, election registrars and northerners more commonly

called "carpetbaggers."¹ This first convention endorsed the principles of the national party and the Congressional plan of Reconstruction. Education for every child and suffrage to all but those disenfranchised for crimes were planks adopted by the convention. A writer for the New York Herald reported two aspects of the convention; a black majority and that the black majority was under the control of a "few white men."²

In November, an election was held to determine whether a state-wide convention should be held during the next year. Throughout the state, white voters abstained in protest and the Reconstruction Convention was called by a vote of over ten to one in favor. White failure to participate in the election was a serious tactical error on their part for a large majority of the delegates to the so-called "Black and Tan" Convention of 1868 were radicals and only nineteen conservatives were seated in the Convention.³ Thomas W. Adams, a white man from Kemper County was the secretary and was later taken to task by the Klan for his help to that "nigger convention."⁴ Numbered in the convention were over twenty "carpetbaggers," most of whom had been Union

¹Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, 180.

²New York Herald, September 25, 1867.

³Garner, Reconstruction, 182, 187.

⁴U.S. Congress, KKK, 257.

soldiers, and twenty-nine native whites, already called "scalawags."⁵ The representatives from Kemper County were both native white men who had declared themselves Republicans.⁶ The convention was ostensibly called to write a constitution for Mississippi. A great deal of time was spent establishing salaries and compensation for the delegates. No hurry to seek readmission of Mississippi was evident in the schedule of the convention. Members met for three hours daily and conducted lengthy debates on such subjects as the procurement of stationery and methods to relieve "colored idleness." The concern of the convention members for black welfare was viewed by the Democrats as a ploy to garner the black vote in the upcoming elections. Before the convention finally entered into serious thought of the constitution, it had to first address the problem of paying convention expenses. After consideration of several schemes, the problem was laid at the feet of the Finance Committee to draw up an ordinance to levy a special real and personal property tax. The financial burden of the convention was thus placed on those who were not equitably represented at the convention and gave rise to cries of

⁵Garner, Reconstruction, 187.

⁶J. L. Power, "The Black and Tan Convention," Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society 11 (1910): 177.

"taxation without representation."⁷ This battle cry would blossom fully within the Democratic party later in Reconstruction in the form of the Order of '76 or "seventy-sixers" in Kemper and Lauderdale Counties.⁸ A series of tax ordinances was proposed to General Alvin C. Gillen, military Governor of Mississippi, and each in turn was disapproved. Finally, a general tax, equal to fifty-percent of the state tax for 1867, on all property, a percentage tax on all merchant stores and fifty cents on every bale of cotton was approved by the Governor and referred to the sheriffs for collection.⁹

The second Republican convention in Mississippi followed close on the heels of the "Black and Tan" Reconstruction Convention and featured a majority of the same delegates. Meeting in February of 1868, the convention nominated all white and mostly northern candidates for state offices. General Grant was endorsed for the presidency and an all-white slate of electors was chosen. At least one black Republican delegate, Reverend Combash Charles Fitzhugh, deduced that these Republicans were "in the disguise of friends" but were "imposters, and will cause

⁷Garner, Reconstruction, 200-202.

⁸William H. Hardy, "Recollections of Reconstruction in East and Southeast Mississippi," Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society 7(1903): 208.

⁹Garner, Reconstruction, 197-98.

more blood to be spilt than the Union is worth."¹⁰ He withdrew from the Republican party and called for others to follow him to the arms of the southern whites. Reverend Fitzhugh and any who followed him found little solace with conservative white Mississippians who had, in January of the same year, organized the Democratic White Man's Party of Mississippi to "vindicate . . . the superiority of their race over the negro. . . ." ¹¹ Neither did they find a haven with the Democratic convention also held in Jackson in February of 1868 that described the delegates to the Constitutional Convention (of whom Fitzhugh was one) as "negroes destitute alike of the moral and intellectual qualifications required of electors. . . ." ¹²

The Radical Republicans met for the first time in state convention on July 2, 1869. Their platform of seventeen resolutions included support for unrestrained freedom of the ballot, free schools and removal of political disabilities. Their devotion to the National Union Republican Party and the Grant administration was expressed as they met to organize for the fall gubernatorial election. They adjourned without naming a state ticket. In September, the nominating convention of the Radical Republicans

¹⁰Ibid. 209.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 210.

selected James L. Alcorn, a native Republican, for Governor. Ridgeley C. Powers, a former Union soldier from Ohio was nominated for Lieutenant Governor. Messrs. Musgrove and Pease, also former Union soldiers, were nominated for State Auditor and State Superintendent of Education, respectively. The only concession to the enormous black voting block which would carry the Radical Republicans to victory was the Secretary of State candidacy. The convention selected Reverend James D. Lynch, a Maryland-born mulatto.¹³ Nominees for the two remaining state officers were native whites. The first Radical Republican slate in Mississippi was composed of three white "carpetbaggers," three "scalawags," and one black "carpetbagger."¹⁴

National Union Republicans and Democrats united to support Judge Louis Dent, brother-in-law of President Grant, despite Grant's failure to endorse Dent. A state-wide campaign ensued during which General Adelbert Ames, Commanding General of the Department of Mississippi, took stringent measures to guard against fraud or intimidation. Despite a few disturbances, a relatively quiet election was held on November 30 and December 1, 1869. Ratification of the Constitution was almost unanimous. Those sections of

¹³James D. Lynch is not to be confused with James D. Lynch, author of Kemper County Vindicated nor with Roy Lynch who served two terms in the United States House of Representatives and authored two books about Reconstruction.

¹⁴Garner, Reconstruction, 243.

the Constitution submitted separately were overwhelmingly defeated; disfranchising, disqualifying and the secession oath provisions were deleted from the Constitution by rejection votes of ninety-seven percent. Statewide, the black vote went solidly for the Radical Republicans. Alcorn received 76,143 votes and Dent, 38,133. Of the twenty-eight counties with black voting majorities, Alcorn carried them all. In addition, he carried fifteen counties with white voting majorities. All of the state officers, the majority of both houses of the legislature and the entire national congressional delegation were Republican.¹⁵ No local offices were up for election in 1869. The appointments of General Ames were valid until the fall of 1871.

Readmission to the Union and re-establishment of civil government occurred in 1870. Hiram Rhodes Revels, a black African Methodist Episcopal minister born of free parents in North Carolina, was elected to fill the unexpired United States Senate term of Jefferson Davis. The longer unexpired Senate term went to General Adelbert Ames, the Military Governor of Mississippi, who, in that capacity, certified his own selection as Senator.¹⁶

Under the Reconstruction Constitution, the county sheriff received both political and financial power. He was

¹⁵Ibid., 216-17.

¹⁶Ibid., 271-75.

singularly the most important and powerful county official in Reconstruction Mississippi. He was responsible in large measure for selection of trial juries, appointed one of the three election registrars and collected state and county taxes. The fees and remunerations for the services of the sheriff were sizeable. In some counties, these amounted to \$20,000 annually and the average state-wide was about \$5,000. It was not unusual for sheriffs to speculate in warrants and amass a fortune in a short time.¹⁷ The sheriff of Kemper County during most of Reconstruction was no exception. William Wallace Chisolm made large financial gains and left substantial real and personal property to his heirs.

The first Republican sheriff in Kemper County was A. H. Hopper, appointed by the Military Governor in the spring of 1868 to succeed John W. Gully, Democrat, elected during the Civil War. The second Republican sheriff was John E. Chisolm, who was appointed by Governor Ames on September 14,

¹⁷Warrants were promissory notes issued both by the State of Mississippi and most of the counties. They were, in essence, IOUs and their value rose and fell with the confidence of the holder or buyer in the issuer's ability to repay. The drastic fluctuations in value gave rise to speculation. The sheriff, as the tax collector, had the wherewithal to pay the warrants, thus he was in the best position to speculate, and did.

1869.¹⁸ His appointment was a sham to permit his brother, William W. Chisolm, to exercise the office despite his disability for Confederate service.¹⁹ Once the disability was removed, W. W. Chisolm assumed the shrievalty and was reelected in 1871 and 1873. As sheriff, Chisolm courted the freedmen's vote and combined it with some two hundred white votes in the county to remain in office and maintain a Republican stronghold in Kemper County.²⁰

William Wallace Chisolm was the single most important Republican in the county during Reconstruction. He was born in Morgan County, Georgia in 1830 and moved with his family to Kemper County in 1846. The family lived on an eighty-acre hill-country farm in the southern section of the county. The 1850 Census enumerated four slaves in the Chisolm household, three adult females and one male child.²¹ On October 29, 1856, Chisolm married Emily S. Mann. The Mann family was originally from Florida, and, according to one biographer, was an influential family in early Florida politics.²² A detractor insisted that an uncle with whom Emily lived in Winston County, Mississippi, was charged with

¹⁸Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 42.

¹⁹U.S. Congress, KKK, 246.

²⁰U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 765.

²¹U.S. Seventh Census, 1850.

²²Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 16-17.

chicken theft.²³ A third and less biased observer who was very critical of Chisolm maintained that Emily was "a Christian woman, and a most excellent lady. . . ." ²⁴ Mrs. Chisolm taught school while her husband pursued a political and mercantile career. William W. Chisolm's first political mentor was John McRae, an old line Whig who enjoyed great respect in the county. With McRae's help, Chisolm was elected Magistrate in January of 1858 to fill a vacated position. He was reelected in October of that year for a two-year term. Chisolm was sufficiently popular by 1860 that he ran for and was elected Probate Judge of the county, an office to which he was reelected twice. Chisolm later claimed that he was a Unionist who only supported secession in an "unguarded moment."²⁵ Others remembered firey speeches by Chisolm laced with demands for "Yankee blood."²⁶ Chisolm's elective office precluded joining any of the volunteer units and his only service to the Confederacy was a thirty-day stint with the local militia during which time he did not leave the county. Even though his service with the "buttermilk brigade" did not make him a veteran in the true sense, it was sufficient to disqualify him politically

²³Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 86.

²⁴Jack, Iconoclast, 14.

²⁵Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 19.

²⁶Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 22.

in 1868. When the war ended, Chisolm was the Probate Judge and his friend and lodge brother, John W. Gully, was the sheriff. Both had spent the war years in public service. The Gully family had for many years controlled politics in Kemper County and Chisolm's entry into the political arena needed at least the tacit approval of the Gullys.²⁷

On May 6, 1867, William Wallace Chisolm wrote to Governor Benjamin G. Humphries to tender his resignation as Probate Judge for the county.²⁸ Three days later, a second letter asked the Governor to hold the request in abeyance.²⁹ Eventually, the resignation was accepted and Chisolm was out of public service for the first time in nearly ten years. Chisolm's resignation was motivated by the threat of exposure of an attempt to defraud the government. In the spring of 1867, Chisolm presented a deposition to the Probate Clerk, George L. Welsh. The deposition purported to be the statement of one Perry Moore, given to Judge Chisolm, in which Moore attested to witnessing the destruction of one hundred and eighty-four bales of cotton belonging to Robert J. Moseby. The destruction was allegedly done by Federal troops on February 20, 1864 in Lauderdale County by order of

²⁷Ibid., 23-24.

²⁸W. W. Chisolm to Gov. B. G. Humphries, May 6, 1867, Governor's Correspondence, RG 27, vol. 68, MDAH, Jackson.

²⁹W. W. Chisolm to Gov. B. G. Humphries, May 9, 1867, Governor's Correspondence, RG 27, vol. 68, MDAH, Jackson.

General Sherman.³⁰ Perry Moore died after the day of the deposition and before it was presented by Judge Chisolm. When Chisolm gave it to the clerk to be certified, Welsh, who thought the paper and ink too fresh, confronted the Judge with his belief that the document was a forgery. Later, Welsh testified that Judge Chisolm readily admitted that he had forged it and withdrew it. Welsh demanded that Chisolm resign, which he subsequently did.³¹ So incensed was the body politic in Kemper County by Chisolm's dishonesty, the Centre Ridge Lodge, Number 150 of Free and Accepted Masons charged him with "gross, unmasonic conduct" and expelled him unanimously from masonry and the lodge. The notice dated August 17, 1868, was ordered published in the Mississippi Flag and "all papers friendly to masonry."³²

That this attempt to defraud the Federal government should arouse such fury in Kemper County is somewhat surprising. Hardly the hallmark of decency and honesty, the county had been called "the worst in the State of Mississippi."³³ It was most likely the result of Chisolm's affiliation with the Republican party.

³⁰Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 25-29; Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 97-102.

³¹Ibid.

³²Notice of Centre Ridge Lodge, No. 150 of Free Accepted Masons, August 17, 1868, cited in Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 27.

³³Jack, Iconoclast, 8.

Chisolm's response to charges of fraud was a rambling dissertation stating that Perry Moore was alive on the date of the deposition and had indeed signed the document. No reason for his resignation was given.³⁴ In later testimony before a congressional committee, Chisolm was evasive about the allegations of fraud and nebulous in describing the legal proceedings which followed.³⁵ Relatives of Perry Moore testified before the March, 1868 term of the Circuit Court of Kemper County that the signature in question was a forgery, but the grand jury did not return an indictment of Chisolm. In the subsequent term of the court in September, 1868, however, a bill of indictment was found against Judge Chisolm for forgery.³⁶ The clerk of court had resigned at the beginning of the term. Since no permanent repository for the papers of the session was available, they were delivered to the sheriff for safekeeping. Sheriff H. A. Hopper was a radical. When the next term of the court met in March, 1869, Sheriff Hopper reported that all records of the September term had been "stolen and carried off."³⁷ Efforts to reconstruct the indictments of the previous term including that of Chisolm were interrupted and ended by

³⁴W. W. Chisolm to Editor, Jackson Clarion, October 16, 1876, cited in Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 97-102.

³⁵U.S. Congress. KKK, 262-63.

³⁶Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 98-102.

³⁷Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 34.

military assumption of state government functions when civil courts were suspended.

On September 14, 1869, Chisolm's brother, John, was appointed sheriff by Governor Adelbert Ames and William Wallace Chisolm was appointed deputy. Unable to officially serve as sheriff due to having served in a civil capacity in the Confederate government, Judge Chisolm assumed the whole responsibility of the office while his brother carried only the title.³⁸ Once his disability was removed, William Wallace Chisolm was appointed sheriff by the governor in November 1869.³⁹

In 1871, Chisolm was elected Sheriff with a 180-vote margin. He was re-elected in 1872 with a 400-vote majority. In the summer preceding his re-election, Chisolm was accused by the Democracy of letting Hal Dawson's murderers go free. As a result of Chisolm's increasing unpopularity among white-line Democrats, on November 3, 1872, only two days before the election, twenty-five men from Alabama were observed in Kemper County, and according to witnesses, were looking for Judge Chisolm. The men were led by a man everyone called "Captain" and another man who answered to "Lieutenant." Chisolm avoided confrontation with them by using alternate routes to DeKalb from his home. Chisolm

³⁸U.S. Congress, KKK, 246; Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 39.

³⁹Ibid.; Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 78.

organized a group of loyal men and prepared to make a stand against the Alabamians. The posse followed the group back to Painesville, in Sumter County, Alabama, but did not confront them.⁴⁰

The early years as sheriff were years when Chisolm amassed a considerable fortune. Land records for the year 1870 were destroyed in the courthouse fire of 1872.⁴¹ Chisolm's personal fortune in 1860 was \$2000 in real estate and \$1000 in personal property.⁴² In 1866, Chisolm paid \$1.82 in personal property tax and fifty cents to the "military fund." His taxes that year were assessed for five dollars worth of clocks, sixty dollars worth of watches and one dog. In 1869, Chisolm was not included in the tax rolls or his name has been removed.⁴³ The 1870 census showed that Sheriff Chisolm's real estate was valued at \$5000 and his personal property at \$2000.⁴⁴ In 1874, he owned five cattle, two horses, two mules, two carriages, a five-hundred-dollar piano, one pistol, one watch, \$2500 cash,

⁴⁰Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 80-81; U.S. Congress, KKK, 250.

⁴¹Although most of the land records were destroyed in the fire, those surviving show up to 900 acres in some sections. Only occasionally does the acreage of a section total 640.

⁴²U.S. Eighth Census, 1860.

⁴³Mississippi Personal Tax Rolls, Kemper County, 1866-1878, RG 29, Microfilm 273, MDAH, Jackson.

⁴⁴U.S. Ninth Census, 1870.

\$185 in stock and some \$1500 in other personal property.⁴⁵

In 1875, Chisolm paid a personal property tax of \$107.05 and \$21.52 to the schools fund. The piano had been depreciated to four hundred dollars, Chisolm had two additional pistols and another watch and he listed solvent credit of \$8000. The total evaluation of his personal property, exclusive of real estate, was \$14,760.⁴⁶

The only land records extant for the period of interest are the Kemper County land rolls of 1883, six years after Chisolm's death. These showed title held by Mrs. Emily S. M. Chisolm, his widow, to 420 acres and that his eldest surviving son, Henry Clay Chisolm owned 960 acres. Judge Chisolm's brothers, Marbra, John and William owned a total of 740 acres in 1883.⁴⁷ It is not unlikely that Mrs. Chisolm sold some of the land when she moved to Washington, D.C. in 1878 or in 1879 when Mrs. Chisolm ordered the remains of her husband and children exhumed and reinterred in the Cedar Hill Cemetery in Mill Hall, Pennsylvania. A friend of the Chisolms claimed that Judge Chisolm owned "ten

⁴⁵Personal Tax Rolls, RG 29, Microfilm 273, MDAH, Jackson. Sheriff Chisolm paid taxes on one pistol but in 1874 was carrying two pistols in his encounter with Judge Dillard in Meridian.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Mississippi Land Rolls, 1883, Kemper County, RG 29, Microfilm 273, MDAH, Jackson.

thousand acres" in the county when he was killed.⁴⁸ No real property tax records are extant for the period 1870-1880.

The position of county sheriff was a lucrative one and Chisolm did not let the benefits of the office escape him. The financial inquiries of R. G. Dun and Company indicated that Chisolm was a partner in a mercantile business in 1860 that was quite solvent but finally went broke in 1868.⁴⁹ In 1871, Chisolm bought into the Grace and Grace Company, a grocery business. Dun listed it as one of the most solvent firms in the county in 1870, worth fifteen to twenty thousand dollars.⁵⁰ In July, 1873, the Dun financial report on the D.C. Treadway Company of Wahalka indicated that William Wallace Chisolm was a partner in that "perfectly solvent: dry goods and grocery company." The partnership was dissolved in January of 1875.⁵¹

On April 4, 1876, Dun and Company received an evaluation of Chisolm as "all right and safe to cr[edit], worth at least [\$20,000]." In June of the same year, he was credited with carrying on a "large farming bus[iness]." In December, the report became even more positive when Chisolm

⁴⁸New York Times, May 2, 1877.

⁴⁹R. G. Dun and Co. papers. Mississippi, V12, 342E, Baker Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration, Boston, Massachusetts.

⁵⁰Ibid., 342C.

⁵¹Ibid., 342E.

was considered "financially strong in lands and good securities, holds considerable paper. . . ."52

On February 20, 1873, W. W. Chisolm became a partner in T. H. Orr and Company, a retail grocery and bar in Scooba. Chisolm's partnership shored up a previously unreliable business. A report in June of 1874 was favorable. In March of 1875, the partnership was dissolved and T. H. Orr went on with the business. In June, only three months later, the firm was "behind and hard up" and by June of the following year, Orr was "broke and gone."53

Chisolm sold out of the two successful businesses early in 1875, the year of the redemption election. It is doubtful that he had any premonition of defeat at the polls, but rather, was shifting his financial interests and talents. The resultant effect on the businesses demonstrated clearly that he was the strength and backbone of the businesses.54

Chisolm was certainly one of the richest men in the county by 1874. His defenders hastened to add that he was "never accused of misappropriating a dollar of public funds" and he was only doing what every other sheriff in

⁵²Ibid., 342I.

⁵³Ibid., 342K.

⁵⁴Ibid., passim.

Reconstruction Mississippi was doing.⁵⁵

John P. Gilmer was appointed Deputy Sheriff by Chisolm in 1869, shortly after his own appointment. Gilmer, who was a merchant in Scooba, was born in Heard County Georgia in 1846. Gilmer served in the Confederate Army. James Wells attested to his good character but admitted that even though he "moved in the first circles of society where he lived," he was said to partake "too much of the reckless habits of a very large majority of the best young men of the county," drinking.⁵⁶ James D. Lynch did not couch his words and claimed that Gilmer "possesses a mind utterly destitute of every sentiment of virtue. . . ." ⁵⁷ Gilmer ran for and was elected to the Mississippi State Senate representing the 17th District in 1872. In the special election to succeed H. M. Gambrill, deceased, Gilmer defeated his Democratic opponent, H. W. Foote, by a vote of 4514 to 162 in the three-county district.⁵⁸ Gambrill was himself an enigma. Born in Ohio, he came south at an early age and taught school near Rio, in Kemper County. Before the war, he married a local girl but persisted in his unionist beliefs to the point of not voting on the secession issue as no

⁵⁵Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 94-95.

⁵⁶Ibid., 69.

⁵⁷Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 104.

⁵⁸ Records of the Secretary of State, Mississippi, RG 28, Container MF9, MDAH, Jackson.

other ballot was available. Gambrill (Gambrel, Gambril) was finally forced into Confederate service late in the war when his exemption for teaching was no longer valid. Republicans claimed that the community was ready to hang Gambrill for not going readily into service but that he was saved by Judge Chisolm, a kindred spirit. Judge Chisolm served as the Conscript Officer for Kemper County in lieu of active service and would have been the one who drafted Gambrill into service. Gambrill surrendered to Union forces in his first engagement and accepted a position with the Federals. He returned to his wife and children in Kemper County after the war and was elected as a Radical to the State Senate in 1871. Gambrill was a frequent target of night riders. In 1872, a confrontation over a burglary one night with a freedman, Flander Jones, ended with Jones fatally wounding Gambrill with a pistol. Jones was never arrested, leading Democrats to charge that Sheriff Chisolm conspired to open the Senate seat for his deputy, Gilmer. Republicans countered that both Gambrill and Jones had pistols and the whole affair was simply a settlement of an altercation, not inconsistent with the extant frontier atmosphere. None argued with the facts: Gambrill went to the grave, Jones went free and Gilmer went to the Senate.⁵⁹

John Gilmer left Kemper County to take his seat in the

⁵⁹Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 125-31, 208;. Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 91-93.

Senate. In 1875, while still a Senator, he became Deputy to Sheriff Peter Crosby in Vicksburg. Gilmer testified to the Boutwell Committee in 1877 that he was discharged by Crosby because they did not agree. "Two or three days" after Gilmer's dismissal, Crosby was shot and wounded. Crosby said Gilmer did it. Gilmer was arrested and acquitted.⁶⁰ Gilmer said he resigned his Senate seat "sometime while [he] was over there [Vicksburg]."⁶¹ After his acquittal, Gilmer returned to Scooba and his mercantile business. There he ran up large debts with creditors in St. Louis where eventually indictments were filed against him. Sheriff Chisolm allegedly made bond for Gilmer, but the indictments remained in force at the time of Gilmer's death in April of 1877. Gilmer's store at Scooba was the meeting place for Radical Republicans and for meetings of the Voter Registration Board of that beat of the county. An employee at the store, a Mr. Davis, was a member of the Voter Registration Board and meetings were often held in the back of the store. Both Gilmer and Davis were known Radicals and suffered verbal abuse from the local Democrats. One, "Hal" Dawson, was particularly abusive. Given to heavy drinking, Dawson, on one occasion, claimed he could shoot the newspaper from Gilmer's hands with a shotgun and not inflict

⁶⁰U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 506.

⁶¹Ibid.

any injury to Gilmer. Dawson, stopped before he could demonstrate his theory, often paraded in the streets of Scooba with a "gaily colored flannel-over-shirt, open at the neck . . . and a six shooter and a knife of enormous size." "High topped boots and Mexican spurs the size of a small cart-wheel" made Dawson an unforgettable character in Scooba.⁶² Hal Dawson liked his liquor and it was his downfall. In the summer of 1871, he entered Gilmer's store, probably drunk, passed Gilmer, demanding to see Davis. Davis was at the back of the store armed with a double-barrelled shotgun. Davis fired at Dawson, striking him full force in the chest. Gilmer alleged that Dawson had fired his pistol at Davis and then wheeled toward Gilmer. Gilmer fired his pistol, mortally wounding Dawson who fell to the floor. Two witnesses, Clay McCall and Benjamin F. Rush, examined Dawson's pistol and determined that it had been recently fired. A later inquiry found marks of the bullet in the wall of the store.⁶³ The Democratic version claimed that Davis, unprovoked, fired on Dawson in the store, after which Gilmer approached the prone, wounded Dawson and fired two pistol shots into his head.⁶⁴

Gilmer and Davis were arrested immediately by the town

⁶²Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 113-14, 121; Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 70-71.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 114-15.

constable. They were taken to DeKalb to the county jail. On the following evening, a mob broke into Gilmer's store and damaged or destroyed a large quantity of merchandise. Gilmer was never indicted for the murder of Dawson, nor was Davis. An examination by "three magistrates" recommended a bond of three thousand dollars each for appearance in the next term of circuit court.⁶⁵ Dawson, the deceased, was closely related to Judge Dillard of Sumter County, Alabama and according to Chisolm, was affiliated with the Alabama Ku Klux Klan. On November 3, 1871, about fifty Alabamians arrived in DeKalb and gathered at John Gully's store. Gully's store was reputed to be the headquarters of the local Klan and rumors spread that a "big job of Ku-Kluxing" was about to occur. Gilmer and Davis were still in custody and fear of a riot of the proportions of the March riot in Meridian perpetrated by Alabamians, moved Sheriff Chisolm to let Davis and Gilmer escape to the safety of "the woods."⁶⁶

When the charges against Gilmer and Davis were finally considered by a grand jury composed of eight Democrats and seven Republicans, the two were not indicted. A malicious

⁶⁵Ibid., 115-21; U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 771-72.

⁶⁶Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 72-80; U.S. Congress, Boutwell Committee, 764. The Meridian riot of 1871 was precipitated by a black-white confrontation during a court hearing in which the white Republican judge and a black defendant were killed. The riot spilled into the streets of Meridian and some twenty-five to thirty blacks were killed. The Republican mayor resigned and fled. An unbiased account is presented in Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 188-190.

mischievous charge against Gilmer for shooting Dawson after he was severely wounded was not considered because Gilmer and Davis were not tried separately, at the insistence of the states attorney, "a fierce democrat."⁶⁷

In the campaign of 1875, Gilmer, representing Noxubee, Neshoba and Kemper Counties in the State Senate, stood for re-election despite his claim of resignation during the Vicksburg foray. He originally decided not to seek re-election, but when the Republican convention did not nominate a candidate for his seat, he accepted candidacy offered by a subsequent convention. Gilmer half-heartedly entered the campaign of 1875 during which the Democrats "redeemed" Kemper County and Mississippi.⁶⁸

In the Ku Klux Klan Congressional hearings of 1871, John R. Taliaferro of Noxubee County testified that there was considerable Klan activity in several counties in Mississippi including Kemper County. Taliaferro disclosed the Klan password, "Mount Nebo," which would guarantee recognition in Mississippi and the recognized distress signal, "Kosciusko." Taliaferro had participated in one raid, but had not taken an oath. He stated that when large raids were planned in Noxubee County, the Klan there

⁶⁷Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 85.

⁶⁸Ibid., 114; U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 497.

called for assistance from the Kemper Klan.⁶⁹

Bloody Kemper's Ku Klux Klan was well-organized and the county "had a well-earned reputation for not being afraid of the devil himself."⁷⁰ Not only was there inter-county cooperation of the Klan but interstate as well. The Klan was not organized everywhere in Mississippi. Of ten counties in Mississippi where extensive Klan activity occurred, nine were in the tier of counties adjacent to Alabama and six share a common border with Alabama. The locations of these counties and their proximity to Alabama are shown in Figure 2. There was no apparent reason for this concentration of Ku Klux Klan activity in Monroe, Chickasaw, Lowndes, Noxubee, Winston, Kemper, and Lauderdale counties, but it was accompanied by a great deal of cooperation across the border.⁷¹ Some argued that it was merely one group of "rowdies" helping another group of "local rowdies" in Mississippi.⁷² When Alabamians crossed into Kemper County to seek out the radical Sheriff Chisolm, they went back home because they failed to get

⁶⁹U.S. Congress, KKK, 231-32, 236-37.

⁷⁰Clayton Rand, Ink on My Hands (New York: Carrick Evans, 1940), 327.

⁷¹U.S. Congress, KKK, 246-47; Trelease, White Terror, 276..

⁷²Ibid., 277.

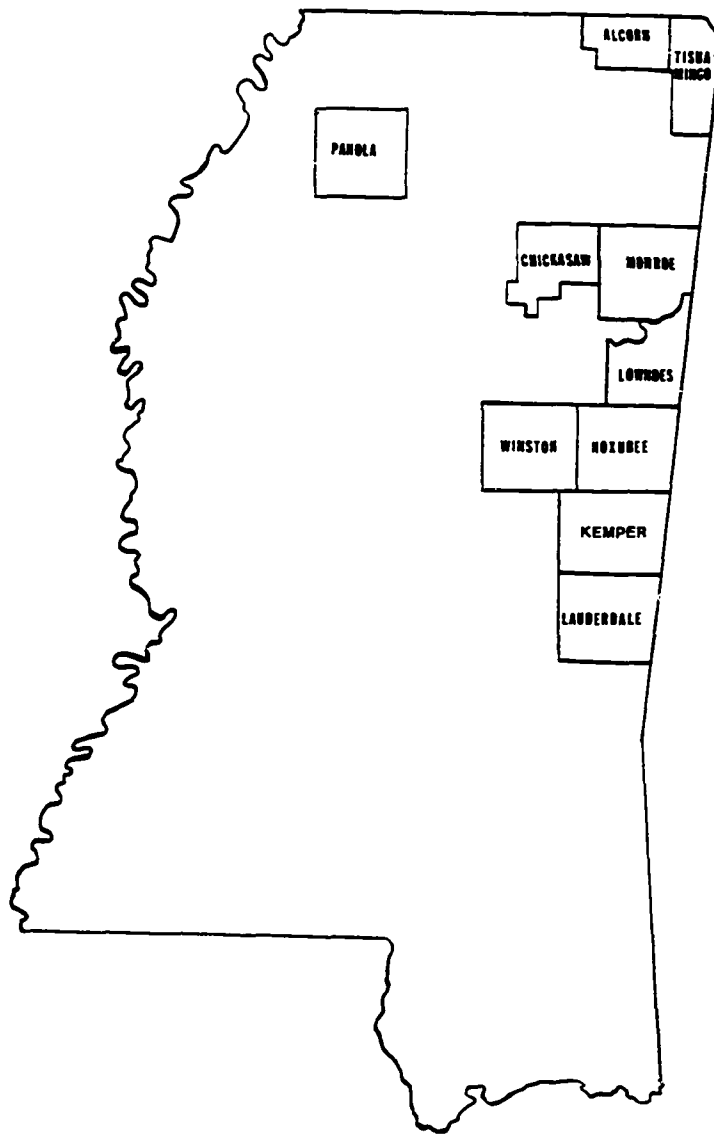


Figure 2. Ku Klux Klan Activity in Mississippi
1870-1871

sufficient white support in DeKalb.⁷³

Night riding had occurred in Kemper County long before talk of the Ku Klux Klan began. Apologists found justification for the night riding and later for the Klan activities that occurred in the county. For many, the Klan served "good purpose" during Reconstruction in saving the populace from a "mob of plunderers and brigands."⁷⁴ Rising fears of Negro uprisings prompted by the official proclamations of Governor Humphreys inspired informal bands of young men to "keep order at night."⁷⁵ The increase in Klan activity in 1870 in the east central Mississippi counties was attributed to a cotton crop failure, redemption elections in nearby Alabama with accompanying Klan activity and a change in the date of collection of school taxes which caused collection to occur twice in the calendar year 1870.⁷⁶ By 1871, nearly all trace of the organized Klan had disappeared from Mississippi and any role of violence was taken up by local marauders who did not have the sympathy of many of the

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Rand, Ink on My Hands, 319.

⁷⁵Stanley F. Horn, Invisible Empire: The Story of the Ku Klux Klan, 1866-1871 (Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1969), 148.

⁷⁶Ibid., 146.

white population.⁷⁷

Sheriff W. W. Chisolm, in his testimony before the Congressional Committee on the Ku Klux Klan, admitted substantial violence in Kemper County but, perhaps in self-adulation, allowed that in the years 1869-1871, Kemper County had been relatively quiet. Chisolm attributed that peace to the arrest of a "great many men" by military authorities just before the return of Mississippi to the union in 1870. Chisolm testified that those men arrested were "kept" for four or five months and then returned. One did not return. The two year peace period described by Chisolm corresponded almost exactly to the period Chisolm or his brother, John, had been sheriff. Chisolm minimized Klan activity in Kemper County, claiming that Alabama "ruffians" were responsible for most of the violence in the county. Other murders or shootings were detailed by Chisolm but he considered them a part of everyday life in rural Mississippi, and not of Klan origin.⁷⁸ As a result of Chisolm's testimony and the lack of prosecution of any Klan-related activity in the county, William Wallace Chisolm was most often credited with keeping Kemper County free of the Klan. Allen W. Trelease

⁷⁷Robert Somers, The Southern States Since the War 1870-71 (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1965), 152.

⁷⁸U.S. Congress, KKK, 246-47.

claimed that "Kemper was probably the most peaceful, and much of the credit belonged to Sheriff W. W. Chisolm . . . [arrest and detention] strengthened the sheriff personally and the idea of law and order . . . henceforth they cooperated to hold Klan activity to a minimum."⁷⁹

The arrest of several men in the summer of 1869 may well have caused restraint of Klan activity in Kemper County. On May 13, 1869, Captain James Kelly of the Lauderdale Command Post went to DeKalb to consult with the Sheriff and District Attorney. He reported that he was informed that an "organized party of men," most of whom lived about twelve miles west of DeKalb, had committed a large number of "outrages" in the preceding three months. Loyal men felt endangered in the county. There was no notation in Captain Kelly's report that freedmen felt endangered unless it was Kelly's intent to include them with loyal men.⁸⁰ The sheriff gave Captain Kelly a list of fifteen names of men known to have been engaged in unlawful acts. On May 13, 1869, H. A. Hopper was the sheriff of Kemper County.⁸¹ William Wallace Chisolm, who later became sheriff, was credited with providing the names of klansmen to federal officials. Captain Kelly

⁷⁹Trelease, White Terror, 277.

⁸⁰Captain James Kelly to Brevet Major John Eagan, 19 May 1869, RG 393, Part V, NA, Washington, D.C.

⁸¹Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 32.

also received a list of witnesses "by whom a clear case [could] be proved against them."⁸² The witnesses asked that their names not be made known until the principles had been arrested. Kelly estimated that twelve mounted men would be necessary to effect the arrest of all of the men at approximately the same time. The sheriff offered six horses and Kelly went back to Lauderdale with the understanding that he would return when the Sheriff notified him that he was ready.⁸³ There is no doubt that Federal officers were dealing with Sheriff Hopper as correspondence as late as July was addressed to Sheriff Hopper and no mention whatsoever was made of either Chisolm.⁸⁴

Pursuant to the sheriff's identification, fourteen Kemper County citizens were charged with civil crimes and thirteen of them were held in military custody at the Lauderdale Post.

Thomas Wilson, S. O. "Coon" Daws, John Terry and Jim Terry were charged with the illegal arrest, detainment and beating of three freedmen on April 1, 1869.⁸⁵ Jake

⁸²Kelly to Eagan, 19 May 1869, RG 393, NA.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴J. O. Shelby to H. A. Hopper, July 13, 1869, RG 393, NA.

⁸⁵Captain James Kelly to Lieutenant W. Atwood, July 3, 1869, RG 393, V, NA.

Abercrombie, a freedman, was at home the morning of April 1, 1869, and two white men, Hiram Gibson and George Mitchell, came and told him that Richard and Bill McDaniels, two freedmen who lived on the Wilson farm, wanted to see him. Jake said that the two white men took him to Wilson's place and that Gibson carried a "double barrel gun" for the entire trip. On arrival at the Wilson farm, Jake asked where the McDanielses were. One of the men told Jake that Bill McDaniels "had got away from them the night before" and that Richard McDaniels would be there soon. Gibson and Mitchell, together with "Coon" Daws, Tom Wilson and F. M. Parker kept Jake in the yard until about ten o'clock that evening. Then, five men whom Jake identified as "the Ku Klux" came and took Jake about three hundred yards into the woods adjacent to Wilson's farm and beat him, striking him at least four times in the face. Jake broke free, and as he ran further into the woods, the men shot at him without effect.⁸⁶

Richard and Bill McDaniels were taken from their homes at around nine o'clock of the same evening by Tom Wilson, Jim Terry and "Coon" Daws. They were "carried" to the Wilson farm and after midnight, they were taken to a small house in a field nearby where a "trial" was held to

⁸⁶Statement of John Abercrombie, enclosure to Kelly to Atwood, July 26, 1869, RG 393, NA.

"see who . . . stole Mr. Wilson's meat."⁸⁷ Bill admitted the theft and claimed he gave Richard three pieces of it. Daws took Richard to the Daws house and kept him overnight. Tom Wilson and Jim Terry took Bill McDaniels away with them and, as of mid-summer of 1869, he had not been heard from nor seen. Not content that Richard had learned his lesson, Daws got Richard the next night and returned to the Wilson yard where they sat down around a fire. While they sat there, "the Ku Klux" came and took Richard away and "whipped" him.⁸⁸ Wilson, Daws and the Terrys admitted that they had illegally arrested the three freedmen. They recalled chaining Bill McDaniels to a tree by the neck and guarding Richard and Jake with loaded guns. The manner in which the freedmen were delivered to the farm and the subsequent arrival of the Ku Klux Klan appeared to be deliberate and premeditated collusion with the Klan. F. M. Parker denied that he was one of the Ku Klux but failed to produce any alibi or evidence to the contrary.⁸⁹

In another Kemper County incident, five white citizens were arrested and charged with severely beating an elderly freedman, Joe Garner, in April, 1869. Garner

⁸⁷Ibid., Statement of Richard McDaniels.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Kelly to Atwood, July 3, 1869, RG 393, NA.

was confined to his home for four to six weeks as a result of the beating. Dr. Bedsell, who treated Garner, said that he was nearly beaten to death by clubs and whips.⁹⁰

The five men charged in the Garner beating were Thomas Newell, Jack Newell, Pulaski Grey, Samuel Ross and Calvin Ross, all of Kemper County. Garner stated that he was called out of his house and when he refused to leave, two of the men came to the door and grabbed him. They told him to get his gun which Garner did. One of the men took the gun. Pulaski Grey told them, "boys, do what you are told to do." Garner was dragged to the nearby house of another freedman. Just in front of the door, Garner was knocked to the ground and each of the white men fired a pistol over him. Garner recalled that a Bill Chamberlain or Chamberly was also present. The six men began to whip Garner with a bull whip and club him with fence rails until Garner was unconscious and as he believed, "they thought I was dead." Garner remained on the ground for about two hours until he mustered the strength to crawl home on this hands and knees.⁹¹

Tom Newell came to Garner's house on the Sunday before Newell was arrested and yelled for Garner: "God dam you old Joe, come out and take your gun, I am tired of

⁹⁰Kelly to Atwood, July 26, 1869, RG 393, NA.

⁹¹Ibid.

toting it a-round." He told Joe to look at the corner of the fence and he would find it. Garner came out of the house after Newell left and searched the area but never found the gun. Shortly after the beating, friends of the five men who had beaten Garner came to Joe's house on several occasions inquiring if he knew who beat him. Joe, "being afraid of [his] life told them [he] did not know who they were."⁹²

Thomas Newell confessed to whipping Joe Garner and stated that Jack Newell, Pulaski Grey, Samuel Ross, Calvin Ross and Bill Chamberlain were accomplices. Speaking for all of them, Thomas Newell offered to pay the medical expenses of Mr. Garner.⁹³

William V. Brock of Kemper County was arrested and charged with the murder of freedman Proney Payton on May 16, 1869. At nine o'clock that evening, a large party of disguised men rode up to the Payton home, fired a shot into the house, and called for Proney to come out. Mrs. Fanny Payton estimated that there were twenty-five or thirty men, most of them with their faces covered. Proney refused to leave and the men broke the door down. One shouted "lets take him out and give him hell." George Mitchell and William Brock took hold of him and dragged

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Kelly to Atwood, July 3, 1869, RG 393, NA.

him out. Fanny and two other witnesses heard shouts of "shoot him" and then heard shots in the night. Proney Payton was later found dead about forty yards from the house with gunshot wounds in the head and side. Witnesses Celia Abercrombie, Fanny and Perry Payton stated that George Mitchell was disguised but William Brock was not. John Moore, a white citizen of Kemper County was also in the group that took Payton away but he did not come into the house.⁹⁴ Neither Moore nor Mitchell were apprehended. Residents of DeKalb indicated that the two "left for Texas."⁹⁵

The quick roundup of Klan activists in Kemper County instigated by Sheriff H. A. Hopper stemmed the rise of nefarious evening activity in the county. Even though there were no convictions, those responsible for beatings and even killings, either left the area or toned down their emotions and curtailed their nocturnal revenge.⁹⁶ A small military detachment together with Republican county law enforcement officers calmed a volatile situation which one resident had said was "to[o] strong and widespread in

⁹⁴Statement of Fanny Payton, Kelly to Atwood, July 26, 1869, RG 393, NA.

⁹⁵"Left for Texas" or "gone to Texas" was a phrase used for any person who skipped bail, left the area just ahead of an indictment, or left under suspicious circumstances.

⁹⁶Horn, The Invisible Empire, 167. Of over 600 arrests and indictments in Mississippi under Federal and state KKK laws, there was not a single jury conviction.

this county for the civil courts to do anything with them"⁹⁷ John McRae was prophetic of a trial which would occur nine years later when he said that any "trial by civil court would be a complete farce."⁹⁸

In Kemper County, in late 1870 or 1871, a secret society known as The Order of '76 or The Invisible Circle was organized. civil court would be a complete farce." Loss of the franchise and Radical Republican election victories and tax imposition caused the white-line Democrats to cry "taxation without representation," hence, The Order of '76, in reference to 1776.⁹⁹ The alternate name of the organization, The Invisible Circle, was probably derived from the secretive nature of the organization. This new organization was dedicated to Democratic victories at the ballot box, protection and defense of fellow members and their families, and the establishment of white supremacy in Mississippi. They also promised to "punish lawless negroes and their white allies who were protected by the military authorities."¹⁰⁰ Kemper countians who were members of this new white supremacy political organization included John Gully, who

⁹⁷John McRae to Lieutenant J. O. Shelby, May 29, 1869, RG 393, NA.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Hardy, "Recollections," 210.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 211.

was named the "high priest" of the Ku Klux Klan in Kemper County by John R. Taliaferro.¹⁰¹ Another member was Philomen "Phil" Gully, whose previous violence against black citizens was well documented in Chapter 2. Other members were Dr. D. Stennis, Ebb Felton, Jess and Philander Hull, Jim Britain (Brittain), Foote McLellan (McClelland), Henry Tate, and James K. P. West.¹⁰² Little is known of the activities of these men, but it is interesting that all but Tate and West were party to the Chisolm massacre in 1877. It is known that this group met in the summer of 1872 and drew straws to determine who would burn down the courthouse. The fire was set to destroy land and tax records in an effort to thwart the hated acre tax imposed by Radical Republicans to pay for their Reconstruction programs, including education for black and white children of the county.¹⁰³

The Order of '76 was extremely secretive, each member swearing not to reveal even the existence of the club, or its members or officers. The local club leader was titled Captain; his assistants, First and Second Lieutenants, and Adjutant. No record of the proceedings

¹⁰¹U.S. Congress, KKK, 262.

¹⁰²Ibid., 258-59; Walter B. Atkinson, It's a Long Way from Scooba (Bessemer, Ala.: Colonial Press, 1986), 82-85, 95, 120.

¹⁰³Ibid., 117-119.

was kept and no written orders were given. Only a roll of membership was kept under the title "Members of Robinson Club No. _____, _____" (place).¹⁰⁴ "Robinson" was part of a recognition signal used by members and a hand signal was added for security of the order. Republicans knew of the existence of the order and generally equated it with the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁰⁵ Sheriff Chisolm knew the order existed and testified that it was headed by a Frank Blair. Chisolm was of the opinion that the Order of '76 in Kemper County was organized to elect Democrats and take over the county in a peaceable manner. He testified that he had no feelings against the organization.¹⁰⁶ The Order of '76 participated and had a great effect on the redemption election of 1875.¹⁰⁷ The order operated concurrently with the last vestiges of the Ku Klux Klan in eastern Mississippi. It may be entirely coincidental that the order was first organized in 1870 in Somerville, Mississippi at approximately the same time that Governor Alcorn was calling for strong measures against the Klan.

The Republican reign was short-lived. Sheriff Chisolm got national recognition for subduing the Klan in

¹⁰⁴Hardy, "Recollections," 211.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 211; U.S. Congress, KKK, 258.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 258-59.

¹⁰⁷Hardy, "Recollections," 211-12.

Kemper County and at the same time amassed a personal fortune. Although it was Sheriff Hopper who blew the whistle on Klan members, Chisolm bore the brunt of revenge attempts by white-line Democrats, Klansmen and Alabamians. It would eventually cost him his office and his life.

CHAPTER IV

REDEMPTION, THE ELECTION OF 1875 AND THE CHISOLM MASSACRE

The frontier nature of Kemper County had not changed appreciably by 1875. The pistol was still commonplace even amongst boys as young as fourteen, and arguments were settled by shootouts.¹

Sheriff Chisolm was himself involved in a street fight in Meridan in the fall of 1874. He met Judge Dillard of Sumter County, Alabama, and after an exchange of words, Chisolm shot and wounded Dillard. Chisolm later explained that Dillard, who was related to Hal Dawson of Scooba, had always blamed Chisolm for letting Dawson's killers go free. Dillard made frequent disparaging remarks about Chisolm, and according to Chisolm, had sent assassins into Kemper County to kill him on more than one occasion. Surprisingly, Chisolm had never met Dillard until the day he shot him and they drew on each other shortly after being introduced by a

¹Charles Nordhoff, The Cotton States in the Spring and Summer of 1875 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1876), 74.

mutual friend.² The incident drew more attention because it was a Democratic versus Republican showdown than for being a breach of peace. In 1875, one observer ascribed "all that is bad in Mississippi . . . to an almost total lack of a right public opinion," and said that "men defy the law and don't lose respect of the community."³

Despite Governor Alcorn's pledge in 1869 that "society should no longer be governed by the pistol and the Bowie knife," there was little change when the 1875 campaign began.⁴ Nordhoff said "Mississippi is still . . . a frontier state, with frontier habits."⁵ In Mississippi and in Kemper County, the electorate was divided into two extreme factions with a large group in the middle without allegiance to either. The white-line Democrats were frustrated by six years of exclusion from political power and the benefits thereof. The intimidation efforts of the night riders, Ku Klux Klan and the Order of '76 had been thwarted and failed to break the Republican-black alliance. The Radical Republicans in Kemper County controlled the elected offices and succeeded in convincing the black population to support the Republican party. In other areas

²U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 764.

³Nordhoff, Cotton States, 78.

⁴Trelease, White Terror, 277.

⁵Nordhoff, Cotton States, 74.

of Mississippi, the Democrats were successful in intimidating blacks and carpetbaggers by violence. The Meridian riot of 1871 has been called "the transition period of Reconstruction, and . . . a forcast of the end of carpetbag rule in Mississippi."⁶ Wharton called it a "lesson learned" that blacks were "economically dependent, and timid and unresourceful after generations of servitude" and "would offer no effective resistance to violence."⁷

The white-line Democratic strategy which succeeded in the state-wide election of 1875 was a direct outgrowth of the lessons of Vicksburg in the previous year. In city elections of August, 1874, intimidation of black voters and vote manipulation caused defeat of the Republican incumbents. Governor Adelbert Ames requested Federal troops to guarantee peace during the election campaign because Democrats were becoming increasingly vocal in their calls for violence. President Grant claimed he did not have jurisdiction and refused assistance. The ease of victory by intimidation bolstered the Mississippi white-liners' enthusiasm and in Vicksburg, the victorious Democrats set sights on the county elections of December, 1874, during which Warren County (Vicksburg) would choose a sheriff. The county had a decided black majority and a black sheriff.

⁶Rowland, History of Mississippi, 2:272.

⁷Wharton, Negro in Mississippi, 190.

The intimidation reached such proportions that racial violence broke out in the county. In December alone, over three hundred blacks died violent deaths in Warren County. Only two whites died as a result of the riots.⁸

Governor Ames saw the violence approaching dangerous proportions and called a special session of the state legislature. The Governor proclaimed a state of insurrection and the legislature called for Federal troops. The request for troops remained unanswered until Ames himself asked for Federal intervention. The troops arrived in mid-January, after the election, and removed the newly-elected Democratic sheriff, replacing him with a Republican. The Northern press concurred with Grant's refusal to interfere in August, but the tales of terror and bloodshed in Vicksburg in December swayed much Northern sympathy to the plight of blacks and Republicans in Mississippi. The New York Herald, usually critical of Federal intervention, declared in August that "nothing could be more wanton and unnecessary than the war now waged upon the blacks of Mississippi by the whites."⁹

Mississippi Democrats gained valuable insight from those two local elections, one which the Federal government chose to ignore and one which brought troops into the state.

⁸William Gillette, Retreat from Reconstruction 1869-1879 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 150.

⁹Ibid., 150-51; New York Herald, August 4, 1874.

The comparison clearly demonstrated the limit of violence that would be tolerated. The Federal government made it clear that claims of intimidation would not be answered with occupation forces. Riot and violent racial clashes, however, would result in the dispatch of troops. White-liners throughout Mississippi organized for the election of 1875 with the Vicksburg experience in mind.

To give the Democrats of Kemper County the political sophistication of identifying the acceptable level of intimidation and violence would be generous. Rather than restraint on the part of the Democrats, the relatively peaceful nature of the 1875 campaign and election in Kemper County was due to the timidity and fear of the black population and the withdrawal from confrontation on the part of the Republican leaders. The Democrats bullied the opposition into an election that was "no contest." The Democrats of Kemper County, many of whom were members of the Order of '76 or former Ku Kluxers, chose to intimidate the black voters knowing that black failure to participate in the election would break the Republican hold on the elective offices of the county. Intimidation took two forms: physical and economic. Economic intimidation was, quite simply, the notification of black that their employment would be in serious jeopardy should the Republican candidates win. In some areas of Mississippi, names of

blacklisted "freedmen" were published in the newspaper.¹⁰ The Columbus Index recommended saving the list of "presidents of the negro clubs . . . for future reference."¹¹ In Kemper County, a meeting of Democrats discussed not employing any black who voted for the Republican ticket. No agreement was signed, but a great many were in favor of such action. A. G. Ellis of Kemper County admitted to the Boutwell Committee that he told blacks in his employ that "they were co-operating with a party that was hostile to me, and that I had furnished them with supplies and given them a home for themselves and their families; but unless they would go with me and assist me, that I could not assist them any more."¹² On further questioning, Ellis admitted that it could be taken to mean he would not employ them any longer. In the parlance of the day, it meant that he would run them off if they voted Republican. Ellis admitted that he knew of other Kemper County landowners and employers who had done the same thing. Ellis testified that many of his black laborers did not vote at all, rather than vote Democratic. One employee of Ellis, a preacher, said that he had to go to the polls and vote

¹⁰Chickasaw Messenger, January 1, 1876 cited in U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 167.

¹¹Columbus Mississippi Index, n.d., cited in U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 164.

¹²U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 1797.

because if he were absent, his congregation and his "colored neighbors" would ostracize him. The preacher added to Ellis that since he could not associate socially with "you white people" and his children were growing up in Kemper County, he had to vote.¹³

Physical intimidation was apparently the more common tactic in Kemper County. Republican political rallies were the target of hecklers seeking to provoke a violent incident. Armed white-liners visited all political meetings and threats of assassination forced cancellation of some Republican speeches.

The opening of the 1875 canvass, or campaign, in Kemper County was scheduled to be held in Blackwater. Judge Bell, the Democratic candidate for state representative, suggested that Chisolm, candidate for re-election as sheriff, share the rostrum with him. This practice of dividing time had not been used often since the war as many Democrats had abstained from voting. Just prior to the scheduled speeches, Bill Bailor, a black acquaintance of Chisolm came to him and told him not to go to Blackwater. Bailor said that the Key boys, Hudnalls, Hodges, D. V. McWhorton and other white-line Democrats did not want Chisolm there and planned to ensure that he did not speak. Chisolm told Bell that he did not want to have any trouble

¹³Ibid., 1798.

and if Bell couldn't assure him that the meeting would be peaceful, he would bow out. Bell reassured Chisolm. Chisolm went to Blackwater with an escort of fifteen to twenty white Republicans, most of whom had been Confederate soldiers. Chisolm learned that the Democrat's plan was to provoke him with questions in hopes of raising his ire to a point he would deliver a blistering harangue, which was often his custom. Chisolm purposely restrained himself to prevent provoking an incident.¹⁴

Chisolm noted that at every Republican meeting thereafter, there were five to ten, sometimes as many as fifteen or twenty, white-liners present carrying double-barrelled shotguns and rifles. In many cases, blacks did not show up at the meetings. Chisolm rightfully opined that they were intimidated by the armed men. Early in the campaign, Chisolm told the black Republicans that should an incident occur, they were to stay out of the way and let white Republicans fight white Democrats.¹⁵

As the election neared, the prevalent Democratic campaign theme was "vote blacks down or knock them down,"¹⁶ while the Vicksburg Herald declared "the negroes in North

¹⁴Ibid., 756-57.

¹⁵Ibid., 757.

¹⁶New York Herald, August 3, 1875.

Mississippi need a little killing."¹⁷

On Saturday, October 31, 1875, the weekend before the election, Chisolm was scheduled to go to Scooba to give a last rousing speech in Beat number one, a Republican stronghold. Figure 3 is a map showing the Districts or beats in 1875. On that Saturday morning, Chisolm was only a mile east of DeKalb when he was stopped by Julius Wollford, son of the black Republican candidate for state representative. Young Wollford said his father had sent him to stop Chisolm from coming to Scooba because armed white men were lying in wait on the DeKalb-Scooba road. Wollford said they were at the edge of the road on the pretense of hunting deer, but Chisolm was their real target. Chisolm sent five or six men ahead of his buggy and proceeded with caution. Shortly over half way, Chisolm encountered James West, a member of the Scooba Democratic club. Chisolm drew his pistol. West explained that he came out to warn Chisolm that his life was endangered and that he should not try to return to DeKalb that evening, but rather, stay in Scooba. West told Chisolm that he did not want his club to know that he had warned the Sheriff, but that he, West, had no argument with Chisolm and no desire for the intended violence. Upon arrival in Scooba, Chisolm made his speech under what he described as a "good deal of excitement." By

¹⁷Vicksburg Herald, cited in U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 166.

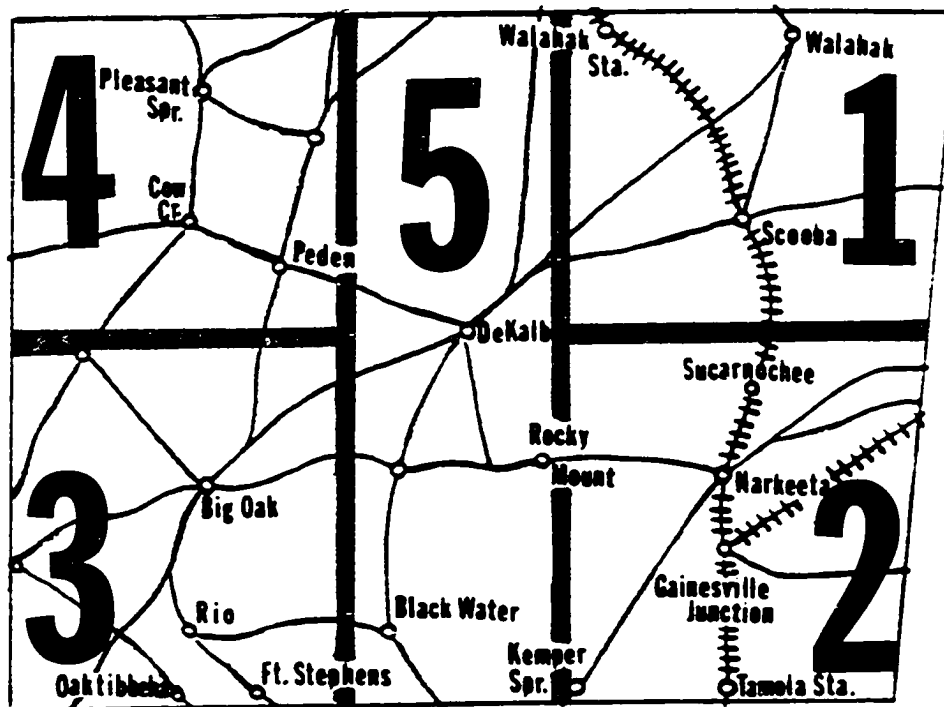


Figure 3. Political District or Beats, Kemper County, 1875

his own admission, it was his "bitterest" speech.¹⁸

While in Scooba, Chisolm, who sensed trouble in the Beat, talked to Democrats Hab Woods, Jr., Miller Jones and James H. Duke and agreed to try to keep the election peaceful. They asked that Chisolm eliminate from the rolls some twenty registered black voters who were commonly known to be minors. Chisolm agreed to do so. He returned to DeKalbon Sunday morning without incident.¹⁹

Chisolm remained at home on Sunday, but received reports of what was going on in the county. His brother visited from the western part of the county and said things did not look good for the Republicans. Others reported that John Gully and other county Democrats were stirring in DeKalb and milling around the courthouse and in the streets of the town.²⁰

On Monday, November 2, armed white men began to show up in DeKalb. Chisolm, who continued on speaking terms with John Gully's brother, Philomen, asked Phil what was going on. Gully replied that he and his sons had come to town because they heard that James Duke sent a telegram from Scooba claiming that "negroes" were being armed there. Duke

¹⁸U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 760. None of Chisolm's speeches survive, but his letters on file at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History are not eloquent and contain numerous spelling and grammatical errors.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., 760-62.

later denied sending the telegram. Chisolm's fifteen year old son Clay went to Scooba on Monday to meet a visitor coming by train from Meridian. The visitor did not show up, but Clay came back with tales of Scooba in arms. Clay said that the Democrats had killed Gilmer or "run him off." In actuality, John Gilmer had taken to the woods, avoiding the main road and rode to DeKalb. At one point, he was lost and so afraid of wandering into an armed Democrat that he paid a local farmer fifty dollars to guide him to DeKalb.²¹

T. H. Orr, a Republican election official in Scooba, sent a note to Chisolm stating that an election would be impossible there. The "crowd" from Alabama had arrived. The Democrats claimed that they invited the Alabamians to check for any residents of Sumter County, Alabama who might be voting in Mississippi. The Kemper County Democrats claimed for many years that black minors and Alabamians were used to inflate the Republican majority in Beats one and two.²²

Scooba was a target of the Democrats in the election of 1875. Lucien Q. C. Lamar, famed secessionist and member of the Confederate Congress, who would be elected to the United States Senate in 1876, made a "powerful" speech in

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

Scooba.²³ Captain W. H. Hardy, on assignment from the State Democratic Executive Committee, arrived in Scooba at three o'clock in the afternoon, Monday, November 2, by train. Every business in town was closed and no one was in the streets. At last, he saw a man at the head of a flight of stairs in a two-story building beckoning him. He went into the hall which was filled with men who were listening to a speaker. The speaker admonished the group to "carry the election to-morrow if we have to drive every negro and scallawag from the polls."²⁴ Hardy was recognized, introduced and rose to make his remarks:

Men of Kemper: I was sent here by the State Executive Committee to address you on the eve of the election, which is to decide the fate for long years to come of our beloved State, that is bleeding at every pore, her great heart throbbing with the desire that she be rescued on the morrow from the robbers and spoilsmen who are preying upon her. When the great soul of the immortal Stonewall Jackson was about to leave its tenement of clay and wing its flight to God, in the delirium of his dying moment, he suddenly cried out to one of his trusty commanders, 'A. P. Hill, prepare for action!' So say I to you, men of Kemper! The time for argument is passed, prepare for action.²⁵

By Monday evening, Chisolm was resigned to losing the election to the Democrats and intimidated by the presence of

²³Hardy, "Recollection," 207-208.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

armed men in DeKalb and reportedly in Scooba, the two largest polling places. Chisolm told Democrat James Brittain that afternoon to "take the election anyhow and run it just as you damned please."²⁶ The registrar's books which were locked in the Sheriff's safe, after some controversy, were finally delivered to Dr. E. Fox, a Democratic member of the Board of Registrars, so the election could proceed.²⁷

With the white Republicans subdued, the Democrats turned their efforts to intimidation of the black voters. If Chisolm, Gilmer and other leading Republicans were not at the polling places to distribute ballots, it was unlikely that many blacks would vote, but the forces were already assembled and a night of merriment was welcome. Captain Hardy described a night parade throughout the county. The parade was led by Captain Winston of Sumter County, Alabama, who rode at the head of the column of men and issued orders "as would the captain of a squadron of cavalry in the regular army."²⁸ Every fourth man carried a torch. They rode all night blowing bugles, beating drums and firing their pistols. The group even had a cannon which they towed with them and discharged at intervals. Hardy said the

²⁶U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 762.

²⁷Ibid., 763.

²⁸Hardy, "Recollections," 208.

parade concentrated on the areas "densely inhabited by negroes."²⁹

Chisolm remembered the evening as one of terror with drunks in the street, "hollering, hooting" and making "demoniacal sounds."³⁰ Chisolm went to the Hobart house, a few miles from his own and remained in the nearby woods until about eleven o'clock and then slept in their house. Chisolm admitted that he was afraid of the Alabamians because of the Hal Dawson and Judge Dillard incidents. On election day, Chisolm stayed in the woods and did not come out until the morning after the election.³¹

Armed men were at the polls on election day. Blacks in DeKalb and other polling places did not even turn up. Republicans did what the Democrats had done in past elections: they stayed away. Figure Four is a compilation of elections results by beat.³²

Witnesses who appeared at a congressional inquiry of this election described a peaceful election day with no confrontation and no violence. That the Democratic intimidation worked can be seen by comparison with voter

²⁹Ibid.; Statement of Ebb Felton, WPA, RG 60, MDAH, Jackson.

³⁰U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 764.

³¹Ibid.

³²Election Results, Kemper County, Files of the Secretary of State, State of Mississippi, RG 28, File 101 and MF9, MDAH, Jackson.

turnout in previous elections. The total vote in 1875 was 1,760. This is considerably less than 1873, 2,176; 1872, 2,095; and 1871, 2,436. Of 925 registered voters in DeKalb in 1875 only 287 voted.³³ In Hardy's words, "The ruse was effectual. Not a negro in that community appeared at the polls next day to vote, and not a single one had been harmed or personally injured."³⁴ The Radical Republicans were finished in Kemper County. In 1876, William Wallace Chisolm ran for United States Representative on the Republican ticket in the Third Mississippi District which includes Kemper County.

He was soundly defeated by Democrat Hernando D. (he used H. D.) Money. The Democrats called again on intimidation, both economic and physical, to ensure that the black vote was either Democratic or abstaining, and they were successful. The total vote in Kemper County in 1876 was 2,463.³⁵

By the time he was ousted, Sheriff Chisolm had amassed a considerable fortune. By his own admission, he did

³³Ibid.; U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 45. A beat-by-beat summary of elections other than 1875 was not on file at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

³⁴Hardy, "Recollection," 208.

³⁵Albert D. Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1951), 5; Election Results, RG 28, MDAH, Jackson.

<u>Office/Candidates</u>	<u>Beat 1</u>	<u>Beat 2</u>	<u>Beat 3</u>	<u>Beat 4</u>	<u>Beat 5</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
District Attorney						
Thomas H. Woods (D)	251	183	362	251	287	1334
State Representative						
T. P. Bell (D)	251	183	368	249	287	1338
M. G. Wollford (R)	344	2	6	70	0	422
Sheriff						
F. C. Sinclair (D)	251	181	367	247	285	1331
W. W. Chisolm (R)	343	3	6	72	1	425
Circuit Clerk						
Guy Jack (D)	263	180	363	230	284	1320
B. F. Rush (R)	332	5	8	89	3	437
Chancery Clerk						
A. F. Rush	251	182	368	249	287	1339
F. M. Poole	343	2	5	72	0	422
State Senator						
H. W. Foote (D)	251	183	369	251	287	1341
J. P. Gilmer (R)	343	2	5	65	0	415

Figure 4. Kemper County 1875 Election Returns

"considerable more business than any man in the county."³⁶

The Democratic animosity extant at the election of 1875 probably did not subside as Chisolm continued to live in luxury in a dirt-poor county that was still recovering from the economic ruin of the Civil War. His feud with John Gully continued and would be the immediate cause of his death at the hands of a mob.

In January of 1877, W. W. Chisolm left DeKalb with his daughter, Cornelia, to travel to Washington to testify before the Congressional Committee investigating the election of 1875. They spent two months in the east visiting Niagara Falls and New York City. Their return in late March was predicated by the necessity of making arrangements to send the two oldest Chisolm sons to commercial school in St. Louis. On April 26, Chisolm returned from Mobile where he had made financial arrangements for his sons. He brought with him their school equipment and tickets. The family was reuniting in the lawn of their home when John Gully rode by on his way to his home a mile and a half distant. Gully was only out of sight of the Chisolms for a few minutes when a man came riding up from the direction Gully had gone, reporting that Gully had been waylaid and shot only a short distance from his

³⁶U.S. Congress, Boutwell, 756.

house.³⁷

Gully's body was lying in the road. His money, hat and boots were gone. From the appearance of the body, the muzzle of the gun that killed him must have been very close for the face and neck wounds were blackened by powder. One witness said that Chisolm "wept openly" at the news of Gully's death knowing it sounded his own "death knell."³⁸ An attempt on Gully's life occurred on December 20 of the previous year. Gully was shot by a disguised assailant near DeKalb, but no suspect was ever arrested or convicted.³⁹ The second and successful assassination attempt caused great consternation in the community and a wave of rumors accompanied the funeral preparations. Surely Chisolm and Gilmer were parties to the deed if not the assailants. The county buzzed with excitement and all, including Chisolm, waited for a response from the Gully clan or the Democrats.⁴⁰

Gully was buried on Saturday, April 28. The rumors were exacerbated by the eulogy of George S. Covert, a relative by marriage of the Gullys. Covert was from Meridian, a "city" man, and wore a clean linen shirt. His

³⁷Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 159-61; Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 293.

³⁸Ibid., 293-94; Jack, Iconoclast, 15.

³⁹Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 142-43.

⁴⁰Ibid., 294; Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 161.

cleanliness lent veracity to his claim that Judge Chisolm had hired an assassin. Covert further declared that the crowd assembled had a grand opportunity to rise and rid the county (and world) of this man. Lest they fight Chisolm alone, a courier was sent to Ramsey Station in Alabama to seek the assistance of those neighbors who had been so helpful before. Covert then swore out a complaint with J. L. Spinks, a justice of the peace, naming Ben Rush the assassin and Chisolm, Alex Hopper, J. P. Gilmer and Charlie Rosenbaum as accessories. The warrant issued by Spinks called for all parties to present themselves to a justice of the peace on Monday, April 30, to answer the charges.⁴¹

Word quickly spread through the county and those who were not in town for Gully's funeral and had an interest or an ax to grind made their way to DeKalb. One observer saw men with loaded guns on every road to DeKalb on Sunday morning. On Sunday morning, the excitement had reached such a pitch that Henry Gully interrupted the church service at the black Methodist church to warn the congregation that there was going to be trouble. Doffing his cap, he stood before the congregation and asked the preacher to dismiss the congregation. Then, according to Sam McAllum, "De preacher rise to his feet an' got up an' stretch his arms out an' kep' on liftin' his hands an' time dey were up high,

⁴¹Ibid., 165-69.

ever' nigger in de house were up, an' he sung de doc-sol-ny
an' dismiss 'em."⁴²

Early that Sunday, Sheriff Sinclair, armed with the warrant, arrested Alex Hopper and his brother, Newton at their home. Delaying departure on the excuse of first having breakfast, Hopper secretly sent a note to Chisolm, telling him of his own arrest and that the warrant included Chisolm, Gilmer and Rosenbaum. On receipt of the note, Chisolm waved off his wife's suggestion that he escape and sat down to breakfast. Soon, the Sheriff and deputies, together with the two Hoppers, arrived at the Chisolm house and showed Chisolm the warrant. Chisolm consented to the warrant indicating his willingness to appear on Monday. He objected to confinement in the jail, declaring he was much safer in his home. The Sheriff's first response was "they say you must go to jail." He subsequently agreed that Chisolm could remain at home under the guard of Thomas Hampton, Emory Key and Adil Knor, all Democrats suggested by Chisolm. Chisolm was removed to a small outbuilding and placed inside it. A crowd of people continued to grow around the Chisolm property. The house was less than one hundred and fifty yards from the jail and even less from the center of town, so most of the people who had come to town

⁴²Statement of Sam McAllum, WPA, RG 60, MDAH, 9.

gravitated to the Chisolm home. Twenty or thirty horses were hitched in the woods at the rear of the house. Jere Watkins, whom Chisolm called a "Ku Klux scoundrel," rode up to the fence and conversed with Sheriff Sinclair. Finally, Mrs. Chisolm demanded that her husband be returned from the damp, cold outbuilding to the house. The Sheriff began to accompany Chisolm toward the house, when some twenty armed men, unknown to the Chisolms, began to accompany them. To Chisolm's objection, the Sheriff said, "they say that the guard must be strengthened." Mrs. Chisolm believed "they" to mean the mob. Once in the house, the Sheriff returned to the yard and spoke with Watkins and returned saying, "Judge, they are getting uneasy." Watkins rode off.⁴³

Watkins returned bringing with him a "large crowd" of armed men. After speaking with Sheriff Sinclair, the Sheriff told Chisolm, "they say you must go to jail." In a moment alone, Emily Chisolm begged her husband to hide in a secret compartment in the attic to avoid being jailed. Chisolm refused, for he feared the anger of the crowd would then be vented on his house and family. Just before the family left the house, Angus McLellan, a Republican friend, thought by most to be a British subject, approached the

⁴³Testimony of Mrs. Emily S. M. Chisolm, Source-Chronological File for Northern Mississippi, Letters Received 1849-1904, General Records of the Department of Justice, RG, M970, Roll 1, NA, Washington, D.C. Also see Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 171-73; Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 301.

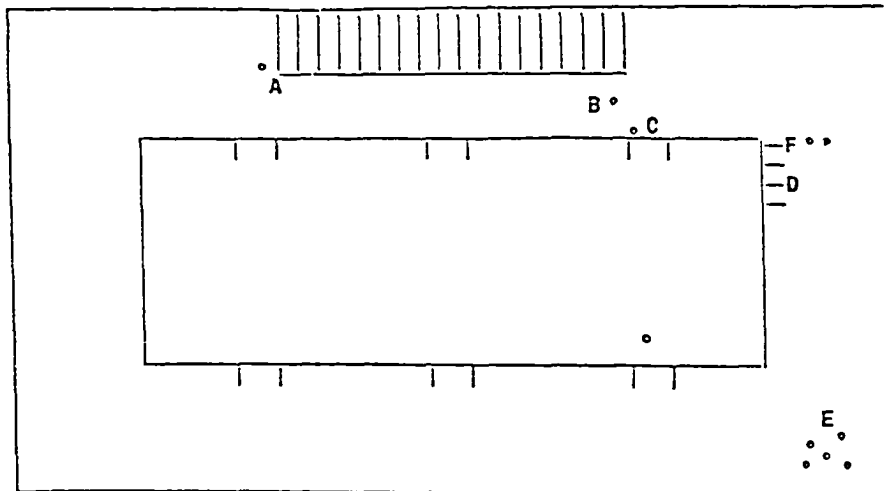
Chisolms and offered his assistance in a showdown if they desired. Judge Chisolm said no and turned himself over to the Sheriff and indicated his readiness to go to the jail. The whole family--the Judge, his wife, daughter Cornelia, and sons, Johnny, Clay and Willie--were surrounded by the growing mob as they walked with the Sheriff to the jail. Angus McLellan followed behind, armed with Clay Chisolm's gun which he had picked up at the house.⁴⁴

Before leaving his house, Chisolm asked Henry Gully if he would be protected on the way to the jail and while there. Gully replied that protection would be provided enroute, but thereafter, he could make no promise. Once at the jail, of the original guards, only one remained. The others were members of the mob. Sheriff Sinclair pushed Chisolm into the jail. The children and Mrs. Chisolm followed. Figure 5 is a diagram of the Kemper County jail. The Chisolms went upstairs to the area of the cells and a guard named Overstreet and the Sheriff tried to keep the crowd out of the jail and particularly from ascending the steps to the upper level. Mrs. Chisolm and the children left the jail, went home and the children returned with ammunition hidden in their clothing.⁴⁵

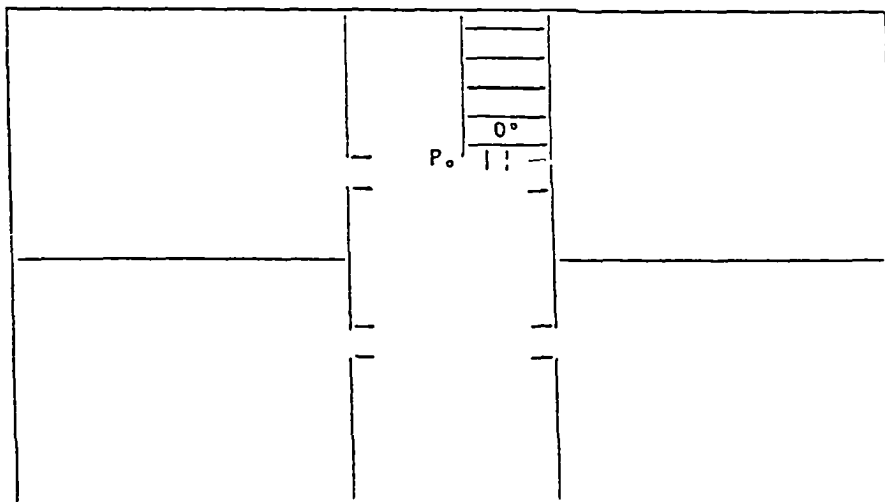
⁴⁴Testimony of Mrs. Emily S. M. Chisolm, RG 60, NA. Also see Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 173; Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 302.

⁴⁵Testimony of Mrs. Emily S. M. Chisolm, RG 60, NA.

PLAN OF THE UPPER FLOOR.



PLAN OF THE LOWER FLOOR.



- A Position of Rosser when he was killed.
- C Position of Chisolm.
- B Johnnie Chisolm, killed by Rosser.
- D Guns of the guards, stacked against the wall.
- E The Hoppers, Rosenbaum and the two guards.
- F Mrs. and Miss Chisolm.
- O Position of Chisolm when shot.
- P Place where Chisolm fell.

Figure 5. Diagram of Kemper County Jail

While the Chisolms were at home, Gilmer and Charles Rosenbaum approached the crowd around the jail, reportedly to turn themselves in. James Brittain, who had been deputized by the Sheriff, took them into custody, and as they neared the jail, they were surrounded by armed men. Gilmer and Rosenbaum began to be uneasy. Brittain took hold of Gilmer by the wrist and while holding him, a charge of buck-shot struck Gilmer in the back and neck. Wells reported that "a Gully" shot him. Lynch does not name an assailant, but in reporting that Gilmer ran into an alley pursued by the crowd, he declared "wonderful to tell" that two bullets fired into Gilmer's head entered in nearly the same manner as those that killed Hal Dawson.⁴⁶

McLellan, the "old Scotsman," was in the jail with the Chisolm family and left, going out into the crowd, then behind the jail. As he came into view of the crowd at the backside of the jail, several in the crowd opened fire on McLellan. He continued to walk as several rounds struck him and finally fell dead. Witnesses Bettie McRae and Winny Jack both saw McLellan shot and neither saw him draw his weapon. Both of these witnesses, who were black, signed statements that four of the men who fired on McLellan were Houston Gully, Jesse Gully, Henry Gully and Bill Gully. On the advice of George McKee who took the statements, neither

⁴⁶Ibid. Also see Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 303.

Jack nor McRae swore to their statements for fear of molestation in the county if it were known they had given names.⁴⁷

Inside the jail, Chisolm, and three of this children remained in a cell on the second story. Willie, the youngest son, had been sent to the cabin of a black friend for safety. Mrs. Chisolm joined the crowd as it descended upon the jail after the shooting of McLellan. Mrs. Chisolm worked her way through the crowd and to the head of the stairs where the crowd was beginning an assault on the door to the cell area. Mrs. Chisolm pleaded with Dr. Dave Rosser of Noxubee County to reconsider his actions. Rosser called for an ax to break down the door. Two axes were used and the door began to give. At the head of the stairs, in addition to Rosser, Mrs. Chisolm recognized Bill Gully, Henry Gully, Cal Hull, Charley McCrory and Bob Moseley. As the door came ajar, Cornelia Chisolm could be seen just inside the door trying to keep it closed. Rosser, according to Mrs. Chisolm, said "Go away G_d d_m you or I'll blow your brains out." When asked by one of the men if he would shoot a woman, Rosser replied "Yes, G_d d_m her I will shoot anybody that gets in my way." Mrs. Chisolm, still in the crowd outside of the door accosted one man and asked how he, as a human, could be part of such a thing. The man replied that

⁴⁷Testimony of Winny Jack and Bettie McRae, June 12-13, 1877, RG 60, NA.

he was only a "private" and acting under orders. Another said he was going to shoot or "else they would shoot him."⁴⁸

The door opened further. Overstreet, who was inside the door stepped back and the door opened even further. Rosser thrust his shotgun into the opening and fired. The major part of the blast struck Johnny Chisolm and severed his arm. The muzzle was so close to Johnny that his shirt caught fire from the blast and was extinguished by his blood. Johnny was assisted away from the door by his brother Clay but upon seeing Rosser aim at his father, Johnny threw himself in front of his father catching the full force of Rosser's second shot in his chest. Another shot from the crowd struck the iron bars of the cage filling Cornelia's face with lead and iron shrapnel. Upon seeing Rosser kill his son, Chisolm picked up a weapon and shot Rosser in the head. As the news of the death of Rosser spread down the stairs and through the crowd, they began to rapidly evacuate the building. They congregated outside the jail crying "burn them out." Cornelia opined that it was better to be shot than burned to death. Emily and Clay took Johnny's body downstairs and Cornelia and her father came down just behind them. The crowd came back into the lower level at about the same time. Mrs. Chisolm closed the door

⁴⁸Testimony of Mrs. Emily S. M. Chisolm, RG 60, NA. Also see Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 304-06; Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 185.

at the bottom of the stairs, but Henry Gully stuck a shotgun through the grate of the door and fired two shots which lacerated Cornelia's arm, wounds from which she would later die. A boy handed Gully another gun which he unloaded into Judge Chisolm. Gully fired another time at Chisolm as did Bob Moseley from the outside room. The crowd backed off somewhat, and presuming that Chisolm was dead, or nearly so, permitted the family to proceed to their house bearing their dead and dying members home. Some members of the crowd assisted the Chisolms, but a few who offered to assist, including Moseley, were turned away by Emily Chisolm.⁴⁹

Both William Wallace Chisolm and his daughter, Cornelia succumbed to their wounds, he on May 13, and she, two days later. The violent and bloody Sunday of the Chisolm massacre caused waves of reaction for many years and even today evokes passion in the community.

For all practical purposes, the Radical Republication party and the aspirations of the Kemper County black community died in Norfolk, 1875 with the redemption election. The slaughter of Radical leaders William Wallace Chisolm and John P. Gilmer was a final lashing out at the vestiges of Radical rule. No one would be held accountable for the bloodshed and there would be little remorse.

⁴⁹Statement of Mrs. Emily S. M. Chisolm, RG 60, NA. Also see Lynch, Kemper County Vindicated, 306-11; Wells Chisolm Massacre, 185-88

CHAPTER V

EPILOGUE

Kemper County provides a microcosm for challenging the historical interpretation of Reconstruction. The Dunning school, exemplified by Garner's Reconstruction in Mississippi, argued that Southern whites accepted defeat, sought a quick return to the union and were willing to extend justice to the freedmen. This apologist view held sway for over forty years. So blameless were the southern whites that Garner wrote that "much of the responsibility for these so-called Kuklux disorders must rest ultimately upon the authors of the congressional policy of Reconstruction."¹ In Kemper County, there was certainly not a gracious acceptance of defeat. In fact, the white-line Democratic faction was obstinate and glorified in the antebellum legacy. Confederate veteran organizations were well subscribed and the night riders, Ku Klux Klan and Order of '76 each sought to perpetrate the tenets of a bygone social order. An expedient return to the union was welcome in Kemper County, but only inasmuch as it meant a return to

¹Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, 353.

the way it used to be. The physical atrocities perpetrated against Kemper freedmen and the benign neglect of blacks by the Radical Republicans belies the Dunning proposition that southern whites welcomed their black brothers to citizenship. The single Dunningite principle that applies to Kemper County is the portrayal of blacks as passive victims of white manipulation. This can be substantiated by examination of the extremely limited role that blacks played in political life in the county. A token black was the candidate for County Treasurer in 1875, but throughout Radical rule, whites dominated the elective and appointed offices. One black served one term on the County Board of Supervisors. The black role in politics was to deliver the black vote in one bloc to the Republican party.

The Progressive School attempted to link Radicals with Northern economic interests. This has no corollary whatever in Kemper County.

The pioneer revisionist, W. E. B. Du Bois impugned the motives of the Dunning devotees by claiming they had not documented the considerable contribution of blacks in Reconstruction due to a refusal to accept them as human beings. Du Bois went on to declare that "the facts of American history have in the last half century been falsified because the nation was ashamed. . . . The North was ashamed because it had to call in the black men to save

the Union, abolish slavery and establish democracy."² Certainly the Dunning School wrote with a bias, but Du Bois would be hard pressed to document any notable black political contribution in Kemper County with the exception of bloc voting. Even post-Revisionist Eric Foner tried to give greater credit to black Southerners for Reconstruction accomplishments than was merited. In remarks to the Society of American Historians, Foner said that

Rather than victims of manipulation by others, or simply a 'problem' confronting white society, blacks were active agents of change whose demand for individual and community autonomy helped set the agenda for Reconstruction politics, and did much to introduce the country's first experiment in interracial democracy.³

There is no evidence to warrant attaching great significance to black accomplishments during Reconstruction in rural Mississippi and particularly in Kemper County. If the motive is to assuage the national conscience, it is a sham. The Mississippi black farmer was overwhelmed by freedom. He was uneducated, timid, poor and simply was not prepared for or capable of the political finesse which Foner accords him.

Revisionist Howard K. Beale called for a new look at the black role in Reconstruction and Wharton responded with

²W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America (New York: Russell and Russell, 1935), 911

³Eric Foner, remarks to the Society of American Historians, cited in History Book Club Review, August 1989, 20.

a brilliant study of black Mississippians. It is also the most balanced account of Reconstruction in the state. Wharton saw Reconstruction as a period during which subjugation of blacks was changed from slavery to caste control. For a brief interval, blacks were given the vote and other trappings of freedom but they were shortlived. Of black county supervisors and justices of the peace, Wharton said "such negroes were almost entirely without influence, and generally found it to their advantage to be 'very quite, good negroes', to use the description given of those in Lawrence [County]." ⁴ Wharton made no attempt to embellish black accomplishments, and as a result, his picture of the period is complemented by the Kemper County experience.

There is no evidence to show that either Republican or Democratic leaders of Kemper County played any role in state-wide politics. Chisolm was a crude, profane backwoods sheriff and his antagonists, the Gullys, were no better. John Gully was known as "the bull of the woods" for his habit of going about with his shirt front open exposing the masses of hair on his burly chest. ⁵ Both W. H. Hardy and Lucien Q. C. Lamar, state Democratic officials, came to Kemper County during the canvass of 1875 to implement the Mississippi Plan. This plan of intimidation, with violence

⁴Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 168.

⁵New York Times, July 7, 1877.

reserved as a fall-back position, was successful in the fall election, without violence. Hardy said the intimidation alone was successful.

The aftermath of Reconstruction in Kemper County included trials for violations of the Civil Rights Act and for the murder of John Gully and the Chisolm family. Most of the participants in "bloody Sunday" returned to life as usual in DeKalb and Scooba. A few left the county. Books, magazines and newspapers continued coverage of the violent end of Radical Republican rule in Kemper County.

The Chisolm family still lived in fear of reprisal when Emily, two sons and a few of Judge Chisolm's relatives from the western part of the county took Johnny's body for burial. They travelled more than twenty miles south to the Chisolm family cemetery near Rio. In two weeks, they would make the same trip, but bearing the body of their husband and father. The preparations for the funeral of Judge Chisolm were done quietly to keep the news of his death from daughter Cornelia, who lingered near death in an adjoining room. She succumbed two days later and the small group of mourners made the trek to Rio once more.⁶

In early March of 1879, the three graves were opened and the caskets disinterred. Charles Rosenbaum shipped them to Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, where they were reinterred in

⁶Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 196-97, 221, 223-24; New York Times, May 28, 1877.

the Cedar Hill Cemetery. Mrs. Chisolm travelled from Washington, D.C., and met Clay in Harrisburg and both went to Lock Haven where a service was held in the home of Mr. J. C. Sigmund and at the local Methodist church. Proceeds from the sale of Chisolm Masaacre and numerous subscriptions and donations were intended to erect a monument for the Chisolms at their new burial site. A design was approved and Mrs. H. C. Ingersoll of 511 4th Street, Washington, was the secretary-treasurer of the Chisolm Monument Association. No monument, however, was erected in Cedar Hill Cemetery.⁷

The trial of the alleged assassin of John Gully was accomplished with considerable speed. Walter Riley, a black with whom John Gully had had previous disagreement was arrested in Tennessee in August, tried and found guilty of the murder of John Gully. Great pressure was brought to bear on Riley during the trial to implicate Chisolm in conspiring to kill Gully, thus giving the mob that killed Chisolm some justification for their action. The closest relationship to Chisolm that could be shown was that Riley got the gun from Hezzy Jack, black Republican friend of Chisolm. For the white-line Democrats, this was a close

⁷Mrs. W. W. Chisolm to Mrs. H. C. Ingersoll, March 29, 1879, cited in Records of Cedar Hill Cemetery Association, 64-68, Cedar Hill Cemetery, Mill Hall, Pennsylvania; New York Times, June 27, 1878.

enough association to show conspiracy.⁸

Walter Riley was hanged on Decmeber 7, 1877, but only after a last-minute interrogation by county officials, a magistrate and a doctor that delayed his execution for over an hour. They pleaded with him in front of the large crowd that had gathered to witness the execution, to free himself of the burdens of his guilt by telling them who hired him to kill Gully. The preacher and his friends implored him to ensure his arrival in eternity cleansed of sin. After singing a hymn, Walter Riley went to his death on the gallows, steadfastly maintaining that he was alone in the murder of John W. Gully. Governor Stone received a telegram after the execution that stated that Walter Riley had indirectly implicated Chisolm and Gilmer in his last words.⁹

Swift sure justice was dispatched to Walter Riley, but the wheels of justice were much slower in attempting to mete out justice to those members of the mob that killed the Chisolms, Gilmer and McLellan. In fact, justice was never served. William H., Jesse, Houston and Virgil Gully, and nine others were indicted by the grand jury in Kemper County for violations of the Civil Rights Act in that they intimidated both Judge Chisolm and the Republican voters

⁸Ibid., August 29, 1877; Report of Special Correspondent Hanson of the Cincinnati Gazette, December 7, 1877 cited in Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 299-308.

⁹Ibid.

during the Congressional election of 1876. The accused were tried in the United States District Court in Jackson in February, 1878. The prosecutor could not show that William Wallace Chisolm was a registered voter, as he had apparently neglected to register, and all of the accused conspirators were acquitted.¹⁰

At the same time that civil rights indictments were pending, indictments were found against fourteen persons involved in the Sunday murders of the Chisolms, Gilmer and McLellan. On September 18, 1877, Henry J. Gully was indicted for the murder of Cornelia Chisolm; Henry J. Gully and Slocum Gully for the murder of William Wallace Chisolm; Henry J. Gully, Houston Gully and Virgil Gully for the murder of John P. Gilmer; and Jesse Gully and Houston Gully for the murder of Angus McLellan.¹¹ The grand jury that brought forth the indictments, addressed correspondence to the governor asking that he pardon all of the accused before trial for "the promotion of peace and good order in our county. . . ."¹² The prosecutor for the State of Mississippi was pessimistic: ". . . [it] seems to me

¹⁰Luke Lea to Attorney General, February 9, 1878. General Records of the Department of Justice, Source-Chronological File for Northern Mississippi, Letters Received 1849-1904, RG 60, M970, NA, Washington, D.C.; New York Times, February 17, 1878.

¹¹Ibid., September 23, 1877.

¹²Meridian (Miss.) Mercury cited in New York Times, April 1, 1878.

preposterous to expect verdict of guilty from Kemper jury."¹³ His most frank appraisal was that the "jury will hang, not the criminals."¹⁴ The trial of Henry Gully for the murder of Cornelia Chisolm was held in September, 1879 in DeKalb. A jury heard the arguments and returned a verdict of not guilty after less than thirty minutes of deliberation.¹⁵ The prosecutor did not press any of the remaining trials and the indictments were eventually "quashed."¹⁶

Emily S. M. Chisolm moved, with her two sons, to Washington, D.C., where she was given a clerkship with the Treasury Department. She returned to Mississippi in February, 1878, to testify at the civil rights trial in Jackson and the trial of the accused assassins in DeKalb in September, 1879. The last record of Mrs. Chisolm at the Department of the Treasury is in the Federal Register of 1887. Henry Clay Chisolm returned to Mississippi and married Sarah Victoria Moore of Kemper County in 1880. Upon her death in 1924, Clay buried her in the Chisolm cemetery in Rio. Clay lived until 1936, but is not buried in the family plot. Only one record of Willie Chisolm was located.

¹³Luke Lea to Attorney General, April 27, 1879, Justice, RG 60, NA.

¹⁴Ibid., April 29, 1879.

¹⁵New York Times, September 13, 1879.

¹⁶Luke Lea to Attorney General, December 10, 1879.

He applied for a Federal clerkship in 1889 from the state of Pennsylvania and later withdrew the application.¹⁷

There are still Chisolms in Kemper County and a great number of Gullys, but no Gilmers. Mrs. Gilmer, like Mrs. Chisolm, accepted an appointment in Washington, in the Department of War, and remained there until 1883. The Chisolm house in DeKalb is the office of the State Forestry representative and visitors can see the secret cubby hole that Emily wanted the Judge to use for a hiding place. It is said that if one rolls back the linoleum in the upstairs room, Chisolm's bloodstains are still visible in the wood. The jail was torn down in the mid-1970s. A new courthouse stands in the town square and a monument to the Confederate war dead. There is, however, no marker in evidence that mentions the Chisolm affair. The era of Reconstruction is remembered in Kemper County as the time of "ruthless and unrelenting rule of the radicals."¹⁸

¹⁷United States, Official Register of the United States Containing a List of Officers and Employees in the Civil, Military, and Naval Service on the First of July, 1881, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1881); Genealogy chart, Chisolm Family Papers, unpublished, in possession of Ms. Dianne McClain; United States, Department of Treasury, General Records, Appointment Division, RG 56, Boxes 99 and 678, NA, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸Atkinson, Scooba, 113.

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APPENDIX A

BLACK REAL PROPERTY OWNERS IN KEMPER COUNTY 1870

Name	Age	State of Birth	Real Property Value	Other Property Value	
Carter,	38	GA	800	-	Scooba
Charles, Bill	58	SC	90	200	DeKalb
Dunger, William	55	VA	800	-	DeKalb
Holloway, Tom	53	VA	360	-	Scooba
McCaleb, Jack	64	NC	800	-	Scooba
McCall, Dick	60	VA	300	600	DeKalb
McCoy, Nelson	46	SC	160	-	Scooba
Mobley, Mark	57	MS	640	-	Scooba
Moved, K.	65	NC	200	-	Scooba
Nicholson, Phil	45	AL	1200	-	Scooba
Riddle, Nelson	60	SC	300	-	Scooba
Shuman, Glen	50	AL	80	100	DeKalb
Spinks, Abram	61	GA	800	100	DeKalb
Thompson, Lewis	60	KY	400	700	Scooba
Walton, Albert	39	AL	400	100	DeKalb
Wooton, Albert	40	AL	100	300	DeKalb

BLACK FARMERS PROPERTY TAXPAYERS IN KEMPER COUNTY 1870

	Age	Place of Birth	Value of Personal Property
Beard, William	56	GA	240
Bishop, Thomas	25	VA	400
Carter, Tony	60	SC	800
Delk, Henry	40	-	400
Duncan, Alex	25	TN	300
Fase, Daniel	57	NC	1200
Gay, Geralders	47	NC	120
Gustan, Julis	29	MS	500
Johnson, John	49	AL	1400
Johnson, Samuel	55	NC	120
Little, John	47	NC	160
Madison, Jack	57	AL	320
McGreer, Z.	33	AL	200
McWharton, Andy	42	SC	100
Peden, James	26	AL	440
Stewart, _____	36	GA	120
Thompson, Frances	21	AL	100

Source: U.S. Ninth Census, 1870.

APPENDIX B

ALLEGED PARTICIPANTS IN THE "CHISOLM MASSACRE"

APRIL 27, 1877

Arch Adams	Jess Hull
Bill Adams	Philander Hull
John Adams	John Hunter
Tom P. Bell	_____ Ivory
John Bounds	_____ Jenkins
Rufus Bounds	Sanford Jordan
James H. Brittain	J. W. Lang
Baxter Cambel	Tom Lang
Dr. Cambel	Albert Lilly
John Cambel	Dee McLellan
Bill Clark	Foote McLellan
Theodore Clark	Charles L. McRory
Doland Coleman	Jim McRory
Ed Davis	Dan McWhorter
George Eldridge	_____ McWilliams
Joe Ellerby	Wallace Morrison
Ebb Felton	Robert J. Moseley
John T. Gewen	Ed Nester
Bob Goodwin	Jim Overstreet
Bill Gully	John H. Overstreet
Henry Gully	W. J. Overstreet
Houston Gully	Dr. Rosser
Jess Gully	Jim Scott
John Gully	Pat J. Scott
Phil H. Gully	_____ Shot
Slocum Gully	Dr. Stennis
Virgil Gully	Ruff Turner
_____ Gully (Phil's son)	Peck Vandevender
J. J. Hall	Robert Waddle
Frank Harvin	Jime Warren
Sam Harvin	Sam Warren
Joe Hodge	Sloke Warren
_____ Hodge	Jere Watkins
George Hull	Jim Whittle
	Bill Williams

Source: Wells, Chisolm Massacre, 276-77; Testimony of Mrs. Emily S. M. Chisolm, RG 60, NA.

APPENDIX C

STATEMENT OF MRS. EMILY S. M. CHISOLM

JUNE 14, 1877

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, RG 60, NA.
Transcribed leaving spelling and grammatical errors intact.

I am the wife of W. W. Chisolm.

The first I ever heard of any charge against Judge Chisolm as being in any way connected with the assassination of John Gully was on Sunday morning when the sheriff came to arrest him.

Mr. Chisolm had just gotten up when a note came from Mr. Hopper stating that he (Hopper) had been arrested and that the Sheriff would soon be there with a warrant for his arrest and that warrants were also out for the arrest of Rosebaum and Gilmer.

I feared that the arrest of my husband meant his death at the hands of a mob _____. I advised him to leave the house and evade the officers. This he refused to do saying that such a course would arouse suspicion of his guilt. I feared that he would be mobbed because they have repeatedly mobbed him before and threatened his life. Hopper soon rode up with the sheriff and together they came in and the sheriff showed the warrant.

Mr. Chisolm remarked that he was always ready and willing to obey the proper process of the law, but that he feared the mob and desired to remain in his own home under guard. To this the sheriff assented. The jail was in sight of the ouse not more than 150 yards distant. Judge Chisolm then named several gentlemen, known to be moderate Democrats whom he would prefer for a guard. He named Mr. Thomas H. Hampton, Emory Key, Adil Knor[?] and Charles Rosenbaum. The Sheriff agreed to appoint them and the guards further agreed to be responsible for Mr. Chisolm's safety and security.

I went out to give the servants direction about their work and on returning found that the guards had removed my husband into a small outhouse. The door to this building had no fastening. It was a cold morning and I objected to his remaining in this building. The sheriff told me not to go into the building with my husband.

About this time, my husband saw Jere Watkins ride down by the garden fence where he and the sheriff held an interview. My husband asked what that notorious Ku Klux scoundrel was doing around his place. By this time a large number of people had come into the yard and around the house. Sam Collins, a friend of my husbands told me that there were at this time twenty or thirty horses hitched in the woods just in the rear of our house.

I then repeated my demand that my husband should be carried back into the house where he could be made

comfortable.

The sheriff consented and he had not moved ten steps from the outhouse before he was surrounded by twenty villanous looking men armed with double barreled guns. My husband exclaimed to the sheriff "Sinclair, what does this mean? You appointed a guard over me and here you have surrounded me with a score of armed ruffians."

This was inside of the yard close to the door. My husband then came into the house followed by a number of armed men. These men were not of the guard appointed by the sheriff. My husband asked the sheriff why these men were following him into the house. The sheriff replied that "they say" (meaning the mob) that the guard must be strengthened and said that these were also guards. The sheriff then went out and had another interview with Watkins.

Returning, he said, "Judge, they are getting uneasy." Mr. Chisolm asked why they were getting uneasy. The sheriff replied that they wanted the guards recreated again. I then saw Watkins riding off. He returned in about a half hour bringing a large crowd of armed men with him. They came in squads and by companies, hitched their horses and surrounded the house. My husband then asked Dr. Stennis what all this meant, meaning the large number of armed and boisterous men. Stennis replied that he did not know much about [it].

My husband then asked Dr. Campbell what it meant.

Campbell replied in a gruff voice that he did not know; that he was a "know nothing." My husband then asked if that was the usual course of procedure when a man was placed under arrest charged with any crime. Campbell said yes that it was under some circumstances. I then asked him what were the circumstances peculiar to this case. He gave no explanation. I then said that I supposed there was law in the country by which men could be punished for crime. He replied that law was a farce. My husband then called up Henry Gully and said to him, "I do not understand this. I am surrounded on every hand by armed men." Gully said, "Sir, I have positive proof that you aided in the murder of John Gully." To this my husband did not deign a reply, treating the accusation with contempt. Before Gully came in the sheriff returned to the ouse and said "they say" you must go to jail." Mr. Chisolm then asked What do you say? to which the sheriff made no reply.

Mr. Angus McLellan asked Mr. Gully if this mode of proceeding was the law in this country. Gully waived him back with his hand and said in an angry and insulting manner, "Go away, sir. I answer none of your questions."

Then Mr. Chisolm asked Mr. Gully what evidence he had that he (Chisolm) knew any thing of the killing of John Gully. Gully replied that Ben Rush had been seen running from his house--meaning Chisolms. I then said that I did not believe that Rush was within hundreds of miles of the

place. Gully replied that as I was a woman he would have nothing to say to me.

My husband then asked Gully if he would have protection on his way to the jail and after his arrival there. Gully said that he would have protection to the jail and after that he could make no farther promise. The sheriff again said "they say" you must go to jail. I then called my husband into another room and told him not to leave the house at all. I showed him a trap door leading from a closet up into the garret. Told him to go up there and that I would furnish him guns and ammunition and food; That he could fight them their to the death. My husband replied that it was too late. That they would know that he was somewhere in the house and that they would kill his children and burn the house. We then came back to the front door and the sheriff said come you must go to jail.

I then handed my husband some pistol cartridges and the sheriff made a move as if to take them away, but I looked him steadily in the eye and he relinquished his impulse[?].

My husband then asked the sheriff if he was the sheriff in fact or if he not had assumed the duties of that office. This question my husband repeatedly asked but the sheriff made no reply. The sheriff then told the mob to close around him and take him to jail. At this they started with him, myself and children following close by his side.

Clay went and got his uniform and gave it to Mr. McLellan who also went along to the jail.

When halfway to the jail, my husband called my attention to the great number of men that were surrounding us from every direction.

I said let us hurry on and get inside the walls of the jail else we may all be killed on the way.

Arriving at the jail, Sinclair opened the door and pushed my husband in and my children went with him. The sheriff stopped me as I undertook to enter and told me not to go in.

Not one of the original guards appointed by the sheriff accompanied him into the jail. The men who went up at that time were of the mob proper. The only one of the original guards who even portended to discharge his duty as such was Overstreet. All the others deserted their posts. Overstreet stood at the door at the head of the stairs when the mob came up and tried to keep them back. Presently, Phill. Gully came in. My husband asked him what this all meant. Phill Gully said a negro says that in passing your house about twelve o'clock on night of Wednesday the 25th of April he saw a strange man coming from your gate that he took to be Rush.

Gully said that the negro who told him this was a trifling fellow and that he (Gully) would not believe him unless his evidence was strengthened by further testimony.

I said to Mr. Gully that my husband had been a friend to him and that further more he could not believe that my husband would aid in the assassination of his brother John Gully and I gave him as a reason for that, that John Gully was no longer in my husbands way in anything whatever. Besides, said I, you know very well that John Gully had bitter and unrelenting enemies in his own party. Yes, said Phill Gully, I know he had many enemies of that kind.

Col. Hull came up and told my son Clay that he did not believe that Judge Chisolm had any thing to do with the killing of John Gully

I asked Hull if he believed my husband guilty. He evaded a direct answer but presently said that the negro, when telling his story said, that on the Wednesday night spoken of above, he saw a man near (the) Chisolms gate whom he thought looked like Ben Rush. It was transpired since on information that this talk was obtained from the negro at the end of a rope. That the Gully crowd caught him after we had all been taken to jail on Sunday and hung him up in our back yard. This is the manner in which the portended evidence of my husbands guilt was obtained.

During my conversation with Hull in the jail, he told me of repeated kindnesses my husband had done him and his uncle Phill. Gully. He also told me that he was opposed to such a manner of obtaining justice, even if my husband was guilty.

Afterward, when the mob were rushing up the stairway to kill my husband and children, I heard Col. Hull say to them "go back," if I can afford to wait on this matter and let the law take its course, then you ought to be willing to do so."

Believing that the guns furnished the guards were not loaded I secretly told my daughter that she with the two boys might come to the house and get some ammunition, and at the same time pack all of our valuables, clothing and other movable articles of value in the trunks and put the trunks in the closets for I feared that aside from the murder that would probably be committed they would also rob. This the children did and my daughter returned with ammunition secreted under her skirts. Just before the children came to the house, Gilmer had been shot in the street. My belief that the guns were not loaded was afterward confirmed for I tried them myself when the wads after striking the mark aimed at, fell harmless to the floor. Mr. Chisolm also discharged some of the same lot of guns with similar effect as did also my daughter.

My husband then told me to take Johnny and come to the house and feed and water the horses. Johnny would not consent to leave his father and said, "O! Mother as soon as I leave father they will kill him." I then came to the house with Willie and took care of the stock.

When I came to the foot of the stairs to get out of

the jail, I met the sheriff who asked me if I wanted to get out. I told him that I did and that pretty soon I wanted to come back. He let me out.

As I came out I saw old Mr. Mac. leaning up against the wall inside the jail looking very much dejected. His hands were empty and he had no gun or pistol in them.

While at the house with Willie attending to the horses, the guns began to fire and I started upon a run for the jail. As I got to the front gate, on my way I saw a man fall but did not know at the time who it was. I called out to Willie that another man had just been killed, and I went on and found it to be Mr. Mac. The last man that shot at McLellan went up to him as if to see if he was dead. He then made a signal with both hands and the whole crowd rushed to the jail.

I sent Willie to a negro cabin and followed into the jail among the mob.

While working my way among them I encountered Bill Gully. I implored him to go back, stating to him that he had already shed blood enough and told him that he was mistaken about my husband's guilt. I went to the top of the stairs. I struggled with infuriated men and tried to turn them back. Rosser, finding the door fastened at the head of the stairs then called for an axe. I took hold of him and entreated him to desist. Told him to think of his own wife and children at home, and the God in heaven upon whom he

would soon be called upon to appear. I asked him if he had a wife and children and he replied that he had.

One axe was brought and then another and by the aid of which and an iron bar the door soon began to give way. At this door, the parties whom I saw and recognized and can identify full well were: Bill Gully, Henry Gully, Cal Hull, Charley McCrory, Bob Mosely, usually known as "Black Bob"-- There was an innumerable crowd beside whose faces I had seen before in other mobs that had menaced my husband's house, but whose names I did not know.

Before the crowd had rushed into the jail, my little daughter stood near one of the windows up stairs and crying out "O why do you do my father so bad who has never harmed any one in his life." To this Bill Gully, then standing outside under the window said "D_m him we will do him worse than that."

While at the gate, Rosser said to Cornelia "Go away G_d d_m you or I'll blow your brains out." Said a fellow at his heels, "Would you shoot a woman" "Yes G_d d_m her I will shoot any body that gets in my way." One man who was crowding against the door with gun in his hands. I begged to kick back and for a time held him by force and asked him if he was human and could partake in such a crime as this. He said, Madame, I am a private and I am acting under orders and I always obey orders." Another man said that he was going to shoot, else they would shoot him. Another pointed

his gun at Overstreet and told him to leave the door or he would shoot him. Overstreet started back for an instant and the door was pushed ajar, when Rosser fired through the opening shooting off Johnny's arm who stood on the inside holding the door back. For a moment Johnny clung to the door when Clay came and carried him behind the cage telling him to remain. But Clay was no sooner back to the door than Johnny also came just as Rosser was in the act of shooting my husband. Seeing this Johnny cried out "O! my father" and sprang before him, and Rosser leveled his gun and emptied its contents into Johnny's heart.

I saw the man shoot but could not at the time see Johnny.

In the meantime a load had been discharged against the iron bars in the door which filled Cornelia's face with chips of lead and iron causing the blood to flow a score of ugly wounds, and after Rosser had shot Johnny she began to faint. I rallied her by telling her that she must think of her darling father, that his life might yet depend upon her courage. I ran my hand through the grates and rubbed her face. I afterward learned that Cornelia fainted from seeing Johnny killed by Rosser, as well, also, from loss of her own blood.

About this time I discovered some of the mob rushing out exclaiming as they did so. "Let's get out of this, Rosser is killed." and in less time than it takes to tell

it they all ran out and down the stairs dragging the dead body of Rosser by the heels.

I then went inside the door when I first learned that my boy had been murdered. At this time then arose a wail of agony and despair from my husband and children which words cannot describe, and at the same time the cry of "Burn them out the jail is on fire" arose from the mob. The jail was full of smoke from burning wads and from powder and to add to the horror, the prisoners regularly confined began to howl and scream like wild animals in a burning amphitheatre. Bill Gully told me that the jail was actually on fire.

Cornelia had already carried the dead body of little Johnny behind a cage after we had both kissed him repeatedly. I then told my husband that the jail was on fire and I thought to give him my dress and let him go down in that while I remained behind but this I found to be impracticable.

When Johnny's arm was shot off the gun was so close to him that his sleeves was set on fire and it was not until after he was shot the second time and had breathed his last that the blood running out, put out the fire.

I told my husband that I would go down in advance and see what could be done by way of making our escape. Cornelia then advised her father to go down, telling him that Johnny had died an easy death, and that it was better that they should all go down and be shot to death than stay

there and be burned.

I then went down stairs and saw a whole troupe coming down the street and I said to Clay who had come down with me that we must lay Johnny down and go back and see what could be done with father.

Turning to go up, I met him with Cornelia's arms around him coming down the stairs. As the crowd came in I ran and closed the door at the foot of the stairs. Henry Gully rushed in and ran his gun through the grates. Cornelia pulled her father's arm so as to bring his body below the range of Gully's gun and implored him to shoot her and spare her father. He replied by discharging both barrels which shivered Cornelia's arm to pieces from which wound she afterward died.

A boy then handed Gully another gun which he also discharged into my husband's body. Henry Gully then disappeared for a moment and I told my husband to go behind some rubbish in the back end of the hall. As we started to go back Phill. Gully stepped out from a side door with a heavy stick in his hand as if to strike, but just at this time Henry Gully reappeared and discharged another gun into my husband's hips. Bob Moseley also shot him at the same time from the outside room. This my husband told me on his dying bed but I did not see it myself.

My husband then sank upon the floor and I kneeled over him and in a faint whisper he said "My precious wife, I am

killed and my family are all killed but I die innocent of any crime. If any children live, I want you to tell them that their father never did an act in his life for which they need to blush or feel ashamed," and at another time he said to me "I have been murdered because I am a republican and would live a free man."

Immediately after my husband fell, I ran to the door and asked if there was any one there who would come and help me carry home my murdered husband and child. I then ran back to my husband and Cornelia ran to the door and with her chattered and bleeding arm uplifted to heaven she asked if there was not some one in all that great number of men who had enough humanity left to come and help mama carry off her poor murdered pappy.

While standing there in the door she was shot in the leg below the knee with a full charge of small shot and one buck shot. She then turned back to me and without any appearance of pain said, "mama, they have shot me in the leg."

A large crowd then came around the door looking in to see if my husband was dead. Among this number I saw Bill Gully who was still at the head of the mob, with his gun raised and pointed it at my prostrate husband. I had already picked up a gun which my husband had brought down stairs. Gully after seeing me with a gun in my hands

directed his gun toward me and fired. I then shot at him but without serious results--as might be expected, for I afterward learned that the gun was loaded only with a blank cartridge.

Gully then turned and went out and all the crowd followed him up the street. Calling again for help, Moseley came forward and I told him to go back, that he had murdered my husband. Another man came who I know had also been foremost in the mob and I would not allow him to touch him. Still another came up and after declaring that he had taken no part in the killing I consented to his offer of assistance and we gathered my husbands body up and started. Then Moseley stepped up and took hold also. When about half way to the house the mob came on declaring that my husband was not dead and that they were coming to finish him. My little daughter who had lingered behind declared to them that he was dead, that he died in her arms before leaving the jail, and she implored them not to mangle his dead body. Among the crowd that came up wa Houston Gully and Dan McQuester. My husband told me to hurry so that he might die on his own bed, stating it as his opinion that he would not live but a few minutes at best.

I then hurried to the mob and told them that the only favor I had to ask of them was that I might be allowed to carry my husbands bleeding body home.

We met with no further open resistance from the mob.

My husband lingered for weeks and then died of the wounds received. In two days after my husbands death my daughter died of the wounds that she received.

/ / s / /

Sworn to & subscribed
before me June 14th 1877

At. Rush
Chancery Clerk

APPENDIX D

ELECTION RETURNS KEMPER COUNTY

Source: Mississippi Secretary of State Election Results.
Record Group 28 Mississippi Department of Archives and
History, Jackson.

1871 17TH Senatorial District

17th District Totals

W. B. Gambril (R)	1176	4542
H. S. St. James (D)	1060	1827
H. W. Foote (D)	-	171
T. H. Griffin (-)	-	178
Total votes cast:	<u>2436</u>	<u>7418</u>

1871 Sixth Judicial District

T. H. Wood	1279
J. P. Walker	894

Special Election, November 5, 1871 occasioned
by the death of H. M. Gambrill - 17th Senatorial District

Kemper 17th District Totals

John P. Gilmer	1299	4514
Washington McLean	-	-
H. W. Foote	-	162

Presidential Election 1872

Whig/Republicans	1303
Democrats	777

Congressional Election 1872

James Niles (R)	1303
J. G. Hamm (D)	792

Gubernatorial Election, November 4, 1873

Adelbert Ames	(R)	1204
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James L. Alcorn (D) 972

1876 Third Congressional Election*

W. W. Chisolm (R)	890
H. Money (D)	1573

* Chisolm did not carry any county.

Unless otherwise indicated figures represent the votes cast in Kemper County.